

# Scottish Socialist VOICE

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# AFTER THE HOLYROOD ELECTIONS...

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# THE BATTLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

by Ken Ferguson

**FOR** supporters of Scottish independence the much overused term ‘historic’ really does apply to the Holyrood election result which saw the SNP not only victorious but winning an overall majority in the parliament.

Elsewhere in this *Voice* we look at some of the implications flowing from the result but what is clear is that we now stand at a potentially historic moment of great importance and rich in potential consequences.

It is a situation filled with dazzling opportunities and also fraught with real danger.

On the face of it the 5 May poll amply justifies the strategy of the SNP’s gradualists of governing well, looking responsible and gradually weaning the voters over to their side.

With 69 seats in Holyrood the temptation will be to continue this approach, bring forward more undoubtedly sensible measures such as a minimum pricing on alcohol and further demonstrate government competence.

The disarray on the much depleted opposition benches will make it even easier for Salmond and his team to dominate the Holyrood scene and through it the media, adding to its apparent attractiveness.

However while this approach may serve the purposes of routine day to day politics it is going to be of limited value when it comes to the fight for a Yes vote in a independence referendum.

The ballots were hardly counted before the pro unionist pundits and politicians opened their offensive against independence and this will be an ever growing chorus.



It is a campaign with a number of strands including asserting that SNP voters don’t want independence on the one hand and that Salmond is frightened to put it to the vote on the other.

This latter claim is the more breathtaking coming from parties which spent the last four years blocking and independence referendum on the grounds that there were more important urgent issues.

Nonetheless it is a certainty that the backers of the imperialist British state will use every gambit in their book of dirty tricks in the period ahead to scare the Scots back to the union jack.

Unfortunately some of these forces will be those hopelessly muddled ‘internationalists’ on the British left who will bleat about separatism as they fight to stay in Europe’s most belligerent junior partner to the US drive for global dominance and plunder.

They will have to work hard to explain why they would side with the Tories, City of London and their policies of plunder, war and cuts to keep Scotland inside the bloodstained British slash and burn state.

The SSP in contrast recognises that independence is not only a democratic necessity but also essential to

opening up more favourable territory for a new society based on a socially just and sustainable future.

Armed with that recognition it is clear that if the powerful forces ranged against independence are to be defeated the battle cannot be confined to the chamber of Holyrood but must become a people’s fight.

Independence is a radical idea that requires a radical vision of a renewed and better Scotland to drive it forward not just debates about dividing the national debt and whose head is on the stamps.

It will need a vision driven by more than sober suited managerialism but fuelled by a plurality of socialist, feminist, green, cultural and other strands pointing to a more just, democratic Scotland.

On the face of it however, if judged by the elections, the forces of the broad progressive pro independence left which will have to provide the radical edge of a Yes campaign are limited.

But this of course would be to overlook the fact that in the poll all political sides were crushed under the SNP steamroller but some of those forces can view the outcome with more enthusiasm than others.

In the referendum the battle will be for ideas not seats and that will place both a responsibility on the left and provide an opportunity for vastly extending the audience for its vision for Scotland.

Another little noticed factor in this complex struggle will be situation in England where the defeat of AV has blocked voting reform there while boundary changes will give the Tories an extras 40 to 60 seats in the Commons.

We are looking at a UK with a virtually unshakeable Tory majority implementing policies detested in Scotland and a Labour Party incapable of removing them.

This raises the question - why vote Labour?

The election saw a seismic shift with Labour defeated in heartland citadels which at a minimum places a question mark over their long term ability to maintain unionism’s grip in working class Scotland.

Post election the prospects for independence are more open than ever before but it winning it will be no spectator sport but requires the building of a powerful mass movement to win the battle and open the way to the progressive, sustainable, democratic future on offer.

Breaking with the British state not only opens up new prospects for Scotland but would be major blow against the warmongers and speculators who treat people as expendable and point a new way for all those across the continent bowed under the burden of the rich.

This is a time of great opportunity and history will not forgive those who either stand in its way or fail to grasp it.

# WHERE NOW FOR SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE?

by John McAllion

**THERE** will be a referendum in the lifetime of this Scottish Parliament. That much we know for certain. The SNP's unprecedented parliamentary majority will guarantee at least that. Beyond that certainty, however, very little else is clear.

No sooner was the election over than Tory taunts to "bring on" an early referendum were in full flood. Tory leader Annabel Goldie called on Alex Salmond to take a "brave pill" and get on with it. Inside the Westminster labyrinth, political dinosaurs like Michael Forsyth began to stir with threats to amend the Scotland Bill currently creeping its way through their noble Lords' House.

The one time Scottish Secretary judged that an amendment empowering the Coalition Government to conduct a referendum on Scottish independence would put Westminster back in the driving seat of Scottish politics. Always a talented trouble maker, he had immediately recognised the huge unionist advantage to be derived from not only the timing but also the wording of the referendum question being decided in Westminster rather than in Holyrood.

Beyond that advantage, most unionists calculated that the tsunami of votes cast for the SNP did not signify support for Scottish independence. Scotland's voters, they argued, knew that before that could happen there would have to be a referendum and that in that referendum they could vote no.

With all the opinion polls pointing to a pro-union majority among Scottish voters, the Tory right remained supremely confident that an early referendum would bury



the independence question for a generation and leave the SNP in office but without the power to deliver on their ultimate goal of independence.

Salmond, of course, will ignore all of this Tory noise. He recognises it as bluster with little of substance to back it up. The Scottish election not only handed his party an unparalleled mandate to govern Scotland. It also further humiliated the already widely hated Scottish Tories, while all but destroying those new political hate figures the Scottish LibDems.

A governing coalition of these two parties, with its mainly English power base, would not dare to impose a rigged referendum on a newly elected and still widely popular Scottish Government. Scottish Secretary Michael Moore has already acknowledged as much by announcing that the Westminster Government will not bring forward a referendum bill. Prime Minister Cameron has confirmed that the issue of a referendum is for the Scottish and not for the Westminster Government.

Salmond therefore can now decide both the timing and the wording of the future referendum. He has already made it clear that there will not

be a referendum until "well into the second half" of the new Parliament's five year term. Instead his Government's immediate priority will be to argue for a beefing up of the range of devolved powers to be delivered in the short term through the Scotland Bill currently working its way through Westminster.

This approach chimes with his own long term strategy of winning popular support for independence through a gradual building of respect for the SNP's governing credibility. The result of the Scottish election will convince him that this strategy is working. The minority SNP Government of 2007 not only survived for its full four year term. Its record of achievement in office was such that in the subsequent election Scottish voters rewarded it with the best result for any party since the dawn of devolution.

Yet, the prospects of a yes vote for full independence being delivered via a referendum vote in 2014 or 2015 remain remote. Despite his outright parliamentary majority, Salmond will not impose an independence referendum on the defeated opposition parties. He too fears a no vote and has

accordingly indicated his willingness to consult with the opposition over the structure and the wording of any referendum.

He has allowed suggestions to be floated in favour of a multi-option referendum with voters free to choose between the status quo, full fiscal autonomy or outright independence. Another suggestion floated is for a single question that authorises the Scottish Government to negotiate an independence settlement with Westminster without any attempt to define in any detail what such a settlement might involve.

It is becoming increasingly clear that Salmond is looking for enough wriggle room to allow him to manipulate the referendum process in line with his own gradualist vision of how Scottish independence will come about. Here lies real cause for concern.

Salmond has always been an arch pragmatist. Having tasted high office for a four year term, he now wants a second and even a third term. He is ready to pay any political price for that, including constitutional change that falls far short of full independence.

If continuing SNP electoral success requires a new constitutional settlement that leaves the monarchy still ruling over us, he's up for that. If it means keeping Treasury control over Scotland's currency, he can live with that. If it means retention of the British armed forces, he will argue for continuing military co-operation between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Independence, he will argue, is a process not an event.

We know that there will be a referendum. We do not yet know what that referendum will be all about.

# ALL CHANGE AT HOLYROOD

by Colin Fox

AS landslides go the 2011 Holyrood election was huge. Scotland has been shaken to its political foundations as voters again voiced their contempt for the Tories, their coalition partners the LibDems and New Labour. The Scotsman described Thursday's result as a "victory of hitherto unthinkable proportions" for the SNP. Even *The Scotsman* can be right some of the time!

In truth the extent of the victory surprised even the SNP. They emerged with 45 per cent of the vote. At counts across the country SNP candidates arrived expecting third or fourth place and walked out hours later "as the newly elected MSP for the said constituency".

The front page of Saturdays *Edinburgh Evening News* said it all. It led with a photograph of the newly elected MSP for Edinburgh Southern emerging from a bookmakers with his £750 winnings after he put £50 on himself to win at 14/1 just a fortnight ago.

It is impossible to underplay the scale of the SNP victory. Even the 'certainties' of the system employed to distribute Holyrood seats were swept aside.

So many people voted for the SNP on Thursday that after winning all the constituency seats in some regions they also got MSP's on the same regional list! The SNP's message, albeit deceitful, that 'the list vote elects the First Minister' brought them huge dividends.

The SNP's sophisticated, multi-million pound election campaign, with its navigational tools for activists



and social networking operations completely outstripped the once powerful Labour machine. Pollsters YouGov report that 80,000 Labour voters across Scotland switched to the SNP in the final 36 hours in disgust at its increasingly negative campaign and incessant targeted mail shots.

## BELEAGUERED and BELABOURED

It is only a year since every Labour MP in Scotland increased their majority. This time the all-conquering Labour Party of Lowland Scotland fell to pieces like a Laurel and Hardy car. I

In Labour's Central belt 'heartlands' its seats toppled like ninepins. And comparing Thursday's results with the notional results from 2007 (itself a bad night for Labour) does not sufficiently explain the scale of their collapse.

A better comparison would be to look at how Labour's five figure majorities from last year poured into the SNP corner.

Labour imagined the Lib Dem protest vote would go to them, so why didn't it? The

answer is that Labour like the ConDem Coalition also support public spending cuts and tuition fees. They offered no real alternative.

Former LibDem voters were also seduced by Salmond's claims of managerial competency at Holyrood.

These SNP's achievements in wooing disenchanted Liberals should not be regarded lightly. There is little love lost between the two parties, but on this occasion the support the SNP won from the Lib-Dems was the difference between winning and winning an overall majority.

And let's not forget that Labour started this election campaign with a 15 per cent lead!

The fact is the SNP attracted votes not just from disaffected LibDems, but also Labour, Green, Tory and SSP supporters too.

## Ephemeral or earth shattering?

The central question is how much of this change is ephemeral, a one off, a freak result, and how

much of it has broken the political mould?

Those who suggest the former must reckon with the 5-year term the SNP majority now has in this Parliament. That's certainly not superficial. Neither is the scale of Labour's collapse.

On the other hand those who suggest we are now in permanent new territory must ask how can the SNP keep seats like Edinburgh Pentland's and Edinburgh West wh And what will be the consequences in next years Council elections after a year of public spending cuts?

Many voted for Labour in huge numbers last year and opted for the SNP equally emphatically this time demonstrating an inherent volatility in politics because there are no ideological differences between the four establishment parties.

Alex Salmond's economic programme, his business plan, or international policy in regards to say Libya or Afghanistan and the public spending cuts which he delayed until after this election sit in his in tray

awaiting his scissors point to things to come.

## The cuts

Most testing will be the issue of cuts and the SNP has very difficult choices now to make during continued economic stagnation.

In reality it is a party with little compunction in voting for them, unlike the SSP. It votes through cuts in Councils across Scotland and it will do so again at Holyrood.

Of course Salmond will try, rightly, to pin the blame on Cameron and Clegg but in the end he will not fight the cuts, he will make them risking huge public opposition and with it huge opportunities for the left.

Salmond must make £3billion of cuts over 5 years and these will be severe and unpopular. A shrewd and cunning political operator he might be - look at the way he announced his five year Council tax freeze for example at the same time as he unceremoniously and largely unnoticed dumped the SNP's commitment to an income based alternative - but he will make them nonetheless.

Neither will an SNP Government confront the employing classes or redistribute the great wealth of Scotland. Salmond may be a populist but he will defend the interests of big business in Scotland as mercilessly as anyone else.

The message however remains unequivocal - these cuts are utterly unnecessary and indefensible and he must fight them! The economic crisis wasn't caused by the greed and recklessness of working people and the poor after all.

"The SNP has been good for Scotland", boasted Salmond defending his record and is certainly has for the

200 businessmen who endorsed him on polling day including Sir David Murray, Sir Jackie Stewart, Sir Tom Farmer, and clutch of essentially Tory papers

John Swinney welcomed their backing and said "Captains of Industry have benefited from the SNP".

The Sunday Times Rich List came out at the weekend and what's remarkable about the table of Scots billionaires and millionaires is the number who came out last week in support of the SNP.

So there's the rub. Millions of Scots voted for the SNP to fight the cuts and to stand up to the Tories but the SNP now supports a regressive council tax freeze, cutting corporation tax and cuts in public services, jobs, pay and £3.3billion off the budget over the next 5 years.

## Independence

Then, most significantly from the SNP landslide is prospect of a referendum on Independence becoming a reality The SNP did not present the Bill in the last Parliament they said because they had no majority. Now they do. Independence just took a great leap forward.

There is no doubt that the case for independence took a battering during the election campaign itself as the SNP leadership barely rose to its defence whilst the unionist parties, sensing a weakness in the SNP's armour, poured endless cold water on it.

In these circumstance its little wonder the polls show support now down below 30 per cent.

Supporters of Independence, like the SSP, therefore have a huge task on our hands to win the argument for Independence outside Holyrood in the pubs, clubs, community centres and workplaces across the land. But it can and must be done.

The case for independence must be won before the referendum is called.

This offers an unprecedented opportunity for the left. The SNP is incapable of delivering a majority for independence on its own and to be fair it has acknowledged this frequently in the Independence Convention which the SSP joined.

It remains our job on the left to outline the alternative vision for independence.

The alternative to neo-liberalism, warmongering, privatisation and profiteering. How many of the 69 SNP MSP's for example will protest at having to swear the oath of allegiance to the Queen? The party favours independence with the Queen as Head of State.

Alex Salmond is undoubtedly a shrewd politician who closely courts popularity but he also supports the NATO attacks on Libya and the British occupation of Afghanistan. He also supports the monarchy and cutting corporation tax for employers and retaining the unfair Council Tax. The SSP are better able to persuade progressive Scotland of the case for Independence.

## The Left

Given the huge swing to the SNP which swept all before it, taking dozens of seats from Labour, Liberals, Tories and Greens who polls suggested could get 8 seats alike it is hardly surprising the left's vote was squeezed on Thursday.

We were also entirely eclipsed in the way the media covers this big money election.

The left was never at the races.

In Glasgow George Galloway got 6,500 votes but never looked like winning and he has gone back to where he came from leaving nothing behind pretty much as usual.

The Socialist Labour Party

got the biggest left vote with 10,000 but they have been unable to coalesce the left in Scotland up to now and that will not change.

The SSP vote (8,722) was also disappointing and down from 2007. This was inevitable when the fiasco of the Sheridan affair is added to the steamroller effect of the SNP surge and there courting of the regional vote,

Solidarity, as expected, were the biggest losers given their disgraced leaders incarceration for lying.

It is also true that nowadays the left's resources are minuscule compared to the millions spent by Labour and the SNP and this disparity makes an uneven contest all but impossible.

For the SSP and the left as a whole the task must be to build up support for the socialist case again and to act with others to establish new fresh ideas and a potent political base of support in communities, workplaces and amongst those fighting the cuts

There will be many opportunities presented to us in the weeks, months and years to come. We need to roll up our sleeves and take the socialist case to new generations of political activists.

The electoral plain is but one of many in politics and the 2012 Council elections offer an opportunity for a breakthrough.

But as SSP Councillor Jim Bolland put it to me during the election you have to lay foundations before you put up the walls and take your seat.

This time last year I met the team behind Green MP Caroline Lucas's success in Brighton and asked them what they put their victory in getting Britain's first Green MP elected - down to. They each said "25 years hard work at ground level". After last Thursday, the Greens are the biggest Party on Brighton and Hove Council.

# THE RICH KEEP ON GETTING RICHER - WHILE THE REST OF US FACE CUTS

by *Raphie de Santos*

IN a year when the majority of the population are faced with a pay freeze the richest 1000 people in the country have seen their wealth rise, in 2010, by just over £60 billion (a billion is one thousand million) or 18 per cent to a total of nearly £400 billion.

This wealth which includes land, property, art, race horses and shares in companies is underestimated because it excludes the money held in bank accounts (liquid cash).

Of course much of the 'money' they have made is not down to anything clever they have done in 2010 but simply from the rise in the stock market, expensive property and land that we have seen in 2010.

Some people point that we are all actually pretty wealthy – the average wealth of a UK household is around £200,000. But when you look little closer this is not really the case.

70 per cent of this average wealth is the value of our houses but we don't really own them as they have been bought with borrowed money the majority of which has not been repaid.

The same applies to the cars we 'own' and the balance is our pensions which is part of our deferred wages.

When you look at net wealth which is our assets minus loans and take away the value of our pension you are left with an average figure of less than £5,000.

The wealth of the super-



rich is net wealth – they don't have loans on their assets.

This is the wealth that we should be taxing to help reduce the public debt - after all it is the rich super wealthy that have benefited from the financial bubble economy not us.

A 10 per cent annual tax on their wealth would eliminate the need for any cuts when combined with taking North Sea Oil under public control and ownership.

They would not have to even sell anything just use the billions they have hidden away in their secret bank accounts to pay the annual wealth tax.

Interesting in Scotland the second wealthiest person is Ian Wood who has estimated wealth of £1,119 million.

Here is a man who has made his money out of the profits from North Sea Oil, money that really belongs to the people of Britain and Scotland.

Money that should have

been used for useful public services.

In Scotland one of the Scottish National Party (SNP)'s biggest backers, Brian Souter, has a personal fortune of £650 million made from privatising public transport.

At a time when the SNP have frozen the council tax for five years leading to a real loss in local public spending of £240 million they are quite happy to take donations from Souter and keep transport private while freezing the wages of public sector workers in Scotland for two years.

This is in effect a 10 per cent pay cut with consumer price inflation running at over 5 per cent a year.

There is the real chance that Scotland will become independent in the near future and if that is the case we have to make sure it is an independent republic.

The two biggest land owners in Scotland are Dukes (Sutherland and Buccleuch) who are related to the Royal

Family and their families were 'given' their estates centuries ago.

Their combined estates are worth £760 million.

Most of the wealth of the richest people is sitting idle doing nothing.

Any consumption these people have is mainly luxury consumption providing few jobs or the creation of useful products and services.

Their wealth does very little to benefit the economy and help create jobs and increases tax revenues.

On the other hand the majority of us are useful consumers buying things on mass that are basic necessities that create jobs and services and tax revenues.

That's why it is ludicrous to freeze our pay when the economy needs a boost and let the rich off tax free. It's time we turned that on its head.

■ *The views expressed are the author's own and of no other person or organisation.*

# GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND

by Roz Paterson

**WHEN** we envisage Scottish independence, most of us want more than a tartan tiger economy and Lion Rampants on the post boxes.

Increased democracy and accountability, for instance, an end to our involvement in illegal, US-led wars, and the introduction of free school meals in fully-resourced state schools would do for starters.

But what about sustainability?

Academic research suggests that a sense of ownership and security leads to better land husbandry, stronger communities, and more thoughtful, long-term decision-making.

The research focuses on land reform and community buy-outs, like that at Eigg and Gigha, but could Scottish independence create a similar, more widespread sense of connection to the land, and what benefits could it entail?

One of the problems Scotland has had is that decisions regarding the use of our considerable energy resources, from North Sea oil to North Sea wave power, have been made with regard to liberalised and competitive markets, rather than to Scotland's needs and carbon footprint.

If we uncoupled ourselves from the global economic trend, and thought in practical rather than profitable terms, we could lead the world in sustainable development.

For instance, if all energy utilities were taken into public ownership, public money could be channelled into ironing out such problems as how to store wind energy, to be used when climatic conditions made generating



energy impossible. This kind of research is scarce in the current profit-driven system because chronic short-termism make capitalists wary of investing without certainty of quick returns.

Public investment and a not-for-profit system don't necessarily have these glitches. Investment could also be made into energy efficiency, in homes, public buildings, factories and places of business, and into building or retro-fitting all accommodation to the Passivhaus standard, resulting in dry, well-ventilated homes that are warm, without heating, in winter, and cool in summer.

Given how well Scotland took to the universality of free prescriptions, then surely we could also contemplate the concept of 100 per cent grants to make all homes, even middle-class ones, comfortable and, importantly, carbon-neutral?

Public ownership of energy utilities could also ensure that domestic prices are kept stable, with subsidies available for those with the greatest need, including elderly people and those with young families.

Continuing with this collective spirit, Scotland could follow the lead of Hasselt, in Belgium, and introduce a fully comprehensive, free public transport system, incorporating rail, bus and ferry routes.

It's an idea that works, as the cost of building up the transport network and buying up the privateers is more than offset, in time, by the reduced need to build and maintain roads and the sharp decrease in road accidents.

It also hugely improves the quality of life of those isolated by geography or poverty, engenders a greater sense of community and with it, security and general well-being, and, by taking tens of thousands if not millions of cars off the roads, makes us fitter, richer, and closer to eliminating our dependence on fossil fuels.

An independent Scotland could also close the nuclear submarine base at Faslane and see to the decommissioning of our ailing nuclear power stations, whose contribution to our net energy production could be made up through a

combination of further investment in renewable resources and dramatically increased energy efficiency.

As for the land itself, we could create land reforms with teeth, thus ensuring that our incredible land resources are not squandered on private estates owned by absentee landlords and the needs of multinational agribusiness.

We could do worse than introduce land reforms that allow for a network of smallholdings and community and family farms, supported by agricultural collectives that ensure fair prices, and a housing policy that provides council housing for rural workers and their attendant communities.

A revival in our agriculture could see a revival in our food security, currently dipping below 60 per cent, increased sustainability, better links between urban and rural communities, and a greater sense of connection to the land we live in, and from.

Scotland need not be a landed estate, for the sport of gentry, but a common treasury for every last one of us. We could make it that way.

# CUTS: THE DEFINING STRUGGLE

by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

**THE** media scribes ran out of superlatives to describe the SNP's sweeping surge to power - "historic", "unprecedented", "a tsunami", to name but some.

The explanations and factors behind this astonishing triumph are many and varied.

But the SNP won additional vast swathes of voters with one main feature, one main desire, in common - people seeking shelter from the storm of savage cuts by Westminster's butchers.

That common thread to most of those who gave an unprecedented outright victory to the SNP, under a voting system designed to prevent single-party government, is profoundly significant.

It represents the seeds of an almighty collision between the hopes for shelter from the cuts under the SNP umbrella, and the realities of cuts that will rain down from that same SNP government during the next five years, without the mudguard of minority rule to protect them from a later tide of people's wrath.

## Labour cowardice

The people with a fervent desire to stop cuts to jobs, services, benefits, pay and pensions looked around, and what did they see?

Tory butchery. LibDem treachery. Labour cuts in Labour-run councils and in the recent Labour government. A UK Labour leader who breezed into Scotland at the tail-end of the election and called for a Labour vote in Scotland as "a stepping stone" to him becoming Prime Minister, thereby inflaming Scots' national feeling.



PHOTO: John Lanigan

And more crucially, a Scottish Labour leader as likely to stand up and fight Cameron and Clegg as he is to confront anti-cuts campaigners in a sandwich shop!

In marked contrast, as Ian McWhirter wrote in the Sunday Herald, "Salmond manages to make Scots feel better about themselves without them really knowing why". The SNP preached "hope over Labour's negativity", vision versus sniping.

## SNP cover-up on cuts

Since 1998, the SSP has championed abolition of the unfair Council Tax and its replacement, a progressive, income-based Scottish Service Tax, which would provide almost double the funds the council tax does for local jobs and services.

In 2007, the SNP stole some of the SSP's clothing, parading much the same pledge on the vastly grander stage afforded

them by the media - which helped them conquer minority government.

In sharp contrast, in 2011 the SNP trumpeted their pledge of a 5-year Council Tax freeze, appealing to those desperately shuffling bills in the face of pay cuts - as well as to the well-heeled Tory and LibDem voters who actually gain most from the freeze.

But the SNP silently buried their 2007 pledge, dropping the promise to bring in an income-based tax instead bowing to the self-interest of the rich, including the millionaire businessmen who conspicuously backed the SNP for 5 May.

But it condemns hundreds of thousands of council workers to even more severe cuts to pay, jobs and conditions, and adds to the looming threat of carnage in the communities.

One estimate puts the cost of the SNP Council Tax freeze at £2.5 billion over two terms of government paid for through

the current savage pay cuts imposed by the outgoing SNP government, plus wholesale job losses, and vital services cuts to holiday pay, community services,

## All things to all classes

The SNP can realistically boast of being "Scotland's national party", in that they swept all before them in the rural north and south as well as the urban Central Belt.

But there's the rub, t for the next few years. They try to be all things to all classes. It's one thing to get away with that during an election campaign, an entirely different thing to deliver in government.

When the SNP downplay their goal of independence to appease the majority of unionist capitalists, they also demand more powers for a devolved government, including control over Corporation Tax

Why?. To cut Corporation Tax, to make Scotland a haven

of low-tax, high-profit allurements for the multinationals.

One class's tax cuts are another class's pay cuts, job cuts, service cuts.

The current Scotland Bill includes cuts to the Westminster block grant, increased tax-raising powers for the Scottish government, but a gaping shortfall of £5 billion even if the tax-raising powers were fully applied.

The SNP will face the stark choice: stand up for Scotland and demand back these stolen billions - or pass on Westminster's brutal cuts just like they did with the £1.3 billion cut to this year's block grant .

**Stockpiled SNP cuts**

The SNP cleverly delayed the full force of the cuts in last June's Emergency Budget and the October Spending Review

That was pivotal to their sweeping victory; it delayed the impact of cuts which they have failed to resist, failed to defy, failed to mount a mass revolt of the Scottish people against.

But the next one or two years will throw up an entirely different scenario. They have not avoided the cuts, merely stockpiled them, created a double whammy of cuts to come.

The evidence from their four years in Holyrood, and their role in the leadership of local councils, show they do not have the vision, to truly stand up for Scotland, to initiate and mount mass rebellion against ConDem cuts.

Whereas the SSP's battle-cry is "stop all cuts - tax the rich", the SNP blames Westminster, reassures the rich with offers of Corporation Tax at Southern Irish levels (12 per cent) and seeks to "manage" the cuts.

**Hopes raised - struggles required**

So after the raised hopes,

communities, colleges and workers will have to roll up their sleeves for a fight to stand up for the real Scotland - for the mass of the Scottish people as opposed to the small minority who have amassed fabulous wealth and are keen to hold onto it!

An entirely new prospect around the struggle for Scottish independence has opened up. New expectations have been invested in the SNP to combat the cuts, yet the economic recession remains dictating cuts to any party that refuses to break out of the capitalist straitjacket.

**Hopes will turn to bitter strife as the reality bites.**

So far very little of the ConDem's butchery has materially impacted, except by some people on benefits and sections of council workers. A wave of attacks to workers, students and communities is about to descend on Scotland.

**Stand up for Scotland!**

We should demand, through community, student, pensioner and workplace organisations, for the new SNP government

to really stand up for Scotland, to stop and reverse the cuts. But to achieve this they will have to be compelled to reflect a massive revolt from below.

The struggle against cuts, alongside the national question, will be the pivotal issue for life under the new government.

**Make unions fight**

Potentially the most powerful vehicle for resistance to the cuts is the trade union movement. Consciously combining with students and communities, it would be an unstoppable force. But that requires vision and leadership.

The very summits of the Scottish trade union movement, including the STUC, tend to seek "partnership" with whatever government is in power - to "do business" with them. Some leaders of the big unions, up to their oxters in loyalty to Labour, are likely to be more inclined to oppose cuts from an SNP government than cuts by their Labour friends.

That could open up greater chances of opposition from the union ranks being

encouraged.

But this will need left union leaders and the best of the rank and file argue, organise and fight for active resistance, alongside convincing arguments against cuts.

For example, the STUC and leaders of several big public sector unions recently agreed a deal with COSLA that promised no compulsory redundancies in exchange for a vicious pay freeze - and it's already been pushed through Borders council.

Whilst the SNP's promise to avoid compulsory redundancies is welcome, it will be little consolation to the tens of thousands - several economists forecast 100,000 - who face loss of their jobs.

The same EIS leaders who wax lyrical against education cuts and joined the 500,000-strong TUC demo on 26 March have now rushed out media adverts calling on the new government to defend education - after brow-beating a 60:40 majority of their members in schools to accept a monstrous pay-cutting deal - and threatening hellfire and brimstone to EIS socialists who dared circulate branches with the case against this dirty deal.

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# SAFE ON THE STREETS

## Reclaim the night and the controversial new protests

### SOAPBOX

Mhairi McAlpine

**RECLAIM** the Night started in the UK as a response to the ‘Yorkshire Ripper’ murders, but took off later particularly in the US in response to exposure of the high incidences of rapes on US campuses.

Linked with campaigns for ‘blue light’ emergency phones in dark areas of campus and increased security, these events typically saw women marching together along a set route with a rally at the end.

Controversy has flared up amongst whether these marches should be women only, what the position of transwomen is within a defined safe space and also – particularly in the US – controversy over survivors’ tales which some detractors accuse of being defamatory.

I have issues with Reclaim the Night. The whole notion that women walking en-bloc along a predetermined route demonstrates to me just exactly how much we don’t own the night. It chimes to me with every admonishment not to walk through dark/non-CCTVed/remote areas after dusk and to always get a taxi home.

It tells me that the night isn’t mine, that I can only be safe in a group of other potential victims and on occasions concludes with horror stories of the dangers of not following “sensible safety advice”. Moreover it feeds into notions of sexual



assault being a phenomenon of strangers waiting in dark bushes waiting for unsuspecting damsels to fall into their trap.

One of my favourite anecdotes is given by the Victorian feminist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman. On attending a party in a local house, she announced her intention to walk home alone. A man in the company immediately challenged this, and asserted that he would walk her home announcing “Any true man is always ready to go with a woman at night, for he is her natural protector.” Gilman replied “Against what? The thing a woman is most afraid to meet on a dark street is her natural protector - singular. But I refuse to worry, there is little to steal and I am quite willing to be killed. It is not a woman’s right, but her duty to walk alone at night.”

Women aren’t unsafe when they are alone, women are unsafe when they are in the presence of a predatory male. The standard advice given when there is a spate of stranger rapes within an area

is for women is “Don’t walk home alone in the dark; don’t go down dark alleys; walk home with friends; get public transport.”

Eh? No! How’s about sticking your keys through your fingers, working out how to aim a kick in the balls and practice screaming, then go for good long walks in the dark making every other woman on the street safer? Or then again how’s about advising men how to avoid becoming rapists?

Most sexual assaults occur within private and usually domestic settings, most victims know their assailant, and most are never reported to the police. No amount of blue lights, emergency telephones or marching huddles will address those issues. Making women afraid to walk home alone however puts them in danger, in danger of unregulated taxi-drivers picking up on increased demand, of staying somewhere that they would rather not be, of accepting offers of lifts/walks home by people that they would not

usually be accompanied by and in danger of being even less inclined to report any assault for fear of being blamed for transgression.

A new phenomenon appears to be replacing Reclaim the Night and I for one am very glad. On 24 January the Toronto Police issued a statement stating “women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimised”. The term “slut” has an interesting history - originally applied to women who were poor housekeepers or slovenly, it became increasingly associated with promiscuity, thus bridging the madonna/whore divide.

A slut is a non-respectable woman, one who doesn’t shine her sink, stay chaste until marriage and faithful within it or accept the curtailments of liberty that the official safety advice entails. The sluts of Toronto were severely pissed off. Refusing to don twinsets, pearls and control knickers, they took to the streets.

There have now been replicated walks across the UK. In a county where nearly a quarter of women will be raped in their lifetime, and over half of people think that there are circumstances where women should take responsibility for their assault, asserting the right to wear what you want, do what you want, go where you want and sleep with who you want, has never been more necessary. Sluts, and those who dress like them, have as much right not to be assaulted as the next woman.

# MEDIA WORKERS PREPARE FOR BATTLE

by Pete Murray, NUJ  
National Exec, Scotland  
rep.

**BBC** workers are preparing for what could be the third round of major industrial action at the Corporation in the seven years since Mark Thompson took over as Director-General in the wake of the Gilligan “dodgy dossier” affair and the Hutton Inquiry.

Scores of jobs are under threat at BBC offices in Glasgow, Manchester, London and at the BBC World Service. Workplace reps from the National Union of Journalists met last month ahead of a lobby of MPs at the House of Commons and voted unanimously to call a strike ballot and industrial action in the event of any compulsory redundancies among NUJ members.

The ballot is likely to command a massive majority for action, which could take place any time in June.

The NUJ represents the majority of journalists at the BBC, and took two days of successful strike action last autumn to stall bosses’ plans for swingeing cuts to the staff pension scheme.

That action, together with a further strike by journalists at the threatened Arabic Service, has boosted confidence among union members across the public service broadcaster that strikes yield positive results.

There is no justification for the new threat of compulsory redundancies.

Says NUJ general secretary Jeremy Dear: “For months we have been negotiating with the BBC and have been able to



resolve most threatened redundancies by agreement”.

But the BBC’s refusal to consider workable alternatives for around 100 staff has left us with no choice but to ballot members for industrial action to defend jobs and services.

BBC bosses have spent months locked in a closed circle of discussions with one another – dubbed “Delivering Quality First”. “Delivering Cuts First” would be a more accurate description.

Minimal numbers of BBC

workers and programme-makers have been involved in any of these discussions. Nor have viewers, listeners, MPs and MSPs been consulted on any of the proposals.

The government said last month that it was not planning any meetings with the BBC to discuss the plans to axe programmes, BBC website services and jobs.

Senior management are due to report the outcome of this internal consultation in July. They have hinted strongly of massive cuts to

output in local radio, late night and daytime TV and the News Channel, on top of sweeping government-imposed cuts to the BBC’s international arm, the World Service.

The World Service cuts have already triggered calls for a re-think from MPs on the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. There is further information about the campaign on a short NUJ film here:

<http://vimeo.com/21039825>.

BBC workers, unions and community groups have already successfully fought back plans to axe radio stations and other services – from the Derry-based Radio Foyle in Northern Ireland, to 6Music and the

Midlands-based Asian Network.

With all evidence pointing to the Tory-led government favouring private monopolies such as Murdoch’s News Corp, a new campaign for publicly accountable, public service broadcasting is increasingly urgent.

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# BUILD FOR 30 JUNE STRIKE

by Richie Venton

**OUT** in the real world, behind the media's focus on the elections, massive stirrings of revolt are building up.

Lecturers in the UCU union have staged several strikes, as have PCS call-centre workers. The NUJ is balloting for strikes in the BBC. PCS members in the tax offices have voted for strike action, forcing employers into talks.

Most significantly of all for short-term resistance to cuts, the PCS are set to ballot 250,000 public sector members for strike action, including a stoppage on 30 June, when they expect to join forces with teachers' and lecturers' unions – NUT, ATL and UCU - putting at least hundreds of thousands on the streets on the same day.

Socialists and other active trade unionists should focus immediate attention on 30 June, as the first chance to at least partially fulfil the idea of striking together across the public sector.

Recent belligerent speeches from UNISON's general secretary, Dave Prentis, need to be converted into action, something only the organised efforts of the left of UNISON



PHOTO: Carolina Perez

and ordinary members will achieve.

With council workers facing the first wave of attacks, and Nicola Sturgeon already calling for "efficiencies" in the same NHS which the SNP told voters they would protect,

UNISON, UNITE, GMB and UCATT should join with PCS and the teachers' unions in a united stoppage and rallies against cuts on 30 June. That would focus and channel the hopes and wishes of all those who cast their votes against cuts, regardless of which party they entrusted with their hopes, and would help to shape which section of Scotland the new SNP government stands up for – people, or profit; the millions relying on them for decent

jobs and public services, or the 100 wealthiest Scots who have combined wealth of £16.4billion.

## Which Scotland?

The new government has raised new hopes, but in doing so has sown the seeds of ferocious conflict with them in the years ahead, as the predominant, pro-big business leadership of the SNP fails to meet the conflicting demands of bankers and workers, capitalists and communities.

Labour is in no position to lead the resistance to cuts, given their ideological acceptance of cuts, and their appalling track record of cuts locally and nationally.

The unspoken strategy of far too many union leaders of

"fight the cuts by voting Labour" is blown to smithereens by Labour's baleful performance in the elections.

We should help to break Labour's death-grip on the unions and their funds.

Some unlikely union figures might even gravitate towards the SNP, on the crude basis that "everyone likes a winner".

But the true test will be where they stand on the struggle to unite in defiance of the cuts.

Socialists not only have a duty to take up the cudgels, but a renewed opportunity to convince people in action that we are the best fighters as well as having the genuine alternatives to cuts.

Alex Salmond's charisma won't stop cuts. Taxation of the rich would.

Public ownership of the nation's vast wealth and resources would. And most immediately, demonstrations, united strikes and occupations of endangered facilities can halt the ConDem cutters - and those in Holyrood, council chambers or boardrooms who wish to reverse the modest gains of past generations of workers' struggles.



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