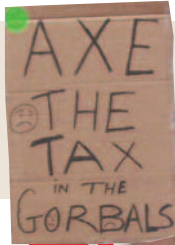


**STUC:** Scottish trade unionists will decide if they're better off fighting for independence  
• see pages 6, 7 & 8



**Bedroom Tax:** grassroots activists use Facebook to build local networks  
• see page 12

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# Scottish Socialist Voice

# NO to Trident WMDs to Bedroom Tax to Thatcherism



SCOTLAND CAN BREAK FROM GREED TO JUSTICE

# VOTE **Yes** to put people before profit



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@ssv\_voice

by Ken Ferguson

THE *Voice* was going to press as Margaret Thatcher's death was announced, triggering a tsunami of fawning tributes about her greatness, leadership, wisdom and so forth with Lords, ex-cabinet ministers, the Prime Minister and his echo Nick Clegg among those getting in on the act.

It will come as no surprise to *Voice* readers to learn that your paper will not be joining the queue of those signing the condolences book and heaping praise on the extremist former PM.

As a paper committed to a socialist future and an independent, democratic Scottish republic, we stand four square against the entire Thatcher project and the neo-liberal nightmare it spawned.

### Obscene

Not for us the loadsamoney city slickers unleashed by the Thatcher deregulation of finance or the obscene fat cats who wrecked the banks while pocketing bonuses beyond the dreams of avarice.

The hijacking of key industries such as electricity and gas which was sold as a "peoples, capitalism" but actually ended up with super profits for the bosses and fuel poverty for millions.

And of course we should remember the brutal destruction of the coal industry after the miners dared to resist, and the destruction of manufacturing industry as the ruling elite turned the UK economy into a giant Ladbrokes.



# Thatcher's death tribute orgy is a ghastly warning of a British future

Subsequent events have shown that, far from the act of brilliance it was sold as, this was about as sensible as betting your house on the Grand National, and we are now living amidst the smoking ruins of that policy.

However, while it might be said you can only expect class war from the Tories, perhaps

Thatcher's greatest achievement was that she created a climate of fear for Labour which saw them abandon their own history for the market friendly, city-fawning New Labour. The fact that, in England, the basic ideas of market greed, privatisation, attacks on welfare and hostility to trade unions are now the accepted currency of all

the major parties is both a tribute to Thatcher and a dreadful warning to those who will vote in next year's independence referendum.

The Thatcher tributes will reveal the increasingly right wing politics of the Tory-led coalition and the weak-kneed trimming to them by a gutless Labour Party.

### Poll Tax

What is unfolding before our eyes is the ghastly vision of history repeating itself. In the Thatcher years, Scotland never voted for pit closures, the Poll Tax, privatisation of electricity and gas, etc, but we got them just the same via English Tory votes in Westminster. Of course, this time we will be told its different - Holyrood will protect you and for the moment that is partly true.

However, should the Scots forge their own chains and vote No next year, only the terminally naive can believe that won't change. Faced with an every escalating financial crisis the cash given by London to the Edinburgh government will be slashed.

This will be justified by pointing at England's suffering from spending cuts alongside a barrage of tales of how much more the pampered Scots suck out of the London treasury and demands that cuts be made.

### Nightmare

Given such cuts, the promise of "increased powers" from London will turn into a poisoned chalice which leaves any Holyrood government to make the cuts and manage the Scottish end of the British crisis.

The old saying is indeed apt - he who pays the piper calls the tune - and the only way to avoid a re-run of the Thatcher nightmare is to vote Yes and take control of all the powers to break with neo-liberal Britain and shape a Scotland which puts people before profit.

For a nation which consistently shunned Thatcher and her politics, this would be an appropriate epitaph on her era.

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# FUTURE OF FASLANE PEACE CAMP AT RISK

by Sandra Webster

**PEACE** protesters formed on socialist-anarchist grounds have been a constant presence in Faslane Peace Camp since 12 June 1982.

They have become a part of the landscape, not only to those who pass by their colourful camp but on the Scottish political landscape too. For 31 years, there has always been at least one peace protester present, making this the oldest, longest, continuous occupation in the world.

But a letter posted on social networks at the weekend has fuelled concerns about the future of the camp. The letter, posted by the present protesters, raises concerns about their ability to continue and has asked for groups and individuals to attend a meeting at the Kinning Park Complex on Saturday 13 April at 4pm, after the march to George Square.

## Heroic struggle

The present campers have transformed the camp, creating an alcohol and drug free space which has been the centre of peaceful non-violent protest. Last year saw them participate in Faslane 365, where 100 activists participated in different actions throughout the year.

This year they have co-ordinated a weekend of action which will be the biggest demonstration against Trident that Scotland



**PEACE WARRIORS:** a presence at Faslane Peace Camp is essential in the struggle against Trident

has seen for decades. It is sad to think the future of the camp is at risk.

The campers have defiantly stood up for all of us who oppose Trident, selflessly putting their lives on hold.

They have opted to live off-grid, not relying on benefits, with most of them working to sustain their activities. This has come at some cost to themselves, though they remain passionate about what they do.

Their plans are to dismantle all the buildings and structures in the camp so they don't fall into disrepair, and create a park space that can be used for meetings and future activities.

With independence referendum coming up next

year, it is crucial that there is a physical presence at Faslane which personifies all of those who oppose these weapons of mass destruction.

But to survive, the camp needs your help. Like many others, I have been guilty of just taking the camp for granted. I have gone to there and been inspired by the campers' non-violent approach, which has made me question my own activity. They are at the heart of all on the left.

The future of Faslane Peace Camp is in all our hands. Its future is reliant on all of us to take a more active role in supporting it.

The peace campaigners are as much part of our struggle as those who oppose

all that the Westminster regime throw at us.

It is up to us to support them in all that they do, not just applaud as their actions get media coverage. As long as nuclear subs are moored on the Clyde, it is imperative that Faslane Peace Camp remains as an active and visible presence that constantly reminds those in power of our opposition to these evil weapons, and the peacefulness that mankind is capable of.

• *An open meeting on the future of the peace camp will be held at 4pm in the Kinning Park Complex in Glasgow on Sat 13 April. Read the open letter at [www.faslanepeacecamp.wordpress.com](http://www.faslanepeacecamp.wordpress.com)*



# Welfare not warfare

by Sandra Webster

**ONE** of the reasons I joined the SSP was because of our clear policies on Trident.

Now, as the run up to the independence referendum fast approaches, I am proud to be able to tell people that we look forward to the day when Scotland becomes free from the burden of having weapons of mass destruction right on our doorstep.

They can only hold us back from the SSP's vision of Scotland as a modern, peaceful, democratic republic. A nation where "we come in peace" means simply that and that we do not have the potential to destroy the planet several times over.

We also believe in the transformation of society for the benefit of all our citizens. For this to happen, choices will have to be made. The Tories claim they had to make difficult choices to justify welfare cuts, our choices will be more clear cut. A Trident replacement has been estimated to cost billions. Money that can be put to much better use.

We are at the beginning of an onslaught of cuts that are impacting on communities all over Scot-



**NOT IN OUR NAME:** dozens of Scrap Trident protesters descended on defence firm Thales in Govan on 5 April as PM David Cameron sneaked in the back gate to defend UK WMDs to a slaving media

PHOTO: Simon Whittle

land. Foremost on people's thoughts at the moment is the Bedroom Tax but other brutal cuts are here too, including reductions in Working Tax Credits and Council Tax Benefit.

On the day Thatcher died, DLA was replaced with a new Personal Independence Payment. Its aim is to reduce the number of claimants by 20 per cent. The new criteria for high rate mobility will move from being unable (or be in pain)

to walk 50 metres, down to 20 metres - meaning people with so-called 'fluctuating' disabilities will lose their mobility car and the freedom that it brings them to live an ordinary life.

Peace and freedom are any nation's and any citizen's right. For Scotland to cruelly call itself a peaceful nation surely this means its citizens should be free from hunger and poverty.

True peace begins in our hearts

and homes. This is why it disgusts me to see the money that is spent on warfare and the double-speak of "defence" budgets. That's why I would like an independent Scotland to call for a Peace Budget. Use the money invested on weapons of mass destruction on people instead.

Our small nation could be all the wealthier for investing in its people. Better health and education services would be for the benefit of all of us.

A nation where there is still a safety net of support available. Where the poor are not taxed on having a so called spare bedroom and ATOS assessments are a thing of the past.

This is why and I and other members of the Scrap Trident Coalition have given one of the themes of Saturday's march Welfare Not Warfare.

I will be marching on Saturday and participating in the blockade at Faslane on Monday.

As an SSP supporter, I know you are as proud as me in our peaceful policies, which have the potential to transform our nation for the better, both socially and environmentally. Let's always campaign for people first.

**SSP ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
**Sat 20 April**  
 Augustine United Church,  
 George IV Bridge,  
 Edinburgh EH1 1EL  
 Open to all Scottish Socialist Party members.  
 Debates on SSP policy and strategy.  
 £5 waged, £3 unwaged, payable on the day.  
 To help conference organisation, please let us know in advance if you are coming (see 'Join the SSP' form on p10 for contacts)

**SCRAP TRIDENT**   
**LET SCOTLAND LEAD THE WAY TO A NUCLEAR FREE WORLD**

**NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION IN GLASGOW**  
**SAT 13 APRIL**  
 Assemble George Square at 10.15am  
 March starts 10.45am  
 Rally in George Square 11.45am to 1.15pm

**MASS WORKSHOPS AND NON VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION TRAINING IN GLASGOW**  
**SUN 14 APRIL**  
 Kinning Park Complex 9am-9pm  
 Full details: [scraptrident.org](http://scraptrident.org)

**MASS BLOCKADE OF FASLANE NAVAL BASE AND SUPPORTING DEMO**  
**MON 15 APRIL**  
 From 7am  
 Buses leaving from Glasgow at 5.30am  
 Full details: [scraptrident.org](http://scraptrident.org)

# LABOUR HAS HAD A LONG LOVE-IN WITH THE BOMB

John McAllion explains

“ED [Miliband] and I have spoken about this quite a bit and we’re in the same place, which is that we’re not a unilateralist party and we’re not about to become a unilateralist party.”

This quote by Jim Murphy MP, Labour’s Shadow Defence Secretary, was cited in a recent *New Statesman* article under the headline “Labour is sticking with Trident”.

Labour, however, has not always been so opposed to unilateralism. Following the initial success of CND and the Aldermaston marches in the late 1950s, Labour’s conference briefly adopted a unilateralist position at its gathering in Scarborough in 1960.

## Pro-nuclear

In that year’s critical debate Labour’s then pro-nuclear defence leader, Hugh Gaitskell, denounced his unilateralist opponents as “pacifists” and “fellow travellers” who were soft on communism. He promised to “fight and fight and fight again to bring back sanity” and nuclear weapons to the party he loved.

Gaitskell narrowly lost the vote but was rewarded with a standing ovation and the cheers of between a half and two-thirds of the delegates. He also won the argument over nuclear weapons in the longer term.

Following his unexpected death in 1963, Gaitskell was succeeded as leader by Harold Wilson who was equally pro-nuclear defence and who would go on as Labour Prime Minister after 1964 to equip the Royal Navy with American Polaris



**STICKING WITH TRIDENT: Miliband and Murphy agree “Labour is not a unilateralist party and it’s not about to become one”**

nuclear missiles. Labour’s next flirtation with unilateralism surfaced during the leadership of Michael Foot (1980-83), himself a long-time campaigner against nuclear weapons.

Labour had moved to the left following defeat to the Tories in the 1979 general election, and following the internal party split that led many of its right wingers to defect to the breakaway SDP in early 1981.

As part of all of these developments, Labour once again adopted a unilateralist position. It did not last.

Foot was quickly undermined by right wing parliamentary colleagues including his Depute leader Dennis Healy, who made it clear during the 1983 election campaign that he was no unilateralist.

More importantly, Foot’s predecessor as party leader, Jim Callaghan, intervened to

denounce unilateralism and thus became the only former Labour Prime Minister to repudiate the defence policy of his own party in the middle of a general election campaign.

Not unexpectedly, Labour lost the 1983 election badly – only just beating the SDP/Liberal Alliance into third place. That defeat also marked the beginning of the end of Labour unilateralism. Foot was succeeded by Neil Kinnock who initially maintained Labour’s stance on non-nuclear defence.

Kinnock, however, was determined to change Labour and used the period running up to the 1987 election to take on and defeat the Labour left over support for the 1984-5 miners’ strike and then the expulsion of Militant.

Following yet another defeat in that election, he then began the process of policy

modernisation that would shift the party back to the centre ground of politics and open up the way for New Labour.

A central part of that policy shift was the ditching of unilateralism and the embrace of nuclear weapons as central to Labour defence policy.

Whether in or out of government, and with only minor exceptions, Labour has solidly backed Britain’s possession and potential use of nuclear weapons.

Michael Foot is the only one of ten post-war party leaders who fully supported unilateral nuclear disarmament; and even he fought his only general election in 1983 from a position of endorsing both unilateral and multilateral disarmament.

## Suspicious

Labour’s parliamentary leadership has always been suspicious of the role of party, trade union and campaign activists in the formation of policy. They believe activists to be unrepresentative of, remote from and out of touch with the views of the wider electorate.

They believe themselves to be answerable to that electorate and only to that electorate.

Murphy and Miliband’s distancing of their party from unilateral nuclear disarmament along with their support for retaining Trident is wholly consistent with Labour’s past.

There are no grounds for supposing that future Labour policy will be any different. Those wishing to rid Scotland of nuclear weapons must look elsewhere for any hope of a non-nuclear future.

by *Richie Venton, Trade Unionists for Independence steering group*

# WORKERS NEED INDEPENDENCE

**THE** Scottish TUC congress meets in the wake of Margaret Thatcher's departure from the scene of her multiple crimes against working class communities. As millions curse the day she was born and celebrate her passing, trade unionists also need to assess the best ways to confront and defeat the multiple assaults by the government of Thatcher's spawn, David Cameron. Preparations for a one-day general strike of public and private sector workers is one critical strand of the struggle to defeat the worst theft of workers' rights, incomes and living conditions since at least the 1920s.

The growing movement against the Bedroom Tax is another, an issue that has channeled the growing hatred for the Twin Tory Coalition, and which the trade unions need to combine with communities in defeating, which would be a body blow to the Westminster razor gang. But running alongside these battles is that to win the powers for the Scottish people to banish forever the ruination of our lives by Tory Westminster rule.

The leadership of the STUC has quite rightly demanded answers from both the Yes Scotland and Better Together campaigns on what their re-

spective visions of Scotland's future would mean for workers' rights and social justice, including the reduction of inequality. But too many trade union leaders - manacled by their ties to the pro-big business New Labour - fail to face up to the stark fact that continued Westminster rule is a recipe for growing inequality, draconian assaults on workers' rights, and brutal social injustice.

## Anti-union laws

They hide behind the falsehood that independence is the same thing as indefinite rule by Alex Salmond and his desire to tempt multinationals with rock-bottom business taxes, ignoring the real life experience of 13 years of Labour Westminster rule, where none of Thatcher's privatisation, anti-union laws or glorying in inequality was reversed. Labour leaders are fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with the millionaire Tories in 'Better Together', to help

the British ruling class hold onto Scotland's wealth, natural resources, nuclear bases and cheap, skilled labour.

This unionist cabal has just revealed a £500,000 donation from Ian Taylor, an oil industry boss 'worth' £155million who is notorious for dodging business taxes for decades and for secret \$1million deals with genocidal Serbian paramilitary leader Arkan - after, in one of many atrocities, he had slaughtered 250 people in a hospital.

Surely that is proof enough the STUC were right to refuse to be part of Better Together - but also that they should go one step further and put a distinctive working class case for Scottish self-rule, as a normal democratic nation? Why should trade unionists remain prisoners of an unelected dictatorship of the rich, whose keenest apologists include crooked millionaires prepared to finance murderous dictators?

Trade Unionists for Independence (TUPI) is a broad-based, democratic campaign that champions the case for independence as a means of radically improving the lives and conditions of Scotland's working class majority population. We are growing in strength in the unions, and the 4,000-strong Scotland no2 branch of the Communication Workers Union has now voted to affiliate to TUPI.

We are taking the workers' case for independence right to the heart of the trade union movement, in union branches, workplaces and at the STUC conference itself.

TUPI don't seek independence for the sake of swapping one set of flags and emblems for another. We want to change the conditions of working class people, and see independence as the best route to achieving this. TUPI is firmly of the view that rule by Westminster means ruin for workers, their families and communities. All re-

gardless of how the Scottish people vote in Westminster elections! The unelected Coalition is hammering the poorest through the Bedroom Tax, benefit cuts and pay cuts in order to fund tax cuts for the millionaires and big Corporations. But the Labour opposition started the benefit cuts and pay cuts for public sector workers, and have confessed they will keep the Bedroom Tax. Labour recently aided the Tories in forcing people into unpaid Workfare schemes without the compensation Court rulings had awarded them. And they slashed taxes on the rich and big business.

The millionaires' Coalition has recently added even worse anti-union laws to the package of repression introduced by Maggie Thatcher and retained by 13 years of Labour governments. Labour has never once pledged to repeal these.

## Trident

The vast majority of Scots oppose Trident. In 2007, 60 per cent of Scottish MPs opposed its renewal, but 72 per cent of Westminster MPs imposed its renewal. The Tories and Lib Dems are systematically dismantling the remains of social provision, the minimum wage, universal benefits and the welfare state - with plans being hatched to scrap the minimum wage and cut Working Tax Credit. But Labour's Johann Lamont imitated Thatcher in her diatribe against "the something for nothing society".

Some in the trade union movement prefer to remain in the British state but with a few extra powers devolved; various shades of Devo Max. But that is a complete red herring when it's not even a choice on offer in 2014. It merely provides a thin 'left' varnish to Unionism. Some union leaders adopt a fake neutrality on the Referendum, whilst trying to undermine the case for

## TUPI: Voices of INDEPENDENCE

**“** DURING my eleven years as a civil servant, I've seen successive New Labour and Tory/Lib Dem governments wage war on the unions, the poor, the public sector and public sector workers. We saw more cuts under Blair and Brown than under Thatcher, with over 100,000 jobs slashed across the civil service. Cameron can only attempt his undemocratic reordering of society in the name of deficit reduction because the way has been paved for him by his predecessors. Not-so-red Ed has gone on record stating that he will not reverse any of the Tory cuts as he courts the marginal middle England constituencies he needs to win the next general election. There is no progressive alternative in UK politics any longer and increasingly Scotland is out of sync with the politics south of the border. The idea that a nasty, racist outfit such as UKIP would get anywhere near a seat north of the border is simply ridiculous. In contrast, just six years ago, Scotland had six socialist MSPs, demonstrating the very different environment we operate in. We have every chance of getting back to that place but we need real powers over the economy, defence, employment and welfare to ensure that our law makers are truly representative of our working class majority. Only independence gives us that opportunity.

• *John Davidson, PCS HMRC GEC, (personal capacity)*





**TUFI GET GOING: forge a future worthy of the 21st century - for people not profit** PHOTO: Craig Maclean

self-government with scare stories about an impoverished, unequal Scotland and mythical visions of a redistributive Britain being possible with a few tweaks to devolution. Some, in common with their Labour leaders, prefer the realistic prospect of continued Tory (or even Tory/UKIP) rule through Westminster to the possibility of Labour rule in an independent Scotland.

**Power shift**

We need to take sides, Yes or No to a self-governing Scotland with the powers to carry out a radical and irreversible shift in power and wealth in favour of the millions away from the millionaires. TUFI believes that a No vote would usher in continued - and probably escalated - attacks on the working class from a Westminster government emboldened by our failure to seize the opportunity to determine our own future.

The British capitalist state has exhausted all it's remaining radical potential. Gone are the days of the Welfare State, progressive taxation, extensions of public ownership.

And unfortunately that applies even if Labour is elected in 2015, given its track record in government and its recent declarations. After all, Thatcher's most grovelling apologists have repeatedly boasted that her

most lasting legacy is New Labour - a point endorsed by Tony Blair in his eulogies for the woman who was his very first guest at No. 10 after Labour's 1997 landslide.

TUFI wants the fullest possible democratic debate in the unions and workplaces - but based on pro-trade union arguments, NOT to make Scotland a tax haven for the multinationals. We support the Motion to the STUC from Cumbernauld Trades Union Council that calls for precisely that. We do not see this as a choice between two forms of rule by the rich. We see independence as an opportunity to transform Scotland into a society rooted in the best trade union principles of social justice, equality, wealth redistribution and internationalism.

The arguments from some trade union leaders that independence would break the unity and solidarity of the trade union movement are entirely bogus, and lacking in ambition. Since when did trade union unity, or indeed internationalism, depend in the good grace of a Westminster government? Scottish workers have given solidarity to fellow workers not only in the rest of the UK and Ireland but across the globe - in the teeth of divide and rule tactics by the British state.

Members of the NUJ, UNITE and others have never divided despite

straddling the borders between two states in Ireland. Scottish independence would afford working people the democratic opportunity to elect governments with the powers and political will to scrap all anti-union laws and introduce a charter of workers' rights that exceeded the best in Europe; reverse all Tory and Labour privatisation and extend democratic public ownership; tax the rich and big business to

fund the creation of well-paid jobs for all and a living income for those unable to work and a living pension at 60 for those wishing to retire.

It is far more realistic to fight for such measures in a self-governing Scotland than to peddle the myth of such progress in a British state whose competing major political parties all vie for the most right-wing, even racist votes, trampling workers' rights and interests in the stampede to the bottom on behalf of capitalist profiteers.

And the unity in action and internationalism of Scottish workers would blossom across all and every national boundary, as they conquered a new Scotland for themselves and emboldened workers in the rest of the UK and beyond to follow suit. A powerful, influential trade union movement at home could pioneer international committees of shop stewards across national boundaries within multinationals, matching the globalisation of capital with the internationalism of workers.

A different Scotland is possible, but only if powerful organisations like the 630,000-strong Scottish trade union movement takes sides, sets the agenda, elbows aside the exponents of capitalist exploitation on both sides of the Referendum debate, and forges a future worthy of the 21st century; a Scotland for the millions, not the millionaires.

**TUFI: Voices of INDEPENDENCE**

**“ I BELIEVE that Scotland should be an independent country, not for the sake of independence, but for the sake of the choices that it will permit. Nations can be judged on how fairly they raise finance and how wisely they spend it. I want to have the choice of how that is done, with a progressive tax system that is based on the ability to pay, that ensures businesses pay their share in a way that encourages investment, research and employment. I want to have the choice of how those taxes are spent. Spent in ways that help the people of the nation achieve their potential, that helps nurture the young, respects the elderly and allows all to live with dignity and in peace. I want to live in a nation, that other nations look to for inspiration, not because of the might and power of a military, but because of the might and power of the minds of the people, where wealth is not measured by the weight of gold, but in the weight of the contribution the country makes to art, culture and science. I want to live in a country that understands its past, is determined in its present and is confident in its future. And I believe that can only be achieved if the people of Scotland choose it for themselves. • John Duffy, a leading FBU official in Scotland, writing in a personal capacity**

by Paul Holleran, NUJ  
Scottish Organiser

# Yes vote is quickest way to implement trade union policies

THE Scottish Trade Union Congress meeting in Perth will be set in a quite different vein than any other in its long history. Although there is a record of a strong Home Rule movement raising self-determination as an argument at a number of conferences in the last century, this is the first time we have been on the run-in to an independence referendum.

Almost every motion will be looked at in the context of what could be achieved with independence or what progress is possible if any under the status quo. Indeed there will be an awareness that many campaigns to protect public services and our industries may be further hamstrung, with the threat of more anti-union legislation from the Westminster coalition.

## Labour concerns

A few years ago, the referendum scenario would probably have led to a steamrolling of any suggestions that the unions might be better off out of the union, if you get my drift. The big unions would have rolled over anything that might challenge the Labour line of the day. However, things have dramatically changed in a remarkably short timeframe. Now there are many union activists and leaders questioning their relationship with Labour and with real concern about the political direction of the Labour Party, particularly their position on universalism.

There is also of course the contradiction of them forming a coalition (Better Together) with the coalition (Lib Dem) to oppose independence, yet at the same time struggling to appear to be in opposition of the damaging Tory austerity policies.

Another element to take into ac-



**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: Labour's political direction is a big concern**

count, which will hopefully encourage positive debate, is the position taken by the STUC General Council, promoting constructive engagement, indeed demanding the fullest debate on the independence referendum.

It has been noticeable that STUC staff members have been to the forefront in testing the arguments and policies on both sides. In recent weeks, articles have appeared in the Scottish national broadsheets by STUC assistant secretaries calling for more transparency and certainly more answers about fiscal and taxation policies.

The agenda itself is guaranteed to stimulate heated debate against the Westminster Government as motions on austerity, youth unemployment, blacklisting, facility time, employment tribunals, living wage, education and A Just Scot-

land are all grist for the mill at this crucial conference.

The Yes Campaign and Trade Unionists For Independence (TUFI) will have stalls and will host fringe meetings with senior trade unionists on their platforms. The arguments from Yes will focus solely on the referendum and the need to win a Yes vote; while TUFI seem sure to argue for independence but for a future Scottish Government willing and capable of implementing socialist policies.

Visitors to the conference from the Scottish Government will include Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon, and both will be keen to highlight their willingness to continue working with unions on tackling a range of issues. This will almost certainly include the question of public service pensions and the possibility of separate deals for Scottish unions.

The FBU for one have been working hard behind the scenes lobbying Scottish MSPs and Ministers on the pension issue and have offered the government a chance to avoid a strike north of the border, if

a deal can be done. The EIS and PCS are looking for similar deals, although up to now the SNP have expressed their reluctance to face the wrath and penalties of the Con-Dem finance ministers by not meeting Westminster's stringent budget demands.

There are other areas of interest for the trade union leaderships, including the oil industry, transport - particularly investment in the rail network which will attract much debate and demand - but possibly the most interesting debate could be around the NHS and public services. There is also the burning issue of the Bedroom Tax and swingeing cuts in benefits for the most vulnerable in society.

## Faslane

Shipbuilding and Trident's home in Faslane are debates not to miss, as the question of losing UK government contracts will no doubt raise the temperature in Perth.

For my part, the NUJ delegation will be desperate to get to the platform and argue our motions and composites on the future of the Scottish media, highlighting our fight for the future of jobs at the BBC and for support for the beleaguered local press.

The outcome of the debates will inevitably strengthen the view that we are definitely not better off together, and the quickest way to turn around these policies is to vote Yes next September.

This could be a pivotal week in the history of the Scottish trade union movement and hopefully it will happen in a constructive and comradely manner, as we are all definitely in this fight together.

**“This could be a pivotal week in the history of the Scottish trade union movement...”**



# SWASTIKA SMEAR SHAMES ITS AUTHORS

by Campbell Martin

**A RECENT** article, authored by a lecturer in French from St Andrews University and given prominence by the *Scotland On Sunday* newspaper, argued similarities exist between the Scottish National Party and other right-wing Nationalist organisations across Europe, including the racist British National Party.

The article suited the purposes of those involved – the author has a book coming out and wanted some free publicity, while Tory-supporting *Scotland On Sunday* used the contents to attack the idea of an independent Scotland, plumb a new low in British Unionist propaganda in the process. To illustrate the article, the newspaper carried a doctored photo that showed a Scottish saltire being held aloft, but the St Andrew's cross had been replaced by a Nazi swastika in Saltire colours, just so the message reached even those who couldn't be bothered actually reading the article.

## British aristocracy

The basis of the piece in *Scotland On Sunday* was that during the Second World War some Scots supported Fascism and the abhorrent policies of Adolf Hitler. A few of those individuals also supported an independent Scotland, but the majority of Scottish Nazis were disaffected members of the Conservative or Unionist parties, not to mention the British aristocracy.

The assertion of the article



was apparently that Nationalist leopards don't change their spots, and today's SNP has the potential to take an independent Scotland on a dangerous, right-wing journey, one previously trodden by Second World War Fascists and currently advocated by other European Nationalist organisations.

I was a member of the SNP for 27 years, before being expelled in 2004. My 'crime' was to argue that the 'New Labouresque' leadership of John Swinney was disastrous for the party and that Alex Salmond should return as National Convener.

I also publicly criticised the rightward re-positioning of the SNP, but let me be absolutely clear: my assertion that the SNP had moved to the right of the political spectrum simply placed them as a moderate centre-right organisation, still well to the left of the Labour Party, never mind the Tories.

No one with any semblance of political knowledge or credibility would attempt to portray today's SNP as a fascist party. The SNP still advocates moderate centre-left, social democratic policies, but the contradiction at the heart of the party is that it thinks such policies can be achieved by adherence to a centre-right capitalist economic strategy.

It is this free-market ideology, also embraced by the three main British Unionist parties, that puts the SNP very much in the political centre-ground but tilting slightly more to the right than the left.

The 'Scottish fascism' article carried by *Scotland On Sunday* was an absolute disgrace, both in terms of journalism and political dialogue.

However, without putting the constitutional cart before the horse, there are legitimate questions over where the SNP would fit in Scotland's political reality following a successful

outcome to next year's independence referendum. Indeed, is there a place for an ostensibly broad-church 'national' party in an independent country?

There are some people in today's SNP who would be comfortable in the Liberal Democrats or even the Tories, were it not for the crucial issue of independence. There are far more for whom 'old' Labour could be home, but for the same constitutional consideration. So what do those people do once independence is secured? Would they remain together in one 'national' party where policies inevitably have to be compromised?

In all likelihood the SNP will have served its purpose by leading Scotland to independence. Those of us on the 'left' already have a home in the Scottish Socialist Party.

## Left coalition

There will, of course, be centrist social democrats and liberals whose beliefs would be accommodated in new parties or even re-constituted and independent Scottish versions of Labour or the Lib Dems. Unfortunately, there will also be right-wingers, but in an independent Scotland they will never again be in a position to impose their will on us.

With a fair, proportional system of election, it is likely an independent Scotland will be governed by a coalition of the 'left' with, by then, former members of the SNP playing significant roles.

# CHILE'S NEW SONG MOVEMENT

by Carolina Perez

**NEW** Song or Nueva Cancion is a movement that emerged from Chile in the 1960s. It was an antidote to the mass produced commercial pop that was coming out from the US and the UK at that time.

The subjects these new folk songs dealt with were poverty, anti-imperialism, human rights, democracy and like most songs, love. Songs were created by renewing typical folk and indigenous music alongside political messages; the movement played a crucial role in politicising the masses, and became an integral part of Chilean youth culture.

It was not unusual for people to attend political rallies or meetings in their hundreds - musicians of new song would always be present. The movement rapidly spread across Latin American in response to the surge of right wing regimes that began to sprout up all over the continent.

It was also taken up in Spain by Joan Manuel Serrat who, in protest at the Francoist regime, attempted to sing the country's 1968 Eurovision Song Contest entry in Catalan. As a result he was banned from Spanish radio for a long time afterwards.

In 1970 he travelled to Chile



**QUILAPAYUN:** if you've ever sung 'The People United Will Never Be Defeated' then you've sang one of their songs. Catch them in one of their rare UK gigs in Glasgow and Edinburgh next week

to perform a free concert at the Vina del Mar International Song Festival, in support of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity Government. That year when Allende became the world's first democratically elected Marxist leader, the banner above him read, "You can't have a revolution without songs."

In 1973, the overthrow of Allende's government by Pinochet's fascist forces, meant that the movement was effectively forced underground and its writers and performers would

often be censored, exiled, 'disappeared' or tortured.

Victor Jara, perhaps one of New Song's most famous exponents, was rounded up with thousands of other activists into the Estadio Nacional, tortured and shot dead. He is now a Chilean national hero.

Many bands such as Inti Illimani and Quilapayun still continued their protests under brutal oppression and were eventually exiled. Nueva Cancion music and the indigenous instruments they were traditionally played on

such as the quena and charango were outlawed but whilst outside their home country they continued to support various Chile Solidarity campaigns.

In 1979 in Argentina, Mercedes Sosa, another popular singer, sang at a concert denouncing the military rule of Jorge Videla. She was arrested and searched on stage along with members of the supporting audience. She was banned and also fled the country.

Quilapayun today remain one of the most renowned ambassadors of the movement's music. They supported Victor Jara on his 1969 album *Pongo En Tus Manos Abiertas (Into Your Open Hands)* and appear on his recording of *El Pueblo Unido Jamas Sera Vencido (The People United Will Never Be Defeated)*, a song still used as a working class slogan at many protests around the world.

They are playing in Scotland next week, their only UK dates for a number of years, with added significance in this the 40th anniversary year of the brutal coup. A review will appear in the next issue of the *Voice*.

• *Quilapayun play Oran Mor in Glasgow on 18 April, and at The Picturehouse in Edinburgh on 19 April*

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# Pakistan election under US watch

by Amjad Ayub Mirza

**PAKISTAN** Peoples Party's (PPP) failure to benefit millions has given a chance to the right to gain electoral ground. After completing a five-year term, Pakistan's parliament was dissolved on 16 March by the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari, and elections are to be held on 11 May. A caretaker government composed mostly of technocrats has taken over to conduct "free and fair" elections.

Victoria Nuland, the US State Department's spokesperson, has called the Pakistani parliament's completion of its full term, "truly historic". But for five years the outgoing government led by the Pakistan People's Party had managed to survive the treacherous waters of Pakistani politics through keeping arch rivals on board by bartering their allegiance for prominent government positions, such as, most notably, making Pervez Ellahi the Deputy Prime Minister.

## Economic mess

Mr Ellahi, the right wing Muslim League leader, was Chief Minister of Punjab during military dictator General Pervez Musharraf's rule, and was accused by the slain leader of the PPP and Asif Zardari's wife Benazir Bhutto of plotting to assassinate her.

As the democratically-elected government plodded through the social, political and economic mess of Pakistan, it was continuously accused by the right of coming to power by way of trickery. General Musharraf, who himself came to power by orchestrating a military coup against the elected Muslim League government of Nawaz Sharif, had, in October 2007, declared amnesty for politicians and bureaucrats who were accused of corruption, money laundering, murder and terrorism between January 1986 and Oct 1999, a timespan that covered two periods of Martial Law in the country.



**IMRAN KHAN: promised a 'corruption-free' Pakistan, then formed an electoral alliance with the Islamic Party - accused of genocide of Bengali people, rapes, arson, and implicated in 'witch-hunts' of left wingers**

The ordinance, infamously known as the 'NRO' or the National Reconciliation Ordinance, was criticised most notably by the Imran Khan, an ex-cricket hero who led Pakistan to victory in the cricket World Cup in 1992 and who now was the leader of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) or 'Movement for Justice'.

The 2008 election that brought the NRO beneficiaries to power were boycotted among a handful of other political parties by Imran Khan and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) or the Party of Islam which enjoys close ties with Saudi Arabian family of Saud and who hail from the same Wahhabi sect of Islam that the Taliban follow.

Since 2008, Imran Khan has been on dozens of talk shows where a population deprived of the basic necessities of life such as clean drinking water and health care have been glued to TV screens in amazement watching this new gimmick of 'talk shows' where politicians are seen accusing one another of corruption and Imran Khan patiently but vigorously criticising the Muslim League (Nawaz)-led Punjab

Provincial and the Asif Zardari/PPP-led Federal Governments, accusing both of being corrupt to the teeth and unreformable.

On 23 March (the anniversary of the Pakistan Resolution, passed in Minto Park in Lahore in 1940) Imran held a huge election rally, interrupted by heavy rain, while millions of youth and women heard their leader promise a corruption-free Pakistan and an increase in minimum wages. He claimed that he would make Pakistan prosper by regulating the tax system in a corruption-free manner. However, the next day his announcement of an electoral alliance with the JI came as no surprise, since he always had shown a soft corner for the 'corruption-free' Islamic Party.

The JI has been accused of committing rape, arson and genocide of the Bengali population during the Bangladesh War of Liberation in 1971. The JI also was deeply implicated in the witch-hunt of left wingers during the Martial Law period that extended from July 1979 till August 1988.

The PPP Government has failed to quell the onslaught of Taliban insurgents that hail from the north-

western borders of the country; it has been unable to guarantee peace in the largest industrial city of Karachi where target killings of political opponents and gang war is rife. It has demonstrated incompetence in not achieving a settlement with separatists in Baluchistan; it has been impotent in the face of US drone attacks that have claimed thousands of civilian lives, and finally, it cannot even bring reliable power to homes and businesses, so that people – and the country's industrial sector – frequently have had to go without electricity for up to 10 hours at a stretch.

In view of this cartography of ineptitude, the likelihood of there being a significant majority for any of the parties, most of whom at some point in time have been in coalition with the PPP, seems very unlikely. Unless something extraordinary transpires, a hung parliament is expected.

## Left alternative

The inability of the PPP to benefit the majority of Pakistanis has given a chance to the right (and given that the PPP itself has been only fitfully and unreliably, if at all, of the left, the 'right' in Pakistani terms truly is far-right) to gain electoral grounds in Pakistan.

Unless there is a socialist alternative that consistently, persistently and patiently strives to organise the working people of Pakistan, the future will remain bleak.

However, it is of interest to observe that the aforementioned Ms Nuland, the US State Department's spokesperson, is said to be watching the situation closely and already has been in contact with both Imran Khan and the JI in case they become the power brokers after next month's general election.

• *Amjad Ayub Mirza is a member of the SSP's International Committee. He can be reached at: [dr\\_amjad\\_mirza@hotmail.com](mailto:dr_amjad_mirza@hotmail.com)*





# Axe the Tory Bedroom Tax

PHOTO: Simon Whittle

by James Marr

ON 30 March there were over 30 demos across the UK demanding the scrapping of the Bedroom Tax. But probably the biggest and liveliest was in Glasgow, where thousands of people took to the streets to demand an end to the cuts in housing benefit.

They were responding to a call that had not come from a political party or a trade union, but outraged members of the public who used Facebook to organise a protest informally through social networking.

This was combined with the dozens of public meetings held in housing schemes across Scotland on the issue, some organised by political parties, others by trades councils and union branches, as well as Unite the Union's new Community section, and some just called by outraged social housing tenants facing being forced from their homes.

## Get organised

The grassroots activists behind the protest are now moving to form a UK wide network, No2Bedroom Tax, to coordinate similar days of action, and begin to try to provide support to other people on the ground in communities devastated by the withdrawal of housing benefit.

At No2BedroomTax.co.uk they started to provide advice on how to set up your own local group.

If there hasn't been an anti-Bedroom Tax meeting in your



**AXE THE TAX: demonstrators in Glasgow and Edinburgh said no to the Bedroom Tax and no to evictions** PHOTO: Craig Maclean

area yet, it's very easy to get one started, and in many areas there is already a group initiated.

It's important to develop these local networks so that if politicians fail us, and it does come to mass evictions, there are people who stand ready to resist them.

But also its important to keep the pressure on local landlords to work with their tenants, for exam-

ple by reclassification of rooms.

No2Bedroom Tax plan to take part in May Day marches in Glasgow and elsewhere in order to link up the issue of benefit cuts with the organised trade union movement, before calling another protest next month.

Unite the Union's new community branch in Glasgow has also voted to support the campaign,

and has organised a major public meeting featuring Alan Wylie of No2Bedroom Tax, Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey, Cat Boyd of PCS, disabled rights campaigner Susan Archibald, and comedian Mark Steel.

Between them they hope to start a discussion that links together the growing mass movement against the Bedroom Tax, the cuts to disability benefits and the public sector, with Unite's recent proposal to the TUC to begin preparations for a general strike.

## Resist evictions

While opportunities for a big meeting are welcome, the most important thing as ever is to get organised in the communities where people are directly affected.

That means building phone trees of local people prepared to resist evictions, and databases of those at risk.

Many people will be reached through social networking that aren't in touch with traditional political or campaigning organisations.

But also benefit claimants are least likely to have home access to the internet, and knowing there is the group locally who meet in the community centre could make all the difference to someone faced with being forced to give up their home.

• *No2Bedroom Tax want anyone affected by the cuts to get in touch directly, via [info@no2bedroomtax.co.uk](mailto:info@no2bedroomtax.co.uk) so they can build a central database to counter evictions*