

Armed police: cops with guns could routinely be on the streets in the Highlands
• see page 11

Rejecting UKIP: pics from the demo in Edinburgh
• see page 2



£1 • issue 438 • 16th–29th May 2014
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Scottish Socialist Voice

EXIT THE BRITISH ROAD

SCOTLAND

18/9

Make Tories history
People not profit
Scrap Trident
Choose your government

WESTMINSTER

More fat cat rule
Austerity & cuts
Bombs not jobs
Rejected Tories rule

AS THE Tories take the lead over Labour in the UK and both promise more austerity, nuclear missiles and savage attacks on the poor, the prospects offered by staying in the United Kingdom looks less and less attractive.

No wonder the No camp faces mounting panic.

Uncharismatic Better Together boss Alistair Darling faces the push, Scottish Office polls – paid for by us –

showing growing Yes support are suppressed and evidence mounts that the scares and smears of Project Fear are failing.

From the Oxford Union to the trade unions, the Scottish Socialist Party is driving home the message that independence opens the way to a more just, democratic Scotland, putting people before profit.



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OPPOSING UKIP



INDY LEFT SAYS NO:
 the pro-independence Scottish left descended on Edinburgh Corn Exchange on the evening of Friday 9 May to declare Scotland a UKIP-free zone and tell Nigel Farage and his nazi Scottish Defence League and Britain First minders that their politics of hate and lies will never be welcome in our country

PHOTOS: Craig Maclean (top left, bottom right) and Scott Macdonald



by Ken Ferguson

TWO YEARS into their relentlessly negative campaign – codenamed, in best Biggles style, as Operation Fear – early signs of a change of tone if not message are emerging from the bowels of Better Together.

Indeed those self same bowels are becoming increasingly uneasy as the gap between Yes and No narrows and the contrast grows between the genuinely mass nature of the Scotland-wide Yes campaign and the cunningly concealed No campaign ground-level activity.

So rare is the existence of any non-PR driven No activity that the ever willingly gullible Scottish press leapt on the supposedly rank and file unionist ‘No Borders’ campaign only to see it exposed by citizen’s journalism as a London-based, rich person’s, Tory-driven PR front.

Nothing can more clearly illustrate the willingness of the Scottish media – including the licence fee-funded BBC – to happily gobble up spoon-fed unionist propaganda with apparently minimal journalistic fact checking.

Yet despite the almost blanket support – with the honourable exception of the Sunday Herald – for No from the print and electronic media, there is a growing realisation that ‘negative, negative, negative’ just isn’t delivering for them.

Additionally, of course, there is the reality that a growing number of Labour activists realise that being in the same organisation as the loathed Tories and their austerity-mongering Lib Dem pals, Better Together, is now and will remain a disaster for them.

Hence the appearance of the so-called ‘United with Labour’ No breakaway, fronted by grumpy failed Prime Minister Gordon Brown, reflecting particularly the revulsion with the Tories amongst No inclined trade unionists.

Spite and confusion

The fact that Brown and No chieftain Alistair Darling are, let us say, not chums, simply adds personal spite to the political confusion.

The latest example of this reality to break was the remarkable news that Better Together’s Labour co-ordinator in east Edinburgh, Gary Wilson, had quit his post, joined Labour for Independence and endorsed a Yes vote.

The reasons given by Mr Wilson for his decision majored on his lifelong rejection of the Tory values of greed-and-grab, and a growing revulsion at sitting with them in

Growing smell of fear signals appearance of No camp ‘soft cop’



THE GOOD, THE BAD: but the ugly truth is that remaining in the UK is a massive risk for Scots

Better Together while they and their Lib Dem soulmates continue to assault the poor.

Even in the closed world of Scottish Labour, the penny is beginning to drop that scares and smears – even when delivered by so called Labour “big beasts” such as Brown, former war minister Reid or NATO groupie Robertson – aren’t doing the job.

Into this melee then enter Scottish Labour’s key thinker Douglas Alexander apparently offering a pipe of peace to Yes campaigners, urging them, if they lose, to work with him to deliver more devolved power to Edinburgh.

The reality of course is somewhat different. When the Scottish Parliament held its first modern session just 15 years ago, Labour was the dominant party, the Tories reduced to a rump and the Lib Dems large enough to form a coalition with Labour. The SNP looked defeated.

The first sign that this was changing was the election of an SNP minority government followed by the humbling of Labour in the SNP landslide in 2011 which comprehensively trashed any illusions that Labour was the leading force in Scottish politics.

There can be no doubt that the Alexander intervention is both an attempt to soften the

unremittingly negative No message and a rather clumsy attempt to pretend that Labour – in opposition in London and Edinburgh – is still dominant in Scotland.

It was probably a coincidence that Alexander’s supposed olive branch came hard on the heels of a Church of Scotland offer to host a “service of reconciliation” after the referendum, as if the two camps had exchanged gunfire rather than arguments, but for Labour it is a calculated move.

Nightmare scenario

The nightmare scenario – apart from a Yes vote – for Scottish Labour is that they deliver a No vote then lose the 2015 Westminster poll.

The Tories would then step up and slash and burn in what they would see as a defeated Scotland leaving Labour to face the consequences of having persuaded supporters to face a further five years of austerity with cuts which would hobble Holyrood without further devolution.

Hard cop Darling or soft cop Alexander, remaining inside the increasingly rightward moving UK is a colossal risk for Scottish voters and it is imperative that a mass Yes campaign ensures that it does not happen.



Were MSPs right to not to outlaw fracking?

by Roz Paterson

WHEN YOU imagine a future Scotland, do your fond daydreams largely feature the practice of pumping highly toxic chemicals through shale rock, thereby contaminating groundwater and soil, in the hope of extracting some small reserves of fossil fuels that will only hasten our journey to sure and certain climate catastrophe? No? You sure, now?

Alas, MSPs recently declined to outlaw fracking in Scotland, just as the energy vultures circle, hoping to secure the rights to blast open the earth's crust in pursuit of things to set fire to, for profit.

Hazardous

The Greens' Alison Johnston, who led the anti-fracking charge, argued that we could surely do better than "[scrape] the bottom of the fossil fuels barrel". Surely, a lot better.

Fracking gets a bad press, because it deserves to. It involves pumping water, air and chemicals, at high pressure,

into shale rock or otherwise inaccessible coal seams, in a bid to find and extract gas and methane.

It is hazardous, and hit and miss in the extreme. If you want a graphic example of what fracking could mean for you, try looking up YouTube, where a number of people demonstrate the presence of methane, leaked from fracked sites, in their tap water...by igniting it!

Not only that, but once the stuff is actually out, and used, it only serves to accelerate global warming which, as the IPCC has pointed out, is well on the way to a 2 degree rise. A 2 degree rise is not good, and will not mean Mediterranean summers and bumper crops of grapes, like some pea-brains would insist.

Instead, we can look forward to more flooding, more drought, more famine, more species extinction...and still we'll have to curb our carbon habit. So why not do it while we still have something left to lose?

Nonetheless, Iain Gray, former Scottish Labour leader, you know the one, er...well, anyway..., he opined that we in Scotland are in "no position to shut down another potential energy source."

It's funny he should say that because, in fact, Scotland is perhaps unique in that it IS in a position to shut down such a dubious energy source, and provide a blueprint for the post-hydrocarbon economy.

Energy surplus

Far from running on empty, Scotland is a net exporter of energy; some 26 per cent of the energy we generate is sent elsewhere, because we are in surplus.

Not only that, but government figures show that Scotland is on course for the renewables sector to generate 100 per cent of Scotland's energy by 2020. The figures for 2012 show that renewables accounted for 40.3 per cent of the energy market, up from 36.3 per cent in 2011, and still expanding.

This compares with 8 per cent accounted for by gas, and 2.8 per cent by oil. Do we really want to reverse this healthy trend towards sustainable energy?

Instead of investing in fracking, the latest swear-word in the environmental lexicon, surely we should be investing in offshore wind energy? The WWF says we should, and given that Scotland boasts 6,200 miles of coastline, much, much more than England, Wales or Ireland, we're very well places to do very well with it, why don't we?

Scotland is on the brink of making a very bold and brave decision. If we are capable of deciding for ourselves, if we bid for independence, we may find we are capable of a whole raft of bold and brave decisions. Like saying no to fracking, to fossil fuels, to a carbon-based economy that has sickened our planet, compromised our future, and corrupted our political systems. Scotland has no need, and no place, for fracking.

THE UNION MAN

Scottish Socialist Party national co-spokesperson **Colin Fox** was invited to the Oxford Union last week to debate the motion 'This House Believes Scotland Should Be An Independent Country'. Opposing him were Labour MP Anne McGuire, Lord Jim Wallace and the businessman John Dunsmore. This was his speech.

F Mr President I rise to support the motion and would like to thank the Oxford Union for inviting me. I understand the debate this evening will 'follow the British Parliamentary style.

I have done my best to heed those instructions. I have fiddled my expenses and have received payment for the questions in my speech. And in time honoured tradition, I shall speak in a manner completely out of touch with the day to day reality of the people who elected us, an approach practised with such aplomb by so many MPs at Westminster!!

Mr President, supporting Scotland's democratic right to self-determination does not make you a Scottish nationalist it makes you a democrat. The Scottish Socialist Party are not nationalists, we stand in the traditions of the Red Clydeside leader John Maclean and Edinburgh's James Connolly, executed by the British for his part in the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916.

Progress

No one familiar with the work of these men would ever describe them as nationalists. They weren't. They were internationalists, socialists who supported Scottish independence because they recognised the progress it offered democrats and anti-imperialists like them.

According to the OECD's most recent report, an independent Scotland would be the 14th richest country in the world, ahead of the RUK at 18th. We contributed



9.8 per cent of all UK taxes last year despite having just 8.4 per cent of the population. Our GDP was £150billion.

I only mention these facts because the No side would have you believe, Mr President, that Scotland is some economic 'basket case', entirely dependent on subsidy from England the claim is nonsense because like all wealthy countries Scotland's riches come from an array of industries.

We have huge oil reserves. We have a world class financial services sector, a renewable energy industry that produces one third of our electricity, a highly profitable food and drink industry, construction, manufacturing, fishing, agriculture and forestry, life sciences and IT, tourism, world class Universities... and our most valuable asset?

Our people – skilled, talented and resourceful. It stands to reason that if all that wealth remained in Scotland instead of being siphoned off by the UK Treasury we would be better off. And we could tackle the scandalous social problems Scotland suffers under the Union. The child poverty that sees one in three youngsters in Glasgow live in deprivation. The

fuel poverty that sees one million households denied the gas and electricity they need. The 157,000 people on housing waiting lists.

The food banks catering for those unable to feed themselves. And the chronic low wages that sees 680,000 people endure poverty pay – these will never be solved under the Union.

Britain is the 4th most unequal society on earth. Such grotesque inequalities do not happen by accident. They are the result of policies designed to make the rich richer and poor poorer. Britain is a failed state, a political Union no longer fit for purpose. It is a democracy denier.

A Yes vote on 18 September is not just a vote for independence it is a vote against the neoliberal, warmongering policies that dominate Westminster. Scotland will be better off free from that regime. Scotland is a nation with a social democratic centre of gravity.

The majority of Scots support the redistribution of wealth, higher taxes on the rich, public ownership over privatisation, trades union rights and state intervention when needed, universal benefits, social solidarity, equality, fairness, justice and enterprise.

And we are much more inclined towards building a modern, democratic republic than maintaining an unelected, unrepresentative feudal monarch as our Head of State. We are, in short Mr President, a left of centre country trapped inside a right wing body.

The speakers from the other side have shown us again tonight that their case is based on scare-mongering. They bleat like Private Fraser in Dad's Army 'We're doomed, Captain Mainwaring, doomed' – our oil is worthless, our currency is useless, our pensions will never be paid, we are too small, too poor and too stupid to run our own country – the sun will never shine again with independence!

They argue 'Scotland has the best of both world's, we have a strong Scottish Parliament and vital influence at Westminster.'

Delusion

It's a double dip delusion Mr President! I was an MSP at Holyrood for four years. My daily experience was to be told what I could not talk about. So, we don't have a strong Parliament that's what this debate is all about.

And neither do we have vital influence at Westminster because if we did we would not have had the Poll Tax, Bedroom Tax, the privatisation of the Royal Mail, Trident II or the war in Iraq all foisted on us against our wishes.

Scotland is continuously denied the policies and political philosophy we want. That's why Scotland will vote Yes on 18 September Mr President. We have a unique opportunity to live our lives based on our own values, to change Britain forever and again change the world.

I am confident we will do so. I urge this house to stand on the right side of history and to support the motion. Thank you.

by John McAllion

SINGING THE RED FLAG CAN'T HIDE LABOUR ATTACKS ON THE POOR

DURING Scottish Labour's recent Perth conference, a succession of speakers sought to convince us that a socially just Scotland could only happen inside a Labour Britain.

They promised a "race to the top" in which Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom would fight together to build a people's economy.

They explained that social justice could only prevail over capitalist exploitation after the Coalition Government had been consigned to the dustbin of history.

All they required of us was to vote No in the referendum and to vote for Labour governments in both Scotland and the UK.

As the three-day conference ended with the singing of the Red Flag, delegates congratulated themselves on recapturing the social justice agenda and on re-positioning themselves to the left of the SNP.

Yet within a week of the conference's end, Labour's Westminster MPs had joined with the Tories and Liberal Democrats to pass by 520 votes to 22 a vicious cap on welfare spending across the UK.

Cuts target poor

Placing such an arbitrary cap on welfare spending is a direct attack on the poor. It ignores actual levels of need in a country already reeling from massive Coalition cuts. It makes no provision for changing circumstances like the current housing bubble in London and the South-East that many fear will cause another economic crisis. It locks unfairness into our welfare system and penalises those least able to look after themselves.

Save the Children warned that £3billion of cuts would now be targeted on the poor and predicted that the cap would drive another 345,000 children into poverty.

Labour's "socially just" leadership responded that the cap was the "right thing to do".



HEX FACTOR: Ed Miliband at Scottish Labour's recent conference

They added that Labour had called for the cap first and that the Coalition Government was merely implementing Labour policy. Of course, not a whisper of this Labour policy had been heard during the three-day conference in Perth.

Labour's record on social justice leaves much to be desired. Their Scottish leader infamously railed against universal benefits and a "something for nothing Scotland". At the Perth conference, the party issued a 64-page mini-manifesto intended to woo back disillusioned working class voters.

As the Labour-supporting Guardian newspaper pointed out, the document singularly failed to explain how Labour proposed to end popular but costly policies targeted by their Scottish leader in her speech, including free university tuition, free personal care for the elderly and free NHS prescriptions.

Labour's Shadow Chancellor had already promised to implement the Coalition's plans to slash spending on public services after 2015. He went further than the Coalition in committing to the means-testing of winter fuel payments for pensioners.

Labour had also endorsed freezes on public sector pay, compulsory work for the unemployed and even considered axing housing and unemployment benefits for under-25s. Their current Shadow Work and Pensions Minister, Rachel Reeves MP, has promised to be tougher than the Tories on welfare.

Given Labour's long march to the right on social justice, their decision to back the cap on welfare should surprise no one.

However, it is possibly the final straw that signifies the party's ultimate break with the post-war settlement of a comprehensive welfare system providing social protection from the cradle

to the grave. Before 1945 the 18th century Poor Law principle had determined that applicants for public assistance must undergo a means test and demonstrate virtual destitution before qualifying for state aid. The inter-war British state recognised no responsibility for the welfare of its citizens.

After 1945, all of that changed.

The British welfare state was the most ambitious in post-war Europe. Health care, education, pensions, benefits were all largely state funded and heavily subsidised. In 1949, and despite the then severe strains on the country's public finances, nearly 17 per cent of all public spending went on social security alone.

By its nature, this welfare spending was socially redistributive but not socially divisive. The universal nature of the benefits meant that the middle and commercial classes also benefitted for the first time from state provided health care, education and insurance cover. Apart from a diminishing elite at the very top, everyone in post-war Britain had a stake in the new social state.

It is that social state that is now being dismantled by a cross-party consensus on Westminster's green and red benches.

Brutal reality

Like the other Better Together parties, Labour too now draws a distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor. It also looks to means test the better off out of the social state. Like them, it scapegoats the unemployed and vulnerable for their welfare dependency while competing to keep the costs of welfare for "hardworking families" to an absolute minimum.

Once the party of the Welfare State, Labour now belongs to a Westminster consensus delivering the last rites to the social state they had once helped to create. There is nothing socially just about that.

Singing the Red Flag and talking about social justice cannot disguise that brutal reality.

INDEPENDENCE, SOLIDARITY, SOCIALISM

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

by *Richie Venton, SSP
national workplace
organiser*

WHEN IT comes to reporting the stance of trade unionists on the referendum, the picture is consciously distorted in the mainstream media by announcements of national union leaderships declaring their adherence to Better Together, or their sub-contracted messengers, United with Labour.

Under the surface, a groundswell of trade union members are concluding independence is the quickest, and maybe the only, escape route from decades of miserable poverty, job insecurity and capital's dictatorship over their working lives.

Members in revolt

It is no accident that the leaderships of giant unions like UNITE and UNISON – plus the STUC as a whole – have remained studiously unaffiliated to either the Yes or No campaigns, whilst in fact regularly lacerating Better Together for its lack of vision and failure to persuade workers of any bene-



CWU: UK conference decision to call for a No vote flies in the face of the sentiment of Scottish meetings

fits from continued UK rule. These union leaderships know full well the ranks wouldn't tolerate affiliation to the Tory-funded, Labour-fronted Better Together.

So their Labour affiliation has

not led to them toeing the party line. And in the case of UNISON, this is despite pressure from UK general secretary Dave Prentis to accept a huge sum of members' money to affiliate to Better Together!

Even in those unions which used UK-wide conferences to impose support for a No vote on the Scottish membership, usually with little or even no prior discussion in Scottish branches,

• *continues on page 8*



PHOTO: Craig Maclean

• *continued from page 7*

members are refusing to obey the dictates of remote, overpaid national leaderships.

USDAW members on or just above the pathetic minimum wage have a radically different view of the glories of Britain from that of a Labour-loving general secretary on six or seven times the wage of a full-time retail worker.

ASLEF members are angry at the lack of real debate prior to their affiliation to Better Together, and are now insisting on debates to inform members prior to September. GMB members are furious at the way their union leadership nailed them to the No camp, which is why Scottish officers have been desperate to disassociate from Better Together, clinging onto the veneer of being United with Labour instead. The CWU leadership are the latest

to hoist their flag for the No camp, after an exercise in sham consultation in Scotland. They didn't ignore the Scottish membership as brazenly as the likes of USDAW; they held a series of city-based debates, with members invited to hear a speaker from both sides.

But as one of those who spoke in some of the debates for the Yes side, I can testify that the recent UK conference decision to call for a No vote flies in the face of the sentiment of those meetings.

The leadership circulated scaremongering bulletins to every member, lifted straight from the book of the Better Together fear factory. At the meetings they consciously never took a vote after the debate. In some of the meetings there was a clear majority for Yes, judging by comments during and after,

Richie Venton spoke to two SSP members who are delegates to the PCS union national conference this week in Brighton...

Gerry McMahon, Glasgow DWP worker and PCS Scottish Committee member



GERRY McMAHON

THE SSP has been a massive part of Yes PCS, driving and leading the arguments.

No is nowhere in PCS. Not one branch and not one delegate at the special Scottish PCS branch conference on the referendum was prepared to back the No campaign. This shows that amongst active union members there is no faith in Westminster government of any political persuasion to deal with the deep-seated problems of civil servants and public service workers.

A significant minority of branches openly backed independence. Many, many more

members did personally, but some were reluctant to commit their branch to it, but argue the case for it among members.

PCS has since met with the SNP government and with Scottish Labour leader Johann Lamont to seek commitments on key issues. Johann Lamont is not prepared to give any commitments on protecting union facility time, the check-off system of collecting union subs, nor job protection.

In contrast the SNP government has. The SSP

welcomes that; it is not insignificant, and in fact helps makes the choice of voting Yes a simple, unequivocal one. But we need much more than just a Yes vote. We need an independent socialist Scotland to deliver much more than is on offer from either Better Together or the current Scottish government. For example we need a single civil service pay system. If it's good enough for Scottish teachers, nurses, local authority workers, it should be good enough for us too. And it should be based on the best pay rates, not some of those suffered in the likes of DWP. We need a society which can deliver no redundancies.

A massive issue is the number of food bank referrals made daily in the DWP. It's scary. When they first came in about

nine months ago we had to ask 'how do you do this?'. Now it's often three or four a day. We need a vision of an entirely new welfare system, with fundamental change. We need to free up resources, with investment in green jobs. We need to tackle the housing crisis. We need to end the tax evasion by the likes of Gary Barlow by reversing the loss of tax workers jobs. And an independent Scotland needs not only a decent welfare state but meaningful, rewarding, well-paid jobs.

In the view of SSP members in PCS, our union decision to inform the members must be carried out in a clear, honest, forceful report of what is on offer - not some wishy washy report. The NEC should make sure every member is clear that New Labour

offers absolutely nothing to persuade members to back Westminster rule, no ifs or buts! They should also make clear what the Scottish government has committed to.

PCS branches should do all in their powers to campaign for a Yes vote, whilst the national union has agreed 'we inform, the members decide'. And my appeal to PCS activists is to examine your conscience, your socialist soul, and surely you must conclude that you need to talk to members, argue and persuade them to vote Yes. Almost the entire progressive left is in the Yes camp. The SSP has been instrumental in shaping that view, with written material, speakers, videos, debates, and huge public meetings on the case for an independent socialist Scotland.

and in the rest a substantial Yes minority – all despite the leadership documents.

But fury at the UK union leadership wielding the vote of UK conference – where over 90 per cent of delegates are from outside Scotland – has only added to the determination of CWU activists to campaign for a Yes vote.

The Scottish Prison Officers' Association debated and voted overwhelmingly for Yes.

The RMT is about to announce the outcome of their consultative members' meetings, where several were enthusiastically for independence.

And PCS held an extremely democratic consultation of members, where not one single branch in the whole of Scotland supported the No camp.



THATCHER'S BRATS: even if Labour defied predictions and won in 2015, what future do they offer workers?

Stark choice

Workers face a stark choice. Continued, and indeed escalated, attacks on the working class from a Westminster government regardless of what colour rosette the Prime Minister wears after the May 2015 General election. Or kicking the door open to radical redistribu-

tion of wealth and power towards the working class through Scottish self-government, not by relying on the pro-big business SNP, but by fighting and organising to shape Scotland into a socialist society.

The latest polls are reason enough to vote to escape Westminster, with the Tories ahead

of Labour and UKIP leapfrogging the Lib Dems. But even if Labour defied most predictions and won in 2015, what future do they offer workers?

We can't afford to forget 13 years of Labour in government preceded the current Etonian butchers, and acted as John the Baptist preparing for the arrival

of Christ. Labour initiated the vicious Workfare schemes and benefits sanctions now carried out with the zeal of maniacs by the Coalition, driving 70,000 people a month into destitution. And worse is to come, with threats of daily visits to the Job-Centre, compulsory work for no

• *continues on page 10*

*John Davidson,
HMRC PCS Group
Executive member
and Yes PCS
organiser*



JOHN DAVIDSON

THE PCS position on the referendum is far from neutral. Not a single branch endorsed Better Together, and the NEC Motion to annual conference states that.

We need to make sure members are informed, with debates in branches and in every town and community where civil servants live.

The positive case

for Yes on the questions PCS put to them on no compulsory redundancies, scrapping Trident, etc, contrasts with getting nothing back from Better Together.

And when it comes to circulating

members with the responses, we won't think twice about printing a blank space where Better Together fails to answer.

PCS Left Unity supports independence, after we debated it at a Scottish members meeting.

Working people would be better off. It would be a direct challenge to austerity.

For socialists and trade unionists independence is based on the triumvirate of prosperity, equality

and democracy.

Working people would be better off when you look at the taxes wasted on weapons of masses destruction, illegal wars and Westminster politicians who increasingly never serve us.

Equality could be tackled in the eight richest country which is also the fourth most unequal. One in three kids in Glasgow live in poverty, one in five across the UK, whereas it's one in 25 in Scandinavia.

On democracy, we

have one Tory MP in the whole of Scotland, but if the latest opinion polls are to be believed, we face a Tory government until 2020 or beyond.

PCS members need to not only vote Yes, but get involved in the campaign, through the SSP, Yes PCS and RIC.

Independence would be a blow to the anti-trade union laws that go back to a Thatcher and even pre-Thatcher.

To allow secondary action, which is the real barrier between workers, not borders.

• continued from page 9

wages – all of which not only condemns the unemployed to pauperism, but helps drive down the wages of those in jobs. And Labour has promised to be tough on benefits too!

Labour jokers

Labour retained Thatcher's anti-union laws, now being added to by the Coalition, with plans to effectively outlaw public sector strikes. Westminster are the ones to ban solidarity action between workers – not some bogus splitting of the working class through Scottish independence.

When Ed Miliband and Gordon Brown promise 'the best of both worlds', with a 'strong Scottish Parliament and the benefits of sharing resources across the regions within the UK', with tantalising promises of only one Xmas until a Labour government that will usher in social justice, I don't know if they're standup comedians or downright stupid, or just lying.

Social justice in the UK after 13 years of Labour in office means the most regionally unequal state in the whole of Europe. As even Coalition Lib Dem lapdog Vince Cable admits, the city of London "sucks the life out of the rest of the country".

Since the massive recession, London has had twice the growth rates of any other part of



PEOPLE NOT PROFIT: independence, socialism and solidarity should be the watchwords of the union movement

the UK, and whilst 284,000 jobs were lost across the UK from 2007-12, 267,000 jobs were created in London.

In Scotland today, the 'best of both worlds' means the richest tenth of the population enjoy 900 times (yes, nine hundred) as much wealth as the poorest tenth of Scots.

Independence is a sure way to escape Tory dictatorship, which is a real and present threat up until 2020 or beyond if we remain chained to Westminster.

But that is not to delude workers that a land of milk and honey automatically follows a

Yes vote. The wealth is there aplenty in Scotland, but it depends entirely on who owns and controls it.

The SSP wants independence as a means to very desirable ends. To banish poverty pay with a decent level of legally enforced national minimum wage – at least £9 an hour in today's figures.

To end the nightmare of Workfare and benefit sanctions, with massive job creation in housing, green energy, public services – plus a caring welfare system for the young, elderly, sick or disabled, funded by tax-

ation of the rich and big business. To scrap the anti-union laws and enshrine the right to work, the right to strike, the right to take solidarity action in the constitution. To demand widespread democratic public ownership of the banks, energy, transport, construction, and major industries – with elected, accountable workers' representatives making up the majority on boards of management.

Socialist Scotland

These steps towards a socialist Scotland would vastly enhance the lives of the working class majority in Scotland, but also enhance the fighting spirits and chances of similar transformation being fought for by workers in neighbouring countries.

Workers and their unions should join the fight to shape such a socialist future.

Independence, socialism and international solidarity should be the watchwords of the trade union movement – not surrender to the dictatorship of capital and its various political mouthpieces.

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Highland MSP and former police officer **John Finnie** examines the evidence

Is this the end of unarmed policing?

SCOTLAND'S POLICE Service, like every other employer, must assess the risks its staff face and put in place mechanism to ameliorate those risks. Crucially, the police must also constantly assess the risks faced by communities.

The former Northern Constabulary covered the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, a massive expanse of land with the Highland Council area alone the size of Belgium.

A number of years ago an assessment showed that there was a need to have an Armed Response Vehicle (ARV) i.e. two trained firearms officers driving around in a traffic car, able to respond readily to any 'firearm' situation in the north.

The officers were not armed. Rather, should the need arise, they sought permission from a senior officer to open a safe in the boot where the weapons were stored. This situation worked satisfactorily receiving good reports from the Police Inspectorate.

Significant change

Last week, a constituent shared their anxiety with me about a change of practice with the ARV in the Highlands and Islands, now 'N' division of Police Scotland, whereby officers could routinely be on the streets and armed, a significant change in operational practice.

Via the press, I have shared my concerns with Police Scotland. The police confirmed that it was now routine practice for ARV officers to be armed throughout their entire shift. Much more worrying, those same officers are used to 'support routine policing'.

So, it's closing time for the pubs and clubs in Inverness and among the officers monitoring the crowds dispersing are the armed officer, their



ARMED COPS: in a significant change in operational practice, Highlands armed response officers supporting normal, everyday policing could routinely be on the streets and armed

side-arms clearly visible. Assistant Chief Constable Higgins, in an exceptionally swift letter responding to press coverage, was very direct, '...with the creation of Police Scotland the decision was taken to provide a standing authority for a limited number of trained ARV officers to overtly deploy with sidearms and less lethal weapons.' There you have it. That's how we moved from an unarmed to an armed presence on the street.

We would all understand the occasions when officers would be on our streets armed. Invariably in the north this would be connected with drug related violence and be very geographically confined.

Now, the public were assured that best practices in each of the former police force areas would be replicated in the new single service. Sadly, one year in, that

has not proved to be the case and we have one version, invariably the former Strathclyde version, applying nationwide, everywhere from Govan to Gairloch, Pilton to Portree. It's wrong and I am already challenging it.

I'm sure many readers will stay in urban areas and wonder what the fuss is about.

I am a former police officer with 30 years' service. I support the police. I support a single police service but I understand a single police service was seen as a political challenge to many. As a Councillor I served on a Police Committee and saw how deferential my colleagues were and how ineffective the scrutiny was.

It is great news that there are no longer 23 chief officers, all on six figure salaries, many of them chauffeur-driven. I am also pleased the public purse

no longer pays a staggering £5million to run their 'staff association'. I like that the new service has engagement, right down to council ward level, on how the community should be policed and I am delighted that those of us who pushed for the Scottish Parliament to have a Police Committee scrutinising that single service won the day. As examination of the television footage will show we have challenged the chief constable and his colleagues. They don't like it. Clearly, we need to do much more.

I have absolutely no doubt that this change is an operational decision, taken without reference to politicians, much as the issue of Tasers was in Strathclyde.

Toxic assembly

I will meet with the ACC Higgins shortly. In the interim, I have posed many questions trying to 'understand the background' giving rise to the change of policy. What was it based on? Who took the decision? Based on what criteria? Following discussion with whom? What community impact assessment was made? And many, many more.

Guns and alcohol don't mix and drink and drug-fuelled crowds and police can be a toxic assembly which will only be aggravated by the presence of anyone armed!

In Scotland, the Police undertake their duties by the consent of the citizens. I don't think any reasonable citizen will be content at this arming by stealth.

I know I'm not and I intend getting some answers.

WHAT ARE ZERO HOURS CONTRACTS?

by *Stephanie Pride*

CARE WORKERS, junior academics, mystery shoppers and agency staff... One thing they have in common is that many, if not most, are on zero hours contracts.

Far from being a new phenomenon, zero hours contracts have been around a long time but are only now receiving the scrutiny they deserve for shackling workers to insecure and low-paid employment with fewer rights than those defined as employees.

It is notoriously difficult to estimate the true number of people on such contracts – the STUC puts it at nearly 120,000 across Scotland, although this is based on an outdated figure from the Office for National Statistics, which now puts the number at 1.4 million across the UK. It is also believed that the number of people hired on contracts which do not guarantee a minimum number of hours has doubled over the past decade.

Few protections

Not included in the statistics is the large number of people on highly dubious 'self-employed' contracts – many of them in sales and marketing, catalogue distribution and work-from-home jobs.

The advantage for those who provide such work is that there is no statutory minimum wage, no benefits and very few protections. One large employer, based in Scotland, routinely hands out contracts making workers liable to pay for access to equipment, to supply a 'substitute' when sick, take out their own personal indemnity insurance, indemnify the company against any action from HMRC and – much like a super-injunction – ensure the existence of the contract is kept a secret.

Although the zero-hours contract has no legal definition, European legislation broadly divides workers into three categories with different rights and responsibilities:



POVERTY PAY: pub chain JD Wetherspoon uses zero hours contracts

employees, workers and the self-employed.

Most people on zero-hours contracts, like agency workers and the casually employed, fall into the category of 'worker'. Strictly speaking, they are under no obligation to work for the employer and the employer is not obliged to provide work for them. However, they do have rights relating to pay, hours, health and safety and discrimination.

Sometimes it is hard to determine which category someone falls into, but there are four essential requirements for a worker to be an employee: payment for the work done; the employee does the work personally; control by the employer over what the worker does and when, where and how they do it; and mutual obligation.

Self-employed people only have the rights that are given by a contract, although they are also covered by discrimination law and protected by health and safety legislation.

In practice, the employer holds all the cards and there is often no acknowledgement of legislation like the European working time directive, which lays down rules like ensuring workers have a minimum of 11 hours break between their shifts. More savvy employers will

ask staff to sign an opt-out agreement if they want to work at all.

Of course, the defining feature of a zero-hours contract is the worker is not guaranteed any work at all and the much vaunted 'flexibility' of the arrangement is all with the employer. Some add exclusivity clauses – requiring the worker not to take on other employment – and shifts can be taken away or added with the minimum of notice.

The precariousness of such employment, where it is all but impossible to prove discrimination when your hours at the boss's whim, has given rise to the definition of a new category of worker – the Precariat, a term originally used in 1980s France to describe temporary and seasonal workers.

Today these are the workers, many of them women, recent immigrants and the very young, who don't know what they'll be earning from one week to the next, cannot make plans for things like childcare and find it all but impossible to access the appropriate level of benefits or tax credits, leaving them open to sanctions and periods without income.

'Flexibility' might be touted as a virtue, but these people's landlords, billers and creditors do not share that attitude, plunging many into a debt spiral. However meagre,

there is at least some predictability on benefits. However, the UK government is now saying jobseekers risk losing their benefits if they turn down certain zero-hours contracts without 'good reason'.

In December, Business Secretary Vince Cable ruled out banning such contracts, but announced a consultation on the issue, looking at such areas as exclusivity.

The Scottish Enterprise Minister Fergus Ewing has urged the Government to look at ways in which workers can be compensated or a minimum income secured when shifts are cancelled.

In response to the consultation, Citizens Advice Scotland has highlighted the widespread misuse of zero hours contracts and the need to strengthen employment laws to give workers more rights including protection from unfair dismissal.

Pressure

Under pressure, universities in Scotland are now starting to review their practices, with the Scottish University and College Union branding the widespread use of zero-hours contracts as "exploitative". It said universities were "using the fierce competition for permanent jobs to create a no-rights culture for teachers and researchers".

Unchecked, it is likely that this culture will spread, eroding the hard-won gains of organised labour and distorting the true employment picture.

One solution, put forward by Guy Standing, an academic and former ILO researcher, is to create new organisations rooted outside any single workplace and to adopt a basic citizen's income, payable to all, which would enhance the bargaining power of people at the low end and actually increase the incentive to work.

At least the debate has started, and it is one that should be addressed in any prospective for an independent Scotland.

by Bill Bonnar

ADVOCATES OF neoliberalism argue that their policies have rarely been tried even by right wing governments around the world.

In fact, in Britain, their harshest criticism is often directed at the Conservative Party. If only governments applied genuine neoliberal policies the benefit would be self-evident.

The problem is that most aspects of neoliberalism have been tried in various parts of the world over the past 30 years. It is usually a sorry tale of economic destruction, financial instability and spiralling inequality and poverty with the state eventually rushing to the rescue.

Latin America in the '80s and '90s was a good example. Neoliberal policies hit the region like an economic hurricane inflicting so much damage that governments are still today trying to sort out the mess.

In fact, the election of a raft of left of centre governments in Latin America since the turn of the century has been primarily a political response to this period. These governments range from the mildly social democratic as in Argentina to the overtly revolutionary as in Venezuela yet all share something in common; a categorical rejection of the kind of neoliberal economics which inflicted so much damage.

Alternative

In contrast they have developed alternative economic strategies. These involve two fundamental ideas. First, that the state must play a far more central role in managing the economy and in curbing the excesses of the free market system. This state intervention ranges from nationalisation of key industries, forcing multi-national companies to enter tough contractual arrangements with government, widespread regulation and a much more robust and progressive tax regime.

Second, the conviction that problems of poverty and inequality are structural in nature and can only be resolved by government intervention. Hence the kinds of ambitious social programmes around poverty, health and education that is an anath-

Scotland pioneered the ideas of neoliberalism, now it needs to bury it



ema to neoliberals. Elsewhere in the world what has been the fate of neoliberalism since its heady days of the '80s and '90s?

Many regions have witnessed astonishing levels of growth but not because of neoliberal policies. In South East Asia capitalist growth has went hand in hand with state intervention and control to an extent that would make members of the Adam Smith Institute foam at the mouth.

The best example is probably China which last year emerged as the world's second largest economy. While China displays all the features of a vibrant capitalist economy including colossal levels of corruption and inequality it also has an economy which is still overwhelmingly state owned and with a level of centralised government planning greater today than at the time of Mao.

In part, neoliberalism is ideologically driven; a belief that whatever the short-term pain the system will triumph in the end. Even if what occurs is economic and societal carnage. In post-soviet Russia in the '90s the country was subjected a nation-wide, free market experiment. State industries were broken up and sold off, social services were slashed

and the economy reduced to a state of ruin. The result was millions plunged overnight into poverty and destitution, overnight mass unemployment in a country that had only known full unemployment, the collapse of state institutions, rampant crime, an appalling deterioration in the nation's health and mortality rates which went through the roof.

Yet there was no corresponding rise in economic development instead the emergence of a new criminal oligarchy enriched through their plunder of state resources.

Today Russia, although still beset with enormous social and economic problems and still lagging well behind levels achieved in Soviet times, has turned a corner. How has this been achieved? By bringing many key industries, particularly oil and gas, back under national control and re-asserting the role of the state in the national economy.

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, why do so many capitalist governments still embrace neoliberalism? The reason is that they see no other choice. The rise of neoliberalism in Europe and North America co-insides with the change in these countries from industrial to post in-

dustrial economies. With economies no longer based on manufacturing they have turned to finance capital as an alternative.

Britain's post – industrial economy is now dominated by its financial sector and the City of London. The neoliberal model with its in built tax avoidance system, lack of regulation and 'flexible' approach to working practices is ideally suited to this form of capitalism. In fact for government, Labour or Conservative, it is the only show in town.

Any alternative approach runs counter to the interests of the system they are trying to protect. This all is of vital relevance to a post independent Scotland and the road down which our country will travel.

Wages and rights

The neoliberal model would rely on a Scotland which has a 'competitive' economy. This is a code word for low wages and a lack of workers' rights, a 'liberal' tax regime and little regulation; all to attract foreign investment. Poverty and inequality would remain at significant levels while trying to create a more sustainable and balanced economy would be impossible.

The alternative would be to recognise that some industries are key national industries and should be taken back into public ownership, that high levels of public expenditure are good, that a robust and progressive tax regime is necessary to tackle poverty and inequality and that a developing an alternative kind of economy requires state intervention and control. Scotland was the birth place of many of the original ideas of neoliberalism back in the 18th century. Scotland in future can be where these ideas are buried.

John Finnie takes a look at what has changed since its first performance

REMEMBERING THE CHEVIOT, THE STAG AND THE BLACK, BLACK OIL

IT'S THE 40th anniversary of the 7:84 Theatre Company's play *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*.

I was teenager in the Highlands when it first took to the road across the Gaeltachd. I'd spend secondary education refusing to be told what was 'excellent' in literature. I'd make up my own mind. Plays for me meant Shakespeare. I didn't understand the language and cared nothing of some wifie up a landing in Italy or some crazy Danish prince.

Yet, the 'musical drama' that was *The Cheviot* was the subject of conversation amongst my peers. Drink, football, shinty, girls and 'did you know that 7 per cent of the people own 84 per cent on the land.'

So what got the youth talking about drama? Well, it was the relevance. Landownership was an important issue.

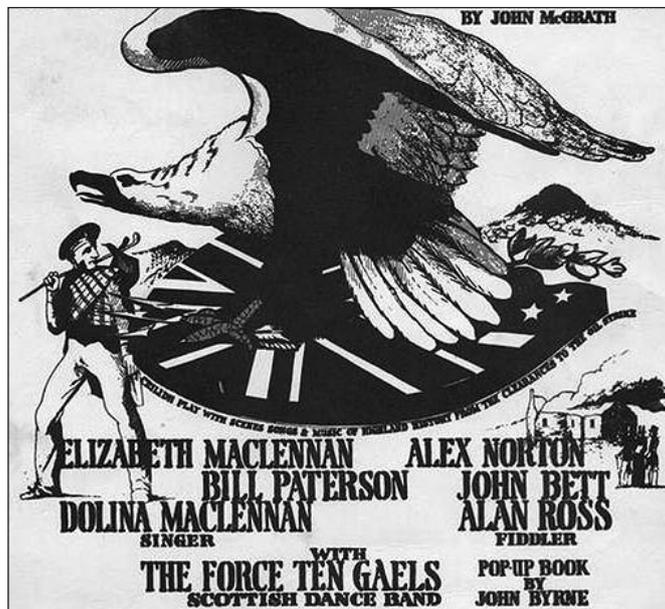
'Barmy'

We knew about Keith Schellenberg, the owner of the Island of Eigg who had described his islanders as "drunken, ungrateful, lawless, barmy revolutionaries" or the owner of Raasay, Dr John Green, from Sussex.

He visited the island only once ever and frustrated all efforts to improve the islanders' lot. He became known as "Dr No" – though less polite versions were available.

The play covered 'the Clearances', when the lairds drove their kinsfolk off the land to make way for flocks of cheviots. Despite an education system that valued knowledge of the Battle of Hastings ahead of knowledge of genocide and ethnic cleansing on our very doorsteps, everyone knew of the Clearances.

The irreverence with which the play dealt with authority



played to, and brought to life, the anarchic underbelly of the Gaels.

The stag of course gets a mention. Perhaps hard to understand by anyone from out-with, but many Highlanders do not accept the concept that anyone can own a wild stag or salmon.

Of course, the laws back the Lairds and were treated with real seriousness by the Sheriffs. 'Poach a beast', get caught and you lost your car. So, long before the high profile seizure of assets from the Mr Bigs of the drugs trade, the humble Highland poacher could lose his motor with all the dire consequences that could bring, jail being a serious possibility.

You need land for houses and the dearth of housing in the Highlands was mirrored in the play by the problems faced by those in the north east joining the burgeoning oil industry. There the Laird's equivalent being the vulgar US oil baron, sharing the same exploitative outlook, whilst the workers and their families struggle to find somewhere to live.

The play's author John McGrath, born in Birkenhead, writer and director of many of the early episodes of *Z-Cars* captured the essence of the Highlands and Islands.

He had empathy for exploited communities. He understood the pernicious power of the elites and whether it's abuse of Native Americans, Aboriginal Australians or the Gaels the same principals apply. Gaelic was used in the play and featured in the memorable musical performances which peppered performances.

So what has happened in those forty intervening years? Many Lairds now come from across continental Europe, Asia and America. Land-access issues have been addressed by the Parliament.

'Mountain closed' signs would now be ignored but, as recent events in Wester Ross show, there's maybe still a way to go yet.

Housing remains a critical issue. Mrs Thatcher's sell off of council houses created huge problems only now slowly being addressed with

the first council houses in a generation being built.

Community ownership has been a success in some places, notably the Islands of Egg and Ghia, perhaps less so elsewhere. Major employers have come and gone from Invergordon, Thurso and Lochaber.

However, Nigg is once again open, part of a reinvigorated oil sector with decommissioning and renewables providing additional work opportunities.

But all is not well, only today I read of the plight of tenant farmers. Lairds, anticipating a reconfiguration of EU subsidies, are not making available short-term grazing lets, threatening the viability of the tenant farmers.

It's a recurring theme throughout history the world over, the elites exploiting the ordinary folk. My generation recognised that in *The Cheviot* and revelled in its raucous portrayals. It was a great phrase to band about 'Do you that 7 per cent of the people...'

Indy generation

Where are we with that stastistic now? I checked the web and the first thing to come up was this, "Scottish landowners have long been called Lairds (Lords) and Ladies, and now you can enjoy the landowner's lifestyle too with plots starting at £29.99 for one square foot."

'This land is my land. This land is your land' – actually it's not, not unless you're one of the 432 people who own half of Scotland.

I thank John McGrath for bringing his humanity to this drama. It invigorated, neigh radicalised a generation – the independence generation.

by Bill Bonnar

ANC election victory can't conceal pressure for change

DESPITE A barrage of criticism, often from their own supporters, the African National Congress won its fifth successive landslide victory in the South African elections on 7 May.

They polled 62 per cent of the vote, gained 11.4 million votes and won 249 out of 400 seats. Their nearest challengers, the right wing Democratic Alliance polled 22 per cent while the recently formed Economic Freedom Fighters polled 6 per cent (1.2 million votes).

The latter are a newly formed left party drawn from disaffected elements of the ANC. Embracing a heady mixture of socialism and black nationalism they drew particular support from young South Africans born after the end of apartheid.

After more than 20 years in power the size of the ANC victory is impressive particularly set against a background of profound economic and social problems, rising crime and rampant corruption.

Despite relatively high levels of economic growth, the post-apartheid settlement has left South Africa a place of astonishing inequality. The wealth of the white elite was protected and added to by the emergence of new black elite; often drawn from the senior ranks of the ANC.

Corruption

For the great mass of South Africans, poverty remains the reality with many seeing few economic benefits of liberation. The social problems which include poor housing, health care and education have been made worse by some of the worst crime and drugs problems on the continent.

Corruption is rampant and government efforts to clamp down on it have been seriously undermined by the overt personal corruption of President Jacob Zuma who recently spent £23million pounds of government money on his private residence.



CHALLENGE: former ANC youth leader Julius Malema (right) leads the Economic Freedom Fighters, who polled 6 per cent of the vote

All this in a country where the left is particularly strong. The dilemma for those who want radical change is how to proceed.

Most of the left, particularly the Communist Party, operate within the ANC. Their strategy is to build their presence and move the ANC to the left embracing the kind of radical transformation of society envisaged by the Freedom Charter. Drawn up when the party was in opposition it called for widespread public ownership, social and economic equality and ultimately socialism.

This position is reinforced by an immense emotional commitment to the ANC; the party of liberation which led the heroic fight against apartheid. Opposing this is a younger generation of activists for whom the liberation struggle is history and who have never known anything but ANC government.

What they see is a party led by a corrupt black elite presiding over a post-apartheid settlement which while carrying out the po-

litical transformation of society left the social and economic system bequeathed by apartheid largely intact.

The most recent manifestation of this movement has been the Economic Freedom Fighters led by former ANC youth leader; Julius Malema. They have been very good at articulating the grievances of young blacks although their programme while high in radical rhetoric lacks a coherent socialist strategy. In fact some of

it verges on anti-white racism. However, with over a million votes they have clearly tapped into a real sense of grievance.

The real battle is taking place within the ANC and at various levels. There is a generational struggle between an older generation who have an almost blind loyalty to the movement honed in the liberation struggle and a younger generation who want the ANC to be a movement of change.

Union struggle

There is a trade union struggle between rank and file trade unionists and an official leadership which is often distant and corrupt. Almost all South African trade unions are affiliated to the ANC. And there is an ideological struggle between left and right; between those who want to defend the existing status quo and those who want a radical alternative.

All these struggles and more are taking place within the movement and can only resolved in one of two ways. Either the left will succeed and return the ANC to its original course or it will finally break with the ANC and set up an alternative movement. The rise of the Economic Freedom Fighters and other such groups could bring such decisions to a head.



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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May Day, Glasgow, 2014



PHOTOS: Simon Whittle



Glasgow's 2014 May Day march saw hundreds of activists – including a contingent against the care cuts crisis – braving the rain. Over 200 have been forced out of the Charlie Reid Centre, for people who need mental health support. Among the trade union banners was an RMT tribute to Bob Crow.



PHOTOS: Neil Scott



by Jim McVicar, SSP
National Treasurer

Donate to SSP indy appeal

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 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 independently 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 Scottish Socialist 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 PLEDGE AND DONATE MONEY

- 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.