

Indy appeal: help the
SSP raise £50k to
finance our campaign
• see page 2

£50k

SSP storm Oxford: Colin Fox is
set to take on the UK elite in
the heart of Oxford University
• see page 10

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Scottish Socialist Voice

British Unionist myth exploded

INDEPENDENCE BOOST TO WORKERS' SOLIDARITY

*by Richie Venton, SSP
national workplace
organiser*

WORKERS celebrating socialism and internationalism on May Day events will doubtless be subjected to the annual ritual of Labour politicians making nauseating declarations of their undying devotion to the working class, international solidarity and socialism. These chancers don't even blush as they make speeches that totally contradict what they practice all the rest of the year.

They fail to explain how introducing what became the Bedroom Tax under a Labour government – and Labour's refusal to pledge its abolition for a clear six months after it was imposed – helped the cause of workers' unity.

Track record

They won't be highlighting Labour's track record of retaining the most vicious anti-union laws in Europe – with Tony Blair boasting about it! – for their entire 13 years in government.

They won't want us to recall that it was a Labour government that dragged us into bloody imperialist wars as they prattle platitudes about internationalism.



SACK LABOUR AND THE TORIES: more cuts, austerity and unjust wars await if we vote No PHOTO: Craig Maclean

• Continued on page 8



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by Jim McVicar, SSP
National Treasurer

Cash vital to fuel indy fight

THE SCOTTISH Socialist Party has registered with the Electoral Commission as a Yes campaigner for the independence referendum in September.

The SSP, since it was formed, has supported Scottish independence and has campaigned within the pro-independence movement for an independent socialist Scotland as a way of lifting working people out of the misery that pro-market governments have brought to all our lives.

In an independent Scotland, working class people will be better off and Westminster-led Tory governments in Scotland will be consigned to the dustbin of history.

The past week has seen the bosses union, the CBI, registering to support the unionist No campaign, but within hours many of its members were up in arms, saying they had not been consulted and were withdrawing their CBI membership as they felt they had

to be seen to be impartial. The CBI is an arch-supporter of the Tories, who since the days of Thatcher have supported brutal anti-trade union laws. Yet when it comes to the CBI supporting the unionist campaign, no mention of a ballot is made or the legitimacy of them supporting the No camp.

The pro-independence campaign have been out on the streets throughout Scotland, with street stalls, public activity, public meetings and door to door canvassing and whether as part of Yes Scotland, RIC or working in-

dependently as the SSP we have received a positive response to our campaign work and canvassing and have received requests from all over Scotland for SSP campaign material.

The SSP, unlike the Tory and Labour joint-unionist campaign, have no friends in big business to bankroll our campaign.

We rely solely on the money we raise from our members, friends and supporters to finance our campaign, and every penny we receive to help promote our socialist vision of Scotland is much appreciated.

Our independence campaign appeal fund has a target of £50,000 and though still in its infancy, has received donations from every corner of Scotland and although £50,000 is a massive amount of money for the SSP to raise, I am confident that we will achieve our target with your continuing support.

That's why I'm appealing to you through the pages of the Voice to make a pledge or donation to the independence appeal fund today.

See below for details of how to donate. Thanks for your support.

HOW TO DONATE TO THE SSP INDY APPEAL

- Donate via your local SSP branch
- Send a cheque to 'SSP Independence Appeal Fund' and return to Jim McVicar, SSP National Treasurer, Suite 307, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD
- Text 07810205747 with your pledge amount and email address if you have one
- Bank transfer: SSP Appeal Fund Account, Co-op Bank, Sort Code 08-92-99 / Account No. 65094637

- Paypal: jim_sspfinance@gmail.com
- If you want to help with the appeal fund, or if you need any more details, contact Jim McVicar on 07810205747 or email: jimmcvicar.scottishsocialistparty@hotmail.com

However you choose to pledge, please text Jim the details so we can keep track of all donations.

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OF
JOURNALISTS

Fighting for a fair and equitable media which benefits journalists, journalism and Civic Society

May Day greetings from NUJ Scotland

Paul Holleran
National organiser

James Doherty
Chair, Scottish Executive Council

by Ken Ferguson

Labour's Scottish 'red turn' turns blue for Miliband's squeezed middle

JUST A few weeks ago in Perth's imposing Concert Hall on the banks of the Tay, Scottish Labour's low profile leader Johann Lamont announced the launch of 'Red Labour' which, we were assured, would out-flank the social democratic SNP on the left.

It was to be a class act and was duly written up by the largely tame pro-unionist political scribes as a return to Labour values and posing a major problem for Salmond and, by extension, the Yes camp. Less gullible activists and writers recalled that Ms Lamont has been busily trashing the key Labour achievements and reforms in line with traditional Labour values such as free prescriptions as a "something for nothing" society. As the old saying has it if it seems to good to be true it probably is and so it proved.

Vile policy

The delegates has barely got home from the spin-managed Perth "conference" before Labour MPs – with a few honourable exceptions – voted with the supposedly hated Tories to cap welfare spending. At a stroke this vile policy, tailored to appeal to the mythical strivers not the victims of bankers' greed now termed skivers, destroys the basis of Labour's proudest achievement the welfare state. That this was done by the whipped sheep of the

BLUE ROMANCE: Labour's Johann Lamont and Ed Miliband – in bed with the Tories



parliamentary Labour Party with one eye on their own comfortable life styles simply adds insult to injury. From now on any calls for a boost to the paltry benefits grudgingly allowed the sick, disabled and unemployed will be met with the call of the guardian's of the rich "there is no money!"

Truly Labour has voted with this one measure for a return to the oppression of the poor and unemployed that spawned the hated means test and imposed forced labour during the hungry 1930s. Now we have Labour employment shadow Rachel Reeves writing in the genteel columns of The Guardian that under Labour the long-term unemployed would not be able to "linger on benefits".

Her heartless views could have come from the pages of Dickens or indeed almost any Tory leader from Stanley Baldwin through Norman Tebbit to Iain Duncan Smith. However in its logic it flows directly from the techniques of spin and so called "triangulation" which long replaced working class politics in the one time Peoples Party.

It was begun by Neil Kinnock who abandoned the miners in their strike, refined by Blair and culminated with the news that the Miliband team have hired – for mega bucks – key Obama spin doctor David Axelrod.

All this is driven by Labour desperation – in the teeth of Tory crowing about the economy and the rise of UKIP in England – to craft policies to

appeal to floating voters now called the "squeezed middle" to win the key English seats needed for Westminster power.

For Scotland the brutal reality is that in this game even if they wanted to be "Red" London would veto it as the politics of so called "blue Labour", focused on middle England, largely discounts their views.

That's why Miliband's jaunt to Glasgow with his aptly named shadow cabinet hardly raised a ripple in a Scottish public who increasingly see through the spin to the Tory tinged reality of today's Labour Party.

Credibility gap

Nothing more illustrates this credibility gap than the deployment of so called "big guns" Gordon Brown, the grumpy, dismally failed ex-Prime Minister and the Union Jack-wrapped ex-Celtic chairman and incorrigible warmonger Lord Reid of Cardowan, as supposed No campaign vote winners.

Both are dinosaurs peddling an increasingly discredited anti-independence doom message.

On May Day, better to heed the famous words of Burns who marked their card labelling them a "Parcel of rogues in a nation" and redouble efforts for independence and socialism.



YesPCS extends May Day greetings to Civil Servants everywhere.

We'd also like to invite you all to our public meeting at St Augustine's, 41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh on Saturday 3rd May from 6-8pm.

You can also visit our website at: www.yespcs.eu



Join the SSP

Fill in this form and send it to: Scottish Socialist Party, Suite 370, 4th Floor, Central Chambers, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD. Or phone: 07810205747. Or join the SSP online: scottishsocialistparty.org/join-us

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by Alan Bissett, author
and playwright

Don't let the No camp fool you anymore

OVER THE last couple of weeks I've found myself under a sustained attack from the media. Given how involved I've been in the independence campaign this, while unpleasant, was probably bound to happen. While I can certainly brush off the likes of the Daily Mail denigrating my poetry or The Telegraph making jokes about my weight, it was a piece from David Torrance in The Herald calling me an 'ethnic nationalist' to which I took most exception.

I've already answered Torrance on the website Bella Caledonia, and won't do so again, except to quote a

section which has significance for the Yes campaign:

"I'm not sure I qualify as a nationalist at all, let alone an 'ethnic' one. I am a socialist. If I believed the best future for the Scottish working class lay in the Union I would vote No. If we were still living in the post-war settlement of the

Welfare State and full employment – led by a Labour Party that truly represented the people, not middle-class swing-constituencies and the USA – I would vote No. That compassionate Westminster, however, existed all-too briefly and is irretrievable without the shock to the body politic which Scottish independence will provide."

This, for me, sums up the position of the movement at large. Our opponents – including, disappointingly, those on the left – like to dismiss us as 'nationalists', a claim which has to be discussed with examination of what is happening on the ground, not within Unionist fantasies.

Grassroots Yes

At the weekend, Green activist Stan Blackley wrote in the Sunday Herald that the 'official' entity known as Yes Scotland has been left behind by the runaway success of the wider, informal, grassroots Yes movement. In less than a year and a half, the fledgling community-led campaign for Scottish independence has grown to become the largest and most diverse public campaign in recent Scottish history. As someone who is invited to speak at several such events per week, all over Scotland, I can testify to this. The panels on which I find myself are not stuffed with SNP apparatchiks, but trades unionists, artists, activists, former Labour voters and

members of the local community. Yes is a genuine people's uprising, involving Scots of all colours, religions and countries of origin.

What the establishment has been forced to do, in response, is use that well-worn, divisive subject of 'race'. Torrance, to give him his due, claims that he meant the definition of 'ethnicity' from the Oxford Dictionary: 'The fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.' I'm even prepared to believe him on this, given that goes on to cite a use of the word in the Scottish government's 2011 census.

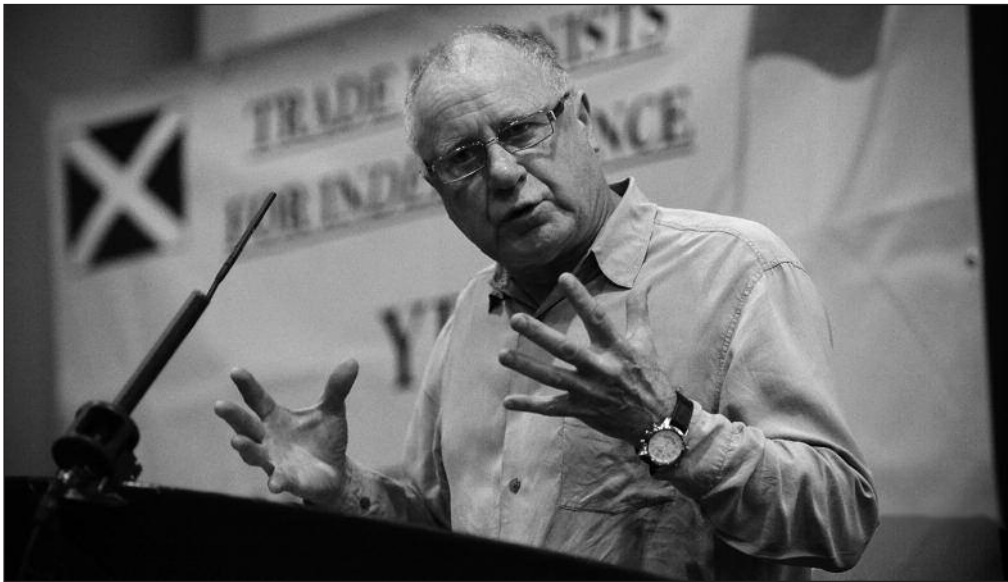
There is a contextual difference, however, between a census, commonly used by governments to discern how citizens self-identify, and dropping the term 'ethnic nationalism' into a febrile debate about the imminent break-up of the British state. It is easy to fall back on dictionary definitions, but 'ethnic nationalism' would be considered a smear by most – especially progressives – conjuring images of Nazi Germany or the Balkan conflict. When Better Together deploy the word 'nationalist', they simply seek to distract from the reality of what our movement is: a struggle for self-determination, improved democracy, dignity and equality. It is worth saying that there is nothing inherently wrong with 'cultural' nationalism or the politicising of the Scottish identity. This has happened

RADICAL INDEPENDENCE CAMPAIGN



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DENNIS CANAVAN: this referendum is about much more than the SNP or Labour PHOTO: Craig Maclean

in response to the marginalisation of Scottish and Gaelic culture, history and language by a dominant British narrative which stands for the traditions of the ruling class.

Our cultural nationalism, in the absence of effective political resistance, has in the past acted as the battering ram against the Union's ideological stranglehold, creating space in which the SNP could operate. Increasingly, however, the extant 'nationalist' elements of Yes have given way to those of socialism. The most influential groups in a grassroots movement which now dwarfs both the SNP and the 'official' Yes campaign are Radical Independence, Labour for Independence, the Common Weal Project and, of course, the Scottish Socialist Party, all far further to the left than any of the mainstream parties.

Serious left voices

Add to this the serious left-wing voices of Dennis Canavan, Lesley Riddoch, Jim Sillars, Gerry Hassan, Ian Bell, Ruth Wishart and Tommy Brennan, as well as the international backing of socialist-anarchist giants like Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali and Billy Bragg.

Other pro-Yes groups such as the Green Party and Women for Independence are not explicitly socialist, but neither are they hostile to our ideas. Even Business for Independence, whose name speaks for itself,

represents small-to-medium-sized businesses, who still have connections to their communities, rather than the swollen corporations involved with the now-discredited, pro-Union CBI.

None of these groups describe themselves as 'nationalist' and all would run a mile from any 'ethnic' basis to the movement. Their prominence means that this element is simply not there or is fading under pressure from the true face of Scotland's future: a republican, democratic socialism.

Up and down the land, every night of the week, community centres, church halls, pubs and school assemblies are full of citizens – many of whom have never been political in their lives – waking from their slumber to engage with radical plans for the transformation of Scotland. This is an unprecedented

blooming from within, a renewal of a moribund democracy which has the potential to alter politics all across Britain, perhaps even across Europe. That the Unionist left can still dismiss the scale of this change as mere 'nationalism' is nothing short of staggering. Meanwhile, the No campaign routinely claim, 'But your relatives will be foreign!' as though foreigners are automatically a bad thing. Small wonder that the neo-fascist BNP, EDL and SDL, as well as the xenophobic UKIP – while not formally aligned with Better Together – are also campaigning against independence.

British nationalists (for that is what we face) all come draped in the triumphalism of the Union Jack, with its sordid, imperialist history. They bizarrely seem to regard worker 'solidarity' as being, by definition, whatever lies within the or-

ganisational unit of the British state. By this rationale, the Unionist left couldn't care less about the plight of workers in the Republic or Ireland, since they are not under this aegis. Presumably they also demand the reabsorption of all the former colonies back into the British Empire, since that freedom involved 'nationalist' struggles for self-determination.

Did they not notice that the solidarity between anti-Poll Tax protestors and striking miners in all parts of the UK did not require a constitution to ratify it, but happened organically, despite the anti-trade union laws and brutal tactics of the British state? Aren't they aware that the Scottish vote has only made a difference to the outcome of UK elections three times since the 1920s?

Rising radicalism

No, Scotland must simply surrender its aspirations and latent, rising radicalism to the demands of the same Labour Party who squandered our trust the last time and who have committed to further austerity measures. This, somehow, is 'solidarity'. To want a better future is 'nationalism'. The independence movement is not about ethnicity, no matter how much the Unionists wish it to be. It's so much bigger than that. The knowledge of that fact, and panic about our growing size, success and determination, is why the No campaign are so desperate to reduce us to 'Braveheart' stereotypes. Don't let them fool you anymore. Come with us.

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by Roz Paterson

Climate crisis: it's time to look at socialist solutions

THE LATEST report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), published on 31 March, adopts a rather milder tone than that of its 2007 predecessor. The work of hundreds of climate change scientists, who sifted through some 12,000 peer-reviewed papers, the final report suggests that there is time to act, that we must work to 'curb' the worst effects of global warming, that we should view it as a 'risk management' project, with a view to costs and effective use of resources.

Such measured, almost corporate-speak may seem hardly appropriate given the drastic climatic developments afoot, from the stinking water gushing into homes in the Somerset Levels this winter to the wildfires that raged across California to the rising tides now driving Bangladeshi coastal communities inland to... Surely we should be screaming from the rooftops, with one of those homemade banners proclaiming 'SOS, our planet is drowning!'

In your hands

Actually, maybe the IPCC are on to a good thing here. The apocalyptic language so beloved of climate change catastrophists does not, it seems, produce much by way of results.

Being told you are doomed and that even living in a tent whilst subsisting on dandelion leaves and ditchwater will only make it slightly less hellish is hardly a motivator for change. Being told you may not be doomed, that the future is in your hands, that there is time to act and salvage much – is.

Not that the IPCC is airbrushing over the facts. The report acknowledges, nay, spells out, the impacts of climate change already in evidence, due to our continuing dependence on fossil fuels, the ongoing destruction of forests, and other human activity, such as the production of



FLOODS: half of Bangladesh's productive land could end up underwater

methane, a much more troublesome greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, through intensive animal farming and food waste, amongst other things.

The sea is now rising 3mm per year, an increase on the 1.46mm annual average that held true from 1870 to 2004, due to the melting of the Arctic ice-sheet and thermal expansion, due to the fact that warmer water increases in volume. For low-lying Bangladesh, this means that by 2080, around 40 per cent of its productive land could be either underwater or hopelessly contaminated by it, as could much of the fresh drinking water supply. For the Netherlands, this could mean that the centuries-old system of dykes and flood defences could require a re-think. "The feeling of safety is so strong in the Netherlands that this seems to be no subject for discussion at all," notes Frank van der Meulen, an expert working with the Coastal Zone Management Centre, based in the Netherlands, as quoted by Germanwatch.

The IPCC is quite clear that climate change will affect more than just poor people, living far

away. And this, perhaps, is where they hope to hit home, and to unsettle our complacency. And the timing could not be bettered.

This year, we've seen tens of thousands of homes in the UK, including some of wealthiest parts of the UK, cut off for weeks because of flooding. Sure, George Eliot closes *The Mill on the Floss* with a graphic and devastating description of a flood in Lincolnshire, but it was a rarity then, an occasional instance of Nature baring her teeth, not a developing trend, as it is now. And with the floodwater, the chaos, came the bewilderment; how could it come to this? How could they let it happen? Ignorance is not bliss, that's for sure.

But there is 'still time' and this is an important message. Those stultifying talks at the head table of the G8 may seem a world away, as do the wave of suicides of Gujarat subsistence farmers, wiped out by 33 failed monsoons in 50 years, but we have time to act and there is much we can do.

An independent Scotland gives us great scope to turn the page on much of the vested interest and back-slapping networks that have

hamstrung efforts to effect change. We could, for instance, start investing heavily in sustainable energies, such as wave power and biomass, ideal for a land surrounded by sea and rich in forestry. We must, urgently, face up to a post-hydrocarbon future, without petrol pumps and private cars, petro-chemical fertilisers and disposable plastics. It needn't be an apocalypse; in fact, it could be a bright future, with people pulling together and implementing collective solutions.

How about Free Public Transport? Where the public transport networks are taken into public ownership and everyone uses them, because they are free, thus reducing traffic, fatal road accidents, emissions and personal financial outlay. This already works, in Hasselt in Belgium, and in San Francisco. It could work in Scotland.

Public ownership

How about taking the energy utilities into public ownership, so that instead of being driven for profit, and by its very nature encouraging excessive use of electricity and gas, and therefore waste, the drive is for efficiency, and reduced usage?

How about subsidies for local economies, keeping the high street alive, thereby reducing the traffic to out-of-town supermarkets and increasing the viability of local food networks, thus cutting food miles?

We don't want to see Bangladesh underwater, Italy turned into a desert, the Amazon rainforest engulfed in flames, the African interior rendered uninhabitable. We probably don't even want to think about that. So let's think about something else – what we can do now, while there's still time.

by John Finnie MSP

BIRDS OF prey have been killed in great numbers – 22 at the latest count; there's even been 'a demonstration in Inverness' and Police Scotland has mounted a large scale operation. What's it all about?

Whilst it may surprise urban eyes, there's very little 'wilderness' in the Highlands and Islands. Few places have escaped human intervention. After the Battle of Culloden the Lairds drove their loyal kin folk off the land and replaced them by sheep and sporting estates.

Until relatively recent times, many of those estates employed large numbers of staff. Where I grew up in Lochaber the estate had a dairy herd, many tens of thousands of sheep. It was an enormous tract of land which required cattlemen, shepherds, joiners, mechanics, lorry drivers, gillies, stalkers and gamekeepers.

As now, the gamekeepers' efforts were directed to rearing pheasants. Hatching pheasant eggs and feeding and nurturing the chicks until such times as the Laird's heavily-tweedied 'guests', 'came up' to shoot the unfortunate birds.

Predators

Nature note: Crows, rats, weasels and stoats like eggs. Wild cats, pine martins and foxes like chicks and adult birds. Birds of prey; eagles, buzzards, hawks, falcons and harriers like eggs, chicks and adult birds. Men like to shoot and kill 'ground game.'

Now the pheasants' natural predators pose a threat to the ultimate number of adult birds which may survive to be shot and, by default, a threat to the livelihood of the gamekeeper. As in the factory, country-side employees with poor 'production' levels will not be tolerated.

Those predators must be killed – no exceptions! And killed they were. By vicious gin

WHAT LIES BEHIND THE MOUNTING TOLL OF BIRDS OF PREY IN THE HIGHLANDS?



RAPTOR DEATHS: Golden Eagle found poisoned on Beinn Udlaidh in 2009

traps, set indiscriminately about the area – bad news for domestic cats and dogs – and, by snares set with little care and checked for wounded trapped creatures with even less care.

Estates have changed a lot since I was a boy and hopefully those cruel 'gamekeeping' practices are a thing of the past. Estates no longer employ large numbers preferring the flexible worker able to tend livestock, do fencing and service the sporting side of the business.

What has certainly changed is concerted efforts to reintroduce persecuted species such as the red kite and the sea-eagle.

Now sea-eagles 'take the occasional lamb' and in the process incur the wrath of farmer and crofter alike. Recently, an Islay crofter, unimpressed by the scientists commending the sea eagle's return, suggested the eagles took lambs 'because no one taught them how to fish!' I'm not

sure that is the case, however, it does illustrate the tensions that understandably exist, the loss of one lamb to a crofter with a handful of sheep is significant.

Fishing is another lucrative source of income for estates which can charge hundreds of pounds a day. I know a senior legal figure who, only when I enquired, told me of the death of his young dog which always accompanied him fishing.

The loss of the dog was 'accepted' as being the result of it eating poisoned 'bait' left by a river side. When I asked what he'd done about it I was told zero. He'd no wish to 'cause any bother' to the estate where he got 'good fishing'. I think laying down poisonous bait is a reckless act which should be punished severely.

Estate employees, like most rural workers, are not well paid. They do often have a 'tied' house and may receive other perks like use of a vehicle and access to firewood. Lose your

job and you lose your home too! I am aware of the pressure gamekeepers feel to 'have a good season' i.e. lots of birds for the 'guests' to shoot. Does this explain what would drive someone to act in such an irresponsible manner?

Now, I have no idea who is responsible for the recent spate of raptor deaths in Ross-shire. In recent years most raptor deaths were associated with upland grouse moors. Grouse cannot be hand-reared from eggs like pheasants so the employee pressures are arguably greater. I do know that the many red kites, with their distinctive fanned tail, are missed by local communities familiar with their graceful hovering.

Rural poverty

I have seen suggestions that the Scottish Government should licence shooting estates. Clearly, that's one option although my preference would be greater community or public ownership.

It's been said that land-ownership in the Highlands is 'unfinished business' and I agree. The days of the Highlands and Islands being the sporting playground for the UK and other nation's elites must end.

Rural poverty and a shortage of housing make many jobs, and perhaps the intolerable terms and conditions attached, attractive and both require decisive government actions to sort.

The irresponsible individual or individuals responsible for these cowardly poisonings must be brought to court because environmental and social justice go hand in hand.

• *Continued from front page*

But this year sees an added layer of hypocrisy from Labour politicians, as they do their damndest to block democratic self-government for the working class majority population of Scotland.

The Better Together fear factory is funded by Tories and Tory-supporting big business tycoons. £1.3million was donated to them by 19 such multi-millionaires on the eve of Xmas – hoping it was a good time to bury bad news!

The exposure of CBI Scotland as open funders and advocates of continued misrule by Westminster reinforces the message: the chief exploiters and enemies of workers' rights and socialism are at the heart of opposing Scottish self-rule.

But they need to subcontract out their dirty work to Labour to have any chance of fooling enough working people into voting No. That's why 'United With Labour' was set up, fronted by the likes of Gordon Brown. That fig leaf has been blown away, exposing the

naked collaboration between Labour leaders and the Tories, with Brown most recently using the toxic, Tory-funded Better Together to tell us we will get 'social justice with Labour by voting against independence'.

Only victims of extreme amnesia could fall for that line. Remember the 'social justice' we enjoyed under Brown, Blair and Alastair Darling's Labour governments of 1997-2010?!

Rampant privatisation, including attempts to sell off Royal Mail; the worst levels of inequality since 1863; announcement of 100,000 civil service job losses; successive assaults on benefits; introduction of student tuition fees that exclude working class people from higher education; wholesale school closures to cut costs at kids' expense; threats to jail Glasgow City Council strike leaders by the Labour council; a government – in the exact words of one of its central leaders, Peter Mandelson – that was "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy

rich", whilst poverty stalked the land for millions. Not to even mention the wars, or Trident.

And Ed Miliband has made it plain a Labour government – even if we assume they're elected in 2015, which is far from certain – will stick to Tory public spending cuts; backed the Tory cap on benefits but refuses to cap private landlords' rents; will not renationalise even the railways or Royal Mail, let alone the rip-off energy companies or the banks; and has absolutely no intention of repealing the vicious anti-union laws.

Weasel words

They use weasel words about stopping exploitation under zero hours contracts, but point blank refuse to abolish them. So voting No to democratic control over who governs Scotland and then praying for a Labour government at Westminster that offers social justice is black comedy, a sick joke.

But the most insulting lie peddled by Labour leaders – one which their Tory pals know they couldn't get away with uttering – is that independence threatens the unity and solidarity of the working class and their trade unions. The theme that workers in Scotland have far more in common with a dustman in London or Liverpool than with a duke in Scotland. Those of us campaigning as socialists and trade unionists for independence welcome lectures on workers' unity and solidarity from Labour politicians a lot less than the proverbial Grannies welcome tutorials on the art of sucking eggs!

Workers and socialists in Scotland have nothing in common with the Brian Soutars of this world, any more than with the Richard Bransons. Both make a fortune out of the privatisation of transport by successive Tory and Labour governments.

And we have everything in common with bus drivers or railway workers, regardless of whether they're from Perth or Poole, Lothians or Liverpool, the south west of Scotland or the south west of England.

But since when did the unity and class solidarity of workers ever depend on the permission, let alone the encouragement, of Westminster governments – whether Tory or indeed Labour? When the Tories imposed the hated Poll Tax 25 years ago – where 'a dustman paid the same as a duke' – they didn't seem to think we were 'Better Together': they imposed it a year earlier in Scotland, in a crude attempt to divide and conquer.

Did working class people wait for permission from Westminster to revolt against the Tory tax? Or for leadership by Westminster Labour MPs, most of whom whined about its unfairness but told us there was nothing we could do to defeat it? No, working class people, often led by those of us who ten years later went on to create the SSP, organised a mass rebellion that eventually toppled Thatcher as well as her tax.

And those of us living in England at the time didn't sit back and ignore the battles being waged by Scottish working class communities during the year when it only applied to

Scottish Socialist Party

The Executive Committee of the Scottish Socialist Party extends May Day greetings to all our friends and comrades, both in Scotland and internationally.

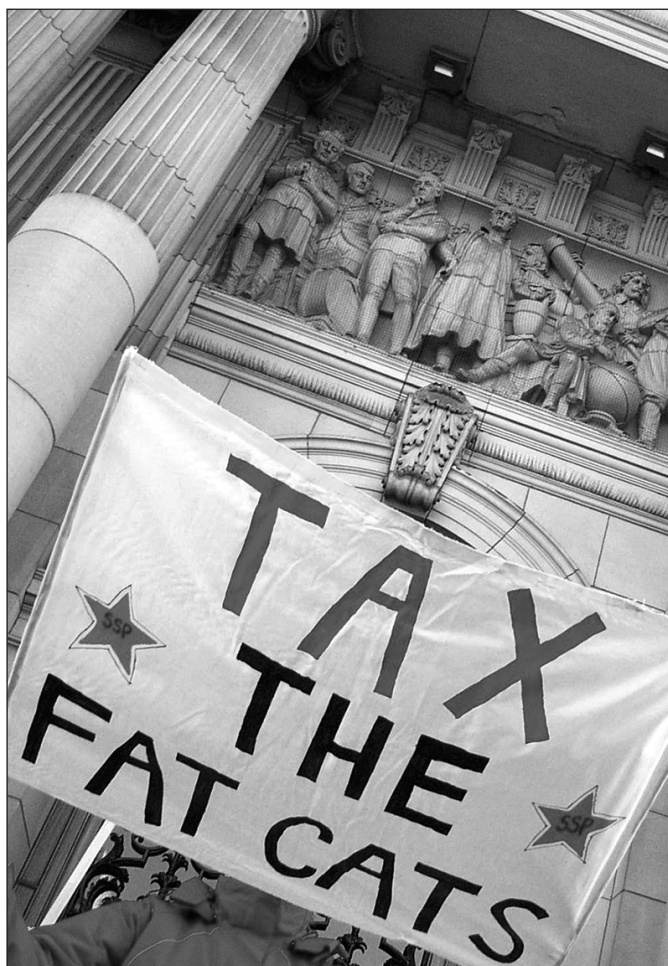
Scrap Trident, say no to NATO and remove WMDs from the Clyde.

Struggle, solidarity and socialism.

May Day greetings from SSP Renfrewshire branch



**Scottish independence
International socialism**



PEOPLE NOT PROFIT: unlike Labour, we want the rich pay their fair share

PHOTO: Simon Whittle

Scotland. We built solidarity with the Scottish working class; for instance I organised a contingent of 1,000 people from Merseyside to the first big Glasgow anti-Poll Tax demo. And we learnt from the experiences of the Scots, inspired by their defiance, spreading the mass non-payment campaign to 18 million people. Workers' unity and solidarity was neither dependent on Westminster nor the Labour leadership, and crossed the borders of Scotland, England and Wales. Why would it be any different when Scottish working class people won self-rule and insisted on radical social and economic change? Surely English workers would demand 'some of the same', encouraged to defy and defeat the dictatorship of the Tories and the dictatorship of capital?

Where were Labour's bogus evangels of workers' solidarity when those of us who founded the SSP organised workplace solidarity tours across Scotland for the 500 locked-out Liverpool dockers, or

striking Tameside care workers, or victimised Bristol civil servants?

If they'd taken part they would have found not a single worker in Scotland spurned the appeal for solidarity on the grounds these workers were English. And why would that powerful instinct for solidarity with fellow workers, regardless of nationality or ethnicity, suddenly vanish once the Scottish working class majority won self-government?

Is Johann Lamont about to tell us they will be 'genetically re-programmed' to become petty, narrow nationalists, against workers from other countries? Too many Labour loyalists at the tops of the trade union movement ape these arguments that independence, an end to rule by the UK Westminster elite, would wreck workers' solidarity. How then do they explain the rich traditions of Scottish workers trekking across the Pyrenees in the 1930s to fight alongside Spanish workers against Franco's fascist dictatorship?

Spain has never been part of the

UK! How explain the more recent internationalism of the cream of the Scottish working class in support of South African workers and youth defying bloodthirsty apartheid? Or with Chilean workers slaughtered by the fascist Pinochet regime in 1973 – a government first recognized by Westminster's Tory regime? Or for Danish bus workers, Belfast car workers or Nigerian journalists – each of whom I and others built solidarity for in Scotland?

Genuine solidarity

Genuine workers' solidarity has never stopped at Dover, let alone Gretna Green. And it has never been dependent on the permission, let alone the support, of ANY Westminster governments, whether Tory or indeed Labour. On the contrary, successive Westminster regimes – including those never voted for by a Scottish majority – did their damndest to divide and defeat workers' struggles.

To name but one example: they privatised and broke up the railways into dozens of separate companies doing the same work. Combined with anti-union laws banning so-called secondary action – in other words, solidarity action! – this was used to legally ban railway workers doing the same jobs on the same tracks from taking action together against victimisation, pay cuts or worsened conditions.

Too many trade union leaders confuse workers' unity and solidarity with their own centralised power over the union, its decisions and its

membership. Those of us who are trade unionists in the SSP have consistently argued for democratic Scottish conferences of elected union representatives to decide on issues within Scotland. But simultaneously we have advocated democratic meetings of elected shop stewards or union reps across national boundaries within the same services or multinational employers.

That would strengthen solidarity, concretely, as well as being a huge boost to members' democratic control of their own unions. Within an independent Scotland we will fight for socialist change – progressive taxation of big business and the rich; democratic public ownership of all services, banks, energy, construction, transport and big industry.

We will argue for majority control by working class people in the running of these industries and services – a model that workers outside Scotland would be inspired to emulate.

Socialist force

And we will champion genuine workers' solidarity, not just with our nearest neighbours, but also far beyond the boundaries of this island – including through elected international shop stewards' meetings. Scottish independence would speed up the prospects of radical improvements to the lives of working class people – provided we build a powerful socialist force – and thereby assist workers in other countries.

And a final promise: unlike Labour politicians, we will commit to this all year round, not just once a year in May Day speeches!

**May Day greetings from
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth
Trades Council**

**Vote Yes –
Forward to an
independent
socialist Scotland**

SSP national spokesman **Colin Fox** has been invited to address the Oxford Union next week on the motion 'This House believes Scotland should be an Independent country'. His invitation gives the SSP the chance to take our case for an independent socialist Scotland to students at Britain's elite university. He gave the Voice a preview of his speech

by Colin Fox

WITH THE independence referendum just five months away and the polls now showing that the contest is neck and neck, Scotland is gripped by this debate in a way never seen before.

The same polls used to show a double-digit lead for the No campaign, not any more. That is because support for independence is far higher amongst the

SSP FOX AT OXFORD

working class and the poor than it is amongst the wealthy.

And I bring news to the Oxford Union that the sons and daughters of Britain's privileged elite will not be the biggest beneficiaries of Scottish independence. No, working class Scots stand to gain most as Scotland's wealth is distributed far more equitably to ensure the appalling inequalities that destroy the life chances of so many are eradicated.

There are thousands of youngsters in Scotland bright enough to earn a degree at Oxford but who will never get the chance. One in three children in Scotland's biggest city live in poverty. We suffer sickening inequalities under Westminster rule that lead to such profound unfairness, and our top priority in September is to bring that to an end.

The No side suggests supporting the democratic rights of nations like Scotland to self-determination makes you a nationalist. It doesn't. It makes you a democrat. Scotland is a nation, a country. We are not a region or province of anywhere else, not Britain and certainly not England. We are therefore entitled to the same rights to self-determination that all 260 other nations in the world enjoy.

Labour opponents of independence put forward the view that it means abandoning the working class in the rest of these isles to 'permanent Tory rule'. This is an argument George Galloway and Douglas Alexander foolishly present. (Mind you, their concern for working class solidarity is rather undermined by lining up alongside the Tories, the Lib Dems and UKIP in this debate.)

The electoral facts show that Scottish seats seldom decide Westminster general elections as they infer. Tony Blair's three general election victories for example would still have been won without a single seat going to Labour in Scotland. He had a 168-seat majority in 1997 when there were only 72 Scottish MP's [56 of them Labour].

Leading the fight

Moreover with independence, Scotland will again be leading the fight for 'social justice' in these isles not abandoning it.

We will be leading the way to a social democratic nation with public ownership preferred over privatisation, wealth redistribution from the rich to the poor not the other way round, higher taxes for the better off, peace-mongering not warmongering, scrapping Trident, refusing to blame claimants and immigrants for an economic and social crisis that was caused by the bankers

and with no more working class kids being sent to die in illegal wars. Those days are over.

These are objectives working class people throughout these isles support – despite Labour's attacks on such values – and their achievement in Scotland will benefit all of us.

Campaigning on the high streets of Scotland, as I do every week, and speaking to people at Yes public meetings across the country, as I do three or four times a week now, I sense a dramatic groundswell of support that was simply not there six months ago.

Indy youth

It is noticeable how young Scots are much more inclined towards independence. This is a generation that no longer considers itself British nor considers Westminster relevant to them.

I will tell the students of Oxford University that we are going to win this referendum in September not least because Yes Scotland, with the Scottish Socialist Party's help, has struck a chord in this debate.

A Yes vote will mean working class Scots will be better off – economically better off, socially better off and politically better off. It is not only a vote for independence it is a vote against the neoliberal, warmongering philosophy of Westminster, Whitehall, the Bank of England and the City of London.

We shall win a famous victory on 18 September because we have also built the biggest and most extensive grassroots political campaign Scotland has seen since the anti-Poll Tax movement 25 years ago. The British ruling classes lost that battle and they will lose this one too. On the other hand, working class people throughout these isles stand to gain enormously.

★ Scottish Socialist Party

The East Kilbride branch of the Scottish Socialist Party sends May Day greetings to all workers in struggle across the globe.

"The great only appear great because we are on our knees.

"Let us rise."

For international solidarity and socialism

Book review – *Settling Scores: the Media, the Police and the Miners' Strike*. Edited by **Granville Williams**. Published by the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

by *Davy Miller*

"The God of our idolatry – the press, thou fountain, at which drink the good and wise thou ever bubbling spring of endless lies, like Eden's dead probationary tree knowledge of good and evil is from thee."

The above quote from William Cowper is appropriate with reference to this book for it is produced mainly by journalists in an attempt (and a timely one) to redress to some degree, the avalanche of lies and distortions to which the public were subjected during and after the miners' strike.

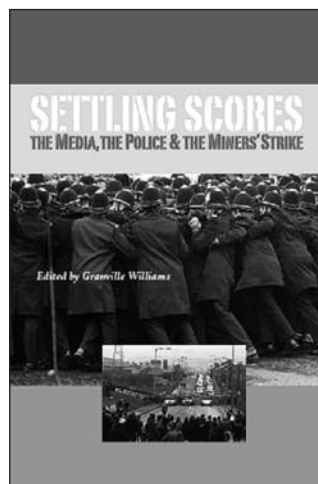
Miners' strike: major truths

I say timely for two reasons, one the present enquiry into Hillsborough which involves the South Yorkshire Police whose activities during the strike occupy a large section of the book and two because of the recent announcement of the impending closure of the last deep mine in Britain.

All industries will at some time die and will be replaced, otherwise we would still have a National Union of Arrow Makers or a National Association of Stage Coach Builders.

But there is a world of difference between dying and being murdered which is what has happened to the mining industry and which has, in most areas been replaced by nothing.

To those who were involved



in the strike there are few surprises here but chapter and verse is provided in comprehensive detail about the activities and behaviour of press, police, leading politicians and even the judiciary, all draconian in carrying out a right wing political agenda.

This comprehensive

political inventory has lessons for political activists of the left and for all trade unionists today.

Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* says "full fathom five I'll drown my book!" But not this one – this one stays on the shelf and should be on the shelf of all those who fear right wing repressive governments who will send in their media and state thugs, as Lorca said of Franco's civil guards, "in a whirlwind of scissors".

Highly recommended.

• To purchase a copy, ring 07729 846146 or send £8.50 (incl P&P) to 'Settling Scores' CPBF, 23 Orford Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9NL. Cheques payable to the CPBF, or buy online at cpbf.org.uk



The communications union

SCOTLAND No. 2 BRANCH

CWU Scotland no.2 branch sends socialist greetings to workers across the world.

We call on all workers to vote Yes in the Scottish independence referendum, and build a new Scotland based on need and not greed.

Forward to a socialist Scotland

WOMEN FOR INDEPENDENCE

by Sandra Webster

AS USUAL Cameron got it very wrong with his announcement that Jesus created the Big Society. He didn't – women did. We are the backbone of society, contribute so much in so many ways but unfortunately our contributions are sometimes not recognised.

Despite some advancements being made in regard to gender equality, there are some roles that are traditionally seen as "women's work". These include childcare and caring. Most of us have done a full's day work already before we arrive at our paid employment.

As austerity cuts gnaw at essential services, it is we women who are there to ensure that daily life continues while we do more and more. Women are bearing the brunt of the cuts. It is the only time the Con-Dems have put us first; right in the firing line.

Benefit cuts impact

The welfare committee heard evidence of the impact of benefit cuts on women and those they care for. A woman in Fife who walked nine miles to get to a food bank. Women who after their adult children who have learning difficulties have been found fit to work, find they are no longer entitled to carers allowance.

They still have to provide care but are called "volunteers" by the apparatus of the welfare state even though their children still require a high deal of support in all their daily lives. Barbara Taylor the feminist historian in her memoir describes



INDEPENDENCE FOR WOMEN: women's voices must be heard

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

LET'S CELEBRATE WHAT WOMEN DO

community care as women usually exhausted, providing care for others. That is probably the view of most politicians who know we won't walk away from those we care for.

As we approach May Day, we must be mindful of women in work whose rights are being eroded. It is a good time to be a boss and be able to make your workforce agree to zero hour contracts. These are also happening in the public sector, with nurses a target.

The head of the Royal College of Nursing called for an end to zero hour contracts. Workers have a right to ask for flexibility in their work but these contracts have put an end to this. Women make up the majority of part time workers too and are often passed over for promotions.

Still we contribute so much. One of the pleasures of speaking for the Yes SSP and Women For Independ-

ence campaigns is seeing so many women becoming more involved in politics. Our passion and enthusiasm will be the key to winning a Yes vote by reaching out to the many women who are still undecided.

It has been so wonderful to see so many women in our own party be part of the Yes campaign and speak at the events we have organised as a party. There are some changes that could encourage women. I have only been on one panel with equal gender representation. I know some may say that women should be only there on merit but how can we develop our skills without being given the opportunities to practice?

Fairer society

The meetings I have mostly attended have been in the evenings when women can't go due to family and caring commitments. We bring to the independence debate a different perspective to the every day issues that have the potential to create an independent Scotland that will be better for not only women but all of us. Women on the left are finding their visions of a peaceful Scotland, a fairer society, are being listened to and being shared by more and more people.

The Scottish Government has announced a women-only Scottish cabinet event to debate indy referendum-related issues. I hope it will be representative of all women all over Scotland, and that as well as

party activists it will include the anti-Trident demonstrators, the women who use food banks, the women who are campaigning against the cuts, the women who nurse a sick child with only care and compassion in their hearts.

This has the potential to be a vibrant, colourful women's debate. I hope this is realised and does not become just a token gesture.

The independence debate has given women more voices and a space to grow and feel they have a right to their viewpoint. For the many women who speak it is not just about the party politics but a wider movement of women.

This has the potential to change Scottish politics forever. Winning independence is just the start, then the hard work begins of creating the kind of Scotland we can only dream about at the moment.

Women will be partners in this – not just left behind with a cursory 'thanks'. We will be there, writing the constitution, being decision makers, and a better place Scotland will be for it. Women – encourage your sisters with positivity and praise and let's rewrite the history books. When future generations look back at this exciting time, let's hope it will be as Scottish HERstory.

There are still many barriers which people do not even realise are there but our voices are powerful and must be heard. It's time for us to take centre stage.

May Day greetings from
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth
Scottish Socialist Party

For independence
for socialism
for internationalism
– say YES in September



by Bill Bonnar

Crash and burn capitalism is the reality beyond neoliberal promises

FOLLOWING THE 1945 general election, the Labour government initiated a range of social and economic reforms which transformed British society.

Key industries were brought into public ownership, turning Britain into a mixed economy. New national institutions such as the Health Service were launched. The education system was reformed to allow greater working class access to higher education while the reduction of poverty and inequality became a central part of government policy.

The welfare state and social security systems were massively expanded while the pursuit of full employment became a key goal. It was all very radical, although this radicalism needs to be put into context.

Most of these measures enjoyed a consensus across the political spectrum and would have been implemented even if the Conservatives had won the election – eg, the Conservatives supported almost all the nationalisation proposals.

Reversing reforms

The guru of modern neoliberal thinking, Milton Friedman, in addressing a meeting of Conservative politicians in the 1970s, described this post war period as an 'historic defeat for capitalism' and was scathing in his critique of the social and economic system it created. He particularly



rounded on successive Conservative governments for presiding over this process and declared that the central aim of any forthcoming Tory government was to restore capitalism to health by reversing as many of these reforms as possible. It was a project enthusiastically carried out by the Thatcher government.

Neoliberalism is the principles of 19th century free market economics applied to modern capitalism. It is based on a simple idea. Capitalism is inherently a productive and dynamic economic system the natural tendency of which is towards growth, innovation and self-regulation. If it is failing to do these things it is because governments are putting barriers in its place; restraining it. What are these barriers?

The first are high levels of taxation which take money out of the pockets of business and consumers. The solution, slash taxes to the bone which will boost the profits of companies allowing them to invest more and put more money into the pockets of consumers allowing them to buy more.

Second, high levels of public expenditure represent unproductive capital; in effect dead money. The money being spent by the state in welfare, health and education would be better poured into productive areas of the economy; promoting growth. This new growth along with increased disposable income created by tax cuts would allow individuals to buy these services based on an assessment of their own needs.

Third, scrap regulations and controls on economic activity. These are simply barriers to productive activity and restrict growth.

In other words slash public spending, use the savings for tax reductions, end regulation and set the system free.

It is all nonsense, of course and fails to address three key issues. The first is that self-evidently the tendency of capitalism is not towards self-regulation.

It is to crash and burn. Because capitalism involves thousands of

companies making millions of short to midterm decisions it has no sense of its collective self-interest. The economic crash of 2008 was a good example.

Leading up to it almost all capitalists saw what the problem was but, driven by their own narrow self-interest, were powerless to act. Only massive state intervention saved the day.

Secondly, all modern capitalist economies survive because they exist within an infrastructure provided by the state. This includes everything from the transport network to the energy system; the health system to the education system. Without these no modern economy could function and these only develop through massive long term state investment.

Thirdly, all the evidence is that an economic system based on neoliberalism creates a society which is unequal, fragmented and lacking any kind of moral framework. The social, economic, environmental and cultural costs for society are beyond measure.

Depression

The first neoliberal project was scrapped after the longest recession in history at the end of the 19th century leading to the First World War. The second was scrapped in 1945 after the depression of the 1930s leading to the Second World War. The third came to an end after the economic crash of 2008.

In each case it took massive state intervention to save the system from itself. The fact that is now being revised again by both the Conservative and Labour Parties is because they can now envisage no alternative within the system. To break with neoliberalism now means to break with capitalism itself.

May Day greetings from
Fife Scottish Socialist Party

All out for a Yes vote!
For a Scottish socialist republic!

• *continued from back page*
Degrees notes: "Investing in unconventional gas now will lock us into dangerously high greenhouse gas emissions and make it extremely difficult to meet our legally binding carbon reduction targets in 2050."

What is needed instead is increased energy efficiency, measures to promote conservation and more investment in the renewables sector.

However, even SEPA, which does not fundamentally oppose UG, has said that it could lead to delays in the programme to convert to renewable energy sources, causing a delay in the reduction of greenhouse gas releases and the decarbonisation of the energy sector.

As the campaign group 38 Degrees notes: "Investing in unconventional gas now will lock us into dangerously high greenhouse gas emissions and make it extremely difficult to meet our legally binding carbon reduction targets in 2050."

False promise

What is needed instead is increased energy efficiency, measures to promote conservation and more investment in the renewables sector – as is already seen in countries like Germany.

But this is unlikely to happen with the Westminster government scrapping green levies and offering tax incentives to the dirty energy companies with the false promise of cheaper energy bills.

The SSP calls for the responsibility for energy to be transferred from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament and the wealth of Scottish energy sources to be brought into public ownership.

Only this way can we hope to see the full development of these resources in an ecologically sustainable and socially just manner, putting people and planet before profit.

Amnesty accuses US Govt of 'stacking the case' against the Cuban Five

by Voice reporter

AMNESTY International (AI), the worldwide Human Rights organisation, has accused the US Government of 'stacking' the case against the Cuban Five. The Cuban Five are five Cuban men arrested in Miami in 1998 while attempting to stop terrorist attacks against the Cuban people.

The AI report spotlights US Government intervention in the build up and during the trial of the Five thus ensuring a successful prosecution, but at the same time making a fair trial impossible.

The systematic payment of journalists to write stories affecting the case, the obstructions on the Five to obtain legal counsel and the fact that procedural and other rights were not afforded to

both the defence and prosecution in equal measure, mean that in the view of Amnesty International the Five could not receive a 'fair trial'.

'Manifest injustice'

The right to a fair trial is a fundamental principle under international law which makes clear that a trial must not only be fair but must be seen to be fair. It is guaranteed under Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 14 of the ICCPR, a key human rights treaty to which the United States itself is a signatory. In the same statement AI calls the double life sentence for one of the Five, Gerardo Hernández, a 'manifest injustice'.

We would encourage all those interested in this case to contact their local national

Amnesty Sections to bring this report to their attention and urging them to coordinate campaigning initiatives for the immediate release of the remaining prisoners, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino and Antonio Guerrero.

Amnesty International gave the formal presentation to the London International Commission of Inquiry into the case of the Cuban Five in March alongside presentations from almost 20 witnesses including lawyers, academics and Cuban Five family members. Over 2000 people attended the Commission events including the Voices for Cuba concert at the Barbican theatre, and over 300 people from 27 countries participated in the International Commission at the Law Society in the heart of London's legal district.



May Day greetings from Scottish Socialist Voice staff and contributors

The only socialist paper written, edited and produced in Scotland

For socialism, independence and internationalism

Paul Robeson Junior died on 26 April 2014. In 2002, he lead the May Day parade in Edinburgh, where the son of the American singer, actor and political activist of the same name spoke to **Colin Fox** about his father and about the political situation in the USA

HALLE BERRY won an Oscar in 2002. Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali have had films made about them. Why has no one highlighted Paul Robeson's contribution? Have they simply forgotten him? His son, Paul Robeson Junior, explained to the Voice:

"Robeson is an non-person in the States today. My father's memory petrifies America still.

"The African American middle class deny his existence altogether. The only black performer who has ever paid him his due has been Harry Belafonte.

"He rightly said that without the pioneering work of Robeson, no one, not Poitier, not Sammy Davis, not Spike Lee, not Denzil Washington, not Halle Berry, no one could have progressed without standing on my father's wide shoulders."

But surely Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali were, in their time, figures equally hated by the US establishment? And yet they have been given a largely sympathetic Hollywood seal of approval.

Anti-fascist

"But Robeson is still too hot for them to handle," says Robeson Junior. "His message is an anti-fascist, wholly class conscious, African-American and anti-imperialist one. All this is too threatening to them.

"They dare not allow him a voice. Especially today, when America is attempting another imperialist offensive."

The Manic Street Preachers 2001 song Let Robeson Sing is a welcome exception which breaches the dam of silence. But it remains Paul Robeson Junior's

Robeson junior and senior remembered



PAUL ROBESON JUNIOR: 1927-2014

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

mission to introduce his father to new generations. To those who have not heard of Paul Robeson, his approach is to try and construct a picture based on people they do know.

"US kids know nothing about my father. I introduce them to him saying 'take a little bit of Martin [Luther King], a little bit of Malcolm [X] and a little of Frederick Douglas and that should give you some idea'.

"Then add in that this son of an escaped slave went on via a highly successful football career to become the highest paid singer in the world, and a hugely successful actor known the world over."

Robeson was one of the first black students to attend university. Despite many dispiriting encounters with severe racial abuse there, he emerged as a law graduate and a professional football star.

It was when the legal world blocked his entry that he turned to the arts. In travels across Europe in the 1930s, Robeson the artist

emerges as Robeson the politically conscious. He became perhaps the best known anti-fascist of all after visiting Spain. He was again perhaps the highest profile casualty of the red baiting witch-hunt in 1950s America.

From being the highest paid singer in America in 1942 (no small achievement given the racist atmosphere of the time), by the end of the 1940s he was denied work anywhere because of his political sympathies with the left.

The authorities withheld his passport for eight years following remarks he made at the Paris Peace conference of 1948 about racism in the USA.

A huge international star, at least as popular in Europe as at home, he was denied the use of halls to perform and recording studios to make records.

Few others were to pay as high a price for sticking resolutely to his anti-imperialist beliefs.

He made a meagre living speaking to union branch meet-

ings. A collection would be taken to provide him with some small income. In 1942 he had earned more than \$100,000 – by 1952 it was less than \$6,000.

Finally allowed the right to travel, he returned to Britain in 1960 to a hero's welcome. A martyr unbowed, he sang to 25,000 Scottish Miners in Edinburgh's Holyrood Park.

Paul Robeson Junior, born in 1927, was with him throughout. Educated in London and Moscow where his father had prolonged spells of employment in concert theatres, he became his father's manager and close collaborator. He has just written an acclaimed biography of Robeson's work.

While his father was never a card carrying member of the Communist Party, his son was a leading figure, serving on the National Committee until he left in 1962.

May Day invite

For 40 years an activist in African American politics, he opposes the "fascist policies of [George W.] Bush" as his father would have.

Invited to Scotland by the Edinburgh May Day Committee, Paul Robeson Junior took time out to meet people and to read widely about the political situation here.

He was enormously impressed by the manifesto and approach of the SSP in constructing a class based mass movement.

"Both Marilyn and myself have been very encouraged indeed by this trip", he said.

"I found the comrades here in Scotland very inspiring.

"I wish all the comrades in the Scottish Socialist Party every success in their work. I know many people in New York who will be equally heartened."

by Stephanie Pride

THE MAIN part of a public enquiry whose conclusion could set a precedent for the development of unconventional gas in the UK has concluded with Falkirk Council coming out against the plans.

Scottish Government Reporters will now consider over three weeks' worth of evidence into what would be the first commercial coalbed methane development in the country.

Dart Energy had submitted a bid to drill 22 wells, a gas delivery and water treatment facility and pipelines on the site at Letham Moss to produce gas for 20 to 25 years, amounting to just 0.02 per cent of annual UK gas consumption.

The method involves the release of methane – a highly potent greenhouse gas – by pumping water out of coal seams some 3,600 feet below farmland near Airth.

Dirty energy

If they get the go-ahead in Falkirk, the decision is likely to set a precedent for the rest of the UK. But if campaigners win, it would be a landmark case in the fight against dirty energy.

In a highly critical summing up, the council's solicitor Neil Collar said the company had failed to provide enough information to support its claims that the environment and community life would not be at risk from the underground works.

Mr Collar said that despite assurances from Dart's experts, the threat to air quality from methane gas leaks remained an issue and criticised the non-availability of key baseline data and testing results.

Summing up for the company, Gordon Steele QC hurled further insults at opposing experts, portraying local residents as gullible, misinformed and led astray by "well-intentioned cli-

Council opposes coalbed gas plans



DIRTY GAS PROTEST: Friends of the Earth Scotland join local campaigners outside public enquiry PHOTO: FoE

mate change supporters" (sic) like Friends of the Earth – who posted an excellent blog of proceedings on their website.

He also posed locally sourced unconventional gas as the only alternative to imported gas from sources such as fracking in the US – as already planned for Grangemouth at huge expense and with the support of the Scottish government.

But claims that the plans for coalbed methane extraction would satisfy Scottish environmental impact regulations count for little as it emerged that current regulations are unclear and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has acknowledged change is needed if unconventional gas opera-

tions are to be controlled properly. As the FoE blogger noted: "They can set standards for the proposed central gas and water processing facility, but can't be sure they can control what happens at the well-heads and along the pipelines.

"No current powers let them take action if methane is found leaking through the soil.

"This is all because commercial-scale coalbed methane is a new industry not envisaged by current rules."

Serious problems

Despite the mounting evidence of serious environmental problems with unconventional methods of gas extraction, the Westminster government maintains that it is "part of the an-

swer to climate change", as a bridge in our transition to a green future. A report to the Scottish Parliament echoes this view, arguing that, properly controlled, "indigenous onshore production would allow the UK to control the emissions better rather than off-shoring them, contribute to energy security, and maintain tax revenues as the North Sea wound down."

However, even SEPA, which does not fundamentally oppose UG, has said that it could lead to delays in the programme to convert to renewable energy sources, causing a delay in the reduction of greenhouse gas releases and the decarbonisation of the energy sector.

As the campaign group 38

• continues on page 14