

# Scottish Socialist VOICE



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## FIGHT POVERTY PAY **£2.60 an hour** - wage slavery of council apprentices in 2012

by *Richie Venton*,  
SSP national workplace  
organiser

**PEOPLE** are queuing up in fury to sign the SSP petitions demanding a decent living wage for council apprentices, most of whom right now get the gobsmacking pittance of £2.65 an hour. Or as one young Ayrshire apprentice told us: "You've got it wrong, it's only £2.60."

Whether its Labour or SNP in charge, that's the obscene handout to a new generation of workers.

In West Dunbartonshire, Labour is continuing where the SNP left off, with the SSP's Jim Bollan the only councillor to fight for a living wage; in North Ayrshire, the SSP is pounding the newly elected SNP and Independent councillors to put an end to their Labour predecessors' outlandish exploitation of Modern Apprentices.

Parents and grandparents express their disbelief and then their disgust

when we explain the facts. "You're not serious, are you?" "But I thought the minimum wage was about £6?" "My wee one is leaving school, what's she meant to do?" "I feel for the young ones starting out. It's just not right."

You could repeat hundreds of variations of these comments from SSP street

campaigns as far afield as Clydebank, Pollok or Irvine.

Young people suffer mass unemployment. They are demonised as work-shy by media editors on behalf of a government made up primarily of millionaires. Then many of them are given the choice of poverty benefits or slave wages.

Apart from the criminal levels of poverty, wasted talent and stress this causes, the biggest crime is that it is perfectly legal! It is the UK government's national minimum wage for apprentices.

Understandably, most people imagine the minimum wage is £6.08 an hour. But that's for workers over 21.

There's a string of exemption clauses that would bring blushes to the dodgiest of dodgy insurance salesmen. And the rates are not about to improve any.

The government recently accepted the Low Pay Commission's recommendations which will raise the 'adult'

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# FIGHT POVERTY PAY

• Continued from page 1

minimum rate from £6.08 to £6.19 in October. That's a 1.8 per cent 'rise' - otherwise known as a pay cut, given inflation levels.

But younger workers fare even worse: the rate for 18-20 year olds stays stuck on £4.98, that for 16-17 year olds unchanged at £3.68... and apprentices are doing the Conga in the streets at their 5 pence an hour rise, to £2.65!

This is more a national scandal than a national minimum wage.

It's not as if we live in a poor country. Dr Lena Wilson, chief executive of Scottish Enterprise, a body supposedly designed to boost the nation's public sector investment and employment, has been exposed for pursuing and accepting a £55,000 salary for a job with private company Intertex - for a grand total of 12 days work a year! - in addition to her £200,000 salary with Scottish Enterprise.

## Pauperism

The director of City Building, one of Glasgow Labour council's offshoot Quangos, has just relinquished his £120,000 a year post. That's equivalent to 25 apprentices' wages. But it's pauperism compared with the incomes of the company directors, bankers and fat cats that run the country.

Young people, and women, are especially exploited in a system that can only be described as wage slavery. The biggest single group in poverty is the working poor.

Ninety nine per cent of last year's pay deals were below official inflation - and real inflation on life's essentials make this even more of a savage pay cut.

Wages as a share of national wealth output (Gross Domestic

Product, GDP) have been battered down to record low levels over the past 30 years, since the Iron Lady of capitalist reaction, Thatcher, launched civil war on the working class, only to be imitated by Blair, Brown and now the Cameron/Clegg dictatorship of the rich.

Economists have proven that if wages were still 58 per cent of GDP as they peaked at in 1978, workers today would collectively get £60 billion more in their

pennies above, the minimum wage in the retail sector and hospitality, many of them part-timers.

They amass billions of pounds in profit for multinational companies, which are frequently cutting hours to boost profits even higher, thereby denying many workers the top-up to low pay that is Tax Credit. Around 200,000 families have lost an average of £4,000 a year because of punitive changes to

change compared to the bankers' and big business bosses' incomes, but a step towards a life worth living for millions of working people, based on a formula that would also help to close the gender gap in pay.

Even the very councils that rip off Modern Apprentices with a modern form of slavery have to admit workers need at least £7.20 an hour for a 'Living Wage'. All the more shame on them that they pay little more than one-third of that to young people desperately seeking skills and work, contrary to the vicious myth that they just want to sponge off society.

## Spongers

The only real spongers are the company directors and government ministers who preside over appalling levels of poverty pay, whilst themselves raking in bonuses and dodging taxes to the tune of at least £120 billion a year. That loss to society's funds alone would be enough to create 4.8 million jobs on wages of £25,000 a year.

The SSP is determined to combine with council workers and their unions to demand a living wage for all over 16, including apprentices, as a first step towards a society where those who produce the wealth of goods and services enjoy the fruits of their efforts.

In building the 20 October demo called by the Scottish TUC, the unions have the power and the opportunity to link the struggle against cuts to jobs and services to a campaign for a living wage that would lift workers, young and old, female and male, out of the dark pits of poverty, and inspire them to fight for a vision of an entirely different future - a poverty-free, socialist Scotland.



**DR LENA WILSON:** Scottish Enterprise Chief Executive has a private second job on the sly - £55,000 for just 12 days a year - that's on top of her £200,000 from SE

wages. Put another way, someone today on £12,000 would be paid £21,300; a worker currently earning £18,000 would be on £28,169; and today's salary of £25,000 would be £33,000.

A poisonous cocktail of anti union laws, cheap labour 'training' schemes, privatisation, the threat of job losses in the midst of mass unemployment, and above all fear in the workplace has been used to achieve this monumental wealth transfusion to the rich from the rest of us.

Public sector workers are battling cuts to their lowly wages. If anything, the private sector is even worse - officially with 17 per cent lower average wage levels. This is largely due to the vast battalions of workers on, or

Tax Credit regulations by the Coalition government in April. Earnings are further suppressed by new contracts in many retail giants that deny more recent recruits any premium payments for working on public holidays. And the fear of job losses is wielded as a weapon of choice by employers and governments to keep down wages for workers of all ages.

In the context of the billions stashed up in profits, and the millions hoarded by a handful who run society, the SSP's demand for a national minimum wage set at two-thirds average male earnings is modest in the extreme.

In today's figures that would be over £9 an hour; loose

# Carry on camping: 30 years at Faslane

by Leonna O'Neill,  
*Faslane Peace Camp*

**IN** 1982 a humble gathering of tents appeared in a council lay by. The campers were locals pitching their concern for the stationing of Polaris, the then British nuclear weapons system, in their community.

Since these humble beginnings, the camp known as Faslane Peace Camp has become the longest running protest site in the world, an anti-nuclear institution and a symbol of resistance, persistence and protest.

The camp today differs greatly from the handful of tents it once was. As time went by, it became apparent that this battle was to be a long one and it still continues.

The tents were replaced by caravans, outhouses and gardens, Polaris by Trident (a new, more advanced and more expensive weapons system) and the chain link fence guarding the weapons establishment was replaced with weld mesh, with new layers of razor wire and reinforcements added each time it's boundaries were mocked by the cutting and entry of Peace Camp protesters.

## Auspicious

From a once auspicious past, in terms of direct action against nuclear weapons, more recently there have been periods of inactivity at the camp, leading to the transient population.

A lifestyle without electricity and the freedom to earn money can be intense, time consuming and extremely restrictive to the point that it becomes difficult to find the extra energy to focus on the cause.

It is true too that the anti-nuclear movement in general has waned and failed to attract a new generation of young activists. However, the Scottish Independence debate has



**FASLANE TODAY:** peace campers have kept nuclear weapons in the minds of Scottish people since 1982

created a situation in which Scotland, where the majority of the population is categorically opposed to nuclear weapons, has the potential to refuse to continue to host the British nuclear weapons system.

With a lack of alternative venues anywhere near as strategically important as Faslane south of the border, coupled with the current financial climate, this could effectively force the hand of the UK government toward full nuclear disarmament.

The timing to ensure that this could become a reality couldn't be more impeccable, with the decision to replace Trident to the tune of £100billion tabled for parliamentary debate in 2016.

The time for anti-nuclear action is therefore now. It is this political climate that is keeping the current campers focussed and active. For the first time since the decision was made to replace Polaris with Trident over two decades ago, we have a tangible opportunity to set the ball rolling for nuclear disarmament.

## Committed

The small group of us here at the Peace Camp are committed to keeping Trident in the media and in the minds of the people of Scotland as they prepare to decide their political future.

To this end, and to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the camp this month, we have announced a

campaign of 30 Days of Direct Action from 9 June to 9 July.

We began with a banner drop from the Finneston crane in Glasgow, our message - "Nuclear disarmament. If not now, when?" - and since then we have been causing mischief daily.

Most notably, two campers trespassed at Coulport nuclear weapons storage depot in the early hours of the morning, risking charges under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act to prove that these weapons are not only immoral but unsafe!

We take our inspiration from the 30 years of activists that have come before us, breaking minor laws and putting their freedom on the line to uphold the greater law of humanity.

Nuclear weapons are immoral, illegal under international law and maintain a world order of power that is unjust and unfounded.

For as long as they are here, we at the camp will be here. A poignant and colourful reminder that their very existence as part of an acceptable defence strategy indicates a lack of morality that strikes at the very core of our society.

We, the people of Scotland, need to send a clear and unmitigated message to the UK government, and this time we have the power to make them listen.

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# Sticking with Britain will further weaken socialism

by John McAllion

IN his *Daily Record* column, George Galloway argued that independence would make Scotland “less socialist not more”. In doing so, he echoed the unionist argument that an SNP governed Scotland, in the search for competitive advantage, would initiate “a race to the bottom in wages, public services, corporation tax, income tax and so on”.

This argument, of course, ignores the inconvenient facts that British Labour was elected in 1997 on the pledge to not raise income tax rates and that Gordon Brown slashed both corporation and income tax rates while he was British Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It also overlooks British Labour’s current position of not restoring the cuts in public services and public sector wages and pensions being implemented by Britain’s Coalition Government.

## Beyond debate

The argument also confuses the SNP with independence. It is at least debatable whether today’s SNP is more or less socialist than British Labour. What is beyond debate is that an independent Scotland has the potential to be very much more socialist than the devolved Scotland we have experienced under both British Labour and the SNP.

Scotland’s bus industry is dominated by four big private conglomerates, including Brian Souter’s Stagecoach. Between them they pick up hundreds of millions of pounds in public subsidy every year through the bus services operator grant and the concessionary travel scheme.

These public subsidies feed into their ever-increasing revenue



**MEGA RICH:** Brian Souter’s Stagecoach gets hundreds of millions in public subsidies each year

and annual profits enabling them to reward their investors with increased dividends.

And 95 per cent of all passenger train services in Scotland are run by First Scotrail, a private company that forms part of a multi-billion pound international business claiming to be the world’s leading transport operator. It claims to carry 2.5 billion passengers every year, to employ 125,000 workers across the world and to pull in revenues in excess of £6 billion annually.

Part of its global success is the £2.5 billion rail franchise it picked up from the Scottish Government.

Under devolution, a Scottish Government has no power to re-nationalise those rail services. That power is reserved to Westminster which rules out any public take-over except as a measure of last resort when there is no other capitalist alternative. Scrapping the deregulated bus market and replacing it with publicly-owned regional bus companies, accountable to elected local authorities, cannot be done under a devolved Parliament with limited

fiscal powers. Re-establishing democratic ownership and control over our transport systems requires the Scottish Parliament to be independent.

Scotland also has a quarter of Europe’s tidal and offshore wind potential and a tenth of its wave power potential. If exploited properly, the renewables sector could lead the re-industrialisation of the Scottish economy using 21st century technologies and generating billions of pounds in investment and tens of thousands of highly skilled jobs.

## Private profit

How this sector is developed will determine the kind of Scotland our and future generations will live in. In a devolved Scotland, control of this key sector is being surrendered to the same big-six privatised power companies that already control and ruthlessly manipulate our existing energy market in pursuit of their own private profit.

They are already pulling in billions in subsidies through the renewables obligation and have

warned that consumers in a post-independence Scotland could not afford to support their plans for profitable renewable power schemes.

The ability to democratically recapture our renewable and fossil-based energy sector from these and other global sharks is way beyond any of the powers devolved to the Scottish Parliament. From North Sea oil to tidal turbines off Scotland’s west coast, public ownership is off limits and multinational energy leviathans hold sway.

Only an independent Parliament, with the full range of state power, has the potential to break capital’s stranglehold on our natural resources.

Staying in the union will make Scotland ever less socialist. Our publicly-owned water industry is being developed via contracts handed out to privatised water companies south of the border. The private and voluntary sectors are taking over local authority services.

Staying in the union will destroy what is left of socialism in our country. It is time to go.

# STREET STALLS OR CYBER SPACE FOR YES CAMPAIGN

by Campbell Martin

**THE** Scottish Socialist Party backs the Yes Scotland campaign. Since the party's foundation in 1998 the SSP has seen independence as the best constitutional option for the people of Scotland.

However, being committed to working with the Scottish National Party in the campaign to deliver independence doesn't mean the SSP agrees with that party's vision of our country's future. Nor has the SSP signed-up to the SNP's use of American marketing techniques as part of the Yes campaign.

The SSP backs independence not as some sort of Saltire-waving exercise in feeling distinctly and overtly Scottish, but as the means of securing all the powers necessary to radically transform our society.

For the Scottish Socialist Party, there is little point in securing independence if we simply re-make our new Scotland along the same lines as the failed British capitalist model.

In the SNP's independent Scotland, an unelected, hereditary monarch would remain Head of State and the Bank of England would still oversee monetary policy.

## Wealthy elite

The SNP would continue a system of privilege, and would retain a capitalist economy, which is based on the exploitation of the majority by a small, wealthy elite.

In contrast, the SSP's independent Scotland would be a democratic republic, where each citizen is as valued as the next, where the economy operates in



**POSITIVE MESSAGE:** but over-reliance on electronic marketing could have a negative effect PHOTO: Craig Maclean

the interests of the majority, creating full employment, restoring hope and opportunity, and building a better, fairer country.

The SSP disagrees with the SNP on the nature of an independent Scotland, but wholeheartedly agrees on the right of Scots to govern their own country, which is why both parties are members of the Yes Scotland campaign.

It is also the case that the differences between the SSP and SNP - in ideology and in campaigning methods - can strengthen the overall appeal of the organisation that seeks to secure a Yes vote in the Independence Referendum.

Personally, I cringe when I hear of the SNP employing a positive-psychology consultant and adopting American marketing techniques as part of its Yes campaigning, but if it produces positive results with certain sections of Scottish society, then fair enough.

But I'll do my bit as part of the SSP campaign - on the streets, talking face-to-face with people, listening to concerns over how independence might impact on pensions, jobs, benefits and putting people's minds at rest.

Without doubt the internet and social-networking sites will play an increasing part in pioneering and campaigning,

but it seems to me that the essentially impersonal nature of cyber contact can leave people cold.

It may seem to be an impressive campaigning technique to contact thousands of people by one click of an e-mail send button, but it is highly unlikely the content of the message will appeal to all recipients.

I'll give you a personal example of what I mean: online I signed up to the Yes Scotland declaration in support of independence.

I've been a political activist and campaigned for independence all of my adult life - 35 years and counting - but last week I received an e-mail from someone I didn't know, congratulating me on signing the declaration and suggesting I might like to "get involved", possibly by "delivering some leaflets" in the street where I live.

## Patronising

The e-mail identified the sender as an "Independence ambassador", a role the SNP's marketing blurb describes as being someone who "blends the strengths of a connector and a maven". I looked up 'maven' in the dictionary: apparently it is a Yiddish/Hebrew word for an expert or connoisseur.

Obviously not everyone would have the same reaction, but I found the e-mail slightly patronising and it certainly didn't make me want to 'get involved'. I'm much happier working with the SSP, on street stalls and at public meetings, dealing with real people and their questions about independence, and persuading them of the benefits and merits of an independent, Scottish socialist republic.

# UNION DEMANDS ANSWERS FROM FERRY PRIVATEERS

by Ken Ferguson

**SEAFARERS** union RMT is demanding answers on why notorious privateers and Scottish Government preferred bidders for Northlink ferries SERCO are claiming on the Stock Exchange that the Northern Ferries contract, that they are expected to take over on 5 July, is worth £350million while the Scottish Government are saying the deal is worth £243million - a £107million gap.

The massive £107million hole has further fuelled union suspicions over the contract after RMT announced that it is planning to ballot for industrial action on the Northern Isles Ferries service after it emerged that the private outfit SERCO are planning to renege on existing pension commitments to staff who will transfer over and offer a vastly inferior alternative that would leave members facing poverty in retirement.

RMT has also been sharply critical of SNP Ministers behind the move to sell-off the lifeline Northlink routes to SERCO in light of this colossal funding discrepancy and for "totally ignoring their duty of care to loyal and committed staff caught in the cross-fire of this privatisation deal".

## Cuts

As well as the attack on pensions, SERCO have also announced possible job losses, cuts to services, zero hours contracts and flexible working as they look at ways of squeezing the contract for every penny they can extract. RMT General Secretary Bob Crow said:

"This whole botched privatisation plan has been a shambles from start to finish and RMT demands to know why a contract that the politicians said is worth £243mil-

lion has been ramped up by the company to £350million on the Stock Exchange. This isn't small change down the back of the sofa, it's £107million and the taxpayers and ferries staff have a right to know just what is going on here. It stinks of the usual capitalist chicanery but it's down to the politicians now to explain this one and

it reinforces our case for binning this whole deal. Add the fact that SERCO are looking to rip up long-standing pension commitments to the staff who deliver these lifeline services and as RMT always said you can see that this Northern Ferries stitch-up is about maximising profits at the expense of services, fares and the workforce."



**CROW:** 'This isn't small change down the back of the sofa...'

**FOLLOWING** the news that the Northern Isles ferries are due to be sold off to private company Serco from the 5 July, with shipping union RMT preparing to ballot for action over a threat to pensions, the union today wrote to David MacBrayne Ferries demanding assurances that there will be no repeat of the Northlink stitch-up on the CalMac routes.

Transport Scotland have identified five CalMac routes for privatisation:

- Ardrossan - Bodick
- Wemyss Bay - Rothesay
- Oban - Craignure
- Largs - Cumbrae
- Pentland Firth

In the RMT letter the union

gives Caledonian MacBrayne until 28 June to respond positively on the following points:

That any transfer of employees will be dealt with under the TUPE regulations.

That members' existing pension provisions will be protected and will continue unaffected.

That the current practice of one joint bargaining machinery will continue, regardless of whether the contract is unbundled or not.

If these assurances are not forthcoming, then RMT have made it clear that the Union will be forced to consider further action, up to and including a ballot of members for industrial action.

The union has already said that it is to ballot ferry workers at publicly owned Northlink for industrial action amid growing concerns over terms of conditions when outsourcing privateer takes over next month. Northlink ferries service routes to Orkney and Shetland.

Even before the "funding gap" row emerged the union was concerned that the change will have an adverse impact on pensions and lead to possible job losses.

Serco will take over as the operator of the Northern Isles Ferry Service from 5 July. RMT National secretary Steve Todd added:

## 'Stitch-up'

"RMT will not stand back while staff caught in the middle of this ill-conceived privatisation stitch-up are kicked from pillar to post and we have no intention of letting the SNP political masters behind this sell-off wriggle off the hook either.

"They cooked up this scheme and they cannot wash their hands now that the reality of what it means is starting to become clear to staff and ferry users alike."

Shetland MSP Tavish Scott has also demanded that Scottish Transport Minister Keith Brown step in to resolve the growing row.

Mr Scott laid into the government for its handling of the contract and demanded immediate action to remove the islanders' concerns about their transport links.

Serco business development director Jamie Ross said: "We have had a series of recent meetings with staff and unions and the discussions have been constructive.

"Over the coming weeks we will continue working with both the unions and employees to discuss a number of issues."



# Was the Elgin platform emergency just a gas leak or something much more dangerous?

Offshore worker **Neil Rothnie** looks at what actually happened...

A full emergency evacuation (238 workers) from the Elgin platform and the Rowan Viking was Total's final throw of the dice once they had lost control of their North Sea well (G4) on 25 March.

Total's single other priority was to ensure, as far as possible, that all ignition sources were extinguished.

The evacuation was achieved by helicopter while 200,000 cubic meters a day of highly inflammable methane spewed out of the well; kept out of the helicopter jet engines by a fortuitous wind direction it is assumed.

Meanwhile, Total left a naked flame burning in the flare stack. In short, luck determined that the blowout did not escalate to Piper Alpha proportions. The potential was for far greater loss of life, than on BP's recent Macondo disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

## Blowout

Eleven oil workers died aboard the Deepwater Horizon when it exploded and burned in a high profile blowout. We all saw the pictures of the thousands of tons of oil that flowed into the Gulf of Mexico and washed up on the beaches of the USA. The workers' deaths and the grief of the widows and fatherless children were less visible.

Conventional wisdom was that a Macondo-type disaster couldn't happen on the North Sea where the safety regime is supposedly much more rigorous than in the Gulf of Mexico.



**LEAKS AND LIES:** "What Total still describes as a 'gas leak' was in fact a blowout. This is not semantics. It's a lie."

But to all intents and purposes it already has! G4 was that "event".

And the battle now is to see that Total do not continue to get away with their campaign of disinformation that has characterised the reporting of the near disaster leaving the industry wide open to a repeat.

What Total still describes as a "gas leak" was in fact a

That the colossal volumes of escaping gas did not ignite and blow up the rig was down to luck (or more precisely wind direction). Nor had Total any control over the resulting pollution. As it happens it was the invisible (but highly inflammable) greenhouse gas methane that escaped from Elgin and not the crude that spewed from Macondo.

**“The battle now is to see that Total do not continue to get away with their campaign of disinformation...”**

'blowout'. This is not semantics. It's a lie.

After grappling with pressure problems for over a week in a well that had been suspended a year previously, Total had as much control over the G4 blowout as BP had over the Macondo blowout - none whatsoever.

The entire industry closed ranks to ensure that Total's disinformation was not challenged. The government, in the shape of the Energy Minister, colluded, and the media were pathetic and questioned nothing.

Total's UK managing director Phillipe Guys has

repeatedly asserted that human error was not a factor, and that it was "a singular event" (read 'act of God'?). This is chilling, because were it true it would mean that blowouts, - perennial killers in the industry - are not necessarily preventable.

If an oil company can do everything right and the well can still blow out then none of us should be out there. This turns conventional understanding of well control on its head. If Total are correct, then the logic is that we should be seriously considering abandoning the whole North Sea. It's nonsense of course!

## Human error

All blowouts are the result of human error, and not just one isolated human error but usually a whole series of mistakes made somewhere during the design, drilling, completion, production or even abandonment stage of a well.

Nobody should be going back out onto either the Elgin or the Rowan Viking till this has been conceded by Total.

The ongoing investigation by the Offshore Division of the Health and Safety Executive must establish just how control of this well was lost and pass the lessons on to every other operator out there before any resumption of operations at Elgin.

Meanwhile, as the G4 blew out on the North Sea, Total was allowing another rig (a land rig) to blow out and burn down in the Niger Delta.

Again Total make no reference to a "blowout" resulting from operational failure on their part.

# NO LOVE MATCH AT EASTBOURNE TENNIS AS DUTCH DOCKERS STAGE PENSIONS PROTEST

by Voice Reporter

AS the *Voice* went to press, a pensions protest by Dutch dockers at Wimbledon tennis warm ups in Eastbourne was set to curdle to cream on the sponsors strawberries with demands for the return of £715million

the say was robbed by insurance giant Aegon.

The dockers say the money was lost to their pension funds when it was taken over by Aegon.

They portray the loss of the £715million as robbing port communities of significant cash

reserves set aside for retirement services.

The decision to take their protest across the channel to Eastbourne has won the backing of Britain's RMT transport union who pledged to join in the protest alongside their Dutch colleagues. RMT General Secretary Bob Crow said: "We salute our comrades from the Dutch dockworkers union for having the foresight to bring their protest over the hi-jacking of their pension funds over the Channel and right to the doorstep of the Aegon-sponsored Eastbourne tournament.

"RMT members will be with them at as they demand pension's justice from this crowd. We know all about the way that pensions are hijacked, asset-stripped and spat out the other end in this country and the protest at the Wimbledon tennis warm-up this weekend shows that this is a global threat to workers that requires a global union response."



FAT CAT GETS THE CREAM: Dutch dockers in the US protest against Aegon

## Workers in Revenue and Customs are striking against privatisation and job cuts

They spoke to the *Voice*:

“WORKERS in HMRC are striking against 10,000 job cuts, privatisation and being sacked for as little as three absences in a year. Whilst big businesses and the wealthy dodge more tax than ever we need more not less staff. But instead, workers face the sack whilst the government award multi-million pound contracts to gangster capitalist multinationals Teleperformance and Sitel to do our work, scandalously giving them access to the public's financial information. And tax office workers are so afraid we'll be sacked for being ill that offices resemble sick wards. After the strike we'll be continuing various actions short of strike, designed to maximise disruption and force the employer to negotiate. We'll also be considering further strike action on a month by month basis. We won't pay with our jobs whilst the rich pay nothing at all.

John Davidson,  
PCS Revenue and Customs General Executive Council

“MONDAY 25 June marks a commitment by Revenue and Customs staff that enough is enough. Calls by ordinary rank and file members to unite all the disputes in the department have been heeded and now we need to ensure that the one-day strike is a success. The intention to close further offices across the country leading to 10,000 job losses; the usage of private sector companies in the contact centres to undermine our working terms and conditions; no pay increase for the foreseeable future and an attendance management policy used to sack the disabled and vulnerable are more than reason to convince everyone to be on strike that day. However it is also a day on which we can unite public opinion against this governments austerity policies. The unions campaign 'Tax Justice for All' shatters the myth that we are all in this together. If there was a political will then billions of pounds could be collected to reduce the deficit. Instead the government attacks the very people employed to do that very task. Indeed its plans to privatise our jobs and services will only benefit the very few. In Revenue and Customs we must ensure the overtime ban is adhered to. Without the working of overtime to cover for the staff reductions the department could not function. Alongside this PCS Revenue and Customs should consider on top of further unified one-day strikes targeted action in key areas that would cause the maximum disruption. This selective action should be supported by a levy of all Revenue and Customs PCS members and supplemented by action that unites the membership across the department.

John Miller,  
PCS rep, Cumbernauld Revenue & Customs





**ACTING STRANGE:** police warned group members, who are in rehearsals for a performance at Faslane Peace Camp, "You do know we knew you were going to be here tonight", only to be told "Well, it is posted on Facebook, officers..."

# POLICE RAID SCOTTISH RADICAL THEATRE GROUP

by Voice Reporter

**AS** the Acting Strange Theatre Company met in the Wynd Centre, Paisley on they were joined by an unexpected audience - officers from Strathclyde Police.

The company was meeting to rehearse short plays they will be performing at Faslane Peace Camp in support of its 30th year of inspirational occupation.

The small and newly organised theatre group will be acting scripts written by founders Sandra Webster and Neil Scott.

A short time into the rehearsals, Strathclyde Police arrived and asked to see "the organisers" of the group. Sandra and Neil spoke to them, and from what the officers told them,

they ascertained that the order came from "elsewhere" for the visit.

None of the theatre group's members gave personal information, and ensured the officers knew that the performances and demonstration could number "between 10 and 1500" next Thursday.

## Harassment

Sandra, who is also SSP co-spokesperson, commented: "When I saw the police arrive into our rehearsal rooms, my immediate thoughts were that something had happened to my children. It is absolutely shocking that our police are being used to harass theatre groups in these times of cut-backs. What a tremendous waste of money and time!"

Musician and actor Pauline

Bradley added: "We're clearly having an impact, given that the authorities have their eye on us."

Neil Scott commented: "This is a fabulous endorsement of our radical credentials. This makes us more determined to go and show our support for the occupation of the peace camp, and it shows that our society is upside down when theatre groups are raided by police but illegal weapons of war are protected by people who are paid by our taxes."

Group member Carolina Perez urged people opposed to these immoral and murderous weapons to "come and join us by the banks of the Gare Loch to sing, laugh and share food in support of the resistance to weapons of mass destruction".

• Festivities kick off at around 11am on Thursday 28 June.

Anyone who would like a lift from Helensburgh Railway station on the morning of our gathering should text 07541392522.

Or email:

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# Real lives affected by public health cuts

**Sandra Webster** looks at the Edinburgh legionnaires outbreak

I do not consider myself adept at the use of social media. I tweet to friends sometimes about politics but more often than not it's just to chat. Last week however I had an extraordinary conversation with a comrade Eddie and, believe it or not, Edwina Currie.

Yes that Edwina Currie - who made such a principled stance on salmonella when she was part of John Major's government.

We talked about the legionnaires disease outbreak in Edinburgh and how one of the suspected sources was industrial cooling towers in Edinburgh. Edwina's response to us asking her to consider that the outbreak might be connected to less health and safety inspections was: "Nonsense, no-one would shirk obvious duty like that."

Unfortunately, according to Prospect, the union for health and safety inspectors, under the present government the number of planned preventative work place inspections has fallen by a third to 30,000 to 20,000 a year.

Legislation is there to protect workers for a reason. It's not just simple "red tape" placing a burden on employers, but legislation to protect

workers and the wider population. Usually the area infected by an outbreak of legionnaires disease is a very small one.

It is not spread by person-to-person contact but by the bacteria being present in a air conditioning unit for example. It was named after an outbreak in a hotel in a legionnaire's convention in America in 1976. It can cause a flu-like respiratory illness which in rare cases can kill.

The recent outbreak in which there have so far been 47 confirmed cases, 42 suspected and two deaths, is unusual as it affected a wide geographical area - Dalry, Saughton and Gorgie in the south west of Edinburgh.

The source has not been - and may never be - identified. But one of the likely sources are three industrial cooling towers. These have all now been treated but due to the slow incubation period for legionnaires, there still might be infected people in the community.

This unusual outbreak has been accompanied by a cut in Environmental Health Inspectors in Edinburgh by 18 per cent - double the UK-wide cut.

Public health officials in the city have also now been cut from 61 in

2011 to 50. It is easy to correlate with less people to undertake inspections and public health responsibilities, that there has to be an impact on the number of inspections staff are physically able to undertake.

There have been two deaths so far, both men - one a building labourer in his 50s and the other a man in his 40s. Both were reported to have "underlying health issues".

I am unsure if this is an attempt to placate the completely healthy among us or justify these two deaths as somehow being less significant due to the conditions the men lived with. Many of the population live with chronic health conditions these days, such as diabetes.

It seems as if the outbreak has peaked now, with less patients in intensive care and no new cases reported as the *Voice* went to press.

We have been told that "lessons have been learned".

I hope that the government that has slashed public health budgets will ensure front-line services are properly staffed to prevent a occurrence of such an incident again.

Sadly however, like with many cuts in other crucial services, vulnerable people will again be among the greater of the saddest statistics.

# Scottish Socialist Party



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# ELECTION WON'T SOLVE GREEK CRISIS

by Bill Bonnar

**THE** election result in Greece might temporarily calm the nerves of European bankers, stock exchanges and governments in London, Berlin and Brussels, but it is very much the calm before the storm.

To claim the result is an endorsement of the austerity programme lacks any real credibility. The conservative New Democracy narrowly emerged as the largest party with 30 per cent of the vote.

The other main pro-austerity party, Pasok, gained 12 per cent. With the support of a few smaller parties and independents they may be able to cobble together some kind of short-term coalition but to what end?

## Recession

The austerity programme has been systematically rejected by the Greek people and their active opposition is making it virtually impossible to implement. Also, it is simply not working. Greece's debt is not being reduced while the country is locked into a long term recession with no end in sight.

Those who voted for pro-austerity parties did so with a gun pointed to their heads. An alliance of New Democracy/Pasok, the Greek media and European leaders laid before them a nightmare scenario. Vote for austerity because the alternative is economic collapse and political chaos.

Even so, most of the electorate voted for anti-austerity parties. There was also an interesting geographic and demographic split.

In Athens, which is very much the economic and political heart of the country there was a clear majority for parties of the Left while the Right gathered most of their support from North of the country.

At the same time most young people voted for the Left while the Right drew a significantly



**SUFFERING:** Greek unemployment is now at levels unseen since the Great Depression

high proportion of its vote from elderly population.

The Left did spectacularly well. The Coalition of the Left, Syriza, polled 27 per cent, drawing support from other Left parties who between them polled another 11 per cent. Worrying, the openly fascist Golden Dawn polled 7 per cent.

So what now? The new Greek government will press ahead with the austerity programme because they cannot see beyond the next bailout.

They have no real strategy for moving Greece forward and may now have to oversee the very economic and political collapse they warned against.

The Greek economy is collapsing. Unemployment is at levels last seen at the time of the great depression, living standards

continue to plummet and basic services such as health and education are being starved of funds. Greek businesses, whose growth are meant to drive the country out of recession are going bankrupt at record levels. Even hitherto successful businesses are closing through lack of capital.

The economic crisis is being reflected in an ongoing political crisis. A mass movement is building against austerity and the government which will not be thwarted by the recent election result.

## Movement

This movement has now developed a distinctly Left characteristic which not only rejects the austerity programme but increasingly rejects the economic system which brought it about.

From the social and economic devastation an alternative is emerging not only for tackling the immediate problems but also for building another kind of economy.

Sooner or later this situation must come to a head. For the Right the election result buys them a little breathing space but no real way forward. A return to military rule is now a distinct possibility.

Gramsci defined fascism as "the open terroristic dictatorship of the ruling class". That point when they could no longer rule through consent and had to rely on force.

Only the full mobilisation of the Greek people behind a Left programme can thwart this possibility and move the country in a new direction.



# Campaign steps up a gear

by Colin Fox

THE SSP's National Council met last weekend in Edinburgh and announced plans to step up our campaigning for Independence. In welcoming the formal launch of the Yes Scotland campaign, the National Council congratulated those SSP members involved in helping to make the event the success it undoubtedly was and also for maintaining the SSP's distinct and separate socialist identity within the broad based Independence movement.

It is a measure of the success of the launch that the No campaign, which finally presents its case for the Union under the banner 'Better Together' next week, have abandoned plans for a similar opening event fearing it would be unfavourably compared to ours.

## Favourable

The SSP NC also welcomed the prodigious press coverage the party received from the launch as our vision of Independence, involving a modern democratic republic with an elected Head of State was widely reported. The press coverage was without doubt the most favourable and helpful publicity we have received in recent years.

The SSP is under no illusions however about the nature of the political contest ahead and anticipates a hard fought Referendum campaign reflecting the magnitude of the stakes involved for both sides. No one should underestimate the lengths the No campaign will go to or the mud they will throw over the next two years. The British State has after all made



**COMMITMENT:** the SSP will collect thousands of signatures for the Yes Scotland Declaration

it abundantly clear it is thoroughly opposed to Independence and it will do all it can, using fair means and foul, to win the 2014 vote.

And in this context a sense of proportion and context is absolutely vital for all SSP members involved in this battle for self-determination.

The Yes campaign is a broad based, cross party initiative that aims to draw support from all corners of Scotland and all shades of opinion. This breadth can of course be strength and a weakness. On the one hand it reflects a wide constituency of support for Independence but on the other hand it inevitably means there will be real differences in the type of Independent Scotland we each want to see.

For our part the SSP has worked to good affect in the Scottish Independence Convention [SIC] for the past seven years working collaboratively with the SNP, the Greens and many other partners from across civic Scotland.

We have never sought during that time to obscure or play down our distinctive socialist identity within the SIC and that honest and respectful approach continues to be our objective within the Yes Scotland movement.

There will be many challenges in the years ahead as we all work towards securing majority support in the 2014 ballot. The Yes Scotland campaign is still evolving and not withstanding recent adverse publicity over its decision-making structures, I am assured these outstanding issues will be addressed in the immediate weeks ahead.

## Persuading

Since recent polls suggest only around one third of Scots favour Independence, the Yes Scotland campaign clearly has it all to do in persuading our fellow Scots they will be economically, socially, culturally and politically better off.

Nonetheless that objective must be uppermost in all our deliberations. This was among the

reasons why the SSP National Council decided to take the party's distinct socialist message around Scotland in a series of public meetings over the coming months.

We also committed ourselves to getting thousands of signatures for the Yes Scotland Declaration over the next few months (see [www.YesScotland.net](http://www.YesScotland.net)) and to participate in the many constituency based Yes campaigns now being established.

And as part of our campaigning work we aim to help maximise the turnout for the 'Independence for Scotland' march in Edinburgh on Saturday 22 September. (See [www.independenceforscotland.com](http://www.independenceforscotland.com) for details).

Tens of thousands of people are expected to attend. Actress Elaine C Smith has been approached to compere the event and the wide array of speakers will include SNP leader Alex Salmond and myself on behalf of the SSP.