

# Scottish Socialist VOICE



# N30 STRIKE

pickets \* action \* occupations

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A SCOTTISH SOCIALIST PARTY PUBLICATION

# JOIN THE MILLIONS



# AGAINST THE CONDEMNED MILLIONAIRES!

see pages 6&7

# WHAT IS SALMOND'S PLAN MacB?

by Campbell Martin

**ALEX** Salmond never tires of telling the Westminster Government that it should be copying his 'Plan MacB': the First Minister asserts it is the reason Scotland, in economic terms, is out-performing the rest of the UK.

So, what is the SNP's 'Plan MacB', and is it really delivering significantly better economic results for Scotland?

The main plank of 'Plan MacB' is an acceleration of capital spending, which involves bringing-forward investment in projects to create jobs.

The Scottish Government has also given a guarantee of no compulsory redundancies in areas of the public sector over which it has direct control, such as the health service.

Now, credit where credit is due, both of these initiatives are welcome. However, it is certainly open to debate whether they and other integral parts of 'Plan MacB' are enough to save Scotland from further economic and social problems.

Figures published in October show Scotland's economy grew by just 0.1 per cent. Any lower and we would be on the cusp of returning to recession.

When read alongside the latest unemployment figures from the Office for National Statistics – Scotland's jobless total rose by 5,000 to 215,000 in the three months from July to September – we can see that, contrary to Alex Salmond's spin, 'Plan MacB' is not delivering the economic recovery we need.

At best, 'Plan MacB' can be said to have resulted in Scotland doing slightly 'less



**BIG PLAN:** to be slightly less shite than others

badly' than the rest of the UK.

Another element of the SNP Government's alternative to Westminster policies is the commitment to provide training or education for every jobless 16 to 19-year-old. No doubt the Scottish Government will claim to be fulfilling that promise, but they can only do so because schools have accepted-back pupils who had 'officially' left at the end of June.

With colleges axing courses because of reduced funding from the SNP Government, many young people decided to dig-out their school uniforms and head back to the classroom, rather than hang around the house watching day-time telly.

As a result, some schools are now seriously struggling to cope with the numbers of pupils in Fifth and Sixth Years. Meanwhile, despite so many young people being denied access to the college courses for which they had applied, the SNP claims to

be meeting its commitment because those who returned to school are 'in education'.

Closer examination of the training part of the SNP's promise to young people also gives cause for concern.

Many major retailers, some continuing to post multi-million pound profits, have signed-up to take on 'trainees' for fixed periods. In many cases, young people find themselves working beside older employees, doing exactly the same job, but only receiving the £50.00 per week training allowance.

While some of these major companies now have a conveyor belt of cheap labour, our young people, working 25.5 hours a week, are receiving a rate of £1.81 an hour.

Scottish Government spin on its 'training or education' commitment for young people should be seen against the reality of the latest unemployment figures. Part of the overall growth in Scottish unemployment relates to a significant increase in 18 to 24-year-

olds without work.

Between July and August the number of young Scots claiming

Job-Seekers Allowance rose by 5,000: the total now stands at 45,000.

That statistic is one which should shame our nation, but politicians, in London and in Edinburgh, continue to argue their policies are right and there is no alternative.

Of course, there is an alternative – the socialist alternative, and we don't need a patronising 'mac' shoved at the start to show we're Scottish.

In a socialist Scotland the SSP would introduce a progressive taxation system, where the rich contribute their fair share and those who avoid and evade their financial responsibilities are forced to pay-up.

Amongst many other things, an independent socialist Scotland would enshrine the right of our young people to receive a free education, including to higher levels. Young workers would also receive the going rate for the job, with a minimum wage of £9.00 per hour. The SSP is committed to creating 5,000 construction industry-related apprenticeships, providing accredited training and skills.

The SSP's Scottish Service Tax, based on ability to pay, would generate an additional £1.5 billion each year to provide much-needed local government services and jobs.

Overall, a socialist Scotland would organise society to meet the needs of the people, rather than the interests of multi-national corporations – putting people before profit.

Now, that's a plan!

# UNITING TO FIGHT FUEL POVERTY

by Ann Lynch,  
Campaign 250

A lively community and trade union conference took place on 12 November in Craigmoynton Community High School, in North Edinburgh.

130 delegates registered to discuss poverty, youth issues, racist attitudes, privatisation, a living wage, decent housing and fuel poverty.

The aim of the conference was to bring together all those affected by poverty and unemployment and to establish a community charter linking these issues together.

I was invited to both the 'women and poverty' workshop and the afternoon one, on 'women and fuel poverty'. Needless to say, both workshops were lively and gave everyone an opportunity to discuss how poverty is having a devastating impact on families.

Most women spoke of their dread of Xmas and how they were going to cope with the ever increasing food bills, electric and gas increases notwithstanding big increases in bus and train fares.



One woman from Muirhouse told us she is still paying back the Provident loan from last years Xmas and is baffled as to how she can even contemplate paying back another one. Her partner lost his job in May and has not received one reply from over 30 jobs he's applied for since then.

The biggest fear from both workshops I attended, were the big hikes in gas and electricity prices. Everyone agreed they would not be able to put their heating on in the winter, and would make do with extra layers of clothing, and close off some of the bedrooms to save heating them.

This is the reality for millions of families, particularly for those on low incomes, and for those who have pre-payment meters installed.

A report on Fuel

Poverty and Pre-Payment Meters was undertaken by local women living in the Muirhouse High Rise Flats. Some of the statistics make shocking reading.

75 per cent of those living in the Muirhouse multis, were on pre-payment meters which means they are cut off when they have used up the £5 emergency. This includes women with small babies and a disproportionate amount of pensioners over 75.

The same survey concluded that most of

the tenants had electric storage heaters, and found them unbelievably costly to use, with 85 per cent stating they only used the ONE heater in the main living room. 15 per cent did not use ANY heating at all, wearing extra clothing to keep warm.

Over half of the tenants were suffering ill-health and the majority believed their health was worse due to lack of heating.

The survey concluded that children's health was worse in the multis citing constant colds chest infections and chronic asthma.

82 per cent said they could not afford to heat their homes to a level they felt was needed with the remainder who could afford their heating bills saying this was due to the National Winter Fuel Allowance or being on the highest rate of Disability Benefits.

I raised the demands of the Campaign 250 within the workshops and everyone agreed that an extension of the National Winter Fuel Allowance of £250, paid to everyone under 60 in receipt of benefits/low pay/or any other vulnerable group facing fuel poverty should be entitled to this one-off payment THIS winter.

The joint community/trades union conference agreed the demands of the Campaign 250 would be included in their forthcoming Community Charter currently being put together to build action around.

With another long winter around the corner and an expected 27,000 fuel poverty deaths anticipated, this is the very least any government can do to tackle this appalling situation facing millions of us right now.

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# HAVE LABOUR DEVELOPED PRINCIPLES?

by John McAllion

**“TODAY** the Scottish Labour Party makes no apologies for standing shoulder to shoulder with workers across Scotland.” With this inspirational flourish, Labour’s business manager in the Scottish Parliament concluded his party’s recent and unsuccessful bid to suspend Parliamentary business in sympathy with millions of public sector workers striking on 30 November.

Earlier to a man and woman, the candidates for the Scottish Labour leadership and deputy leadership had pledged to take secondary action in support of their fellow workers’ struggle to defend public sector pensions. Three of the candidates will even surrender a day’s pay as testimony of their undying commitment to the workers’ cause.

Predictably, the Tory press have tried to trumpet this as a lurch to the left that cements Scottish Labour’s break from the rest of the UK party. Equally predictably, the Labour loyalists among the trade

union leadership in Scotland have welcomed these “fantastic” expressions of support as evidence of support for the strike action right across the Labour Party in Scotland.

Both of them have got it wrong.

When hundreds of thousands workers in the public sector went on strike earlier this year over the same issue the Scottish and UK Parliaments sat as usual. No Labour member of either Parliament suggested that they should not. Indeed Labour leader Ed Miliband and assorted members of his Shadow Cabinet publicly condemned the striking workers at the time.

Nor is the Labour Opposition in Westminster calling for their Parliament to be suspended in support of the workers striking on 30 November. A parliamentary



motion, tabled by left Labour MP John McDonnell and calling on MPs to join the picket lines, demonstrations and rallies on the day, has so far been supported by just 21 of Labour’s 258 Labour MPs.

Only 5 of them represent constituencies in Scotland.

The hard truth is that the Labour Party north and south of the border has an appalling record when it comes to supporting workers in struggle. During 13 years in power, and with comfortable parliamentary majorities at their disposal, the Blair and Brown governments chose to keep all of the UK’s savagely anti-union laws in place. Indeed, at one point, Labour’s Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott looked to make them even tougher by threatening legislation that would have imposed a pay-deal on striking fire fighters.

When more than a million local government workers went on strike in 2006, it was in protest against threats to their pension rights posed by a Labour Government. The Labour Chancellor Alistair Darling crossed two picket lines mounted by striking civil servants on his way from the Treasury to the Commons to deliver his 2010 budget.

He was cheered at the despatch box by hundreds of Labour MPs who had crossed the same picket line.

The author of the Coalition Government’s current onslaught against public sector pensions is neither a Tory nor a Liberal Democrat. He is former Labour Cabinet Minister, Baron Hutton of Furness, who first recommended that public sector workers should work longer and pay higher contributions for poorer pensions.

Labour, like the parties of the Coalition, has history when it comes to putting the boot into unions and public sector workers.

How then to explain the sudden passion among Scottish Labour politicians to show solidarity with strikers? If solidarity action is needed now, why was it never taken in the past? If Labour MSPs were whipped into line to support the suspension of parliamentary business in solidarity with the unions, why have so few Labour MPs in Westminster supported John McDonnell’s call for solidarity with the same unions?

The answer seems obvious. The Scottish Labour Party is in the middle of internal leadership elections in which the unions make up one-third of the Electoral College. The front-runners for both the leadership and the deputy leadership have each received the official backing of the big three Labour affiliated unions – UNITE, UNISON and the GMB.

With the final results in those elections not being declared until

the middle of December, neither the front runners nor any of the other candidates can afford to be seen not supporting the action on 30 November, particularly when it is being spearheaded by those same unions.

For the moment all of the candidates need as many of the votes in the trade union section as they can possibly muster.

For the moment they will all be solidly behind whatever actions the unions take.

This, of course, will change.

Whichever of the candidates are elected as leader and deputy leader of Scottish Labour, they will continue to support a devolution settlement in which real political and economic power remains largely with the sovereign parliament in Westminster. The levels of public spending and borrowing; the framework of employment and trade union law; the extent of privatisation; the future for pensions; these and much else that matters to ordinary trade unionists will continue to be settled south and not north of the border.

Those Scottish Labour politicians who might form part of a future Labour Government in Westminster and who might have an influence over these issues have by contrast been remarkably silent on the need for solidarity with striking public sector workers.

The likes of Jim Murphy, Douglas Alexander or Margaret Curran have so far failed to say anything about 30th November. Like their boss Ed Miliband, they are keen to demonstrate their independence from trade union influence.

While they take the unions’ money with one hand, they push the same unions away with the other. They cynically use the unions for their own ends. Why the unions allow themselves to be abused in this way remains one of the great political mysteries of our time.

# ONLY REAL CHANGE CAN SAVE THE PLANET

by Roz Paterson

**YOU** may recall, shortly before Britain went bust, that David Cameron promised his government would be the 'greenest government ever'. Well, hold onto your hats, but such has not proven to be the case.

Earlier this year, Friends of the Earth UK analysed the ConDems' progress so far and found that the crude scramble for profit – or economic growth, as it's generally known – trumped any attempts to make UK plc a more sustainable, less polluting, less wasteful and generally environmentally disastrous hotspot.

Yet last month, a Eurobarometer survey found that 20 per cent of respondents regarded climate change as the most serious problem we face, and a majority consider it more important than the current financial crisis.

Thus, governments can hardly claim they are responding to public opinion when they ditch the greenery in favour of policies designed (so they say) to stoke up the economy.

But there should be nothing surprising in this.

The ConDems, in common with right-of-centre governments throughout the world, are unashamedly capitalist in their outlook, and capitalism means, nay demands, excess and waste.

As long ago as 1960, Vance Packard, author of *The Waste-Makers*, spelled it out: without over-consumption and waste, the big, clunky, stupid machine that is capitalism would simply grind to a halt.

Stupid because capitalism runs on a single programme – to make profits. Any other consideration, from human dignity to preventing the extinction of the Duke of



Burgundy butterfly, goes out the window in the relentless pursuit of money.

Packard observed a society, America, being duped by the advertisers and copywriters into believing that new is best, that updating every year, every season even, is essential to social standing and human happiness, and that repairing the old, handing items down, conservation, Cupertino and sharing, are the stuff of losers and misfits.

And look where it got them.

Into debt, into resource depletion and oil insecurity, into international conflict, and into the path of the hurricane.

Of course, you're not daft. You probably didn't vote for David Cameron and, god forbid, if you did, it probably wasn't because you thought he'd invest in free, high quality public transport whilst hammering the luxury motorist and multiple home-owner for the tax to pay for it.

The thin gloss of greenwash in the Tory manifesto was there merely to soothe the conscience of those who want to earn shed loads of money at someone else's expense but occasionally get a bit moist-eyed about what it all means for the Polar Bear.

Green measures, such as home insulation grants and financial incentives for wind farms are all very well, though sometimes not, but that's

another story. However, they hardly get to the heart of the matter.

While we are still, as a society, pursuing profit - making and selling too much stuff, driving too many cars, wasting too much fuel and other non-renewable resources, throwing 30 per cent of our food into landfill and generally working in useless industries to produce things that no one actually needs, from dodgy financial services to cheap, one-wear-only clothing – we will continue to deplete our environment at an incalculable cost, not just to ourselves, but to the generations that follow us.

Truly, if you tolerate this, your children will be next.

We need to work differently, and to do that, we need to think differently.

For over a lifetime, we have been force-fed the mantra that economic growth is everything. That, without it, we will be plunged into poverty and despair.

However, even with strong economic growth, an increasing percentage of us were plunged into poverty and despair anyway.

Instead of economic growth, we could opt for no growth, concentrating our energies and ingenuity on creating a sustainable society, where we are equal, where people are valued, and the work that they

do is meaningful.

Instead of measuring our worth in pounds and pence, how about in terms of health, including mental health? Instead of pinning our sense of self-worth on such spurious national achievements as, er, the 2012 Olympic Games, what if we aimed for shorter working weeks and a living wage for everyone, even those unable to work?

How about extended parental leave, free and high quality childcare, equality and dignity, lower crime rates and increased rehabilitation, and an increased sense of belonging and well-being?

A green economy is about much more than being carbon neutral and verging on the vegan. It's about Cupertino, and an attention to people's needs, not corporate profits and manufactured desires.

That Cameron's Tories have turned out to be a bunch of planet-trashing sell-outs should come as a surprise to no one. But all the leading political parties are somewhere along that same continuum, with even the Scottish Greens failing to come up with anything more convincing than capitalism, but nicer.

The SSP is a socialist party. We don't do capitalism, because it doesn't work (financial crisis? More like global meltdown...), even on its own terms, and it certainly doesn't work on ours.

People who can work together, as equals, who can share resources and pool their abilities for the common good, are the natural stewards of the land and seas.

It is in our interest to take care of the environment that sustains us. We are the many and they, the 0.01 percent that constitute the super-rich, are the few. Yet they run the show. For now.

Isn't it about time we fixed that?

# WE ARE THE MILLIONS - AND WE CAN WIN!

by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

‘**HISTORIC**’ is a word often over-used, and thereby devalued.

But the strike on 30 November can only be described as historic for its sheer scale and potential impact on the course of events.

Nearly 30 different trade unions have won sweeping mandates for strike action on N30.

About 3million workers are striking together against the assault on their pensions, and the wider cuts, on the same day.

That makes it the biggest single day of strike action in the UK since the momentous 1926 General Strike.

## Giant awakes

The slumbering giant of the trade union movement is awakening, rising to challenge the most vicious government since Thatcher.

The Scottish Socialist Party has exposed their class-ridden mission of cutting jobs, wages, benefits, pensions and public services -an assault that aims to turn back the clock to the 1930s, destroying of gains won by decades of struggle, putting profit before people.

The cuts are totally unnecessary; counter-productive as well as devastating, and that they can best be challenged by a potent combination of arguments and action.

Arguments centred on taxation of the rich and democratic public ownership of the banks and big business, so as to put people before profit.

Action focused on the potential power of united action by public sector



workers – with the call for a one-day public sector strike in a concerted campaign of resistance... combined with demonstrations, occupations and a rebellion of communities, claimants, pensioners and students.

Now 3million public sector workers are combining in a colossal show of unity and strength, joined by community campaigners, pensioners, students, sick, disabled and unemployed people...and contingents of private sector workers, such as construction site workers engaged in their own showdown with bosses who want to slash their wages by a 35 per cent.

## All change after N30

Things will never be the same after the St Andrew’s Day Showdown.

Every worker on strike and every supporter who joins the union rallies will be transformed in their confidence to resist by the fact 3million others are doing likewise.

Behind their arrogant front, the government and bosses will be severely battered and bruised by this one-day strike

of almost the entire public sector.

They will lash out and have done so on the eve of the strike, helped by of tabloids like *The Sun*.

Beneath their upper-class arrogance, the Tories and LibDems are shaken by a movement with such sweep, with such a massive mandate from its own membership through the strike ballots.

This in stark contrast to the Coalition, which only won 23 per cent of voters across the UK, and which has no democratic mandate whatsoever to rule and ruin Scotland in particular.

## Rising resistance

Cameron and Clegg have launched a systematic “shock and awe” offensive, announcing wave after wave of cuts, repeating their mantras that “the cuts are unavoidable” and “we are all in this together”, claiming a spirit of ‘national unity’ in the face of adversity.

They aimed to cow and overwhelm people with the ‘inevitability’ of the cuts, with the idea that ‘there’s nothing we can do to stop this Juggernaut’.

And at first they had partial success – especially as Labour and SNP politicians only objected to the pace and depth of the cuts, not the whole concept of cuts being necessary compounded by the slowness of the top union leaders in calling members into action.

Street protests by the SSP, UK-Uncut and others; the October 2010 STUC demo of 20,000; the revolt of students last winter; scattered but important community struggles against cuts and closures; the mammoth half-a-million strong TUC demo on 26 March; and especially the 30 June strike by 750,000 civil servants and teachers... all helped explode the myths and encourage the resistance.

## Sweeping mandates for action

Now, boosted by these examples, an incredible array of union members have voted by majorities of 75 per cent to 85 per cent in favour of striking together on N30.

This includes NHS staff voting for their first national strike since 1982; EIS members for their first teachers’ national strike in 25

years; the ATL education union for the first strike in their entire 127-year history; and members of the Prison Officers Association voting by 97 per cent in a consultative ballot against the pension cuts, declaring plans to defy the ban on their right to strike on N30.

### ConDems panic – and lash out

In response, the ConDem Cuts Coalition has moved from sneering dismissal of opposition to a combination of false promises of concessions and threats of dictatorial measures.

They tried to divide older workers from the rest, by making minor concessions on pensions to those over 50. In tandem with that ploy, LibDem axe-man Danny Alexander accused unions of being “hell-bent on strike action”, desperate to undermine public support for the strikes, measured at 8 out of 10 people in recent opinion polls.

That flopped because workers knew they would still have to pay up to three times more, up to the age of 68, for lesser pensions.

The switch from RPI to CPI as a measure of inflation would alone slash pensions by 20 per cent.

Bizarrely government negotiator Francis Maude suggested a 15-minute strike without loss of pay, instead of the huge impact of a 24-hour stoppage. Union members mocked this as a tea break, not a strike.

### Reign of terror

More recently he turned “hard cop” and threatened to withdraw “concessions” if the N30 strike goes ahead – and a speed-up of ruthless anti-strike laws being passed... in a country with some of the most repressive anti union laws in Europe!

### Workers’ power

Does this all amount to ‘sound and fury, signifying nothing’?

It shows they are on the run. It shows the millionaires government, is terrified by the impact of the N30 action.

They fear the role it can play in raising millions of less organised working-class people to their feet in resistance.

But it also goes to show the cold, calculating ruling class of Britain, will not just roll over without an almighty fight.

A sign of what is to come was police kettling protesting construction site workers in London – the first use of this method against workers, as opposed to students.

### Keep chasing the millionaire robbers!

The stealing of £1.8billion a year from workers’ pensions, in a second tax on public sector workers – money that goes not into pension funds, but straight to the Treasury to pay for the bankers’ bailout

They are on the run, and now is the time for the TUC, STUC and the various national union leaderships to keep chasing them – rather than seeing N30 as the end of the battle.

Whatever the detailed tactics decided for further action in each union, the experience of the past 18 months proves the indispensable need for united national and UK-wide strike action.

The ConDems will try and ignore the biggest strike day for 85 years and further days of such powerful unity in action will need to be called and built.

In the first two months of 2012, Scotland’s 32 local councils and the Scottish government will all be finalising their Budgets. A further Scottish (or UK-wide) one-day strike and mass

lobbies of councils and the parliament is a strong option.

### Defiance Budgets

This would be a decisive weapon if the unions demanded that instead of passing on the cuts from the Westminster Butchers as willing servants, the Scottish government and local councils set Defiance No-Cuts People’s budgets, and demanded back the stolen £billions from Westminster.

Alongside such militant and united strike days, occupations of threatened facilities by communities, workers and students will have to be considered.

### No cuts – tax the rich

And in sustaining the struggle against cuts, a vital weapon is the socialist case that they are totally unnecessary, and devastating to those paying for the crisis created by the bosses of a capitalist

system of profiteering.

Taxing the rich would provide mountains of money to invest in decent jobs for a young generation being laid to waste by this system as well as funding decent pay, pensions and benefits for all, and

expanded public services.

£120billion a year in taxes is avoided, evaded or simply unpaid by big business and the rich. — over one hundred times as much as is lost through much-trumpeted benefit fraud!

A modest 10 per cent wealth tax on the richest 1,000 fat cats would generate the funds to create 1.4 million new jobs on £25,000 a year.

### Socialism, not butchery

Democratic, full public ownership of the banks, big business, energy and services would render poverty obsolete transforming the lives of

millions.

There is no scarcity in Scotland or beyond.

Company Directors have average pensions of £175,000 a year – not the miserable £4-5,000 that they brand as ‘gold-plated pensions’ for public sector workers.

The profits of big business have almost doubled since 1970s while wages are at their lowest share of GDP since records began in 1956.

And the switch in how they measure inflation aims to rob workers in existing pension schemes of £100billion

### Independent socialist Scotland

Far from “all being in this together”, it is classic ‘them and us’. It’s the millions versus the millionaires.

We are all in this fight together – public and private sector workers, communities and workforces, students and workers, the employed and the unemployed, sick, disabled or pensioners.

N30 will make history but the fight goes on.

Demand further united days of strike action by millions.

Demand “No cuts – tax the rich”.

Demand that the SNP government and local councils set No-Cuts Defiance budgets.

If the SNP, with their popular mandate are serious about ‘standing up for Scotland’ they have the ball at their feet.

Set a No-Cuts budget in defiance of Westminster, demand back the £3.5billion cuts imposed on Scotland by a Coalition with no mandate in Scotland .

The more the London millionaires resist the stronger the case for an independent Socialist Scotland becomes.

That’s why the Scottish Socialist Party demands a cuts-free, Westminster-free, independent socialist Scotland. Join us!

# A FORGOTTEN CLASS HERO

*Labour of Love: The Story of Robert Smillie* by **Torquil Cowan**. Published by Neil Wilson Publishing

by *Eddy Cornock*

**THE** subject of *Labour of Love* is Robert Smillie, a pioneering Socialist, miners' leader and close associate of James Keir Hardie.

The book, based on the research of his great-grandson, Blair Smillie, has been written by Torquil Cowan as a quasi-autobiography, in order to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of Robert Smillie's character, a more vivid description of his personal life and an insider's perspective of the great industrial and political struggles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

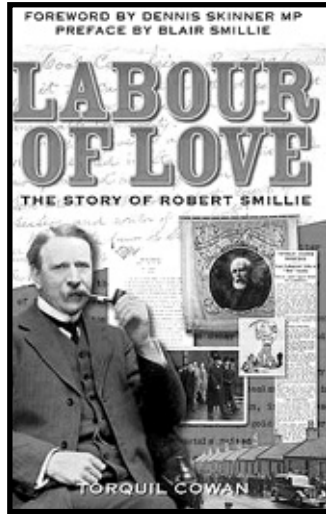
Consequently, this memoir, is not an entirely factual account of the life and times of Robert Smillie since the author uses artistic licence to bring 'Bob' Smillie back to life.

It is not so much the case, however, that Cowan plays fast and loose with established facts; it is more that he uses his imagination to fill in gaps to make the narrative flow more naturally.

Although born and brought up under the harshest of conditions in Belfast it was in Scotland that Smillie was to make his mark as a leading trades unionist and political activist.

He came to Scotland at the age of fifteen and after a series of low paid jobs became a miner in Lanarkshire when he was seventeen.

Smillie subsequently met



and married Ann Hamilton and settled in Larkhall to raise a large family of nine children.

Whilst working in Larkhall Colliery in 1885 he was elected secretary of the branch of the newly-formed Lanarkshire Miners' Association which brought him into contact with other union leaders including James Keir Hardie, the secretary of the Ayrshire Miners' Union.

Smillie shared Hardie's view that the working-class needed its own political party and in 1888 helped Hardie campaign to be elected the Independent Labour candidate for the constituency of Mid-Lanark.

In the event, Hardie failed to be elected but the Mid-Lanark campaign can be seen in retrospect to have been the first step towards the creation of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1893 for which Smillie was a founding member.

He tried several times unsuccessfully to become an MP before World War One but continued his work as a union leader.

In 1894 Smillie was elected president of the

Scottish Miners' Federation.

Two years later he played an important role in the formation of the Scottish Trade Union Congress. His role was recognised when he was elected chairman at its first conference, a post he was to hold until 1899.

Smillie also played an active role in the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) gathering information for presentation to the Royal Commission of Mines (1906-1911).

The leadership of the MFGB tended to support the Liberal Party and it was mainly due to his efforts that the union affiliated to the Labour Party in 1909.

Three years later he became president of the MFGB and helped establish the Triple Industrial Alliance which was an agreement for mutual support between the three most powerful trade unions in Britain, the miners, dockers and railwaymen.

Smillie was opposed to Britain's involvement in the First World War from the start in 1914 and fought to keep the miners outside the provisions of the Munitions Act.

In 1915 he became president of the National Council Against Conscription (after 1917 the National Council for Civil Liberties). Prime Minister David Lloyd George saw Smillie as a threat and in an attempt to control him, offered him a post in his government.

He refused and when the war ended in 1918, Smillie was one of the first to call for the Labour Party to withdraw from Lloyd George's coalition government.

In 1919 Smillie called for the nationalisation and

workers' control of Britain's coal mines. Lloyd George responded by setting up a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Sankey.

The Commission, by a bare majority, came out in favour of the nationalisation of the mines, but the Government refused to comply.

In 1920 the mine-owners notified their workers that wages were to be reduced and the miners responded by going on strike.

Under the terms of the Triple Alliance, the railwaymen and the dockers should have come out on strike in support of the miners but since this failed to happen the miners eventually had to give in and accept lower wages.

Smillie was devastated by these events and in March 1921 resigned as president of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.

Smillie's retirement, however, was shortlived since he was elected MP for Morpeth in the 1923 General Election but declined a post in the 1924 Labour Government headed by Ramsay MacDonald on the grounds that his health was beginning to fail.

As a result of poor health, Smillie was forced to resign his Morpeth seat in 1929 and eventually died in 1940.

Robert Smillie is one of the forgotten heroes of the Scottish and British Labour Movement and it is fitting that his many achievements and legacy from which we have all benefited should be acknowledged. *Labour Of Love* does this in an accessible way so that he can be appreciated by a new generation.

# SEASON'S GREETIN' FACE



**GOD** help us one and all - because it's Christmas time in local newspaper land.

Throughout the country, jolly hacks are rummaging in attics and bringing down last year's 'man who eats Christmas dinner every day' and 'woman who never takes her decorations down' stories and draping them like thread-bare tinsel over schedules so that they jostle merrily next to 'paedo caged' and 'missing cat can bark, claims owner'.

As you sleep snugly, dreaming of the Big Day, teams of eager work experience elves are combing the electoral role looking for Mr Claus's (79 of them in the UK, last time I looked) they can bother and 'behind the scenes at Santa's grotto' tales are being fished out from the cracks in the couch and dropped, like grubby, unhygienic sixpences into the big news dumpling mix.

Meanwhile, the first 'cash-strapped council wastes money on cock-shaped lights' tale will formally be getting switched on, with

perhaps a former Sugababe or Atomic Kitten ceremonially, if clumsily, dragging it into an Atex box and Christmas will have been getting cancelled since July for vandal hit sports clubs and cheerleaders who've had their pom-poms pinched.

I'm a journalist, and this is the end of the market that I work in.

This is what we do and is what we'll always do, till the last print hack files the last 'mechanical Santa toy that looks like it's wanking ban call' story in the last printed paper.

However, the fact that this, on current reckoning, is scheduled for any time in the next six weeks should give us cause for reflection.

The flesh-shearing tempest crashing across the face of the globe from capitalism's collapse is leaving little standing and nothing that does stand is left unscarred.

Consider the plight of us local paper hacks. OK, I know that engendering sympathy for journalists is, these days, a hard sell, like siding with the farmer that pitch-forks the otter at the end of that 70s kids film.

But I'm talking about us at the bottom, at the roots, not those gaudy blossoms in their lovely suits on the nationals, cherishing their expensive degrees and relishing every minute of their 14 hour day as they lovingly craft an



*I'm A Celebrity* Freddie Starr break-out fact-file from cuts.

Substructural changes are reflected in the superstructure - as capitalism's geology heaves, splits, crashes and cracks, the topology is twisted, to a chorus of screams. All that is solid melts into air. Like my Christmas intro. In journalism, your intro is everything. This is where you set the scene. It should be an utter zinger - the rest of the story hangs on it.

Unless you work for The Independent, who specialise in incomprehensible stories, or my favourite weirdie leftie paper, the Workers Hammer, organ (titter) of a mad-eyed sect whose sole purpose is to shout at other leftists when they're trying to eat a pie in peace on a demo (I'm speaking from personal experience here) where "What's needed is a socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers state that will lay the basis for building a socialist society, for

which you need to build a revolutionary workers party" on a review of *TOWIE* is considered the done thing.

So, the intro's everything, and I've built my entire career, such as it is, on about five of them.

I should mention this 'career' in passing, because it's not all been about local papers. For a period, I mixed it with the nationals, before I got found out. Practically the last thing I ever had to do on a shift at a national was to sub Gail Sheridan's column in the *Mirror* (Gail Force - Let's Go Airside with Gail Sheridan!).

The sheer horror of it will be with me forever, like one who has locked eyes with Death but cruelly been given time to reflect.

"See that Annabel Goldie. Ma man says he doesnae like her, but I think she's pure gallus." There are nights when, as in a fever, I twist, tortured and these words feel like they're being pounded, letter by letter, with stamps dipped in

shit, onto my soul.

So, my intro. It's one of my favourites. It goes "Ching, ching merrily on high - in (insert the name of town you're working in here) the tills are ringing!"

There follows 300 of the ripest words, often including the phrases 'this year's must-haves', 'shoppers stampede' and, in 1997, 'Furby'.

But not this year, thanks capitalism. For the first time, I can't bring myself to do it.

Since, I confidently predict, the system will finally collapse on Boxing Day, and we'll be facing our first ever post apocalyptic new year, the last thing I want is for whatever remains of humanity to be huddled round a smouldering Argos catalogue, grunting in a new, barbaric argot (language will go by the 27th), worshipping the manically ho-ho-ho-ing, half charred, soot blackened wanking Santa toy which has become their idiot idol, giving up offerings of their own severed genitals to it wrapped in a paper with THAT intro on it.

I'm not going to leave much of a mark on this world (I reckon I'll get eaten on the 28th), I'm more of a grubby stain on the couch kind of guy, but I can't have that.

Anyway, ding dong merrily on high, readers - it's socialism or wanking Santa-worshipping barbarism!

# OCCUPY MOVEMENT AND ANTI CAPITALISM

by Andy Bowden

**AFTER** two months of protest and an occupation that started to put anti-capitalist ideas into the mainstream, it was inevitable. The patience of the political and financial establishment of the US has run out, and they have moved to crush a groundswell of popular protest - the Occupy movement - with police brutality and outright thuggery.

The Occupy movement has united Americans from disparate and unlikely backgrounds - veterans, pensioners, the trade union movement - alongside radical youth with a simple message; we are the 99 per cent and we are fed up with the political and economic control the 1 per cent of millionaires have on US society.

The US establishment hasn't been able to argue convincingly against that message - bar the embarrassing and predictable attacks from the usual quarters like Fox News, that the protesters are "anti-freedom" - so have resorted to force to try and evict both the protesters physical presence, and more importantly their ideas, from the debate in the USA.

In Oakland the police



attacked the Occupy movement with such force it makes the Met here look like a group of Boy Scouts. They launched a brutal assault on the occupiers, throwing flash grenades, teargas, and firing rubber bullets at peaceful protesters.

One US army veteran, Scott Olsen was shot in the head by a police rubber bullet - This repression, more akin to something out of Mubarak's Egypt than a supposed democratic country resulted in the Occupation calling for a general strike across Oakland.

This call was heeded by the Occupy movements allies in the US trade unions, and resulted in the shutdown of the Port of Oakland - one of the busiest ports in the United States. Alongside support from

transit unions in Occupy Wall Street, the Occupy movement's support from organised labour in the States has broadened the movement's appeal and helped to radicalise and bring into struggle trade unionists who otherwise may not have had the confidence or impetus to take action against the bankers.

The Occupy movement in the USA is acting as a flashpoint, identifying the bankers clearly as the cause of the economic crisis - a welcome return focus away from the previous "grassroots" protesters in the States, the Tea Party, that is effectively an ultra-right wing Republican faction.

As the forces of the state have attacked the Oakland occupation, they've also targeted the protest that started it all - Occupy Wall Street, the protest encamped in the heart of the world's financial citadel.

Using health and safety legislation as a pretext, New York police arrested almost 200 campers as part of their action to evict the protesters. Protesters cited use of pepper spray and even the use of a bulldozer to evict the camp. During this eviction, the police denied media access to report on their conduct.

Similar tactics were used on

Occupy movements elsewhere - at the University of California, Davis, police were recorded spraying protesters with pepper spray, even though they were sitting down peacefully and refusing to move.

At the UC Berkely campus, police attacked peaceful protesters with batons to the kidney and the groin. The police involved in the assault defended their conduct saying "The individuals who linked arms and

actively resisted, that in itself is an act of violence", and that "linking arms in a human chain when ordered to step aside is not a non-violent protest."

This brutality wasn't limited to students - In Seattle the police pepper sprayed Dorli Rainey, an 84 year old woman, showing they've lost any consideration for basic human rights in their assault on the Occupy movement.

The police have now created a topsy turvy reality where those who protest peacefully are violent thugs, and the ones who shoot rubber bullets, gas demonstrators and literally bulldoze them are the legitimate forces of law and order.

Despite this brutality, the Occupy movement is now a part of the radical history of the United States of America, alongside the anti Vietnam war movement, the IWW and the protesters of the bonus army.

As many of Occupy Wall Streets supporters have commented - you cannot evict an idea whose time has come, and the brute force used by the state to suppress this movement shows they are losing the battle of ideas, and world-wide more and more people are receptive to the ideas of anti-capitalists.

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# ON THE OFFENSIVE ACROSS THE PLANET

by Bill Bonnar

**IN** New York and other American cities anti-capitalist protesters have occupied financial centres in the face of brutal repression from city authorities.

In Athens a dogged resistance movement continues to oppose the government's austerity measures.

In Madrid thousands of young people have been protesting against youth unemployment while in Seoul masses of people have taken to the streets in protest against the signing of a new free-trade agreement.

This represents simply a snapshot of what has been happening across much of the capitalist world. Capitalism is in deep crisis and wants to extract itself from that crisis at the expense of working people through draconian cuts in public spending, rising unemployment and prices, privatisation of state assets and the dismantling of long fought for social services.

Yet the people are increasingly fighting back refusing to accept the blame for the crisis and are tackling the real villains of the piece; the rich, big business and their political servants in government.

What is clear is that we are now living through a general crisis in capitalism. This is not the same as recession which is simply part of the normal cycle of expansion and contraction of the capitalist economy but something much deeper.

When capitalism moves into a state of general crisis that crisis can only be resolved by a fundamental restructuring of the economy. This has happened twice in



**MADRID**

recent history. The first was at the end of the Second World War when the aftermath of the great depression and the destruction of the war led massive changes in the system.

These changes were overwhelming driven by the working class and strongly informed by Left thinking and included a massive extension of public ownership, a commitment to full employment, significant expansion of in health and education and the creation of the modern welfare state.

Interestingly, the godfather of neo-liberalism, Milton Friedman, described this period as capitalism's greatest defeat and argued that the key task of governments was to reverse these measures; something enthusiastically embraced by the later Thatcher Government.

The second time was in the aftermath of the Arab Israeli War of 1973 and a quadrupling of oil prices which plunged the capitalist world into recession and accelerated a process of de-industrialisation in the

heartlands of capitalism.

The current crisis is driven by debt. Unsustainable debt is now a central feature of almost all developed capitalist economies and exists at every level.

National governments have debts running to astronomical figures. Currently the Italian government owes 1.9trillion euros while the US government is in debt to the tune of 14.5trillion dollars.

In Britain, it is not just national governments. PFI schemes signed in the nineties are now coming back to haunt many local authorities while individual debt is now at a level unimaginable a generation ago.

Capitalism needs to squeeze this debt out of the system and is attempting to do so by squeezing the working class. Yet as can be seen above and in a hundred other examples, workers are resisting with every means available.

The outcome of this struggle will redefine the nature of capitalism for years to come. If the capitalists succeed it will be through

the general impoverishment of the people with mass unemployment, collapsed social services and a fundamental attack on civil and political rights.

It may even herald a return to some kind of fascism.

If the working class succeed in resisting this offensive the crisis will be resolved by making substantial inroads into capitalist rule.

This would include an extension of public ownership into key areas of the economy, the re-establishment of manufacturing industry, severe curtailment of the finance sector and the move towards a much more balanced and sustainable economy.

These kinds of demands are now emerging through the various struggles around the world. In the United States the Occupy protests have highlighted the gap between the richest 1 per cent and everyone else and have demanded government action to reduce this gap. This has included the audacious demand that the rich actually pay some taxes.

In Athens, the growing resistance movement have highlighted the economic and social benefits of high levels of public expenditure while in Madrid legions of young people are demanding that the 'right to work' be enshrined in law.

All of the above show that global capitalist system is fundamentally flawed and reeking massive damage on the planet and its people. While many reforms represent a positive step forward ultimately it is the system that has to be replaced by something superior; socialism.

# ANTI-CUTS PRESSURE BUILDING

by Ken Ferguson

**ADAPTING** Mark Twain's comment on reports he had died, reports of the death of trade unions has been greatly exaggerated.

The consistent message from the *Voice* in the face of the ConDem millionaire cabinet's cuts and those of their SNP counterparts has been a simple one - they can be beaten.

Now as the massive 30 November strikes approach our message is being confirmed on all sides and by an increasingly fearful clutch of establishment politicians.

Step forward Francis Maude, top drawer Tory cabinet minister who offers unions the prospect of a 15 minute strike without loss of pay as his treacherous LibDem support act Danny Alexander accuses unions of being strike happy.

Clearly the gruesome twosome are part of an increasingly fearful, shaky coalition drive to head of the biggest strikes in a generation over pensions and to sow confusion among their opponents.

But as the ballots are declared in union after union growing fear that the 30



November action might just be the start of their problems grows in the corridors of power.

The ConDems, faced with growing unemployment, a Europe wide economic crisis and plummeting living standards, have indeed much to fear.

The Cameron/Clegg coalition talks tough but in reality is divided, fearful and

can be made to climb down if the unions and the broad anti cuts movement take them on in the streets, workplaces and communities.

A clear sign of their nervousness was the recent planted stories that the Metropolitan Police were prepared to use deadly baton rounds against student protestors in the capital and the use of kettling against

striking building workers in London by met riot cops armed with stun grenades.

As always the oily British establishment keeps a mailed fist in its velvet glove but they can still be beaten by mass action.

Any doubts about the effectiveness of strike action were dispelled by the spectacle of Scottish New Labour, which has spent years cultivating a business friendly image, demanding support for the striking workers.

No doubt the fight for union votes from the Labour leadership hopefuls partly explains this rediscovery of their long lost role as the "workers' friend" but mass pressure is at its root.

The lesson is as the great Scottish Miners leader Mick McGahey said, "If you stop running they'll stop chasing you."

The action on 30 November signals that the running has stopped and the vital need after it is to build the momentum in the unions, anti cuts movement, among youth and students and across communities around the key demands for no cuts and an alternative which puts people before profit.



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