

**Historic days for the Palestinian people:
as Israel attacked, the United Nations
voted to recognise Palestinian statehood**

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INDEPENDENCE

After the RIC - what next?

by Ken Ferguson

THE Radical Independence Conference in Glasgow on November 24 was large and impressive, bringing together a wide range of different campaigns and political outlooks. It covered a wide spectrum of national, local and international topics.

Largely young, it demonstrated the breadth of forces within the progressive wing of the independence movement and in some ways this is both its strength and its weakness.

The day was high on denunciations of the existing order and calls to change it. Calls abounded for unity/new formations, reaching out to communities and so forth.

The declaration moved at the end of the event contains a laudable set of demands for equality, morality, an improved welfare state, just economy and participative democracy.

Who on the left could quibble with such a set of demands?

Purpose

Bubbling beneath the surface, there was also a tension about the purpose of the RIC beyond the event itself. A new party? A permanent civic forum? A left alternative to the Yes campaign?

Certainly, the latter was firmly rebuffed in the sessions I attended, with widespread recognition that the Yes campaign is the only game in town if the referendum is to be won.

The fact that there were a number of parties and groups - with their own distinctive views and policies - at the event clearly illustrates the problematic nature of any thought of a new all encompassing party.

While there may well be



RADICALISED: at the RIC, Cat Boyd explained how she became involved with the movement against the Iraq War in 2003, and how the fights for independence and against austerity are inextricably linked

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

Women For Independence at the RIC

Carol Hainey gives her view of the recent Radical Independence Conference

I ATTENDED the Radical Independence Conference to do a Women For Independence stall with other women.

The event was slick and professional and the turnout was impressive - 900 people.

I was disappointed at the format though - far too many speakers, and far too much shouting.

Much of our class, particularly the women, have experienced a lot of trauma and so don't like being shouted at. Isobel Lindsay from Scottish

CND and Jean Urquhart MSP made their points wonderfully, without shouting.

There was too much use of tired old left language such as "vanguard" and over-exitable claims of being in a pre-revolutionary situation.

Language like this encourages activists to give their all to the struggle and withdraw from "normal" life.

Our Women For Independence stall went well. We are not slick (smile) but many women delegates joined us and were keen to get involved with our listening exercise.

We are inviting ordinary

women who think they know nothing about politics into our living rooms, etc. We are asking them about their hopes and fears for independence. Pretty radical!

The workshop on Women and Independence was transformative, because one young woman raised the issue of left men's abuse of women in the movement.

That struck a chord with women of all ages.

Another young woman challenged the format - the tired old left formula of "top table" plenary - not a participatory workshop at all. Women called

for recognition of patriarchy in an independent Scotland's constitution and for patriarchy to be discussed in the main conference.

Unfortunately these points were not shared with the main conference in the feedback.

Robin McAlpine's speech was inspirational. And he didn't shout! To win this, we need to have a conversation with the Scottish people.

- Contact us at: womenforindependence.org
- Twitter - @womenforindy
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space for a permanent or semi-permanent social forum, it would be optimistic to imagine that it would sustain the size and scale of November's event and there are questions of where/how its deliberations fit into Scottish politics.

How then can the energy and creativity on show at the Radical Independence Conference be harnessed as part of the broader political struggle for a Yes vote and a new progressive Scotland beyond that?

Positive aspects

The Scottish Socialist Party participated the RIC with a stall and comrades intervening in workshops, speaking on top tables on various topics and with SSP members playing a significant part in organising the event.

That said, the question is now is how to grasp its positive aspects and ensure that its energy is central to the objective of presenting radical ideas which can build the Yes vote in 2014.

Given that the organisations and parties involved will



INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTORS: Palestinian speakers prepare to address the RIC PHOTO: Craig Maclean

probably wish to maintain their own shapes and structures, the question then arises as to what can be developed from it and what our role in should be.

If the aim is to paint a picture to the voters of 2014 of what a "radical" independence would look like, then surely one way

would be to set out a set of policy ideas as to what we think that might be.

One approach would be to involve those who participated in the event in building a common set of post-independence policies on key issues which can be endorsed as a programme without the need to abandon

party, organisation, or individual views.

Such an approach would help assert the role of the left in the Yes campaign and allow the broad Yes left to put policy meat on the bone, allowing such ideas to be put to the public in a way which is both principled and non-sectarian.



Independence must end inequality

INSPIRATIONAL: the march for independence - another great expression of the Yes movement's potency

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

Colin Fox reflects on 2012, and the coming battles next year

2012 was the year the campaign for Scottish independence finally got serious. And the Scottish Socialist Party is proud to be the standard bearer of the left within that burgeoning movement. As a prominent supporter of an independent socialist Scotland for more than a decade, we joined the SNP and the Greens to launch Yes Scotland in June, and took our rightful place on its Advisory Board.

As a Board member, I receive regular reports of the many important successes the movement enjoys as it rolls out across Scotland.

The march for independence in September was another tremendous expression of this movement's potency. Since then the Yes campaign has all but completed the establishment of 32 local authority based groups as the first step towards organising itself in every town, village and community in the country.

The independence march was followed by the SNP conference's decision to abandon its

historic opposition to NATO. This move marked a further shift to the right by the SNP who have courted Rupert Murdoch and promised to reduce Corporation Tax in their version of an independent Scotland.

Their appeasement of neo-liberalism and finance capital will worry many but it offers the SSP a clear opportunity to advance the case for our alternative vision of independence. We see independence as a force for changing Scotland, not continuing with the corporate domination of our economy, society and culture.

And in a clear sign that it is not only the SSP who have misgivings about the SNP's vision of independence, the Radical Independence Conference in November brought together hundreds of activists from across Scotland to discuss how to promote this 'change' agenda.

I have compared the independence movement to the anti-Poll Tax struggle of the late 1980s because it too is growing into a mass campaign out of which the working class of Scotland can markedly advance.

When 5,000 people turn up to Yes Scotland inaugural meetings across the country, as they have done, then it is clear we have another serious force for justice being mobilised.

Many wonder how the worsening economic situation will affect voting intentions in 2014. There are those, like *The Scotsman* columnist George Kerevan, who believe the Yes side needs a buoyant economic background to win so that people feel more confident about taking the independence step.

Others believe that whilst a prolonged and gloomy outlook for the UK/Scottish economy is much more likely, this may encourage a vote for self-determination as the more attractive option.

If George Osborne's Autumn Budget Statement is any guide, the economic gloom seems set to last a long time yet. Indeed the number of Scots 'underemployed' (working fewer hours than they would like) seems likely to pass those unemployed in 2013.

Millions are worried about the marked fall in their living standards and attacks on their pensions, for example. And in an

interesting conflation of the pensions issue with independence, I had the pleasure of speaking at the Scottish Prison Officers' Conference in Peebles in October where the union agreed that its members best interests were served by voting Yes in 2014.

The reason for this remarkable result was that whilst all their pay and conditions as prison staff are devolved to Holyrood, their pensions remain under the UK Government's control and they plan to raise their retirement age from 55 to 68.

Whilst the war in Afghanistan, banking corruption and the cuts will continue to appear in the headlines, 2013 may be the year fuel poverty campaigners get serious and demand not just an end to fuel poverty but the return of the energy industry itself to public hands.

It is surely unacceptable that the huge wealth generated by Scotland's enormous renewable energy resources should be left in the hands of shareholders and executives at Scottish and Southern Electric, Centrica, Scottish Power, EDF, Eon or Npower. Independence must end that inequity as well.

GATHERING CRISIS UNDERMINES ‘BRITISH IS BEST’ SPIN

by Ken Ferguson

“PEOPLE of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.”

So wrote the guru of the Thatcherite free market maniacs currently running the UK government, Adam Smith, some 350 years ago.

The sudden discovery by hard nosed Tory chancellor Osborne that greedy mega firms like Starbucks dodge tax may be news to him but it won't surprise the rest of us - or indeed would it have surprised Adam Smith.

Public opinion

The truth is that angry public opinion has now forced the millionaires' Chancellor to take some minor steps not to tackle the problem but in the usual establishment way to be seen to be “doing something” to appease the voters.

This follows closely on the other recent ‘scandal’ to break, which claims a price fixing conspiracy to fiddle the price of gas would probably not have surprised Smith either.

Then again, following the

news of the Libor scandal that fiddled interest rates, the regular leap frog price rises from power firms, the PFI rip off and an economic crisis caused by bankers who erected an economic system based on gambling, it shouldn't surprise us either.

For the increasingly beleaguered ConDems, fighting to maintain the union with their pals in the ‘loyal’ opposition in Labour, the gas scandal comes amidst a gathering crisis which is rocking their “British is best” boasts to the core.

In the teeth of the mushrooming abuse scandal, the BBC - a pillar of the establishment - has been left reeling as top dogs resign or step aside over their mishandling of the scandal.

Free market vultures are now circling in the hope that the extreme right in the coalition will move to weaken the BBC and effectively complete the task of privatising much of its output.

Hard on the heels of the official ceremonies of Remembrance Day, another soldier died at the hands of a supposed ally in Afghanistan, once again raising the question - how many more deaths before this brutal war is ended?

No amount of sunshine stories about the success of the



JOHANN LAMONT: legendary attack on “freebie Scotland”

British mission will wash away the brutal reality of a war started by Labour's Lord Reid, who promised UK troops would not fire a shot and carried on by the Tory/Lib Dems on the fiction that it was in “British national interests”.

And of course Cameron and his Labour counterparts received a further rebuff with the forced release after a years-long extradition case of Abu Qatada when the danger of him facing torture based evidence in Jordan was accepted by the appeals tribunal.

Polished image

All this comes against the reality of rising inflation - caused largely by rising student fees - frozen pay and billions in cuts just over the horizon which will further undermine the carefully crafted British image polished by the Jubilee and the Olympics.

This is the background against which the campaign for a Yes vote will be fought and the most recent warning from Labour unionist big wigs that an independent Scotland would mean “serfdom” indicates how dirty it will get.

Despite the increasingly frantic tide of “Scots warned” and “Salmond at bay” carried daily in

the comic cuts which pass as a Scottish media, the coming holocaust of jobs and services caused by the ConDem cuts are likely to be a game-changer in favour of Yes.

Polls already indicate that the prospect of a further Tory government would tip the balance decisively towards a Yes vote.

As the cuts bite and the supposed Westminster alternative of “One Nation” Labour promises more of the same - as spotlighted by Scottish Labour Chief Johann Lamont's attack on “freebie Scotland” - the case for independence will strengthen.

The unionists know this and in the growing flow of ever more preposterous scares, churned out by their media allies, you can smell the fear.

That's why, in the campaign for a Yes vote, the left must advance a vision not of an independent Scotland as a smaller UK with nothing much else changing, but of a radically changed, republican Scotland in which the priority is putting people before profit.

Such a radical vision is essential to win the many thousands who need convincing that independence means real change, not just a saltire over Edinburgh Castle.

Ferry workers in ballot warning shot for Serco

by Voice Reporter

FERRY workers on the Northern Isles route have voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action in a dispute with privateers Serco in a powerful response to the firm's sackings and cuts plan.

Shipping union RMT confirmed a nine to one vote for strike action on the Serco Northern Isles ferry services in after the company reneged on previous commitments, ripped up normal consultation procedures and announced that it is to press on with a programme of cuts to jobs and services.

The full result of the ballot – asking ‘Are you prepared to take strike action?’ - is as follows:

Total votes cast - 108; number voting yes – 95; number voting no – 13; spoilt papers – 0.

Despite extensive meetings between Serco and RMT negotiators over possible restructuring, Serco have now abandoned any pretence of negotiation and RMT has received a copy of the company's letter of formal intention from director level confirming plans to slash jobs with the threat of compulsory redundancies. It was that letter that triggered the ballot for action.

Mandate for action

As a result, RMT advised Serco Northlink Ferries that a dispute situation exists, a ballot has now been concluded and the members have delivered a massive mandate for action.

RMT General Secretary Bob Crow said:

“Serco are fully aware that we will not accept attacks on our members jobs and conditions and what is now an all-out attempt to bulldoze through redundancies, cuts to core staffing numbers and the casualisation of these skilled shipping grades.

“This ballot result, in the face of this deliberately provocative action, shows that our members are prepared to fight for their future livelihoods. The result will now be considered by the RMT executive.”

Steve Todd, RMT National Secretary, said:

“This overwhelming result shows that RMT members will not stand back while jobs are sacrificed in the middle of this botched privatisation stitch-up. Staff on Northern Isles routes are threatened with the sack in the dash to maximise Serco's profits and that is totally unacceptable.

“The public will understand that it is our members' jobs today and will be cuts to services and increases to fares tomorrow. Serco should withdraw this threat immediately and take up the offer of resuming talks through the proper consultation procedure as a way of resolving this dispute.”

INDEPENDENCE APPEAL: DONATIONS AND PLEDGES FROM ACROSS SCOTLAND



THE Scottish Socialist Party's independence campaign appeal fund has got off to a flying start with donations and pledges to the appeal fund coming in from SSP members, supporters and friends from every part of Scotland. Every penny and pound donated is appreciated by the party.

The independence appeal fund has been launched by the SSP to raise £20,000 so that the SSP can build on and publicise our socialist vision of what an independent socialist Scotland could be like - a Scottish republic free of weapons of mass destruction inequality and poverty. While being part of the Yes Scotland campaign, the SSP will continue to take the socialist message to every corner of Scotland. We've held a series of public meetings recently in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee.

The SSP has no rich friends or well-heeled financial backers but depends solely on the financial support of our members, friends and supporters, and I am appealing to you directly to make a financial contribution to the independence campaign appeal fund so we can continue our socialist campaigning work and reach our £20,000 target. The appeal will run until Burns Night 2013 and with your support, we are confident that we will

meet this target. Consider how much you can afford to donate, £500, £250, £100, £50, £25, £10, £5 or any amount in between - every penny is appreciated. You can donate to the appeal in the following ways:

1. Pay direct to your SSP Branch organiser or treasurer.
2. Pay by cheque or postal order, made payable to 'Scottish Socialist Party' and return to Jim McVicar, SSP National Treasurer, Suite 360, Central Chambers, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow, G2 6LD.
3. Pay by bank transfer to Co-op Bank - SSP Appeal Fund Sort Code 08-92-99, account number 65094637.

When making a donation to the independence campaign appeal fund, please text your name and the details of your donation to Jim McVicar on 07810205747 so that we have an up to date record of all donations made.

We will be carrying regular reports of our progress in the *Voice* to keep everyone up to date on the appeal's progress. Hope you can help - look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Jim McVicar, SSP National Treasurer
email: jimmcvicar.scottishsocialistparty@hotmail.com or phone: 07810205747

Still looking for the missing socialists

Alan Bissett attends a lecture by **Nicola Sturgeon** but is still looking for the missing socialists...

ON Monday 3 December, I was invited to a talk by Nicola Sturgeon in the University of Strathclyde's grand Barony Hall. As well as being Deputy First Minister, Sturgeon heads up the SNP's independence drive, and this was her first major speech on the issue.

She outlined her philosophical position (she's a 'pragmatist' rather than an 'existentialist', in case you're wondering) and spoke about the challenges facing Scotland today.

Her speech was, in many ways, persuasive and passionate and there are certainly places where socialists can connect with her vision.

Rebuke

In a rebuke to Scottish Labour - or those on the left who believe independence to be a distraction from the class struggle, rather than part of it - she pointed out that "you cannot guarantee social justice without having the means to bring about social justice".

Amen to that.

She also produced statistics which outlined Scotland's shocking ill-health: 800,000 Scots on the breadline, 1 in 5 children in poverty, with living standards 40 per cent lower than those of other independent countries comparable to Scotland's size. Sturgeon correctly ascertains that "the UK's ability to reinvent itself is spent" and that independence will reboot the tired machine that is politics on these isles.

Only an independent



INSPIRING: but can Sturgeon deliver for the Scottish working class?

Scotland can protect the welfare state and the NHS, she continued, or do something about our "high-risk economy and eroding social fabric". I asked her, from the floor, what she believed Scotland's relationship to the USA and Israel should be, and her answer was encouraging, even if she allowed herself slight wiggle-room:

"We would hope to have strong cultural and political ties to the USA while following our own moral compass. We would not, for example, have gone with George Bush into Iraq."

She also believes in nationhood and justice for Palestinians. Her speech been warmly praised by even the Unionist press, and rightly so; it was frequently inspiring.

However, this is not to say socialists should not be asking questions of certain elements of Sturgeon's vision.

It was perhaps telling that while she referenced every other party in Scotland - each of whom will outline their own plans, she reminded us, post-independence - she did not mention the Scottish Socialist Party.

As we know, the SNP naturally attempt to appeal to a broad base of supporters. This accounts for Sturgeon's observations that "enterprise and fairness should be two sides of the same coin" and that an independent Scotland would have "enterprise at its very heart but will see social justice through".

Clearly, with this rhetoric, Sturgeon wants to appeal to the huge left wing vote in Scotland while placating the business lobby. A member of that lobby asked Sturgeon, from the floor, how favourable an independent Scotland would be towards business. Sturgeon assured her that steps would be taken to keep

Scotland "competitive".

Words such as 'competitive', 'enterprise' and even 'business' can ring alarm bells with socialists, since they are all euphemisms for capitalism. We are also familiar with the promises of Tony Blair, for whom 'fairness' and 'social justice' were smokescreens for continuing Thatcher's pro-business agenda.

When Sturgeon was asked, in another question from the floor, how she could bring about social justice and democracy when big business is often hostile to both she made less convincing noises: it would left to the Scottish people, she said, to vote for the kind of society they wanted. True.

No assurances

But while assurances could be made to business leaders that Scotland would remain 'competitive', there were no assurances made to the left about say, higher corporation taxes, pro-trade union legislation, workers' co-operatives or increased minimum wages.

Perhaps these will form part of the government's impending White Paper on the infrastructure of an independent Scotland. We shall see. But I suspect otherwise.

So while Sturgeon proved herself a capable and inspiring figure with this speech, and the right person to lead the campaign, she still has some way to go before we can fully trust her, and her party, to deliver for the Scottish working-class.

This will be left, inevitably, to the same socialists who were invisible in Sturgeon's address.

by Richie Venton, SSP
national workplace
organiser

THE Tories got their New Year resolution in early, dedicating themselves to hammering the working class and the poor, making us pay for the deepening capitalist crisis of their class's making.

The obnoxious George Osborne's Autumn Budget Statement confirmed what we all know: the age of austerity for the vast, working-class majority is not only here to stay, but to be prolonged to at least 2018.

That means continued pay cuts, benefits slashed, services slaughtered, jobs culled - all for the sake of the rich getting richer. It means literal starvation for thousands, as proven by the burgeoning reliance on Food Banks already.

Osborne had the neck to declare "our economy is healing"! Whose economy? Just as it is utter nonsense to talk about 'One Nation' in the manner Labour's Miliband does, when we live in one of the most class-divided nations in Europe, it is equally dishonest for 'We're all in this together' Osborne to talk about 'our economy'.

Two economies

There's the economy faced by working people and the most vulnerable poor trying to survive the rising bills on paltry pay or skinflint benefits - and there's the economy of multinational corporations who pay these paltry wages, rake in billions in profit, and dodge taxes like it's an Olympic sport.

Millions of public sector workers face 2013 on reduced pay, increased workload and vastly increased job insecurity. The additional cuts to every government department demanded by Osborne, on top of the butchery already launched, will mean more thrown on the scrap heap, joining the 218,000 Scots already jobless, including a shameful 100,000 young people.

Osborne boasted plans to slash public spending as a share of national wealth output (GDP) from

2013: BUILD DEFIANCE For independence and socialism

48 per cent in 2009 to 39.5 per cent in 2017 - meaning the wholesale slaughter of jobs and services.

He sneaked in plans to scrap teachers' national pay bargaining - the stalking horse for more general regional pay, a ruthless race to the bottom which could lead to forced migration and family breakups.

He condemned people already sinking into despair on benefits to a living hell, by announcing most benefits will 'rise' by 1 per cent for the next three years... whilst the cost of heating and eating rockets.

The further cuts to Scotland's block grant from Westminster will pile on the agony of job losses, service cuts and 16 per cent real pay cuts since 2009 suffered by local authority staff, and the job losses and mounting stress levels of workers in the NHS, colleges and universities.

Starbucks can make £3billion in profit over the past 14 years but only cough up £8.6million in corporation tax - a rate of less than 0.3 per cent!!

They typify the rotten state of Britain, where the Tories and Lib Dems have granted those earning

above £150,000 another windfall through cutting the higher 50p tax rate from April - saving the cosseted handful on £1million a year a hefty £107,000!

And Osborne's Autumn budget declared a further reduction in the rate of Corporation Tax to 21 per cent - one of the lowest in the western world - with the giveaway comment that this sends out the message: "Come here, create jobs here, Britain is open for business". Decoded: "make mega-profits in this haven of low business taxes and dirt cheap labour!"

Retail rip-offs

With the decimation of manufacturing industry over recent decades - a conscious policy by 1980s hate-figure Maggie Thatcher and the most parasitic wing of the Tories and finance-capital - the two biggest employers at UK level are the NHS and the four big supermarkets!

But these are also areas of rampant closures and job losses, as well as being a sea of poverty pay. A recent survey of supermarket workers confirmed that the average rate

of pay is £6.83 an hour, and 52 per cent of workers interviewed explained they've had to cut back on food!

This bitter irony in a sector where Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda and Morrisons reaped combined profits of nearly £6billion last year. And where their chief executives pocketed sums like £6.9million, £4million and £3.2million.

The resolve of the Tories and big business to make the majority population into their profit slaves needs to be resisted by an equally resolute mass movement of workers and communities.

Since the unelected Coalition seized power, the resistance has been sporadic, sometimes localised, then culminating in mass trade union demos and the magnificent one-day strike of nearly two million public sector workers on 30 November 2011.

The potential such militant united action had was squandered by union leaders terrified of a movement they could not control.

But with over 80 per cent of the cuts yet to come, there is no alternative but to mobilise workers and



UNITED AND STRIKE! with over 80 per cent of the cuts yet to come, there is no alternative but to mobilise for a mass showdown

communities in a serious showdown with the Westminster razor gang.

At its recent Scottish regional council, with 200 delegates from branches organising 160,000 members in councils, NHS, water, education, police staff and quangos, Scottish UNISON voted unanimously in favour of a 24-hour general strike against the cuts in all their forms.

That is a huge platform to fight for such a unified escalation of the fight in all other trade unions, linking up with communities, pensioners and students to turn the tide.

General strike

Alongside fighting for a bigger, broader version of the 30 November 2011 strike in early 2013, workers, tenants and community campaigns need to put relentless pressure on SNP and Labour politicians elected to represent them to 'stand up for Scotland' - by demanding that instead of passing on Westminster's cuts the SNP Scottish government and local authorities set no cuts budgets in defiance of the Twin Tories.

The only party and the only elected councillor in Scotland who raised this defiant strategy in 2012 was the SSP and West Dunbartonshire SSP councillor Jim Bollan.

But with the galloping cuts on all fronts, and the mounting unpopularity of Cameron and Clegg's gang, the case is overwhelming for defiance budgets in 2013 that act as a rallying call for mass rebellion demanding back the stolen £millions to avoid all cuts.

And it would vastly enhance the case for independence.

Instead of imposing a second year of increased pension contributions on public sector workers, and passing on cuts in the Westminster block grant to councils, NHS boards and colleges, the SNP government should be bombarded with action demanding they defy Westminster and lead a Scots rebellion to help boot out the Tories.

Running parallel to the need to resist the Tories, intertwined with it, is the battle for workers' hearts and minds on the independence referendum.

All the opinion polls over several decades show the greatest support

for self government rests within the working class and younger people.

But to turn that into a majority, the Yes campaign needs to convince them they'll gain from independence. Appeals to national identity aren't enough.

Central to convincing Scotland's working class majority is a vision of a Scotland that is radically different from the hell-house of deprivation, cutbacks and obscene inequality constructed by successive Westminster capitalist governments and their big business paymasters.

A Scotland that abolishes the anti-union laws and sets the highest standards of workers' rights for the rest of Europe.

Workers can't wait

A Scotland that reverses the savage attacks on people's pay and benefits, guaranteeing a decent national minimum wage at 16, with equal pay for women, and an emergency £50 a week rise in pensions and benefits.

A Scotland that reverses privatisation, taking energy, transport, banking, construction, landed es-

tates and big industries into democratic public ownership - to build a clean, green, poverty-free Scotland.

The fight against Tory barbarism and for an independent socialist Scotland are connected by an umbilical chord. It is not good enough to say "get independence first, then worry about social change". Workers can't wait!

And unless Yes campaigners champion radical social change, with clear-cut concrete alternatives that impact on ordinary people's lives, they won't be convinced to vote Yes.

The SSP will devote itself in 2013 to the twin missions of independence and socialism, of fighting to defend working class people here and now as well as advocating a new, socialist Scotland.

We will unite with others, in our communities, trade unions and colleges, in anti-cuts coalitions, in the recently established Trade Unionists for Independence, in the broad independence movement - and in unashamedly seeking to convince more and more people that socialism is the ultimate answer, the SSP the vehicle to build towards it.

JOURNALISTS UNION ROLE KEY TO IMPLEMENTING LEVESON

by Pete Murray,
former NUJ president

THE journalists' union is demanding representation for media workers on the proposed press regulator body recommended in the 2,000-page Leveson report on the phone hacking scandal.

The NUJ has been buoyed up by a call from the judge, Lord Leveson, for the union's 'conscience clause', which would prevent reporters from being sacked or disciplined if they refuse to write a story which they believe breaches the union's ethical code, to be written into journalists' contracts in future.

'Conscience clause'

In evidence to the inquiry, the NUJ said adoption of the 'conscience clause' - which would also allow journalists to refuse to interview fascists, or write headlines which they believed were sexist, racist or homophobic, for instance - could have prevented the ethical 'collapse' at Rupert Murdoch's News International and elsewhere which triggered the Leveson hearings.

Coverage of the eight month investigation naturally focused on evidence from figures such as the Dowler and McCann families, the parents of murdered schoolgirl Millie Dowler and Madeleine McCann, who disappeared on a family holiday to

Portugal in 2007. Media barons from Murdoch and Rebekah Brooks to the Daily Mail's Paul Dacre also appeared before Lord Leveson, as did former prime ministers John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and current Downing Street resident, David Cameron.

Less well reported, however, was compelling evidence of workplace bullying and harassment inside News International newsrooms from the NUJ general secretary, Michelle Stanistreet.

"The devil will be in the detail," she said. "But what we would like to see from this is an opportunity for working journalists to be represented on any new body through their union."

"So that's going to be our focus in the coming days and weeks, pushing the



COMPELLING EVIDENCE: the NUJ's Michelle Stanistreet at the Leveson Inquiry

industry to a point where they accept that would be a sensible step forward.

"There are terribly toxic problems in some of our newsrooms when it comes to bullying and pressure on people. It's something that's got to be tackled and a union is the ideal vehicle for 'guarding the guardians' - which is one of the questions that Leveson asked at the start of the inquiry."

Function

"If you have an independent trade union in your workplace, wherever you work, that's a function of the union. So it's a shame that he didn't take the opportunity [to recommend NUJ recognition on all newspaper titles] but maybe that would have just been too much for the establishment: to hear that actually, a trade union could be the answer to one of the problems that some of these companies have found themselves in."

As the *Voice* went to press, NUJ officials were holding a series of meetings with government, MPs and newspaper bodies, pressing their case for the NUJ to be provided with a seat at the new media standards regulator.

Union activists are also calling for both the NUJ leadership and workplace branches to use the high profile recommendations of the inquiry to build a new campaign for unionisation and recognition at union-busting papers across the UK and Ireland, from *The Sun* to *The Sunday Post*.

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Crisis sweeps the BBC in Scotland and beyond

NUJ Scottish Organiser **Paul Holleran** explains

SERIOUS mis-management is causing the BBC to stumble from one crisis to another.

While the well-heeled directors try and explain to parliamentary committees the shambles of the Savile and *Newsnight* debacles, trade union members are balloting for industrial action to stop compulsory redundancies in Scotland and England.

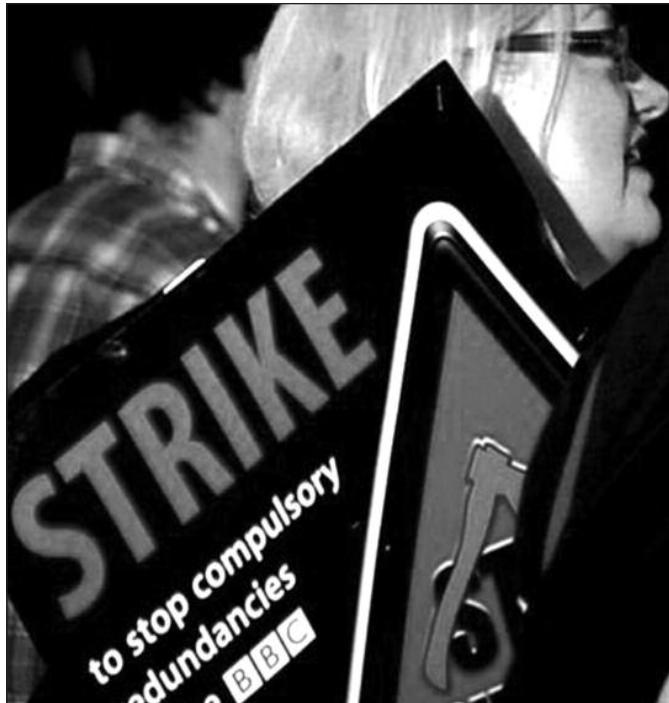
Bosses in BBC Scotland are attempting to separate the two issues but journalists and production staff know there is a clear link between the last four years of job cuts and the problems facing the organisation.

The NUJ and BECTU are particularly angry at the lack of effort to find jobs for at-risk staff despite the re-deployment agreement reached earlier this year. Around five journalists in the Asian Network are getting the chop just in time for Christmas, while around 15 staff in Scotland face a similar threat in the new year.

Anger

The anger across Scottish newsrooms is tangible as management select well-known journalists, presenters and skilled camera operators to meet the demands of a cuts process, known bizarrely as Delivering Quality First.

As part of the consultation, the NUJ called for senior management at Pacific Quay (BBC Scottish HQ) to back the joint union position and demand



MIS-MANAGED: years of job cuts have contributed to the crisis

more resources for Scotland. We called for a special funding package which would help resource a news team to cover the Independence Referendum and Commonwealth Games in 2014.

Management response was breathtakingly complacent as they described the most important political debate for 300 years on the future of the UK as “a one-off event”, that would be dealt with in the same way as any other election.

One manager also suggested it would be “business as usual” once the redundancies were completed. The joint unions told them to think again.

It is not just the numbers leaving the organisation, (35 across BBC Scotland) although a ridiculous figure of 17 was the overall cut in the newsroom alone. Incredibly a number of

specialists are targeted. Experts in Education, Business and Politics have been selected for redundancy at a time when BBC Scotland should be looking for their top journalists to deliver more.

The loss of such expertise is shocking when the public and Civic Scotland are demanding a wider, more transparent debate on the future of Scotland. What we are witnessing instead is a “dumbing down”, through a reduction in expertise and loss of experienced journalists.

Another area of concern triggered by the selection process is the flagrant slap in the face for BBC Scotland’s Diversity Policy.

The last round of cuts led to a large proportion of women leaving the corporation and

this time the targeting has shifted focus. There are very few staff from a BME background in any newsrooms in Scotland, but there are some in Pacific Quay – at least there will be until March 2013 when there will be three less black voices and faces.

Two NUJ members and one BECTU member of BME origin have been selected for redundancy, out of the 17 at risk.

Two union reps have also been selected, Iain MacDonald the NUJ FoC in the Highlands and Yana Thandrakayen, one of the main BECTU reps in the Central Belt.

The unions are appealing all the job cuts but are specifically looking at the targeting of BME and union representatives.

It goes without saying that we will be fighting on all fronts against these savage and discriminatory cuts.

Strikes

We will take industrial action in the form of strikes and a strict work to rule, we are looking at legal action where relevant and will continue to seek political support as well as backing from other trade unions and organisations and the public.

The future of the BBC is at stake here. We are fighting for our individual members, those who remain and face an increased workload.

This is a dispute about what kind of Scotland we want in the future and the treatment of working people but also about democracy and the reporting of it.

The Clash: the past is unwritten

The Rise And Fall Of The Clash directed by **Danny Garcia**. Chip Baker Films / Icon TV Music / Apropos Films. Release date: tbc

by Simon Whittle

FROM their sweaty club beginnings in 1976 to Shea Stadium and Apple Corporation's Us Festival in the early 1980s, The Clash had the world in the palm of their hands. 'The only band that matters' would take left wing politics to a worldwide audience through their musical diversity, energy, style and punk rock attitude.

The Clash's rise to superstardom is well documented in Don Letts's *Westway To The World* and Julien Temple's *Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten* but the band's extended period of implosion is not as much documented as airbrushed over in these films.

Enter Spanish DIY-documentarist Danny Garcia, who first realised The Clash had got to him when, aged 10, he caught himself singing *Spanish Bombs* while out riding his bike. "The song's chorus is in Spanish. It was like they were speaking directly to me.

Cut the crap

Listening to his older brother's Clash tapes in the early '80s, Garcia became a fan, but turning around the sleeve of their 1985 LP *Cut The Crap*, he reeled: "Who the hell are these guys?"

The band had changed. Gone was "engine room" drummer Topper Headon, gripped by heroin addiction. And founder-member guitar hero Mick Jones was forced out, for being in the safe grip of the kind of prima donna rock star lifestyle the band had always railed against.

Joining lead singer Joe Strummer and bassist Paul Simonon were new boys Pete Howard on drums and guitarist Vince White (both closet Genesis fans, it's re-



JOE STRUMMER:
did The Clash's
frontman struggle
on in vain after
the band split in
half soon after the
return on their
svengali manager
Bernie Rhodes?

vealed) and Nick Sheppard, also on guitar. Back in action since 1981 was their original, notorious manager Bernie Rhodes, drafted back in to reinvigorate a band that had released 10 sides of vinyl in the year before he returned.

But while The Clash were at their peak - a cancelled 1981 show in New York's Times Square was met by rioting, rocketing the band's status in the US, with a platinum album to come in 1982 - Bernie Rhodes manipulated tensions within the band. Rhodes refused to appear in this film and had threatened to sue Garcia, but he backed down and helped provide info about this lesser-known period.

A svengali with links to Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren, Rhodes also briefly wielded his managerial axe over the likes of Subway Sect, Dexys Midnight Runners and The Specials, whose first cut *Gangsters* cast him as a modern day Al Capone: "Bernie

Rhodes knows, don't argue."

With Jones gone, Rhodes set about re-inventing "brand-Clash" around Strummer and Simonon. Sadly, it took two years for Strummer to realise Mick was the missing link.

In that period, the new Clash showed real promise in their early shows, like the 1984 Christmas benefits they put on for striking UK miners.

But as the documentary reveals, the new members were treated as hired hands on £150-a-week. The Clash were £500,000 in debt when Rhodes returned, having just released double then triple albums in 1979/80, insisting they sell for the price of single albums, foregoing royalties for years. When Jones departed he had his lawyer freeze the half a million dollars Apple owed them for headlining the Us Festival.

"Even rock 'n' roll is a con," admits Strummer in Garcia's film.

Joe's parents died in this period, making it much easier for Rhodes

to steal control the band, which is exactly what he did before they made their doomed, final album.

Cut The Crap was disappointing - the new members' input was minimal, drums were programmed and McLaren wannabe Rhodes (now a millionaire, incidentally) produced the record.

As Strummer's conscience caught up with him, he turned his back on organised touring and took the band on a busking tour of the UK. The Clash turned up in a town and hoped to raise enough cash busking to make it to the next town - but "Simonon took his credit card" just in case.

Split

By the time *This Is England* was put out as a single and the album finally surfaced, the band had already privately split, yet Rhodes was still spoon-feeding brand-Clash communiques to the music press until well into 1986.

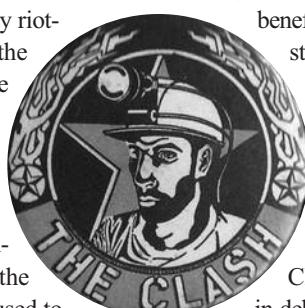
It wasn't until Mick turned up at a striking firefighters' benefit Joe was playing in late 2002 that the two played together onstage again, in a three Clash song encore. Joe died a month later.

Since 2011, Mick has toured Clash songs for the Hillsborough Justice Campaign with the Justice Tonight band (featuring The Farm and Pete Wylie) and features on the Justice Collective single, vying for the number one spot this xmas.

As Garcia reflected at the Q&A after the film, "Mick is Joe now".

The Rise And Fall Of The Clash is a great film. It answers some important questions about the period of The Clash some fans strive to forget - sad, painful, funny - it still happened. The story of The Clash is incomplete without it.

• *The Rise And Fall Of The Clash*'s Scottish première was at the GFT in September. King Tut's in Glasgow hosts its 10th annual Joe Strummer tribute night on Sat 22 December



LOACH PULLS FILM IN PRIVATISATION ROW

by Ken Ferguson

AWARD winning filmmaker Ken Loach has declined a prestigious award from the Torino Film Festival and withdrawn his film *The Angels' Share* from the event in a row over workers' rights.

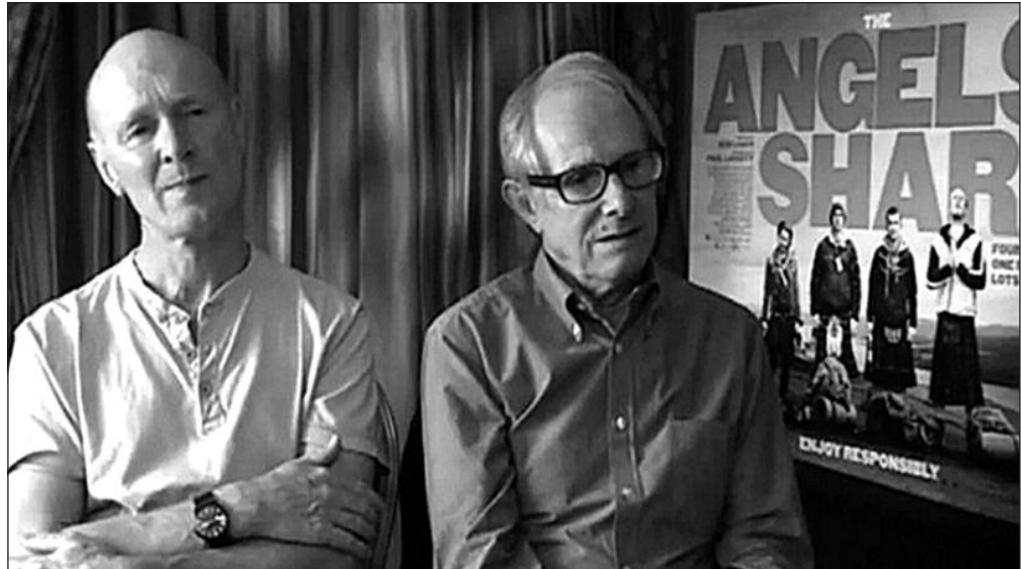
In a statement, Loach explained: "In Torino, the cleaning and security services at the Film Museum have been outsourced to Coop Rear. A wage cut was followed by allegations of intimidation and harassment. A number of people have been dismissed.

"So the lowest paid, the most vulnerable workers, lose their jobs because they oppose a wage cut. Of course, it is difficult for us to disentangle the details of a dispute in another country with different labour practices. But that does not mean that the principles are not clear.

Responsibility

"In this situation, the principal organisation cannot shut its eyes. It must accept responsibility for those who work for it, even if they are employed by a sub-contractor.

"I would hope the museum, in this case, would speak to the workers and their unions, would ensure the sacked workers were re-employed and would re-think its policy of outsourcing. It is not right that the poorest should pay the price for an economic failure which they did not cause. We have made a film on this very subject - *Bread and Roses*. How can I not respond to the call for solidarity



LAVERTY & LOACH: lifetime achievement award declined over film museum wage cuts and sackings

from workers sacked for standing up for their rights? To accept the award and make a few critical comments would be weak and hypocritical. We cannot say one thing on screen and betray that in our actions.

"It is with great regret, therefore, that I have had to decline the award from the Torino Film Festival.

"The Award would have been an honour for me and for those who have worked on our films. Festivals have a valuable function in promoting European and world filmmaking. Torino has a fine reputation and has clearly made an important contribution in nurturing a love of cinema."

The Angels' Share screenwriter Paul Laverty added:

"I too share Ken Loach's sadness about the withdrawal of our film *The Angels' Share* from the Torino Film Festival

which I have no doubt continues to do terrific work."

Accusing the museum authorities of "Pontius Pilate syndrome," Laverty said:

"It worth repeating in detail the position of the Museum. They said - 'The Museum cannot be deemed responsible, directly or indirectly, for the behaviour of third parties. Therefore it is in no way entitled to intervene in employment relations between the members of an external co-operative and their own company.'

"This too is the position of the most powerful corporations around the world, who now have company and employment law moulded in their favour. This raises profound ethical and legal questions which are worthy of rigorous debate as it affects hundreds of millions of workers around the world.

"It means the high street fashion shops in European

capitals take no responsibility for the misery of the seamstresses and their children in Bangladesh working in conditions worse than Victorian England.

"It means the supermarkets take no responsibility for the food on their shelves produced by illegal immigrants working for less than the minimum wage.

"It means that global companies producing computers and car parts in the city of Juarez, Mexico, which I visited, take no responsibility for the misery and danger in which these workers live and work.

"It is the perfect corporate model - The Pontius Pilate syndrome.

"Irrespective of the fine detail of this dispute it demonstrates how far the world has changed when those who should be most aware of what is happening in the far corners of this complex world champion this principle in public."

NEWS

ME AND THE DUCHESS - THE TRUTH

by Ken Ferguson

AS editor of the Voice, I don't normally have much in the way of shared interests with the members of the House of Windsor, the royal family, but this week's news changed all that.

With the news that a pregnant Duchess of Cambridge (aka Kate Middleton) was ill I realised we were both in the same boat - suffering from nausea.

In the Duchess's case, it is a result of her pregnancy - in mine, of the fawning Fleet Street reporting of the event.

As the world faces ecological crisis, economic meltdown, famine and war, the acres of newsprint and hours of airtime devoted to the fine details of the royal news reached new, stomach-churning heights of sycophancy.

Alongside tabloid "Nappy and glorious" and "She's just swell" headline speculation on every possible aspect of the story boiled over, swamping the media.

Up for debate by that indispensable breed, the "royal" correspondents (with the BBC's leading lickspittles) were issues such as, if it was twins who will be the future monarch, how the duchess was coping, the fine details of her treatment, and so forth.

On the day the news broke, BBC news devoted the first 15 minutes (it just seemed longer) to the event and the North British branch office at Radio Scotland treated listeners to a detailed discussion of morning sickness with breakfast.

Then perhaps it only happens to royals.

Coming as it does, just as the memory of the God bless you ma'am jubilee and



GOD SAVE THE WEAN! news coverage reached stomach-churning heights of sycophancy

James Bond Olympic stunt was fading, the pregnancy puts the royals back in the public spotlight. We can now expect wall-to-wall royal baby bulletins, boosting the monarchical gang.

This will be mercilessly milked by the Union Jack wavers in the Better Together campaign, intent on defeating independence - a manoeuvre made the easier by the unashamed Balmoral caricature royalism of the SNP leadership.

For progressive independence supporters, the whole sickening spin further underlines the need for a republican Scotland. Meanwhile, despite the glow of baby warmth, back on reality street the Chancellor confirmed that the assault on the majority to ensure the comfort of the rich continues.

Forget spin about taking on big tax dodgers and we're-all-in-it-together, the eye watering cuts in benefits, slashing of services and frozen pay is now set to continue into the foreseeable future.

All of this is now openly presented by the millionaires' cabinet, stripped of the fairytale that it is going to be sorted shortly, and sunshine is just around the corner.

So there it is for me and you - the offer is rather different than that presented to the royals in their cosseted cocoon, where hard times means wearing the same coat twice.

For us, cuts, sackings and hard times. Or join the fightback and spell out the message - we are all suffering from nausea with the sleazy rich, and taking them on is the only cure that will work.



Join the SSP here

Fill in this form and send it to: Scottish Socialist Party, Suite 370, 4th Floor, Central Chambers, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD.

Or telephone: 0781 126 5388

Or see our website: www.scottishsocialistparty.org

- I would like to join the Scottish Socialist Party
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DEFIANCE: at Hawara checkpoint near Nablus in the West Bank in November, Palestinian women protest Israel's military operation in Gaza

Historic days for the Palestinian people

Bill Bonnar reports

THE last few weeks have proved momentous for the people of Palestine. Having survived the indiscriminate bombardment from Israel, they secured a diplomatic breakthrough by having their right to a state recognised by the United Nations.

The military assault by Israel followed a familiar pattern. A combination of the loss of their most important regional ally, Egypt, the desire to collectively punish the people of the Gaza for their continued support of Hamas, the forthcoming election in Israel and the need to send a message to the newly re-elected US President were all reasons for the attack.

Yet this kind of attack is proving increasingly problematic for the Israelis. Despite the loss of civilian lives and over £400million of damage, the Palestinian people emerged defiant. To achieve victory, the Israelis

would have needed to launch a ground invasion but that would have proved far too risky with the possibility of significant Israeli casualties.

Israel emerged from the conflict more isolated than ever - something that even their much-vaunted propaganda machine could not turn around.

For Israeli military strategists, hard lessons are being learned. Since the Arab/Israeli war of 1973, their strategy has been to build up such military superiority that they could easily defeat any combination of Arab states.

However, their main military challenge in recent years have come from groups well-drilled in the art of insurgency such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine. Against such movements military superiority is no guarantee of victory.

Despite the enormous obstacles, there is now a real sense that the tide of history is turning for the

Palestinian people. There is now almost universal acceptance on the international stage that this conflict can only be resolved when the Palestinians have a viable state of their own and that it is Israel and their American backers who are the barriers to a solution to the conflict.

The loss of Israel's main regional backer, Egypt is a massive boost to the Palestinian cause.

There is now significant pressure from all sections of Egyptian society for their government to take a much tougher line with the Israelis.

The main danger now is that Israel will use the wider conflicts in the region in their own interests.

They will actively promote conflict within and between Arab states in the belief that chaos all around them justifies their policy of 'fortress Israel', the US's only secure ally in the region.

For the Palestinians, the continuing divisions between Hamas

and Fatah undermines their struggle, although progress towards a more united front is slowly moving forward.

One thing uniting them and the Palestinian people generally is the need to know what really happened to their former leader, Yasser Arafat. Suspicions that he was murdered have circulated since his death and should be confirmed one way or another by a team of international experts in the coming period. If it is proved that he was poisoned, the finger of suspicion will fall on Israel, for whom the assassination of Palestinian leaders has long been state policy.

Given Arafat's efforts at trying to secure a peace deal at almost any price, it would, yet again, expose Israel as having no interest in peace.

For Scotland, the need to continue our support and solidarity with Palestine is more important than ever; as one newly-emerging state to another.

Carl's Christmas... with apologies to Dickens

by Sandra Webster

IT was the night before that holiest of Capitalist Holidays. Carl Jones should have been celebrating. As chief executive of Stella Dosh coffee, the profits had been rolling in this year - 300 million consumers of the finest coffee beans Switzerland could buy has made it a good year for the corporation.

However, something was sticking in his throat. For the first time he had been forced to pay Corporation Tax - £2000, and it stuck in his gullet. This would come out of his Christmas bonus.

At least being chief executive had some perks - he watched his personal barista preparing his favourite cup of coffee. Roberta might only be on the minimum wage but she made a good cup of chai latte. She looked at him nervously.

"Mr Jones? Would you mind if I got off now. It's 10pm and it's Christmas Eve. My mum is watching Tina till later but I need to get home and get ready..."

Karl decided to take everything out on Tina.

"Child care arrangements are not my problem. Don't you get help with that? Look though, just go."

"And it's okay to get tomorrow and boxing day off Mr Jones?"

Carl felt the ire rise all this fuss for a day? He answered: "I suppose so but just make sure your in early on the 27th."

Roberta smiled and said "Thanks Mr Jones and Merry Christmas."

Carl was relieved when she left. He was looking forward to spending time with his favourite person - himself. He went to the fridge and took out the piece of stilton. He had been saving it. He washed it down with a glass of port one of his clients had given him.

Then he remembered that

cheese and wine didn't agree with him.

He was definitely hallucinating. In front of him stood his old friend Jake Marley. Jake had been dead for a year had died at the gym when attempting a spin cycle class too many.

It looked like him but he was covered in chains of mobile phones which constantly rung. Jake tried to answer each one just as another went off. He was tormented by them.

"Jake", said Carl, "this is some cheese and wine dream I'm having. What's with the mobile phones? They're not even smart phones, they're the ones we had in the eighties!"

Jake groaned and looked at Carl.

"They are so heavy and torment me. Carl, I have come to warn you to change your capitalist ways."

"I have seen your chain of mobiles and it makes mine look like fairy lights. Tonight you will be visited by a ghost. Heed him and change your ways, or you will be like me. Goodbye Carl..."

As if being tugged by the invisible hand of the market, he vanished as quickly as he had arrived. Carl pondered why he had eaten a year-old stilton and decided to go to bed.

Even though Carl could afford his electricity bill, he didn't like heating his house, so there was a definite chill in the air. He shut his eyes and tried to sleep. A ghost? Just another hallucination...

He was wakened by his curtains being opened widely, and a cheerful voice saying "Wake up! Wake up! I am the Ghost of ATOS"

Carl blinked and saw, hovering in the air, a small man, tapping away on a laptop. He reminded Carl of someone he knew, a politician perhaps?

"Tappity Tap" said the ghost, "lots of figures to collect, lots of

money to be saved. Come, good sir. Don't be afraid of me. I have come to show you the true meaning of capitalism."

Carl decided to go along with it - just a cheese dream. The spirit took his hand and they were flying across the city. Soon they were at a scheme that he knew only by reputation - Basschurch.

The ghost took him into a council house. It was cheery and decorated but bitterly cold just the way Carl liked it. As he looked on the scene, he saw his barista Roberta with her daughter Tina. An older woman was there too, Roberta's mum, Helen.

He knew of course Tina had a learning difficulty. It was in Roberta's file but he had not realised she had difficulty walking too.

Roberta was cuddling her daughter but was crying. In her hand she held a brown envelope.

"Don't cry, hen" said Helen. "We'll manage."

"But mum, they've stopped her DLA, that means you will lose the carer's allowance. Who's going to watch Tina when I'm working?"

Carl felt an unusual emotion. Concern - he hadn't felt that for decades.

He knew of course there were departments to help Roberta. David Cameron had promised to protect the most vulnerable.

Helen said: "Why not ask your boss, Carl. Surely he could help?"

Roberta shook her head. "He's a busy man, mum. I wouldn't want to ask him. What are we going to do though?"

The ghost tapped away on his laptop. "Good that's another £2000 a year in the cabinet's coffers. You must be pleased! Now, let's get you home, away from this place."

"ATOS, is this happening now," he asked, "or does it not start in April 2013? That's the

briefing my human resources manager prepared for me."

ATOS chuckled. "No, the changes are starting now. We are rolling out the pilot schemes. Making the poor history. Now go back to your comfy bed and worry not on the concerns of others."

Against his will, Carl woke up in his bed. Sunlight poured through the windows. It was Christmas Day. He realised he did not want to be a capitalist any more.

He went onto his laptop and paid all the Corporation Tax the company should have paid and made a massive donation to Shelter. Then he phoned Roberta.

"Roberta," he said I want you to come to my house this morning."

She replied: "But Mr Jones, you said I could have the day off and my mum and Tina are here."

He could keep his cheer in no longer. "Merry Christmas, Roberta! I am going to lay on for you the biggest Christmas feast!" And he did.

Roberta would have preferred her quiet Christmas but decided to keep a lonely old capitalist company, and they enjoyed themselves.

Since that day, Carl has seen the error of his ways. He now treats all his employees well and, after having read the Scottish Socialist Party's manifesto, pays them all a living wage.

He pays all his Corporation Tax, and in a few months will turn Stella Dosh into a workers' cooperative. Carl put some of his personal millions into a fighting fund to ensure all affected by ATOS would get all the support and advice they needed.

The End.

If only - but we need a happy ending at Christmas. The fight continues!

Happy Christmas to all *Scottish Socialist Voice* readers!