

Bedroom Tax: the fightback is on - evict the Tories, not tenants. Join the march & family fun day against the hated tax on Sat 18 May
• see pages 6, 7 & 8

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Scottish Socialist Voice

IF YOU LIKED THE BEDROOM TAX... YOU'LL **LOVE** THE NEXT COALITION

Vote 'Yes' to stop the Westminster MADNESS



NIGHTMARE: UKIP spiv Nigel Farage and TV's Boris Johnson

by Ken Ferguson

THE sweeping gains by the "fruitcakes" of UKIP - which we look at elsewhere in this *Voice* - throws a harsh spotlight on the growing chasm between the politics of England and Scotland.

Bluntly put, in the mainstream of Westminster's largely English-based politics, the dominant trend is moving policies increasingly to the hard right backed by shrill

campaigns - often racist - in the tabloid press, which in turn set the tone of the debate.

So after the UKIP surge, a promise to take a hard-line on the EU as over 100 Tory MPs press for more right wing policies to counter the damage UKIP could inflict on the Tories.

Media stunts such as taking tellies off English prisoners or pensions from UK pensioners' foreign partners have done little to stem the tide.

• Continued on page 3

BEDROOM TAX MARCH AND FAMILY FUN DAY GLASGOW GEORGE SQ SAT 18 MAY at 11.30am

As UKIP drives Westminster to the right... Yes vote can block the extremists

by Bill Bonnar

THE surge in support for UKIP in the recent South Shields by election and local government elections has sent shock waves through the British political scene and wider afield.

It demonstrates an alarming shift to the Right in English politics with the other major parties running hard to catch up and begs the question; who are the UK Independence Party?

Labels can often be misleading. In a recent article, the respected columnist, Ian Bell, referred to UKIP as fascism-lite. The problem with a term like fascism is that it is often used as an insult rather than a term of analysis and therefore loses much of its meaning.

A more accurate term would be radical right; a movement seeking to change society in a radical right wing direction. UKIP have emerged as the largest movement of the radical right since Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists in the 1930s.

'Radical right'

Of course, UKIP are not the BUF because it exists in a very different time and place yet it does occupy that same space to the right of the Conservative Party. It also shares much in common with other radical right movements across Europe.

The party describes itself as a 'traditional conservative and libertarian party' whose core policies include:

- immediate withdrawal of Britain from the European Union
- restrictions on immigration
- an end to Britain's 'disastrous multi-cultural experiment'
- an end to Britain's 'softly softly' approach to crime

Like other such parties they have successfully positioned themselves as an anti-establish-



SEND THEM CRASHING: Scotland can resist Westminster's inevitable rightward shift with a Yes vote

ment party rallying people against out of touch politicians and faceless Brussels bureaucrats who are failing to listen to the authentic voice of the British people. Overwhelming white their core support consists of disenchanted middle class Tory voters although recent evidence points to their support base widening.

Rather than a unitary political party they are broad coalition of forces ranging from people who are fascist and proud of it to people who embrace right wing single issue campaigns.

A UKIP supporter, while strongly opposed to immigration, is likely to be equally strongly opposed to speed cameras, wind farms, gay marriage and the metric system.

These kind of parties often embrace a heady mixture of patriotism, racism, xenophobia and religious and cultural intolerance and tend to be authoritarian in nature both in terms of the internal structure and solutions for society.

On the latter point; UKIP might not be quite there yet but give them time. Ultimately their vision

for the future is deeply reactionary. They want to turn the clock back to a real or imagined time before all the current problems raised their heads. In UKIP's case it would be Britain in the 1950s before the Common Market; significant immigration and the evils of the permissive society.

Plague

It is too early to tell how this particular story will unfold but it does reflect a more profound change. British society has moved considerably to the right over the past 30 years and is continuing to do so. Not everywhere. Scotland, by and large, has resisted this move and remains a society dominated by the ideas and values of social democracy; something which fuelled the creation of the Scottish Parliament and continues to fuel the drive for independence.

The writer, William McIlvanie, once describes the ideas of Thatcherism as if, 'a right wing plague had descended on Britain'. That legacy remains strong today and has informed every post Thatcher government ever since.

The current government's likely course of action will be to embrace the core policies of UKIP and perhaps embrace UKIP itself.

It has been outflanked on the right and will now rush to reclaim that space. Unfortunately the Labour Party is unlikely to be far behind.

All of this adds fuel to the debate around independence for Scotland.

The reality is that this is more than a constitutional issue. In terms of political values and ideology Scotland has become a very different country and the prospect of Scotland continuing to be ruled by a Westminster Government, whether Labour or Conservative, which is restricts immigration, persecutes the poor and defends the wealth and privileges of the rich seriously undermines the idea the we are 'Better Together'.

The No Campaign in the run up to the referendum is banking on scaring enough Scottish people into voting for the status quo. When that status quo becomes increasingly unpalatable, independence becomes the only option.

IF YOU LIKED THE BEDROOM TAX... YOU'LL LOVE THE NEXT COALITION

• Continued from page 1

Bubbling just under the surface, the truth is that many of those who form the backbone of the Tory organisation have little real differences with UKIP and favour an alliance with them in order to dump the hapless Lib Dems.

This trend was most clearly articulated by Tory grandee and Devon MP Dominic Rees Mogg, an establishment figure and son of a former Times editor.

Pact

Speaking on Radio 4, Mogg breathlessly backed a pact with the UKIP extremists, pointing out that such a project had the potential to deliver a bigger majority than Thatcher in order to stamp their right wing ideas on the country.

Then, in a *Times* article, former Thatcher-era Chancellor Nigel Lawson backed an EU pull out. What is clear is that such a scenario would dump both Cameron and his Lib Dem coalition partners. Speculation of a Boris Johnstone/Nigel Farage coalition replacing the ConDems is no longer unthinkable.

Despite attempts by unionists to play all this down, the fact is



PM BORIS? a Tory coalition with UKIP - scary but not unthinkable

that Scots, having been fed a relentless diet of vote-Yes-and-die tales, are now seeing the reality that the politics of the union will be the politics of the hard right.

Reinforcing this is the fact that in the elections last week, Labour - the flag bearer for the non-Tory segment of the No camp - performed poorly.

So, beyond the scare stories - mortgages at risk, pensions unpaid and the pound taken off us - what has the No camp got by way of positive reasons to persuade non-Tories to stick

with Britain? Apart from appeals to sentiment not a lot. Welfare "reform" - in reality an assault on the poor - which delivered the detested Bedroom Tax has some way and a lot of unpleasant attacks on people still to go.

Yet the party which Scots used to turn to to rebuff such attacks - Labour - is in a three-way, cross-class alliance with the very parties which are leading the attacks.

Indeed, in a recent media interview New Labour apologist Harriet Harman confirmed that

benefits such as elderly travel and winter fuel payment face the chop under a Miliband administration. In this she was, of course, echoing her Scottish Party chief Johann Lamont who infamously slammed "freebie Scotland" last year.

The real danger for the No campaign is that an increasingly under pressure public grows increasingly unimpressed by scares about frontier posts at Gretna and a ban on Coronation Street as they face the reality of Westminster cuts and sackings.

Opportunity

In the 500 days between now and the referendum, this presents those backing a Yes vote with an opportunity that must be seized and, along with exposing the reality of staying British in an increasingly right wing UK, a coherent picture of how independence can chart a different future can be put front and centre of the campaign. In the Thatcher-era, Scotland decisively rejected her right wing dogma, and that is the foundation of today's progressive consensus, and winning that for a Yes vote must now be the decisive task for independence campaigners.

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Bought and sold for English gold

In the first of a series looking at the history of the Union from 1707 to now, **Campbell Martin** looks behind myths to see who actually profited from the union, finding some striking parallels with today.

CONTRARY to some modern versions of the story, Scotland was not bankrupt when England came calling in 1706 with plans for a British Union. It is correct to record that many Scots nobles had lost fortunes through backing for the Darien Scheme of 1698 to 1700, but the country of Scotland actually had a relatively prosperous economy - one contemporary writer noted economic growth of 2.5 per cent in the year prior to the Acts of Union.

The Darien Scheme was an attempt by wealthy Scots to copy England's imperialism by establishing a foreign colony. They chose the area of Darien on the Isthmus of Panama.

Had the Scots nobles not been blinded by their vision of the great wealth they expected to accrue from their colonialist ambitions, they might have stopped to ask why the all-conquering Spanish had left Darien alone. Essentially, the area was swampland.

A great deal of money and many Scottish lives were lost in the failed attempt to establish a colony in the Americas. But the financial losses belonged to individual investors in the Darien Scheme, not to the nation or exchequer of Scotland. However, the failure of Darien certainly played a major part in the subsequent union between Scotland and England. From



the perspective of ordinary Scots, the union with England was marked by treachery. Robert Burns best described the situation in his work *Parcel O' Rogues*:

*Fareweel tae aa oor Scottish fame,
Fareweel oor ancient glory,
Fareweel e'en tae the Scottish name,
Sae fam'd in martial story.
Now Sark rins ower the Solwaysand,
An' Tweed rins tae the ocean,
Tae mark whaur England's province stands,
Such a parcel o rogues in a nation.*

*What force or guile could not subdue,
Through many warlike ages,
Is wrought now by a coward few,
For hireling traitor's wages.
The English steel we could disdain,
Secure in valour station,
But English gold has been our bane,
Such a parcel o rogues in a nation.*

*Oh would e're I had seen the day,
That Treason thus could sell us,
My auld grey heid had lain in clay,
Wi' Bruce an loyal Wallace.
Wi pith an power, till my last hour,
I'll mak this declaration,
We were bought and sold for English gold,
Such a parcel o rogues in a nation!*

The members of the Scots parliament who sold-out their country were motivated by self-interest. The fact Scotland would disappear as an independent nation mattered far less to them than the accumulation of personal wealth.

Many of the Scots nobles who backed union with England were the same individuals who had lost fortunes trying to emulate the English colonialist model through the Darien Scheme, and what actually took place in 1707 had striking similarities to the economic crisis of today.

Currently, ordinary men, women and children are paying the heavy price that stems from the collapse of global capitalism, an economic system based on exploitation and greed.

In order to accrue ever greater personal wealth, bankers and speculators in financial markets exploited and fleeced everyone, from other



DUKE OF QUEENSBURY: union rogue

banks to men and women desperate for a mortgage to put a roof over the heads of their children. Then, when their corrupt system collapsed, they looked for a bailout - and so it was with the Scots who voted for union with England.

Many of the so-called nobility in Scotland saw union as providing trading and financial opportunities by allowing access to England's growing colonies, but the principle attraction was the offer of English money to offset losses caused by the failure of Darien.

It was not the nation of Scotland that required a financial bailout in 1707, it was private individuals - the capitalists of their day who, motivated by greed, had sought to exploit and fleece others, only for their corrupt venture to collapse.

By far, the most highly-paid of the Scots nobles willing to sell-out their country was the Duke of Queensbury, acknowledged as being largely responsible for the successful passage of the Act of Union through the Scottish Parliament, who received from the English the sum of £12,325, broadly equivalent today to £1,718,000.

Other payments made to the "parcel o' rogues" who voted for union with England ranged from £1,104-17s-7d (equivalent to £154,000 today) paid to the Earl of Marchmont, down to £11-2s (£1,500) pocketed by Lord Banff.

In all, records show England made payments to 30 Scottish Earls, Dukes and Lords to buy their support for union: the total figure paid was equivalent to around £3million today, which means Scotland's independence was sold for little more than the £2.7million tax-free lump sum paid in 2008 to disgraced former Royal Bank of Scotland boss Fred Goodwin on his resignation.

If Scotland really is the basket-case suggested by the No camp... WHY ARE THEY DESPERATE TO MAINTAIN THE UNION?

John McAllion suggests some reasons

WITH still around 500 days to go to the independence referendum, Scotland's print and broadcast media have been engulfed by a tidal wave of doom mongering by the Bitter Together campaign and its supporters in the British establishment.

Scotland, they tell us, is too small to properly manage its vast oil and gas resources. It is too poor to pay for the pensions and public services its people will need. It has too many old people and not enough people of working age. It cannot properly defend itself. Businesses, capital and jobs will all disappear south of the border if there is any prospect of a yes majority in 2014. In short, without British life-support, Scotland is an economic, social and political basket case.

Currency veto

Most recently, the British Chancellor warned that the rest of the UK would veto any proposed currency union with a post independence Scotland and would not allow Scots to use the pound sterling.

Then he shifted his ground and said that if they did agree to a currency union the Bank of England would then place such conditions and limits on the Scottish Government's economic decision making as to effectively neuter any independence that the people had voted for. The pro-Brit press rallied behind the Chancellor's warnings. Scottish



BITTER TOGETHER: unholy doom-mongers alliance, the No camp

banks, they screamed would not be allowed to issue separate Scottish bank notes.

Scotland would end up like Greece in the Euro zone in economic and social meltdown. Scotland, like Panama using the dollar without US permission, would sink into economic subjugation under its larger neighbour.

The *Daily Mail* even invoked the spectre of the Darien disaster in 1690 and warned against yet another feeble attempt at economic independence.

Yet if Scotland really is the economic basket case that Bitter Together suggests, why is the rest of the UK so exercised by the prospect of Scotland leaving their union? If we are the subsidy junkies that they make us out to be, would they not be better off without us? If the balance of trade between us and the rest of the UK matters so much to us and so

little to them, why don't they just cut us loose? Are we really expected to believe that there is no economic or political advantage for the rest of the UK in keeping Scotland tied in to a union that they dominate? Scotland, of course, matters a great deal to the rest of the UK. For more than 40 years now, the petroleum revenues from the North Sea have been keeping successive British governments financially afloat.

Thatcher's governments would have sunk without trace in the 1980s but for the bonanza of oil and gas revenues. As recently as 2011, oil and gas revenues were contributing £40 billion to Britain's balance of payments.

Some recent estimates suggest as much as £60 billion in revenues could pour into the Treasury coffers over the next five years. The prospect of losing 90 per cent all of that because of

Scottish independence terrifies the Treasury and the Government alike. This explains the negativity pouring out of Government departments and the half truths, deceptions and downright lies flowing from a range of Westminster select committees in relation to Scottish independence.

Britain's political elite know that without oil and gas revenues their country is in big economic trouble. They will go to any lengths to thwart a Scottish breakaway. Nor is it just about oil and gas. Without the nuclear bases at Faslane and Coulport on the Clyde, Britain's so called independent nuclear deterrent is doomed. There is nowhere else in the UK that is economically and politically feasible as an alternative home for Trident.

Nuclear weapons

Trident renewal cannot happen if Scotland becomes independent and bans nuclear weapons from its territory.

Britain's role as a global power with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council is directly threatened by Scottish independence.

Whether its Britain being unable to meet its renewable energy targets without Scotland's input or the threat to the sovereignty of the Queen-in-Parliament from the territorial break-up of the British land mass, the British establishment are desperate to return a No vote in the coming referendum.

The rest of the UK needs Scotland a lot more than Scotland needs the rest of the UK.



by Richie Venton

THOUSANDS are expected to march against the Tory Bedroom Tax in Glasgow on Saturday 18 May, determined to bring about its downfall.

This march, rally and family fun day has been called by the No2BedroomTax campaign, which initiated and organised the huge 30 March demo. And it has been backed by the Scottish trade union movement, in the form of the STUC conference, as well as UNITE Community union.

Unity between different sectors of the working class is critical in resisting the vicious onslaught of the Westminster millionaires' razor gang.

Cameron and Clegg have systematically tried to divide and rule working class people on behalf of their class of parasites.

For months they talked of 'shirkers and workers' as they capped benefits at 1 per cent for each of the next three years - trying to bury the fact that 65 per cent of those hammered by this one cut alone are people in work - facing cuts in Working Tax Credit, child benefits, housing benefit and the likes.

Lourdes!

They demonise the sick and disabled as they hire multinational outfits like ATOS to drag people through assessments on their fitness to work, conducted by ill-trained staff, hounding people off marginally higher rates of benefits by declaring them fit to work.

No wonder ATOS' headquarters in Glasgow has been dubbed 'Lourdes', such is the miracle cures they perform, declaring very sick people well as they leave the building!



UNITE AGAINST THE TAX: thousands will attend the Glasgow rally on Sat 18 May PHOTO: Simon Whittle

BEDROOM TAX

But it's no joke - vast numbers have died within weeks of being declared fit by these profiteering hit-men for the government.

But perhaps the most consciously divisive of all the Tory-Lib Dem cuts to benefits is the Bedroom Tax. They thought by picking on 105,000 Scottish households they could isolate them from the rest of us. In vain!

People joining the marches are often there on principle, not directly affected themselves. The most common expression used by the thousands who have stopped and signed Scottish Socialist Party street petitions is "It doesn't affect me, but...".

This crude theft of incomes from the poorest sections of the working class - in part designed to pay for the bankers' bailout and the millionaires' recent tax cut - has infuriated tens of thousands and given them the chance to lash out at a government they detest for all its other attacks. Unity between those directly af-

ected and tens of thousands of others is growing.

People on the streets condemn a Tory Tax that tells disabled people they are not allowed an extra room for lifeline disabled facilities, or for sleepovers by carers unless they are getting 24/7 cover from registered carers.

Daylight robbery

They are appalled at multi-millionaires like Lord Freud - government Welfare Minister, who has eleven spare bedrooms in his two luxury mansions - telling separated parents they face the punishment of the Bedroom Tax for having a bedroom for their own kids to stay in several nights a week.

Likewise, with grandparents who share in the upbringing of their grand-kids, or couples who need an extra bedroom to get a night's sleep because of severe health problems such as COPD.

The term 'daylight robbery' arguably arose 450 years ago when King William introduced a Win-

dow Tax and people avoided it by bricking up their windows. The Bedroom Tax is daylight robbery, 21st century style. It is depriving children, parents, grandparents and disabled people of their human rights. It is stealing £500million a year off the poorest to give to the richest, from the neediest to the greediest, from the millions to the millionaires.

The Bedroom Tax is now well-known for stealing 14 per cent of housing benefit off over 80,000 Scottish households, and 25 per cent cut off nearly another 25,000.

Robbing an average of £14 a week off people often on weekly incomes of £71 is of course what the Tories exist to do: they are the party of the millionaires and multinational capitalists.

But this might as well be called the Disability Tax, or the Single-end Tax. In Scotland, 8 out of every 10 households hammered by it have at least one family member with a registered disability.

And when they tell people they



SHOW OF STRENGTH: the No2BedroomTax campaign initiated and organised the huge demo on 30 March

PHOTO: Simon Whittle

struggle or starve!

need to uproot themselves - often after decades in the family home, or in the immediate aftermath of their partner's death - because millionaires living in mansions dictate they have 'too many bedrooms', they are trying to drive people back to the overcrowded conditions of past generations.

Why should people have to uproot themselves from the home they have invested time, money and memories in, or from the neighbours whose friendship and solidarity they depend upon for a decent life? People should stay put, refuse to budge, and join the fight to scrap this vicious tax.

Whilst millionaires were rewarded an annual 'pay' rise of £107,000 through tax cuts last month, the same government's own civil service calculated that 42 per cent of the households hit by the Bedroom Tax were literally unable to afford to pay it from day one.

People in this rich nation have already suffered the choice of heating or eating. Now they are con-

fronted by the impossible choices of heating, eating or paying the Bedroom Tax. With Food Banks trebling in number over the last year, we are well and truly travelling back to the Hungry Thirties or even Victorian times.

The choice is blunt: in the words of one of the main slogans of the working class movement of the 1930s, we either "Struggle or Starve"!

People in abject poverty being robbed by the Bedroom Tax is a recipe for evictions - which is why the anti-Bedroom Tax movement is so important.

Reclassify rooms

The campaign is determined to help people appeal every housing benefit cut decision - on time, within a month of the authorities issuing the letter of decision.

This can be on grounds ranging from upholding clauses of the Human Rights Act to Children's Acts to challenging what the so-called spare bedroom is actually

used for. Several legal challenges are in the courts, and if any succeed, those who have submitted written appeals could win concessions or exemption.

Alongside individual appeals, the pressure which campaigners, including the SSP, have put on councillors, Housing Association bosses and the Scottish Government to outlaw all Bedroom Tax evictions is critical - and has already reaped important dividends.

Protests at council meetings, street campaigning and fighting demands in local media calling on these people in power to declare there will be no evictions has forced them to sit up and listen.

In a number of councils - including South Ayrshire, Edinburgh, Renfrewshire, Highlands and Dundee - they have taken at least a faltering step in the right direction, pledging there will be no evictions for at least the next year.

After a series of big SSP public meetings, which went on to organise several protests at council

meetings - pounding those in power to outlaw all Bedroom Tax evictions, reclassify houses so as to avoid rooms being eligible for the tax, and to demand the shortfall in rents from the Scottish Government - North Ayrshire Council has gone further than any other so far in Scotland.

Partial victory

The SSP led local people in demanding they follow the example of Knowsley and Nottingham councils and reclassify rooms. Under this pressure, as well as declaring no evictions for at least a year, the council has now said they will reclassify two-bedroom houses with a small room to become one-bedroom and a boxroom.

Also, to make their one-bedroom houses available to all ages, not just the elderly; and to give those asked to downsize an extra 50 housing points so as to increase their chances of getting rehoused.

This is a partial victory for the SSP-led campaign in the area,

BEDROOM TAX

which has been ferocious and persistent.

But it's still only partial; we are stepping up the pressure on councillors to reclassify *all* their housing stock, and importantly to launch a campaign alongside tenants and council workers for funding off the Scottish Government to fill the gap left in rental income by people simply being unable to pay the Bedroom Tax.

Failure to do this could lead not only to cuts in jobs and services, but also to the threat of evictions by another route in the future.

People who don't pay because they can't pay will end up in arrears. Unless the pressure is sustained on the politicians in charge, they could then decide such tenants face eviction procedures because they did not "take all reasonable steps to avoid getting into rent arrears" - the clause adopted by every single council and housing association that has so far pledged 'no evictions for at least a year'.

Outlaw evictions

Some of these tenants may already be on a repayment pre-eviction arrangement, and if they now get clobbered by the Bedroom Tax, they could be driven by poverty into defaulting on their payments and face eviction procedures.

That's why the No2BedroomTax campaign and the SSP will keep building local networks of people ready to form human walls of solidarity against any evictions, as well as demanding local Housing Association bosses and the Scottish Government come off the fence and outlaw evictions.

That is why the campaign needs to sustain the demand for funding off the Scottish Government of the guesstimated loss of £53million this year in rent to social landlords. Otherwise some local Housing Associations will declare cuts and redundancies - one in Glasgow has already issued redundancies and cut the pay of longstanding staff by up to £5,000 a year.

And some of them might even go under, which is an added motive behind the Tory Bedroom Tax;



TAX THE RICH! there's no excuse for these cuts PHOTO: Simon Whittle

to drive people into the private rented sector to be exploited by profiteering shark landlords who are subsidised by public funds through housing benefit - and to even drive weaker ones into the clutches of the banks and the profiteering private sector.

The SSP will unite with anyone prepared to resist the Bedroom Tax. But we do not share Labour's view that it should just be reformed and applied differently. Labour's aspiring future government minister Helen Goodman has blurted out they would keep it but only apply it if a tenant is offered a smaller house and declines it!

The SSP is not out to reform or amend the Bedroom Tax, we are out to scrap it, to help build a movement that makes it unworkable and forces the government to abandon it. And we will never tire of exposing the fact there is absolutely no excuse for introducing this, or any other benefit cuts.

The government peddles the lie that cuts are unavoidable due to the national debt and annual deficit in public spending. But the figures for these were consistently higher than they are now for most of the past century - including during the decades when the NHS and welfare state were built, millions of council houses were built, and un-

employment reached an all-time low. The cuts to benefits are based on ideological dogma, opposition to social provision and universal benefits - something which the Tories and Lib Dems share with New Labour! - as well as a crude drive to divide the working class and make it easier to carry out a wealth transfusion to the very richest away from the rest of us.

There is no excuse for these savage cuts to living standards given the fabulous wealth of the nation. It's not a problem of the wealth available, but its outrageously unequal distribution.

Last year, the tiny elite richest 1,000 people in the UK - making up a minuscule 0.003 per cent of the population - increased their wealth by £35billion. That's more than the entire budget spent on DLA, ESA and similar benefits! It would pay, twice over, for the £18billion cuts to the benefits bill implemented so far.

And the bloated rich - individuals and big corporations - systematically dodge £120billion a year in tax, which is 240 as much as their Tory-Lib Dem political representatives are robbing off the poorest through the Bedroom Tax.

There is no excuse for these cuts. And there is an alternative - socialism. The SSP is fighting to scrap the



Bedroom Tax, halt all benefit cuts, and for the Scottish Government to stand up to the Westminster dictatorship by refusing to carry out their butchery, demanding back the stolen billions that could expand jobs, services and incomes.

Contrary to the SNP leadership's message, the Scottish Government don't have to choose between protecting the NHS, education, council services, Council Tax payers and tenants battered by the Bedroom Tax. They should mobilise all these and more in a Scottish rebellion against the Westminster thieves, demanding back the billions stolen by them, that could be deployed to massively invest in jobs, services, housing, pay and benefits.

Fight for abolition

We are campaigning for an independent Scotland with the power and political willpower to abolish the Bedroom Tax.

We are fighting for a socialist Scotland where by taxing the rich and taking vital services, natural resources, energy, construction, banking and major industry into democratic public ownership, we could guarantee a well-paid job and apprenticeships for all those fit to work; a living income for those unable to and the retired; and decent, affordable social sector housing for all needs, built to the highest environmental standards.

Unite through No2BedroomTax campaigns to fight for the abolition of one of the most vicious attacks in a whole package of savagery. Build a mass movement to evict the Tories, not tenants.

Join the SSP for an independent socialist Scotland where the wealth of the nation is owned, controlled and used for the benefits of the millions, not the millionaires.

Housing payments not reaching the most needy

by Sandra Webster

DISCRETIONARY housing payments are not a new solution to those who find themselves in fear of being evicted or are homeless. In the past they were used to rehouse families evicted due to falling behind with rent payments and even help some homeless people get together a deposit for a home in the rented private sector.

This year however, with the introduction of the Bedroom Tax additional funds are being introduced by the DWP to top up the housing benefit reduced for many tenants of social landlords.

The DWP has given £10million out of a total £125million payment to Scottish local authorities and social landlords. This was due to their fears that their rent revenue would be greatly affected as individual's housing benefit was cut.

Shortfall

Some of the shortfall could be made up by direct grant paid to social landlords who could then encourage their affected tenants to apply.

Although anyone affected could apply most local authorities have prioritised need in accord with DWP guidelines. The first two prioritised groups are foster and kinship carers and people with disabilities in adapted accommodation.

However, evidence is now emerging that many of the most vulnerable are being denied access to Discretionary Housing Payments.

"Karen" who has asked for her name not to be disclosed,



ANGER: the most vulnerable are being denied access to essential Discretionary Housing Payments

cares for her husband who has a terminal illness. Two years ago they were forced to leave their old family home and move to a housing association adapted for his needs.

This is a two-bedroom house with the extra room being used for the storage of medical equipment.

They applied for a Discretionary Housing Payment two weeks go but recently found out that they have been refused due to their "additional" income. The couple are in receipt of welfare benefits with only DLA and carers allowance being extra payments.

"John" a single parent for his adult son was also refused extra support by his local authority. They had asked in line with guidelines being used by other tenants to redefine their additional spare room as a dining room. Especially as they have

no other room for a dining room in their home.

They were turned down as the room was deemed to be too big to be a dining room. Both Karen and John have been left devastated by these decisions and worried about their ability to pay.

Disability Living Allowance was first introduced by Thatcher's government to help alleviate the additional cost of living with a disability.

Carers Allowance is paid to those who offer high quality care to their family member often around the clock.

DWP guidelines are clear that they should not be taken into account as income but it seems that some local authorities are ignoring this advice.

There is also no classification of the definition of the size when a spare bedroom is too big to be dining room but some

social landlords are again making their own decisions.

So where is the money going? Is it all going to support kinship and foster parents? The Scottish Government estimated that the £10million from the DWP would only support 10 per cent of those affected by the Bedroom Tax leaving 90 per cent with no support.

If people with disabilities in adapted houses are not being given any support it seems likely that they have underestimated how far the £10million would stretch to meet needs.

Some local authorities may not even be claiming the full grant they are entitled to while their tenants struggle to make ends meet.

Arrears

The future remains uncertain with the introduction of Universal Credit more and more tenants may find themselves in arrears not of their own making but of inability to pay.

The Discretionary Housing Payment Grant from the DWP has not yet been decided. However with rising costs and the independence referendum my fear is that tenants will be used as political pawns caught in the middle of wars between Westminster and Holyrood.

The decision of whether or not to vote Yes for many of the undecided voters will be about questions such as these which are crucial to everyday people's lives.

If we want to show how an independent Scotland can care for its own, let's set an example before the independence referendum.

HOUSING BILL DIVIDES OPINION

by Voice Reporter

THE Scottish Housing Bill has caused a divide in its support from housing charities and organisations.

The Scottish Government propose to introduce “probationary” tenancies to new tenants for a twelve-month period after which they will be transferred to the Scottish secure tenancy which is enjoyed by the majority of Scottish Social Housing tenants.

While some welcome the bill with its increased flexibility to tackle housing problems before they arise others see it as an attack on the most vulnerable tenants.

Graeme Brown, Director of Shelter Scotland, said:

“People need to feel safe and secure in their home - not have the threat of eviction hanging round their neck.

“At the start of a new tenancy, people need support not suspicion and penalties.

A step backwards

“Introducing probationary tenancies would be a big step backwards in tenants’ rights.

“It is totally unnecessary as social landlords already have a range of tools at their disposal - backed by legislation - to deal with anti-social and criminal behaviour if it occurs.”

He added: “At a time when some UK politicians have sought to stigmatise social housing tenants as scroungers and welfare cuts threaten families’ ability to keep their home, Scotland’s politicians have the opportunity to strike a different tone.

“We believe it is a mistake to follow the lead of English landlords or mirror



WARNING: a coalition of Scottish charities have written to Margaret Burgess MSP criticising the bill

Westminster’s language of division. We are calling on Scottish Ministers to reject probationary tenancies which simply penalise all new tenants for the behaviour of a small minority.

“Everyone needs a secure affordable home and we will campaign vigorously to defend the rights of all of Scotland’s 595,000 households living in social housing.”

A coalition of groups lead by Shelter Scotland have written to housing and welfare minister Margaret Burgess MSP criticising the new bill.

The new tenancy may see a two-tier system in communities and may eventually lead down the path to the demise of the Scottish Secure Tenancy for all clients. Shelter emphasise that this measure will only affect new tenants not those with long term anti social behaviour.

They accused the Scottish government as using the new legislation as a method of demonstrating they are getting tough on anti-social tenants. Even those broadly in favour with the new legislation have

spoken out about the stigmatisation of social landlord tenants and the assumption being made that they are more likely to be a “bad” tenant compared to a private tenant.

One other question that arises is what the definition of a “bad” tenant is. With the Bedroom Tax and cuts in welfare benefits will those who fall into rent arrears be seen as anti-social.

Easier evictions

Such legislation will make it far easy for social landlords to evict someone without having to go down the legal eviction route.

Anti-social behaviour does blight our communities. It is an issue that people have raised on our website.

At first this may seem the right approach by giving people a probationary tenancy. However this will do little to target the behaviour that is already prevalent in all our communities.

A family might lose their assured tenancy, have to be rehoused and spend years

constantly being moved to different areas.

Not good for the children who live in such homes who more than most need stability in school and health services. Given landlords more power too will have an impact on tenants rights which have been fought for and won by many.

Perhaps most importantly this will lead to even greater pressure for some of the most vulnerable tenants in a time when cuts to housing support services find many people struggle.

This discussion also means attention is taken from the continuing impact of welfare cuts and the ConDem agenda which they hope will lead to there being no social housing landlords but all the housing available being in the hands of landlords who will put profit before people.

Do we want a return to the days of the slum landlords? Social Housing should be available for all who need it only a proper building programme for the many new homes that are required can begin to meet that need.

St Andrews protest: bad news for racist Jewish National Fund

by Mick Napier,
Scottish Palestine
Solidarity Campaign

THE St Andrews Jewish Society and an American-type fraternity announced a charity fund-raising ball for the end of April in a local hotel for the Friends of the IDF (Israeli Army) and the JNF (Jewish National Fund), a racist charity which has Tony Blair and Gordon Brown as Patrons and works to dispossess Palestinians and to plant trees over Palestinian village sites to obliterate all signs of the ethnic cleansing that has been taking place from 1948 until today.

The Golf Hotel received over a hundred letters of complaint and finally pulled the plug on the event when it became clear that there would be significant numbers of noisy protestors outside their door on the night.

Cloak and dagger

An event of sorts went ahead at a secret venue on 26 April. In various spots around St Andrews, participants gathered in small groups before being collected by taxis and taken to a destination unknown to them.

From the 100 attendees expected at the Golf Hotel, around



SOLIDARITY: join the next anti-JNF protest in Ayrshire on 4 June

35 went through the cloak and dagger rigmarole to raise funds for the Israeli Army.

The JNF is not having a good year, or a good decade. Starting with the protests against their fund-raiser in Glasgow in December 2001, which was attended by Bill Clinton and a representative of the Scottish Executive, the campaigning pressure to remove the taxpayer subsidies to this charity has built up.

The year after Clinton spoke for the JNF, Israeli General Shaul Mofaz spoke at the same Glasgow Hilton, and hundreds of angry demonstrators blocked the main entrance for hours. The

catering staff declined to serve the JNF event, and the diners already inside had the novel experience of having to serve themselves. How can one enjoy a good banquet without servants!

It was not always easy, though, possibly because some were scared off by the inevitability of accusations of "anti-semitism" for taking on what is an extension of the Israeli State.

An example was the series of JNF fundraisers across the UK, where Colin Powell spoke and - although the Glasgow leg was vigorously protested by hundreds - was met with only a handful of protesters in London. Today, in

contrast, no public JNF event in Britain goes unchallenged and the racist organisation - whose activities in Israel/Palestine would be criminal if carried out here - called off its Glasgow Hilton fundraisers after Goldie Hawn regaled the Hilton banqueters in 2008 on the theme of 'Laughter is the Best Medicine', while Gaza was cold and hungry and waiting for the massacre that Israel unleashed on them later that year.

Charitable status

Sixty-eight Westminster MPs have signed a motion calling for the JNF to be stripped of its charitable status, and so toxic has the JNF brand become that David Cameron has resigned as a Patron and Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg have declined that same status, traditionally held by all three main party leaders.

Tony Blair and Gordon Brown remain as JNF Patrons.

The next opportunity to hasten the defeat of the JNF is at the JNF's charity shoot at Cowan's Law, near Galston in Ayrshire on Tuesday 4 June.

• *Details:* scottishpspc.org.uk
Contact Mick Napier at:
mick@scottishpspc.org.uk



Join the SSP here

Fill in this form and send it to: Scottish Socialist Party, Suite 370, 4th Floor, Central Chambers, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD.

Or telephone: 0781 126 5388

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PEACEFUL CAMPER: full-time resident, Gwilym. Faslane Peace Camp needs eight new full-timers

Peace camp future in spotlight

by Sandra Webster

THE future of Faslane Peace Camp seems less uncertain after a weekend of activity at the site. Activists had given themselves a deadline of the end of May to find eight new people who would be committed to living there in the coming year.

Peace activists want to broaden the campaign and take the battle about the role of Trident in an independent Scotland to the heart of the argument in the Holyrood and Westminster parliaments.

At the weekend which attracted over 60 people, past and present campers shared their stories of the actions that have taken place there. Saturday was also a work day to show what practical living at the camp entails.

Living a life off-grid with no electricity or running water can be a challenge,

especially combined with an approach which means the majority of campers work as well as participate in regular demonstrations.

The camp, which is now the oldest occupation in the world, is 31-years-old this year. One of the people attending the weekend was young SSP member Lindsay Webster.

She has been visiting the camp over the past year since her first visit with SSP Campsie Branch. She had attended to consider if she should join the camp. Lindsay said:

"It's so important, in the lead-up to the referendum, that the Peace Camp continues. I have to think about my future studies but will be considering being more involved with the camp.

"If I'm not staying full time, I'll definitely be spending part of my week here."

With the camp's future looking slightly more secure,

it's important that we offer practical support.

Part of the intention of the weekend was to begin to organise a support group who will allow campers time away, and to offer support with physical work as well as fundraising. New campers will need a lot of people to get behind their efforts.

The Acting Strange Theatre Company and SSP Campsie Branch have invited other people to come along to the camp with them on 28 June when they'll be sharing music and drama and demonstrating.

Rosie Kane and her brother will be sharing songs and words from Rosie's show. Also on the bill will be Marie Collins, a young talented singer-songwriter from Paisley.

• If you are interested in joining us on 28 June, please email: sandra.webster@yahoo.com

RMT accuse Orkney Ferries of 'contempt' for workforce

by Voice Reporter

SHIPPING union RMT has slammed management's complete contempt for the workforce in a long-running dispute over pay on Orkney Ferries and warned that the arrogant and bullying attitude of the company could force an escalation of the current action.

Despite repeated attempts by union representatives to negotiate a settlement to the dispute, which currently involves action short of a strike by RMT members, the Orkney Ferries management wrote to the recognised unions refusing point blank to move from their "offer" of a below-inflation pay award of just 1 per cent - a de-facto pay cut and an undermining of their staff's standards of living.

Cuts

Late last year staff rejected the company's position that any pay increase must be funded through cuts to jobs and conditions.

RMT General Secretary Bob Crow said:

"Orkney Ferries have now forced a stand-off through their sheer contempt towards their staff. The union will be discussing the next move which could, of course, include an escalation of the action as we head towards the busy summer months."

Steve Todd, RMT National Secretary, added: "It is down to the company to recognise the anger and resentment that their stance has generated and to agree to get back round the table for meaningful talks aimed at resolving this dispute rather than slamming the door in our faces."