

**Bin the Bedroom Tax demo:** the masses take the axe the tax message to the Lib Dems  
UK conference in Glasgow on 14 September  
• see page 12

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# Scottish Socialist Voice

**BAN  
ZERO  
HOURS  
CONTRACTS**



**WAGE SLAVERY:** household name employers such as McDonald's and Boots use zero hours contracts

**WORKERS NEED A LIVING WAGE**  
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# SURGE IN VIOLENCE LINKED TO CONDEM ATTACKS

**RAIL** union RMT said this week that a surge in personal thefts and acts of violence on Britain's railways, revealed by the British Transport Police and rail chiefs, is directly linked to the government's attack on station and train staffing numbers and is set to worsen if the recommendations of the McNulty Rail Review are not reversed.

The shocking new figures show that the number of thefts of personal property from railway passengers has risen by 16 per cent and that there has also been an increase in violent incidents in the past year, which rose by 201 on the National Rail network.

## Warning

RMT is warning that cuts to on-train and station staff encourages violent and criminal behaviour and is set to escalate into a wholesale de-staffing of the network if the government get away with their McNulty review plans. RMT General Secretary Bob Crow said:

"These shocking new figures on thefts and violence on Britain's trains should be a wake-up call to the Government as they roll ahead with their plans to axe guards, station and platform staff in the name of maximising the train operators' profits.

"Without a physical presence of staff on our trains and stations, the muggers, the drunks and the violent are given the green light to launch thefts and attacks and the sooner the government wake up to the consequences of their cuts plans the safer our railways will be for all of us."

# A Moscow kiss



**IT STARTED WITH A KISS:** Pam Currie and Aileen Connor kiss to highlight attacks on Russia's gay community

LGBT campaigner **Pam Currie** explains how this photo went viral

"**MY** partner and I decided to take a snap of ourselves outside of Moscow, Ayrshire on the spur of the moment, while in the area to pick up a van in nearby Kilmarnock.

"Uploading the snap, I tagged a couple of Facebook friends who I knew had an interest in LGBT issues, including our local campaign

and support group, LGBTQ Ayrshire, with a wee message sending our solidarity to the LGBT community in Russia.

"I'd switched my phone off while we took stuff from my mother in laws' place to the skip in Cumnock - switched it back on when we finished to get a text from my sister... she'd been idly scrolling through Twitter to see my pic retweeted by Stephen Fry!

"LGBTQ Ayrshire had tweeted us and from there it

went viral. *Pink News* picked up the story (with over 1100 Facebook 'likes') and dozens of folk re-tweeted it around the world. It's been picked up by the Gay Pride website in Chicago and we hope that there'll be a piece in *Diva* magazine - as well as next week's *Kilmarnock Standard!*

"All in all, a successful couple of minutes' work to highlight the legal and physical attacks on Russia's gay community."



# INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM: one year on - one year to go

by Colin Fox, SSP joint national spokesperson and Yes Scotland Advisory Board member

**THOSE** who look at the opinion polls and conclude little has changed in the independence debate over the past year overlook a great deal. They forget Yes Scotland set itself two initial objectives; to get everyone talking about independence and to build 'the biggest grassroots campaign Scotland has ever seen'. It would be foolish to deny substantial progress has been made on both fronts.

The entire country is now talking about independence in a way it wasn't this time last year and the grassroots campaign made up of thousands of SNP, SSP, Green Party and activists of no particular affiliation deserve a great deal of the credit for that.

## Momentum

Whilst it is true the No side has maintained its lead, detailed research evidence shows a sizeable number of voters have still not made up their minds, and we will return to them in a moment. But it is significant that 46 per cent of voters feel they are well enough informed about the issues and 47 per cent of these intend to vote Yes with 48 per cent for No. Moreover, momentum counts for a great deal in these type of campaigns



**RALLY 2012:**  
the SSP's Colin Fox  
addresses 10,000  
pro-independence  
demonstrators in  
central Edinburgh  
PHOTO: Craig Maclean

and as Blair Jenkins of Yes Scotland succinctly puts it this research also shows that 'the direction of travel is unquestionably towards Yes'.

Notwithstanding the complacency of the No side who apparently think the result is already in the bag, Yes Scotland retains every chance of winning. Indeed there are several sub-strata of the population already showing a majority for independence, parents with young families, the social media community and under 25s to name but three.

As well as the statistics from the headline poll, which are scrutinised intensely by both sides, there is also the regularly asked question 'How will you vote if the Tories look like

winning the 2015 Westminster general election?'

In January, this debut poll revealed a 60:40 Yes lead over No.

In other words it revealed a complete turnaround from the headline figures. So we know the prospect of another Tory Government not only disgusts a large majority of Scots the prospect could have a significant bearing on the referendum. Most researchers agree that if the Tories look like staying in office at Westminster that will help the Yes campaign.

Equally if Ed Miliband's dismal streak ended voters might be more inclined to vote No. It is ironic that the future of this particular 'Union movement' now rests not with the Tories or Lib Dems but with Miliband's 'anti-union' New Labour. The latest Westminster polls predict a dead heat with Labour and the Tories both on 36 per cent of the vote. Another poll gave Labour a narrow lead but one insufficient to win an outright majority.

Clearly the Scottish independence referendum does not take place in a vacuum and will be heavily influenced by such 'outside events'.

The standard of living of the Scot-

tish working class is another important factor likely to have a large bearing on the result. Many people in Scotland are experiencing a drastic decline in their standard of living as incomes are held back just as their bills continue to increase.

We in the Yes campaign clearly must convince people that independence can provide relief from the worst recession in 80 years. Persuading undecided voters clearly remains crucial to a successful Yes vote next year.

## Passion

Having emphasised the democratic right to determine our own future the Yes Scotland campaign moved on this last year to highlight how Scotland's prevalent social democratic values of fairness and justice are repeatedly thwarted by Westminster governments we did not elect who introduced the Poll Tax and Bedroom Tax against our wishes. More recently, the campaign emphasised the economic prosperity Scotland could enjoy and Yes Scotland intends next to stress the passion we have for our cause and our determination to win what is expected to be a very tight contest indeed.

This then is the backdrop to the independence debate that supporters across Scotland will sense as we all converge on Edinburgh on 21 September for the 'one year to go' march and rally. I am delighted to again speak on behalf of the Scottish Socialist Party. Calton Hill has proud memories for us because it was there where SSP members and many others gathered in 2005 – as the Queen officially opened the new Holyrood Parliament building down the road - to declare for a modern democratic republic for Scotland. We will all do so again on 21 September as part of our vision of an independent socialist Scotland.

## RALLY FOR SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE EDINBURGH • SAT 21 SEPTEMBER 2013

INDEPENDENCE rally and march organiser Jeff Duncan told the Voice: "Last September's event was a great success - 10,000 assembled to hear speeches from Margo MacDonald, Alex Salmond, Dennis Canavan and many more.

"This year we're assembling in the heart of Edinburgh, in the High Street, which leads onto the Royal Mile, and proceeding to the highly

iconic Calton Hill for the rally itself. Coaches depart from all over Scotland on the morning of the rally, dropping off at the assembly point and picking up again at the foot of Calton Hill."

• See [IndependenceRally.com](http://IndependenceRally.com) for full details. Call the rally office on 0131 541 2194 from 10am-7pm for coach details



# LABOUR'S FOUNDERS WILL BE 'SPINNING IN THEIR GRAVES' AT WHAT THEIR PARTY HAS BECOME

says **Campbell Martin**

TO call the organisation led by Ed Miliband the 'Labour Party' is a grotesque distortion of meaning and history. It is many years since the Labour Party even attempted to represent the interests of those who make their living through selling their labour. Today's Labour Party is indistinguishable from the Tories: both parties now champion free-market capitalism and put the generation of private wealth before the public interest. Looking at the events that led to the creation of the Labour Party shows the extent of today's betrayal of the organisation's founding principles and the people who gave so much to build a political party to represent ordinary men and women.

Towards the end of the 19th century, significant changes began to affect the working-class as suffrage (the right to vote) was extended. At elections in 1885 and 1886, the Highland Land League (HLL), essentially an organisation representing the interests of crofters, made a spectacular breakthrough by securing the election of five MPs committed to land reform. An office bearer of the HLL was an Ayrshire-based Miners' organiser called James Keir Hardie.

## Frustration

Members of the working-class entitled to vote initially put their faith in the middle-class Liberal Party. However, growing frustration with this situation led to agitation for the fielding of candidates who truly represented those who made their living from selling their labour. This led to Liberal-Labour (Lib-Lab) candidates fighting elections in seats where there was a large working-class population. In March 1888 a by-election in the constituency of Mid-Lanark was caused by the resignation of the sitting Liberal MP. James Keir Hardie, a member of the



**KEIR HARDIE: a primary founder of the ILP and later the Labour Party**

Liberal Party at the time and also the trade union organiser for Miners working in Lanarkshire pits, put himself forward as a Lib-Lab candidate for the seat. But, despite his local credentials and support from trade unions and workers, the Liberal Party declined Hardie's offer and, instead, selected as its candidate John Philipps, an English solicitor.

Against this background, and without the support of a recognised political party, James Keir Hardie stood in the by-election as an independent representative of labour. In support of his campaign a broad grouping of individuals and organisations came together, including the Scottish Miners' Federation, trade unions, socialist societies, Highland Land League MPs and the radical Liberal MP Robert Cunninghame Graham who represented the seat of North West Lanarkshire.

Cunninghame Graham had been elected at the 1886 General Election, on a manifesto that included: the abolition of the House of Lords; universal suffrage; the nationalisation of land, mines and other industries; free school meals; disestablishment of the Church of England; the introduction of an eight-hour working day; and Scottish Home Rule. Hardie finished third with a credible 8 per cent of the vote. Philipps retained the seat for the Liberal Party ahead of the

second-placed Conservative, William Bousfield, another English solicitor. However, the Mid-Lanark by-election proved to be a crucial point in the development of working class representation.

Following the Liberal Party's decision to field a London-based lawyer instead of the local Miners' organiser, Hardie and others reached the conclusion that for the interests of the working class to be represented in parliament, there required to be a party of labour. After a series of meetings preparing the ground, the organisations and people who had supported Hardie's candidacy in Mid-Lanark met in the summer of 1888 to formalise a new political body, which they called the Scottish Labour Party. The first electoral test for the new party came at the General Election of 1892. Robert Cunninghame Graham had resigned from the Liberal Party and stood down from his North West Lanarkshire seat in order to contest the Glasgow Camlachie constituency for the Scottish Labour Party (SLP).

In total, the SLP fielded five candidates at the 1892 election but none were elected. However, James Keir Hardie had been invited to stand as an independent labour candidate in the working class London constituency of West Ham. Although offering no support to Hardie, the

Liberal Party did not stand, which meant a straight fight between the candidate of labour and a Conservative. Hardie polled 5,268 to the Tory candidate's 4,036 and was elected with a majority of 1,232.

Hardie's outspoken advocacy of the rights of the working class, and his confrontational style of speaking in parliament made him a focal point for the Britain-wide labour movement. At a Trades Union Congress meeting in September 1892, proposals were moved for the establishment of an independent labour organisation to represent the working class of Britain. It was agreed that a conference on the subject should be held in January 1893.

## Home rule

A large delegation from the Scottish Labour Party attended the conference held in Bradford from January 14-16, where it was agreed to work on a cross-Britain basis to form the Independent Labour Party (ILP). James Keir Hardie was elected chairman of the new political body. From its beginning the ILP's stated objective was to secure for the people "the collective and communal ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange".

The party also advocated an eight-hour working day, free education and provision for the sick, disabled, widows and the elderly. In addition, the ILP also supported Home Rule for Scotland and Ireland.

In 1894 the leadership of the Scottish Labour Party took the decision to merge the body with the ILP. There then followed 8 years of internal restructuring before, in 1906, a political organisation to represent the interest of the working class across the British Isles was formed. It was called the Labour Party. The organisation's founders will be spinning in their graves to see the Tory-clone that the Labour Party has become.

# Labour's UK crisis will boost Yes vote

says John McAllion

**WE** are now into the fourth year of a government that has arguably the worst record in office of any government elected since the end of the Second World War. After three full years in power, output in the UK economy is still nearly 4 per cent below pre-recession levels. The levels of growth the government has achieved have been a third of those under the Labour government that was kicked out in 2010 for economic failure.

Real wages are down. Living standards are falling. Unemployment and underemployment remain rife. More than a fifth of the population are trapped in poverty. Up to half a million Britons now depend on food banks to keep hunger at bay.

## Savage attacks

On top of all of this economic misery, the government has also launched unprecedented and savage attacks on public sector workers.

More than half a million jobs have been scrapped across the public sector. Wage freezes have been imposed. Pension entitlements have been slashed. Working lives have been lengthened and the retirement age remorselessly raised.

Zero hours contracts that deny workers job security and redundancy and pension entitlements have been forced onto hundreds of thousands of low paid workers across a range of social care, NHS and education services.

Then there are the welfare cuts. While the rich are feted as "wealth creators", the poor are demonised by government ministers as "skivers". The already rich are rewarded with tax cuts worth £100,000 a year. The already poor are penalised by benefit cuts and welfare caps.



**HEART OF DARKNESS:** things are so bleak for Labour, the return of Peter Mandelson could be on the cards

Those who look to profit from buying second homes-to-rent out are rewarded with a £130million "Help to Buy" scheme. Those who can't afford to pay the rent in their only home are forced on to the street by the hated Bedroom Tax.

For the first time since the establishment of the welfare state, the spectre of Dickensian levels of poverty has returned to haunt our streets.

Given such an abysmal record, most would expect that this government would pay a heavy political price. Yet in the latest opinion poll, Labour enjoys just a 7 per cent lead over the Tories and actually trails the Coalition parties when their support is combined. Indeed, if you combine support for the Coalition parties and UKIP together, Labour trails the right of centre parties by a staggering 19 points.

The personal approval ratings for the Tory Prime Minister are also 13 points ahead of those for the leader of the Labour opposition. With less than two years to the next election, the alarm bells are ringing ever

louder within Labour ranks. The prospect of losing the next election is now being taken very seriously by leading Labour figures. Senior figures warn that the Tories are making the political weather, that the party lacks policies and that time is running out for Labour to avoid defeat in 2015. Calls are made for the return of New Labour figures like Alistair Darling and Alan Johnson to front-line Labour politics. Some even want Mandelson, the Prince of Darkness, back. Under pressure, Labour's leader promises a Shadow Cabinet reshuffle before the party conference in September.

## Imbalance

The underlying cause of this panic is the imbalance in regional support for Labour. Their lead in the national poll disguises Labour's inability to win support in the southern half of England.

South of a line drawn from the Wash to the Bristol Channel, and excluding London, Labour holds just 10 of 197 seats. In the by-election in the southern seat of Eastleigh earlier this year, they polled a miserable 10 per

cent of the vote and trailed in fourth behind the Coalition parties and UKIP.

In this year's county elections in the south, Labour's performance was eclipsed by UKIP's success. All the evidence points to Labour losing the south in 2015, and without southern support there will not be a Labour government.

In Scotland, the near invisible leadership of the party know this to be the case. Their trump card in the referendum vote has always been to urge a No vote on the grounds that a Labour government in 2015 would rescue our country from this dreadful government imposed upon us.

With every passing month, that card will become less and less playable and more and more Labour supporters will realise that the only certain security against more of the same is to vote Yes to independence.

The recent manufactured attacks on 'Labour For Independence' signal Labour's growing fear that as the prospect of a UK Labour victory in 2015 retreats, the likelihood of a Yes vote in 2014 will increase.



by *Richie Venton*

**ZERO** hours contracts perfectly encapsulate the disgustingly exploitative system we live under. These are the ultimate in casualised labour, the pinnacle of job insecurity, the worst extremes of the ‘race to the bottom’ on workers’ rights. All in the name of profit. And far from being on the margins of the labour market, zero hours contracts are mushrooming, encouraged by the employers’ organisations and the mainstream pro-capitalist political parties.

A survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has put the estimate at over a million - and growing astronomically in the last few years. Zero hours contracts (ZHCs) give all the flexibility to the employers and all the risk and insecurity to the workers on them. It means being contracted to work for a particular employer, but with absolutely no guarantee of how many hours of work you get - if any! - and insistence that the worker is on call, unpaid, ready to work whenever asked to.

Apologists for this system claim it suits people who want flexibility on the hours they work but their argument is just a cover-up for a system of ruthless exploitation.

**Surrender of rights**

One of the many High Street outfits using them - Subway - summarises the reality in the wording of their contracts: “The company has no duty to provide you with work. Your hours of work are not predetermined and will be notified to you on a weekly basis as soon as is practicable by your store manager. The company has the right to require you to work varied and extended hours from time to time.”

To underline the surrender of rights involved, Subway make it a precondition of being hired that workers waive their rights (under European Working Time Regulations) to have the working week limited to 48 hours. In other words, you could be dragged in to work over 48 hours one week, but literally no hours the next, and all along you are contracted to Subway, unable to

# A million modern serfs... **BAN ZERO HOURS CONTRACTS**

get work with another firm, and only paid for the actual hours worked. And it’s all perfectly within the law!

Numerous reports give accounts of people being starved of hours after they have said ‘No’ to a particular shift. And they are frequently left with no work at all for weeks on end, because the employers can use Zero Hours Contracts as a weapon to reward, reprimand or punish people according to their whim - the exploiters’ ultimate dream of control.

As one woman reported, she’d been denied any work as a Home Carer for several weeks after asking for a day off for her child’s medical appointment. And such insecurity over hours and therefore wages are not the only consequences. Zero Hours Contracts also involve zero guarantee of sick pay, holiday pay, or redundancy pay.

It makes it virtually impossible to plan your life, particularly for workers with childcare responsibilities or other care duties, let alone the impact on family and social life. As one Edinburgh care worker explained, “You basically have to take what hours you’re given. So on any typical week I might have a Friday off when I’d rather be working, but then have to make up my hours on a Sunday when I want to spend time with the kids.”

It makes it a nightmare to meet the bills and budget for daily life - and because there is no fixed, regular weekly wage involved, it makes it almost impossible to negotiate the benefits system, such as Working Tax Credits and childcare allowances. The one million-plus workers subjected to this form of excruciating insecurity are also con-

centrated in the lowest-paid sectors of employment - and indeed that is one of the aims of these contracts.

The Tory-Lib Dem Coalition might try to claim it just blesses workers with infinite flexibility without reducing incomes. On the contrary - according to the recent Resolution Foundation Report, the average weekly pay of those on ZHCs is £236, compared to £482 a week for workers on other contracts. And they get an average of 21 hours work a week - compared to 32 hours for the rest. These contracts are not confined to the fringe of the British economy - nor are they the preserve of unscrupulous backstreet employers struggling to survive and cutting labour costs. Quite the opposite.

The government’s own Workplace Employment Relations Survey of late 2011 found that 6 per cent of workplaces with less than 50 workers used them, whereas twice that proportion (11 per cent) of workplaces with 50-99 workers did so - and a whopping 23 per cent of workplaces employing 100 or more.

**Household shames**

Household names exploit the power to dictate that ZHCs offer them. We’ve already mentioned Subway. Sports Direct has been exposed by protests against them hiring 20,000 of their 23,000 workers under ZHCs. Burger King and Domino’s Pizzas use them extensively. So do McDonald’s - with 90 per cent of their staff (82,000 in the UK) on them. JD Wetherspoons hire 80 per cent of their staff this way. Others include Boots (4,000); Tate Galleries; The National Trust; Buck-

ingham Palace; the Kirk of Scotland’s social care wing.

And Labour councils are up to their necks in this exploitation too - directly in the cases of Brent and Rhondda Cynon Taff, to quote two uncovered so far, and indirectly through work they’ve contracted out in vast numbers of councils.

One in four public sector employers use these ZHCs, as do one in three voluntary sector employers. The areas of greatest concentration include hotels, catering and leisure; education, and healthcare. The health sector alone account for 100,000 people on ZHCs! And the ruthless Michael O’Leary’s Ryanair - the biggest airline in Europe - employs an incredible 75 per cent of its 2,625 pilots on Zero Hours Contracts, as part of a regime of bullying and sackings aimed at gagging these highly skilled workers.

Are these forms of employment new? And why are they growing with relentless speed? The media has just now caught up with their existence, but ZHCs have been increasingly common since the late 1980s, and are indeed part of a much broader, deeper trend towards casualised, insecure work since the mid-1970s. What is new is the sheer scale of their use. For about 30 years after World War Two, governments - both Labour and Tory - tended to aim at full employment, reluctantly tolerated the strength of the trade unions, and generally thought rising wages and secure employment was good for capitalism.

It provided a growing market for their goods amongst millions of workers on better wages than their

parents or grandparents - and the power of organised workers' unions won wages as their highest share of total national wealth on record by 1975. That changed with the first signs of crisis in their profit-based system in the mid-1970s, when UK governments began to claw back the gains working people had won in previous generations so as to boost the flagging rates of profit.

Thatcher's government in particular unleashed civil war against workers' conditions, seeking to smash the ability of trade unions to resist, deploying the weapon of mass unemployment to drive down wages. In subsequent years, both Tory and Labour governments obeyed the orders of the bankers and capitalists, ripped manufacturing apart, concentrated far more on financial capitalism's interests and low-paid service sector employment.

### 'Least regulated'

Alongside deregulation of work and globalisation of capitalism, this swung the balance of power decisively to the employers, unleashing a reign of terror in workplaces, which accelerated in the wake of the miners' defeat in 1985. New Labour governments carried on where the Tories left off in fashioning the conditions for maximum profit at the expense of workers' wages and conditions - neo-liberalism, what Tony Blair boasted was "the least regulated labour market in Europe".

Privatisation was a major driver, for instance fuelling local authorities' current hunt for the cheapest bidder through outsourced contracts for the likes of home care services, where a vast array of private companies bid for the care cutting costs to win the contract by hiring people on ZHCs. Privatisation invariably means cuts to workers' terms and conditions, and in recent years has helped create the longest fall in real wages since the 1870s! The TUC reckon four out of every five new jobs created since the 2008 banking crisis have been in low wage sectors. Since the unelected Westminster Coalition seized office in 2010, half a million public sector jobs have disappeared. These jobs were 'permanent'.

The Westminster Coalition claim to have performed a miracle by reducing unemployment in the midst of a recession. But this mirage is explained by the fact that most of the jobs created since 2008 are either agency work, enforced part-time, ZHCs, and half of them are temporary. The Tories manage to massage the unemployment figures, but workers can't even manage to cope as they plunge into insecure, low-paid jobs.

In Scotland, just short of one in ten workers (9.8 per cent) are underem-



**I'M NOT LOVIN' IT: 90 per cent of McDonald's workers are on ZHCs**

ployed. Research shows this is double the rate prior to the 2008 bankers' crisis, and that the workers starved of hours and wages against their will want additional hours that are the equivalent of 50,000 full time jobs. This desperate need for more work amongst the precariously employed is mostly because wages have persistently fallen for 41 consecutive months, a relentless decline in wages clashing with rising prices.

That is the real context of the galloping growth of ZHCs. They are not a lifestyle choice for workers who prefer 'flexibility'. They are one major strand to the package of casualised, insecure, low paid work that is imposed on desperate people, in pursuit of short-term profit boosts to the employers.

Back in the mid-1990s, when many of us who were the founders of the SSP were at the heart of building Scottish workers' solidarity over a period of three years with the 500 locked-out Liverpool dockers, I often wrote and spoke of casualisation being 'the curse of the modern working class'. That was a subject especially dear to the hearts of dockers, whose predecessors had fought fearlessly to end the casual labour system on the docks. A system that meant workers lining up in the

pose tighter regulation of ZHCs - as threatened by Coalition Lib Dem Minister Vince Cable. But Cable shares their opposition to an outright ban on these malicious practices.

If ZHCs are so good for the health of the economy, why have any laws that limit the 'flexibility' of workers' exploitation? Why not repeal laws on working time and child labour?

Every minor or major improvement in working class conditions, at work or in communities, had to be fought for in the face of opposition from capitalists. We can't rely on Vince Cable, let alone the Westminster millionaires' government, to outlaw exploitation.

The trade union movement should launch a massive recruitment drive amongst unorganised workers, demanding the outright banning of all ZHCs, fighting instead for a decent Living Wage as the guaranteed minimum hourly rate for all over 16. They should demand secure and permanent jobs for all - including full time jobs for all who want them.

### Insecure work

By fighting to boost the hourly rates of pay, the working week could also be drastically reduced to a maximum of 35 hours across the board, without loss of earnings, ending the crazy contradictions of millions stressed out by working the longest hours in Europe whilst millions of others suffer the poverty and insecurity of no or insecure work. There are vast areas of work that need to be done - in building decent affordable homes, hospitals, state-of-the-art local schools; in green energy and an integrated public transport network.

But instead of foisting insecure work on workers, we need to build the crusade for dignity at work, decent and secure jobs, democratic rights at work, and a vast, radical shift in power and wealth from the capitalist profit-junkies to workers' wages and public services. Today's Westminster parties will not deliver such a vision. All the more reason to link the struggle against modern serfdom in all its forms - including ZHCs - to the call for an independent Scotland where we can build a socialist future that is founded on people, not profit.

# Posters, bongos and battleships as Britannia waives the rules

by Ken Ferguson

**AMIDST** a gathering campaign of hype aimed at convincing voters that economic good times are on the way, the Westminster Coalition, desperate to hold on to power, opened a second battlefield, using one of its oldest and most reliable weapons.

Wrapped in the union jack, they unleashed a heady cocktail of racism at home, and flexing of military muscle abroad, aimed at reinforcing their campaign to blame it all on foreigners, the EU, scroungers and immigrants.

This nasty campaign throws a harsh spotlight on the essentially insular extremist politics of the ConDems and their willingness to ride the tiger of racism and militarism in order to hold on to power.

## Racist language

First to break cover was UKIP's Godfrey Bloom who railed against UK foreign aid going to buy Ray Bans and fast cars for the leaders of what he termed "Bongo Bongo Land".

Of course, this sparked much official "outrage" at Bloom's racist language but it was notable that behind the outcry, a much more mainstream hue and cry continued in the pages of the right wing press and across the Tory back benches against foreign aid, underpinned by a barely concealed racism.

Enter next to the fray the well upholstered figure of Tory cabinet minister and Thatcher-disciple Eric Pickles, who stoutly defended the use of ad



**AD NAUSEUM:** Home Office's racist 'Go Home' ads are driven around carefully selected areas of London

trailers in London telling "illegal" immigrants to go home or face arrest.

As advertising watchdogs launched an enquiry into the posters with their neo-BNP message, Pickles raised the prospect of their being deployed across the country, by which he presumably meant England.

As the Labour poll lead stalls and the sunshine prosperity tales are pumped out by a compliant media, the deployment of the racism and immigration cards by the Tories both aims to mop up right wing votes and protect them from UKIP.

Of course, this agenda is a close relative to the "war on scroungers" which is a constant theme of both Tory and Liberal ministers and a key reason why

the hapless Nick Clegg can expect a hot reception from Bedroom Tax protestors at the Lib Dem conference in Glasgow next month.

Finally, no Tory election drive is really complete without the prospect of deployment of crown forces against a foreign foe and, on cue, it has been supplied by a return of that old favourite - a Gibraltar crisis.

## Roaring defiance

Older *Voice* readers may recall when such events were a regular feature with the British lion roaring defiance at the then fascist dictator Franco - carefully avoiding the fact that Britain's policy in pre-war Spain helped Franco to power and then kept him there after WW2 as an anti-Soviet ally. It was Marx who

made the remark about history repeating itself first as tragedy then as farce, and the announcement of the deployment of the Royal Navy to Gibraltar with its Falklands echo is a classic case.

Meanwhile back in the real world, food banks mushroom to feed the victims of austerity, and wages fall at a faster rate than anywhere else in the EU, while the full horror of the zero hours culture - which we look at elsewhere in this *Voice* - is revealed.

With each passing day, the truth that the British state is a rotten militaristic, neo-liberal structure becomes ever clearer, as does the fact a Yes vote next year can play a major role in ending it's depredations at home and abroad.



# Whole lotta Rosie

**Rosie Kane** was at The Bungalow in Paisley on Sunday 4 August. She bravely stars as herself in *I, Tommy* (written by **Ian Pattison**) at The Pavilion Theatre in Glasgow from 17-21 September

by *Sandra Webster*

**OVER** the past few months Rosie Kane has started to tour again with a new version of her one woman show which was premiered at the Glasgow Comedy Festival earlier this year.

She is taking this show - a mixture of her stories along with some music - to different audiences in clubs and bars throughout the west of Scotland. This might seem a difficult audience but with a new confidence, Rosie transforms even a humble performance area into that of a theatre and has the audience in the palm of her hand.

## Personal

The show includes stories from her childhood growing up in Pollok to the beginnings of her political involvement and election to the Scottish Parliament.

She makes it clear from the beginning that these stories are told through her own two eyes and this is her very personal view of the events unfolded in her stage set.

These stories included her protest in the City Chambers with the ever expanding elevator cable and her arrests at Faslane. With these stories she had the ability to make the audience laugh out loud and then remember that perhaps the



**ARRESTING PERFORMANCE:** when Rosie's not being arrested, she's a great performer

good old days were not all as rosy as we remember.

All of the stories were punctuated with her unique brand of humour and some references to the political scene today. The Bedroom Tax and welfare cuts were commented on. The set was also personalised by Rosie's name-checking of friends and comrades she has met along the road of her life.

An extra layer of colour and warmth to her performance was contributed by her brother Tam McGarvey. One of "The Osmonds with fillings", he is a talented blues guitarist in his own right. He performed a couple of songs and accompanied Rosie with songs such as *Those Were The Days* and *This Life* from *Miss Smith The Anti-Poverty Musical*.

It was easy to see the hand of Rachel Jury the show's director and how she had helped take a group of stories together and combine them into an interesting narrative.

## Confidence

Having seen Rosie perform in various settings and her very first one woman show, it is good to see her growing in confidence. She controlled the pace of the storytelling and easily filled the stage with her personality and performance.

The audience, who were there mostly I think to see Rosie perform, were drawn into an act that a more experienced actress could be proud of. They left The Bungalow full of praise for her show.

What's next for Rosie? She'll continue to tour her show and will next take it to her parent's hometown in Ireland. And she's just announced that she'll be playing herself in *I, Tommy* at the Pavilion Theatre in Glasgow in September.

Rosie was offered the role after its writer Ian Pattison (writer of *Rab C. Nesbitt*) saw her perform her one woman show at the Glasgow Comedy Festival.

I'm sure her performance will impress her new audience, and will no doubt be the source of some of her future material.

This woman has a long way to go, and I hope many other people will be able to experience her talent in many other venues.

# Herald owners Gannet gobble up profits

by Voice Reporter

THE US owners of Scottish Herald titles Gannett are living up to their name as they push for more profits through enforcing job cuts. The company who also own US Today have told shareholders to expect \$1.3 billion in rewards over the next few years. To do this they are demanding more from their titles across Scotland and England. Up to 20 editorial jobs are at risk in the Scottish titles but journalists at *The Herald*, *Sunday Herald* and *Evening Times*, remain committed to challenging the job cuts at Gannett's UK company (Newsquest) and are voting in another ballot for industrial action as the *Voice* goes to press.

The daily reality for Newsquest journalists is the company continue to slash jobs. Newsquest have refused to move on compulsory redundancies that could have been avoided if the company agreed to offer a better redundancy deal rather than the statutory terms. The current cost cuts across editorial, advertising and circulation is expected to generate savings of around £700,000.

As well as the job cuts the union is concerned about the introduction of a new editorial system, which appears to be a threat not only to jobs but editorial quality as the company tries to reduce the number of sub-editors. Interestingly sub-editors who have been pushed out of



Newsquest have been snapped up by rival titles such as *The Scotsman*, whose management are more willing to work with the NUJ to ensure there are sufficient staffing levels to address the introduction of new technologies.

Last week the union announced that journalists at the NUJ Glasgow Herald and Times chapel voted decisively by 86 per cent for strike action and 96 per cent for action short of a strike. Rather than accepting the will of the union members and negotiate, the company resorted to using Thatcherite, anti-union laws to stop the action. The NUJ is now re-balloting members, at Scottish Newsquest titles in the wake of legal threats challenging the first ballot on minor technicalities.

Paul Holleran, NUJ National or-

ganiser for Scotland, said: "Rather than acknowledge the overwhelming result of the ballot and the strength of feeling that exists amongst their journalists and making efforts to resolve the dispute, Newsquest has chosen to ride roughshod over the democratic decisions taken by staff with an attempt to block strike action by exploiting the many hurdles created by anti-trade union legislation.

"The reality is that their actions do nothing to dissipate the anger and frustration our members feel at *The Herald*, *Sunday Herald* and *Evening Times* and merely renews their collective determination to fight these poorly thought out proposals, even if means action is temporarily delayed. The re-ballot shows the unity of the chapel and the strength

of feeling amongst our members. Gannett has a total revenue of £848 million yet they want to keep on cutting jobs and make compulsory redundancies on what are nearly statutory terms."

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "Decisions taken by Newsquest management in London are gradually eroding the Scottish titles. In the past similar decisions have been rewarded with a bonus pot for directors worth £240,000. It is an utter disgrace that big business is allowed to destroy people's livelihoods and squeeze the life out of newspaper titles so that those at the top can fill their own pockets.

"It seems that greedy managers in London are interfering in Glasgow as rivals jockey to replace the chief executive Paul Davidson before the end of the year. The Scottish job cuts are signed off by London with a total disregard for local readers, local journalists and the titles they produce. The NUJ calls on Newsquest and its parent company Gannett to stop slashing jobs."

## Scale of cuts

The scale of the cuts is shown by the fact that the NUJ in a previous ballot against compulsory redundancies had over 250 members that is now down to 124. Circulation and advertising revenues have fallen and the union blames the fall in quantity of editorial staff for both falling profits and quality of journalism. The ballot result is expected on Wednesday 27 August.

The NUJ Scottish Executive Council have also expressed their concern as to the further diminution of quality journalism in the lead up to the independence referendum. They are angry that at a time when the people of Scotland should be benefiting from expanded delivery of balanced news and information, it is becoming increasingly difficult for remaining staff to cover all relevant issues in detail designed to help people make up their mind in the referendum.

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# REFUGEES SCAPEGOATED IN RUN UP TO AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

by Alex Miller in New Zealand

WITH the right wing coalition opposition riding high in the opinion polls, in June the governing Australian Labour Party voted to replace then Prime Minister Julia Gillard with Kevin Rudd, himself a former Prime Minister who was ousted by Gillard in 2010.

Rudd has now called a Federal Election on 7 September, and since resuming as Prime Minister has been attempting to wrong-foot the xenophobic opposition leader Tony Abbot by imposing what Australian journalist John Pilger calls a punitive and racist policy on refugees.

Rudd is introducing the so-called “PNG solution”, on which no refugees on boats will be allowed to reach Australian soil, but will be held in detention centres in Australia’s vastly poorer neighbour, Papua New Guinea.

Peter Boyle, Socialist Alliance candidate for the federal seat of Sydney, writes in the 7 August *Green Left Weekly*: “This racist policy is a weapon of mass distraction whose objective is to scapegoat refugees for the pain and insecurity imposed on ordinary people through an agenda of serving the interests of the billionaires and their



ABBOTT AND RUDD: falling over each other’s racist policies

corporations ahead of the interest of people and the environment”.

Boyle points out that the Rudd government is introducing \$17.4 billion of cuts and tax hikes, the great bulk of which will be shouldered by ordinary working people.

According to the 31 July *Green Left Weekly*, a third of the refugees attempting reach Australia by boat are from Iran. Australian foreign minister Bob Carr describes these as “economic migrants”, despite the fact that Iran’s economy is suffering under the weight of crippling sanctions imposed by the US, the EU and

Australia. One effect of the sanctions has been to prevent an estimated six million Iranians suffering from diseases such as multiple sclerosis and cancer from accessing the required medicines. Inflation in Iran is currently running at 34 per cent, and because of the sanctions the amount of oil Iran is able to export has dropped from 2.5 million barrels a day in 2011 to 700,000 a day now.

The United Nations Refugee Agency estimated at the end of 2012 that there were 15.4 million refugees and 28.8 million internally displaced persons worldwide. Most of these

have been driven from their homes by war, with the war in Afghanistan displacing more people than any other. As Boyle notes, Australia is part of the western military occupation of Afghanistan.

According to refugee rights activists in Australia, Rudd’s “PNG solution” is illegal under international law: the UN Refugee Convention, to which Australia is a signatory, obliges states “to provide protection and resettlement, and nowhere considers the ‘outsourcing’ of these obligations to third countries that are far less able to provide durable solutions”.

More than 50 per cent of the population in PNG live on less than \$2 a day, while 61 per cent have no access to clean water. Australia ranks second in the UN human development index, while PNG ranks 156th.

According to Pilger, since 1998, some 1376 refugees have drowned attempting to reach Australia by boat. The Australian Socialist Alliance is fighting the 7 September federal election on a platform that defends refugee rights and calls for the nationalisation of mines, banks and energy corporations.

• See [socialist-alliance.org](http://socialist-alliance.org) and [greenleft.org.au](http://greenleft.org.au) for up-to-date news and analysis of politics and current affairs in Australia

# Scottish Socialist Party

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by Voice Reporter

**TENANTS** organisations, the STUC, disability campaigners and housing associations are among those backing an anti-Bedroom Tax protest focussing of the UK Liberal Democrat conference in Glasgow next month. Last week, the tenant led No2BedroomTax campaign announced a march and demonstration at the Lib Dem conference in Glasgow next month. Glasgow Disability Alliance are one of the groups marching which also include the STUC, the Scottish Tenant's Association and the West of Scotland Housing Associations Forum. The mass march and demo under the name Bin The Bedroom Tax will take place on Saturday 14 September.

This is the first time a campaign has been made up both by those affected and some of the landlords and staff having to deal with the day to day realities of implementing the Bedroom Tax. The group have been keen to stress that this group will always remain tenant-led and hope it will help build a mass movement.

## Critical voices

There have been voices critical of the involvement of landlords who may be evicting tenants. Can this movement truly reflect both the needs of tenants struggling to pay the Bedroom Tax and fearing evictions, with the agenda of Housing associations and other social landlords who are facing massive deficits in rental income as more and more people are unable to pay the Bedroom Tax?

The SSP, in common with the tenant-led No2BedroomTax campaign, have opposed social landlords threatening evictions from the very start of this campaign. We have lobbied and demonstrated, demanding

# LIB DEMO!

## Clegg and his collaborators to be told: 'Bin the Bedroom Tax!'

PHOTO: Simon Whittle



that councils and local housing associations join a campaign of tenants and staff trade unions for funding of the rental shortfall off the Scottish Government, rather than threatening evictions of people who simply can't afford to pay.

And we have fought for them to reclassify rooms to avoid the Bedroom Tax. In the case of North Ayrshire, the SSP's persistent efforts have won promises on no evictions and reclassification of rooms from both the council and a local housing association.

It is to be welcomed that the Housing Association Forum are joining the demo demanding abolition of the Bedroom Tax. But they should accompany this with a public pledge of no evictions, and steps to reclassify rooms to avoid liability, whilst offering facilities to tenants to build a mass

movement for its abolition. Unity between tenants affect and staff affected is crucial.

The backing of the STUC offers the hope that thousands of trade unionists will march making this demonstration the biggest one Scotland has seen for years. This may lead to the end of the 'us and them' narrative that divides so much of our society. It will be good for both tenants and staff to have meaningful dialogue on the impact the Bedroom Tax is having on their lives.

## Legal battle

Following the recent defeat of a challenge to the Bedroom Tax in the London High Court many disabled people and the organisations that represent them getting ready to take the legal battle to the higher courts.

Bill Scott from Inclusion Scotland called on the Scottish

**BIN THE  
BEDROOM  
TAX DEMO**  
**SAT 14 SEPT**  
**Mass march  
and rally on  
Lib Dem UK  
Conference**  
• Assemble at noon  
at Glasgow Green  
• March to SECC

Government to allow legal aid funding to be made available to organisations to make a legal challenge in the Scottish courts.

Other charities such as Barnardo's and Capability have already consulted legal teams about individual cases and feel it will be worthwhile to make a stand in the Scottish courts.

In the end this battle must be one for those affected.

Tenants voices must be at the fore. It is a positive step to see the Glasgow Disability Alliance and The Scottish Tenants Association are giving their support. These are both groups who actively involve and consult their members and are a true reflection of their concerns.

The September demo needs to be the biggest yet and aim to drive home to Clegg and his Tory collaborators the message that the Bedroom Tax needs to be binned now.