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**THE CASE FOR AN
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by Colin Fox

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**END FUEL POVERTY
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PROFITEERING**



by Colin Fox

GRANGEMOUTH:

Scotland held to ransom by capitalist dictator

by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

SCOTLAND breathed a collective sigh of relief at the eleventh-hour reprieve for Grangemouth petrochemical plant. 800 workers faced unemployment 48 hours earlier, when INEOS bosses declared its closure and liquidation.

550 oil refinery workers and 2,000 contract workers faced the same fate at Scotland's biggest industrial site – with all the devastation, poverty and social destitution such an act of shameless economic vandalism threatened.

Some kind of job is better than no job at all, and much-reduced wages and conditions is preferable to having no wages. But the sight of Grangemouth workers cheering as they accepted brutal cutbacks should not be dressed up as anything other than a serious setback for workers. Not a defeat on the scale of the heroic 1984-5 miners' strike (which unlike Grangemouth was defeated despite a full year of incredible struggle, solidarity and self-sacrifice, in full confrontation with the state) but a serious setback nonetheless.

Anti-union frenzy

To reverse the closure announcement, the UNITE union leadership offered complete acceptance of the savage cuts to conditions INEOS had demanded – with a rocket-launcher held to workers' heads.

This includes a three year pay freeze; an end to Final Salary Pensions; savage cuts to shift allowances and bonuses, losses of £10-15,000 per worker; drastically reduced redundancy terms; re-



PINSTRIPED VANDAL: scheming INEOS boss Jim Ratcliffe

moval of trade union facilities, including an end to full-time union conveners; unspecified 'head count reductions'; and a three-year no strike agreement.

Union convener Stevie Deans has subsequently lost his job of 24 years. And workers who defied INEOS's blackmail and bullying are to get lesser pensions than others who conceded.

Within hours of these vast concessions by workers – plus the ransom paid of £9million in Scottish government grants and £125million in loan guarantees from the UK government to a tax-dodging multinational with £43billion turnover – the media and commentariat launched a festival of lies and vitriol against trade unions.

They bury the real sequence of events, to tell a fairytale of the union bringing the workforce and entire economy to the edge

of the abyss, pronouncing the death of trade unionism.

It doesn't occur to these overpaid hacks to ask why £134million of taxpayers' money should be handed over to a gangster capitalist who could get that same sum if he sold his £130million super-yacht!

INEOS boss and chief shareholder Jim (JR) Ratcliffe played the cavalier industrial thug, and got away with it. Documents prove he prepared in March to stockpile supplies, then provoke and defeat a strike – which he marked into the calendar for November!

His aim? To decapitate the union, decimate workers' wages and conditions by £50million, and blackmail £150million out of governments (i.e. taxpayers) to subsidise INEOS's investment plans – to import shale gas ethane from the USA, where the

destructive fracking industry is laying waste to whole communities and the environment. Ratcliffe laid his plans; Ed Miliband's Labour gifted him the chance to implement them, when Labour witch-hunted UNITE convener Stevie Deans. INEOS then launched their own fusillade against the union convener. What choice did UNITE and its members have? Just lie down and let Ratcliffe sack their site convener, as a prelude to a general assault on wages and conditions?

Workers voted by 81 per cent to strike, with an initial 48-hour stoppage, due on 20-21 October. On discovering documentary proof this was a long-planned provocation, the union cancelled the strike. Ratcliffe took this as a signal of weakness and increased his aggression, issuing 'sign or be sacked' forms to every worker at their home address, deliberately bypassing the recognised union.

To their eternal credit, over 680 of the 1,000 union members refused to sign up to this bullying and blackmail; a courageous display of union solidarity, a mandate for resistance to the butchers' assault on terms and conditions.

Devastation

The ball was back in Ratcliffe's court. In a high risk counter-move – given the phenomenal importance of the site to the economy and to INEOS's profits – Ratcliffe shut down the petrochemical plant, liquidating it. The workers and entire community, indeed the whole of Scotland, reeled in shock and devastation at Ratcliffe's unhesitating vandalism.

Now what to do? In past days, the pivotal economic position of

WORKPLACE

the site would have given trade unionists an almost invincible weapon: solidarity industrial action at both ends of the production process – from the Forties oilfield pipeline into Grangemouth, to supplies of nearly all the fuel in Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England, and production of 30 per cent of Britain’s needs of ethylene and similar materials.

But 30 years since Thatcher constructed the most repressive anti-union laws in Europe – retained in full by 13 years of Labour governments – workers and their union leaderships immediately confronted a stark choice. Either convince members with a clear plan to defy the anti-union laws and take decisive, appropriate forms of industrial action in defence of a vital enterprise and the communities dependent on it – or be hamstrung and paralysed, beating a hasty retreat from Ratcliffe’s onslaught.

UCS occupation

In the situation where a venture capitalist with absolutely no pretence of social responsibility had declared permanent closure, a strike was not an appropriate tactical option.

More timely would have been occupation of the site, to halt asset-stripping, to take the fight to the heart of the beast, to use workers’ control of the vast assets to mount a mass campaign for public ownership to save the jobs, conditions and enormous contribution to the national economy.



SHOCK: the whole of Scotland reeled in shock and devastation at Ratcliffe’s unhesitating vandalism

It is a bitter irony that just days before UNITE general secretary Len McCluskey led the union delegation offering wholesale capitulation to INEOS’s brutal package, he had given the annual Jimmy Reid Foundation lecture, with eloquent tribute to the inspirational and successful Upper Clyde Shipbuilders occupation to halt closures in 1971. The spirit and lessons of UCS could have been an invaluable guide to the national UNITE leadership in the Grangemouth struggle for survival.

The whole trade union movement needs to ponder key questions posed. How are we ever going to resist butchery by billion-

aire multinationals if the unions simply obey these laws?

When are major unions going to take action in defiance of the anti-union laws, after thorough explanation and preparation of the members, and then build and demand solidarity from the wider trade union movement and working class communities?

Ratcliffe and INEOS have pulled off an enormous extortion racket, robbing workers and taxpayers, after spouting systematic lies about the ‘financial distress’ of Grangemouth, one of their 51 manufacturing plants worldwide; combined profits £2billion.

Contrary to their blackmailing lies about it being ‘worthless’, experts discovered Grangemouth petrochemicals made £7million profit last year, and £6million the year before. They found INEOS’s own accounts forecast profits of £500million from Grangemouth by 2017.

Capitalism ‘in the modern world’ means one man – who registered INEOS in Switzerland in 2010 to dodge at least £100million a year UK taxes – has the power to close down the only oil refinery in oil-rich Scotland; to obliterate an industrial site that

contributes over £1billion a year to the Scottish economy.

This is the modern world – one man lies, blackmails and bullies not only thousands of workers whose jobs depend on the place he owns, but holds the elected government of Scotland to ransom, demanding public subsidies for his private profiteering.

The dictatorship of capital – in the form of one capitalist in this instance – has been revealed to millions in the past week, and reviled by most of them.

Nationalisation

Added to Grangemouth, people are furious at the wider energy cartel, where the ‘Big Six’ suppliers of household energy carefully coordinate their crucifying 8-11 per cent price increases just as the clocks go back for the winter months. The attraction of public ownership of energy, other vital national assets and public services is growing exponentially.

When Ratcliffe and his cronies threatened the very existence of Grangemouth, the SNP government (in stark contrast to the Westminster Coalition) rightly sought alternative ownership. How the hell could there be

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BREAK UNION PROP FOR LABOUR:
 how many more examples of betrayal will it
 take for national union leaderships to abandon
 their futile attempts to reclaim the Labour
 Party for trade unionism, or even socialism?



any justification in leaving the priceless assets, capital and workers' skills in the hands of JR and his capitalist vandals?

Some media wisecracks (like The Herald's Ian McWhirter) who have vilified the unions have simultaneously awarded Alex Salmond a sainthood for seeking a new buyer – and for ultimately winning £millions for INEOS off BP and the taxpayer!

But why on earth did the SNP scour the globe in search of another profit-hungry owner? Why subsidise a venture capitalist holding the government to ransom? The answer was under their own noses: the Scottish government should have nationalised it, taking the assets off an outfit hell-bent on rule or ruin.

Potent alternative

Neither the SNP nor Labour openly raised this blindingly obvious solution. And if the limited powers of devolution make that impossible (although Prestwick Airport's takeover by the Scottish Government at least questions this), then surely combining support for nationalisation with the case for full-blown self-govern-

ment under independence becomes a potent alternative?

The most disappointing failure to fight for nationalisation was that of UNITE's central leadership. Failure by either the unions or major political parties to champion the case for nationalisation, or indeed to carry it out in government, has left Grangemouth under the dictatorship of Ratcliffe, a capitalist thug who has proven he shouldn't be let near the ownership of a burger van, let alone Scotland's biggest industrial complex.

Democratic public ownership is one of the central issues the Grangemouth crisis has thrown up; the trade union movement should seize the time, and popularize what is an increasingly attractive idea within the working class.

To their great credit, the SNP has promised renationalisation of Royal Mail under independence, but they are not a party ideologically committed to public ownership. They are more inclined to rattle the begging bowl under the noses of multinationals, enticing them to invest in Scotland with promises of low business taxation.

Surely INEOS has given us a brutal object lesson in the folly of reliance on multinational capitalists for our prosperity and security?! Labour has long since abandoned commitment to public ownership. That's what Blair's infamous 'defining moment' was all about: obliteration of Labour's commitment to public ownership of 'the means of production, distribution and exchange', as adopted in Clause Four, part 4 of Labour's constitution at the 1918 national conference.

Why fund Labour?

Grangemouth highlights the outrageous absurdity of trade unions – including UNITE – devoting resources, members' money and members' activity to funding and shoring up the 'modern' Labour Party.

JR and INEOS are the enemy of workers in this whole episode. But they were gifted the opening to apply their murky plans by Miliband and the UK Labour leadership, when the latter witch-hunted the Grangemouth UNITE convener for doing what UNITE the union see as their best political strategy: recruiting

workers to Labour to make it the voice of workers.

Where was Johann Lamont – UNITE member, UNITE sponsored MSP, elected to Scottish leader with UNITE's help – during this drama?

How many more examples of Labour betrayal does it take for the national union leaderships to abandon their utterly futile attempts to reclaim Labour for trade unionism, or even socialism?

The trade unions need to ponder much that Grangemouth has taught us, not least the need to break from a party that has persistently acted as an opponent of trade union rights, public ownership and socialism – Labour – and to instead assist those of us striving to build a genuine, organised socialist voice of working people.

If we study the experience of Grangemouth we can help end the dictatorship of capital, and build a genuinely modern world, where the working class reaps the benefits of our collective efforts, with the most advanced workplace democracy and public ownership of major industries, services and banking. A democratic socialist one.

by Ken Ferguson

ELSEWHERE in this *Voice* we look in some detail at the struggle of the Grangemouth workers and its outcome. However important though that unquestionably is, towering over these events is the harsh and brutal spotlight that they cast on the realities of the corporate power whose dominance ensures a world fashioned in the interests of a tiny rich minority totally unconcerned about workers, communities or the economic and social life of the countries they operate in.

Lenin's famous dictum that "there are decades when nothing happens and weeks when decades happen" might have been written about Grangemouth.

In the course of a few days the understanding of a socialist minority, that all our fates are in the hand of uncaring profit driven capitalists, was brutally put to the Grangemouth workers and, across TV and the press, to millions of others. A process of bloated corporate power which has been developing both in the UK and beyond since the Thatcher era has now been revealed in all its pitiless inhumanity. Under the supposed wonders of the "free market" the only concern is profit, with the public subjected to a constant barrage of spin to pretend it is otherwise.

Spineless

This process was set in train by Thatcher, greedily taken up by Blair (now a multi-millionaire) and continued by the super elite of public school Tories with their partners in crime, the spineless Lib Dems. The result of this has been a corporate corruption of democracy to the point that all the main Westminster No-supporting parties are fully bought and paid for members of the fat cats' club and vary only slightly in how they grovel to smooth the path of the rich on their way to ever greater plunder.

The results for the rest of us not on this rich list is falling pay, soaring prices, austerity, cuts and a virtual exclusion from any democratic means of curbing the

Grangemouth reveals not so hidden hand of market forces



GRANGEMOUTH: profits won in this battle against the workers

gross excesses which see figures like Jim Ratcliffe play with the lives of workers, their communities and the vital national interests of Scotland rather like a well fed cat with a captive mouse.

Sadly a quick glance at the world about us shows that Ratcliffe's heedless drive for ever more profit is just one of the more dramatic examples of the results of handing control over industries and services to capitalists programmed to focus solely on the drive for ever bigger profits.

As we write – in energy rich Scotland – various "advisers" repeat the rubbish about switching energy firms to pay less, others advise how low we should set our heating, while the PM's office says we should "wrap up warm" putting on a jumper in the cold weather.

So bare faced are the rip offs of the energy profiteers that even ex-Tory Prime Minister John Major called for a tax on their profits, Miliband wants to "reset" the market and the Eton toffs will do as little as possible and depend on their spin doctors. Meanwhile winter deaths

figures grow, and it is now predicted that across the UK 24,000 people will die of cold this winter, while millions live in fear amidst a country which is one of the most energy rich in Europe.

As the same elite power brokers engineer another housing "boom" and London house prices soar, poor folk face crushing pressure from the Bedroom Tax brought in by Lord Freud who has lost count of his mansion's spare rooms.

From failing care homes with abused residents through rip off train fares to bribing the French and Chinese to build nuclear power with bloated guaranteed prices for their power output, the fruits of the profiteers are the same – lousy services and soaring prices. All gift wrapped in a cloak of uncertainty, job insecurity, celebrity worship and various "crack downs" on the poor.

But this process – which reverses gains made by working people over 500 years of struggle and replaces the power once wielded by unelected monarchs, the divine right of kings, with a divine right of oligarchs like Ratcliffe – is neither in-

evitable nor eternal. What is required is to reverse this system which reduces human beings to pawns on a global chess board and irreplaceable environments, such as the Arctic, to resources to be exploited.

In other advanced capitalist nations, public ownership of key resources such as energy and vital services such as railways are kept in public hands in the interests of both consumers and workers, and this was the case in the UK before the neoliberal market madness seized power.

More radically, in Latin America a clutch of left governments backed by mobilised popular movements have taken back natural resources and vital services to meet the people's needs in an assertion of popular sovereignty which combines both political independence with economic democracy.

Pro-market MPs

The lessons for Scotland are clear. The corrupt Westminster politics, dominated by three pro-market parties, provides no space for the voice of people such as the Grangemouth workers but is entirely in thrall to the tiny minority of greedy men popularly described as "the markets". That's why a Yes vote next year is so vital to break with City-dominated Westminster populated with pro-market MPs riding their own gravy train and open the way to a different politics based on meeting the needs of both people and planet.

The fight for such radical change will be hard and only be won if it also mobilises the Scottish people to bring such a society into being. It will not prove easy but the choice is a stark one between market barbarism or a left/green alternative, coupling political independence with economic and environmental justice.

Prospect of independence drives Scottish politics left

says John McAllion

THE ELECTION in 2011 of a majority SNP government made certain that there would be an independence referendum in the lifetime of this Scottish Parliament.

It also ensured that there would have to be a wide-ranging public debate about the kind of country that Scotland might become after independence.

Initially, this debate appeared to be driving politics in Scotland to the right. The SNP government embraced monarchy, the pound sterling, membership of NATO and Scotland's armed forces in its bid not to frighten the establishment horses. Labour for its part gave notice via Johan Lamont's now infamous speech that they had embraced austerity politics and would end welfare universalism in a "something for nothing" Scotland.

'Efficiency savings'

Both parties had fought the 2011 election on promises not to use the parliament's tax-varying power while imposing a freeze on council taxes. Both claimed to champion business and enterprise. Both promised "efficiency savings" in public spending. It was no secret that the SNP wanted control of corporation tax in order to cut it for companies based in Scotland.

Labour set up a Cuts Commission with a chairman promising that every aspect of public spending in Scotland would now be under review. Gradually, however, other progressive voices began to be heard in a debate that was much wider than the two big parties. The SSP continued to make the case for a socialist independent Scotland in public meetings up and down the length of the country. The Radical Independence Campaign attracted



800 activists to its launch conference in Glasgow. The Jimmy Reid Foundation launched its Common Weal proposals to develop a Scottish version of the alternative economic and social models found in Nordic countries such as Norway, Finland and Denmark.

Meanwhile, alongside of the core independence debate, other kinds of politics continued to happen and to change the Scottish public's perceptions of the kind of Scotland they wanted to live in.

There was near universal revulsion against the hated Bedroom Tax. Zero hours contracts convinced many that the balance of power between employers and employees had swung far too far in favour of the former.

Energy bosses, like bankers, were widely condemned for their greedy profiting at the expense of the poor. The proliferation of food banks in one of the wealthiest countries in the world signalled that inequality was now a national disgrace.

Opinion polls and focus groups began to pick up these changing social and political attitudes. The old certainties around low taxes, free markets and less government that had dominated politics for a generation no longer looked so

convincing. The success of the renationalised East Coast Main Line had shown how public ownership works for workers and travellers alike. The rip-off sale of the Royal Mail aroused widespread opposition to the very idea of privatising public services.

Grangemouth and the humbling of Britain's biggest trade union demonstrated clearly that real economic power remained in the hands of the very few.

Mainstream politicians are never slow to detect such shifts in public opinion. Aware that majority opinion in Scotland was to the left of their own political programmes, both the SNP and Labour began to change political direction.

Each challenged the other on who could be trusted to scrap the Bedroom Tax first. In the Dunfermline by-election, the Labour candidate rediscovered her support for universal benefits and her opposition to Johan Lamont's ideas around a "something for nothing" culture. Lamont herself would later deny she ever used those words.

More importantly, both parties began to look seriously at the Common Weal proposals. Johan Lamont arranged for the

Jimmy Reid Foundation to brief Labour MSPs and researchers on proposals that include higher taxes, wealth redistribution, a cradle to grave welfare state and strong public services.

The SNP conference in Perth voted to examine the same Common Weal proposals further as a potential economic and social template for an independent Scotland.

Without the independence referendum, it is unlikely that any of these developments would have taken place. The Jimmy Reid Foundation has admitted that their Common Weal idea emerged only because the debate about Scotland's future had "opened a window" to social and economic models outside of the UK.

Missing debates

Within a wholly devolved political context it is likely that Holyrood's politicians would have gone on arguing about how differently they would spend the money Westminster allocated to them each year.

The independence debate has brought back onto Scotland's political agenda debates long missing from our mainstream political parties' thinking. The idea that markets should drive economic and social development is at last being seriously challenged.

Public ownership is being rehabilitated in exciting new forms including co-operatives, mutuals and local and regional public ownership. The argument around the welfare state now focuses on why Scotland lacks the cradle-to-grave cover enjoyed by workers in the Nordic countries. Eradicating income and wealth inequality is again at the heart of political debate. The prospect of independence is driving Scottish politics to the left. Where might actual independence take us?



REVOLUTION IN THE AIR: the red flag is raised in Glasgow's George Square in 1919

Maclean raised banner for

by Campbell Martin

IN DECEMBER 1918, just weeks after the armistice that ended the First World War, Liberal Prime Minister Lloyd George signed papers authorising the release from prison of socialist John Maclean.

His campaigning against the carnage that pitted worker against worker had led to him being 'convicted' of actions likely to undermine the war effort.

Although his health had been badly affected by his incarceration and the treatment he received while in prison, Maclean immediately threw himself back into campaigning, but found his position to be at odds with some who had previously been his closest colleagues.

Both the British Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party favoured the creation of a British



Communist Party, while Maclean passionately believed in the need for a Scottish Communist Party, arguing that the flame of socialism burned stronger in Scotland than in England.

It was Maclean's belief that Scotland was fertile ground for a workers' revolution, which he saw as the first step towards a similar uprising in Britain as a whole. Because of these differences, Maclean did not join the Communist Party of Great Britain when it was formed in 1920.

Willie Gallacher, one of the leaders of the Clyde Workers Committee, had travelled to Russia, where he had meetings with Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin. On his

return to Scotland, Gallacher indicated the position of Lenin was that there should be only one Communist Party in Britain. Gallacher also said the Comintern (the Communist International) was now the 'official' voice of international socialist revolution and it, too, favoured a British Communist Party.

However, the position of Lenin and the Comintern was possibly little more than a reflection of how invisible Scotland had become as a nation entirely subsumed into the British Union, ruled and overshadowed by the larger partner, England.

Indeed, Nan Milton, John Maclean's daughter, recorded that Lenin had once referred to her father as 'Maclean of England'.

John Maclean remained loyal to the Bolshevik revolution but believed the views expressed by Lenin and the Comintern regarding there being only one

Communist Party in Britain were based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the actual situation in Scotland.

Point 17 of the Theses and Statutes of the Third International said there could be only one Communist Party in each country, and so the Lenin/Comintern/Gallacher position was based on the acceptance that Scotland was not a country. This was a perspective rejected by Maclean, as he explained in an article carried in the December 1920 issue of the socialist newspaper Vanguard:

"We in Scotland must not let ourselves play second fiddle to any organisation with headquarters in London, no more than we would ask Dublin to bend to the will of London. Whatever co-operation may be established between the Revolutionary forces in the countries at present composing the 'United Kingdom', that co-operation



**GIANT OF RED
CLYDESIDE:**
John Maclean and
supporters
outside Edinburgh
High Court

Scottish socialist republic

must be based on the wills of the free national units.

"Nothing in Point 17 precludes the formation of a Scottish Party as Scotland is a definite country."

John Maclean worked unremittingly for the cause of socialist revolution in Scotland, to bring an end to the capitalist system that punished the working class, condemning ordinary men, women and children to a life of poverty and deprivation. However, he paid a very heavy personal price for his commitment.

Prevented by the authorities from working as a teacher, Maclean's very limited income came from collections at public meetings and from the sale of his political pamphlets.

Struggling financially, his wife and family had gone to live with a relative in the borders. His wife, Agnes, returned to the family home in November 1923, with the

Scotland's wisest policy is to declare for a republic in Scotland, so that the youth of Scotland will not be forced out to die for England's markets...

intention that the children, two girls, would follow as soon as a settled income could be established. Agnes had pleaded with John Maclean not to stand as a candidate in an upcoming General Election, but he was determined to continue the fight.

When she returned to Glasgow, Agnes Maclean found her husband in very poor health. Almost starved, he had continued to address outdoor public meetings in the depth of winter. His only overcoat he had given to his friend Neil Johnston, who was from Barbados and, Maclean believed, needed the coat more than him in a Glasgow winter.

In late November John

Maclean collapsed while speaking to yet another street meeting. He was carried from the outdoor platform and taken to his home in Pollokshaws. Maclean was diagnosed as suffering from double pneumonia and died on 30 November 1923. He was just 44 years-old.

An election leaflet, written by John Maclean days earlier, was published carrying the date on which he died. An extract perfectly summed-up his passionate belief in the working class and the need to establish an independent Scottish socialist republic as a step towards a 'socialist international' spanning the globe:

"Scotland's wisest policy is

to declare for a republic in Scotland, so that the youth of Scotland will not be forced out to die for England's markets.

"I accordingly stand out as a Scottish Republican candidate feeling sure that if Scotland had to elect a parliament to sit in Scotland it would vote for a working class parliament.

"The Social Revolution is possible sooner in Scotland than in England.

The working class policy ought to be to break up the Empire, to avert war, and to enable the workers to triumph in every country and colony.

"Scottish separation is part of the process of England's imperial disintegration and is a help toward the ultimate triumph of the workers of the world."

• See *Voice* issue 426 for part one of Campbell Martin's *Hidden History special on Red Clydesider John Maclean*

Provocative view of Scottish fascism

Fascist Scotland: Caledonia and the Far Right by **Gavin Bowd** (Birlinn 2013, £12.99)

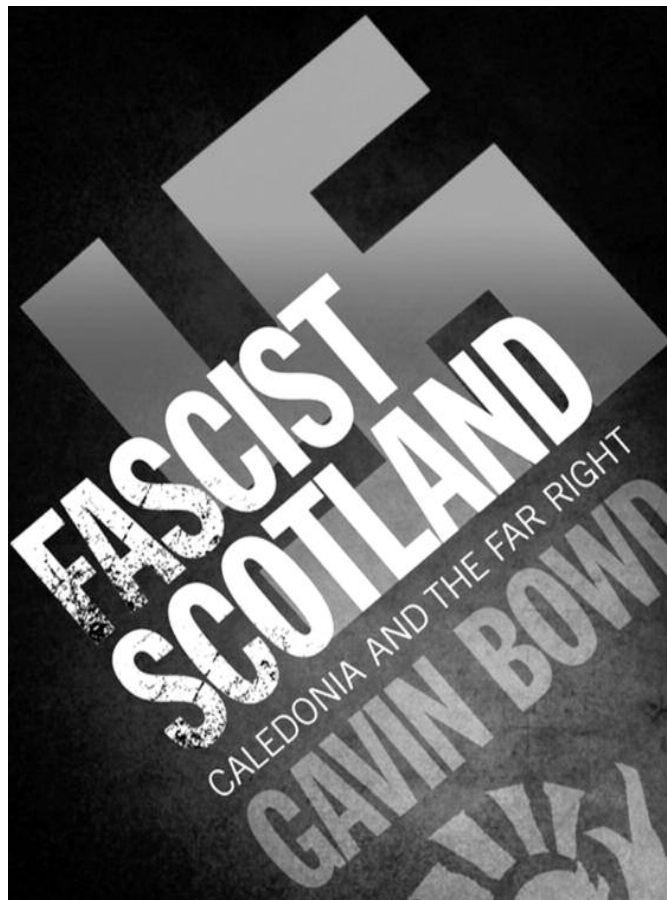
by *Alex Miller*

IN THIS well written and provocative book Gavin Bowd sets out to show how “Scotland provided its own cohort of idealists, fanatics and traitors for extreme racist, nationalist and authoritarian politics”.

The book opens with a description of Rudolf Hess’s bizarre one-man flight to Scotland in 1941, apparently with the aim of negotiating with the Duke of Hamilton in order to end the war between Britain and Hitler’s Germany.

Alleged sympathy

The book also has individual chapters dealing with: Oswald Moseley’s unsuccessful attempt to establish a footing north of the border for the British Union of Fascists; support within the Italian-Scots community for Mussolini’s Italian Fascist Party; the pro-Franco politics of Charles Saroléa, Professor of French at the University of Edinburgh; alleged sympathy within the Scottish National Party for fascism and Nazism; examples of Scots accused of treachery during WW2; and



the fate of neo-fascist organisations in Scotland up to the present day.

The chapter on “The Nazis and the Nats” is no doubt the most provocative section of the book. A number of poems by Hugh MacDiarmid are cited as evidence of how a combination of “anti-Englishness and anti-imperialism” could lead to a “downright downplaying of the threat emanating from Berlin”,

and Bowd also details how other supporters of Scottish nationalism apparently flirted with fascism and racism.

It’s hard to know what to make of this: I can’t help suspecting that there’s a bit of selective quotation going on here, but I’ll have to leave those more in the know about MacDiarmid and the history of the SNP to settle the matter.

The main sources of support for fascism within Scotland, though, are shown to come from among the usual suspects: the tory establishment, the aristocracy, big business and the military.

The book tells the story of Captain Archibald Maule Ramsey, Conservative MP for South Midlothian and Peeblesshire, who created the “Right Club”, a clandestine squad of anti-semites and anti-communists, and who was the only British MP to be

interned during WW2. The book’s conclusion – that “it remains wilfully naïve to think that there can be ‘nae nazis’ north of the Cheviots” – is one that few will disagree with.

Despite this, and the painstaking work that has obviously gone into the research underpinning the main chapters, the book itself points to the conclusion that fascism has never been more than a very marginal force in Scotland: for example, Bowd himself notes that of 1000 Moseleyite activists interned in spring 1940, only three were from Scotland, and he also points out that Scotland’s contribution to the reorganisation of fascism in the decades following WW2 was extremely marginal.

Given this, the book leaves the reader with the impression that the pudding is very definitely being over-egged. For instance, looking for evidence of the toxic legacy of fascism in modern Scotland, Bowd points to a remark made by Rod Stewart in 1970 expressing support for Enoch Powell’s anti-immigration policy.

Londoner Rod

But Rod Stewart – a Londoner born and bred – isn’t even Scottish! In addition, Bowd cites a leaflet exhorting people to “Buy Scots Goods and keep a Scots Worker Working” as evidence of fascist traces among Celtic nationalism.

Whether that is so I’ll leave the reader to decide. The fact that pro-union Gordon Brown’s infamous “British Jobs for British Workers” slogan doesn’t get a mention may lead some readers to think that Bowd needs to widen his gaze from specifically Scottish Nationalism if he is to do full justice to his subject.

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Basque peace process and the left

Bill Bonnar reports

IN SPAIN the on-going struggle for Catalan independence has captured the headlines across Europe but another process is underway with equally dramatic consequences.

In the Basque Country, the peace process has both accelerated the drive to independence and saw the emergence of one of the largest left wing movements seen in Europe for many years.

Euskal Herria Bildu is a left nationalist coalition formed in June 2012. This coalition included the hitherto political wing of Eta.

In the parliamentary elections of October 2012, Bildu emerged as the second largest party with 21 out of 75 seats and around 25 per cent of the popular vote.

This despite the fact that a ban on the party contesting the election was only lifted the day before polling began.

Intense repression

The modern struggle for Basque national identity and independence emerged during the dark days of the Franco dictatorship when the Basque region suffered intense repression.

This led to the emergence of Eta, a movement with both a political and military wing, inspired by some of the left wing guerrilla movement active in Latin America and by the Cuban Revolution.

In the post-Franco years, the emergence of Basque autonomy within Spain undermined the movement and led to a great deal of soul searching as to the best way forward. In January 2011, Eta unilaterally announced “a permanent and internationally



INDEPENDENCE DRIVE: despite an electoral ban on left nationalists EH Bildu only being lifted the day before polling began, they emerged as the second largest party with 25 per cent of the popular vote

verifiable ceasefire” with the aim of achieving their goals by peaceful means.

This threw the Spanish state authorities onto the back foot, with some evidence of targeted repression aimed at provoking Eta to break their ceasefire. This has been the continued harsh treatment of Basque prisoners including transferring them to prisons far away from their homes to make it extremely difficult for families to visit.

It is also reflected in particularly harsh sentences of those convicted of crimes before the ceasefire which some international observers have branded spiteful.

This included the sentencing of Eta leader Garikoits Aspiazu to 377 years imprisonment in July 2011.

Bildu have been particularly impressed by the Catalan movement for independence in which the left are part of a broader movement yet still retain their left identity and programme.

This includes a rejection of the austerity programme

imposed by Madrid, a rejection of the cuts programme, radical action to tackle the region’s housing crisis, a massive expansion of public and community investment along with extending public ownership, progressive tax reforms and the imposition of radical environmental policies.

There is also a rejection of the narrow, populist nationalism of the main right wing party with its campaign of Basque jobs for Basque workers and its anti-immigration stance.

Enormous strain

All of this has put enormous strain of the Spanish state which is now fighting to maintain its existence on a number of fronts.

That it is doing so while imposing a draconian austerity programme is fuelling many of the independence movements who while struggling for independence are also popularising alternative, progressive anti-austerity programmes.

In Scotland, there are strong historic links with the Basque struggle formed during the Spanish Civil War and the time of the Franco dictatorship. Many Basque refugees, including children settled in Scotland.

The Scottish Socialist Party has maintained regular contact with the struggle in the Basque Country and was represented at a conference in Barcelona entitled ‘The Struggle For Socialism In Nations Without A State’.

There have been delegations both from the SSP to the Basque Country and from the Basque Country to Scotland, with the SSP hosting meetings with spokespeople from the Basque Movement. This also reflects an intense interest in development in Scotland.

The breakup of the imperialist Spanish state, the emergence of an independent Basque region and the growth of a major left movement are all developments to be welcomed. Franco would be turning in his grave.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CUTS

by Sandra Webster

IN THE last week, when most of the media were caught up in the froth of the latest chapter in the soap opera which is the royal family, news of the impact of benefit cuts managed to fight their way to prominence.

These are the stories that matter and which touch the lives of many. The benefit cuts were the first of the Tories' so-called reforms. The aim was to introduce Universal Credit – indeed it was expected by now that the whole system would have been rolled out across the UK.

Instead it was announced that its flagship reform will only be introduced in London and some other pilot areas. Although this offers some short term relief, especially to those with disabilities, many people have found that they are among the first affected. Despite widespread condemnation of the Bedroom Tax, the Tories seem determined to carry on regardless.

Arrears

The TUC recently published an impact report from councils all over the UK. Scottish authorities were among the greatest affected with four in the "top ten". Clackmannanshire reported 67 per cent of their tenants had fallen into arrears while Dundee was close behind with 49 per cent.

Usual rent arrears are less than 10 per cent but now they estimate that 31 per cent of social tenants are now in rent arrears. This is having a huge impact on revenue and budgets for services are being severely restricted. Although some shortfalls are being met by Discretionary Housing Payments, what happens when they are no longer available?



ANYONE WHO HAD A HEART: these cuts are at the heart of ConDem policy and will be pushed through at any cost

PHOTO: Simon Whittle

Many people with disabilities and the organisations that represent them are relieved that the controversial new Personal Independence Payment or PIPs introduction has been held back.

This new payment will replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Disabled people have been united in criticising the new assessments and criteria people have to meet in order to receive PIP. Despite the ConDems stating it is not a cut, the fact that it is estimated 20 per cent of people who receive DLA will not be eligible for PIP claims says otherwise.

Motability, a charity which helps disabled people to hire cars to help with mobility, expects thousands of their customers to be affected by the new mobility rule. The distance which one can

walk unaided has been changed from 50 metres to 20. So many families and individuals rely on their Motability car for transport and many again will lose out.

More and more people are being forced into the appeal system to claim benefits. One especially nasty piece of legislation that was passed through recently deals with what happens when someone who is currently claiming DLA is reviewed as the result of someone claiming they are not entitled.

Even if it was found to be a mistake or sheer vindictiveness, they will automatically have to apply for PIP. The mind boggles at the thought of ATOS phoning the benefit fraud helpline. This is just the beginning and portents of what is to come. Universal Credit, when it is eventually

rolled out to all, will affect all of working age in receipt of benefits. We will have to watch the testing grounds of London and the other pilot areas.

We must keep an eye closer to home in West Dumbartonshire and North Lanarkshire which are included in the pilot. North Lanarkshire have recently stated that tenants owe them £2.5million in arrears due to the Bedroom Tax. They also called for tenants to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments. This backs up SSP activists' stories of many people not being aware of how to apply for one in many different areas of Scotland.

Vulnerable tenants

It is already affecting vulnerable tenants who yet again will have to face the impact and challenges Universal Credit will have on them. Councils claim there will be no compulsory evictions if tenants "work with them" but give no definition of what that means.

Meanwhile, more and more tenants find themselves worrying about owing money and all because of this ConDem policy which claims to be fairer – but fairer to who?

Some think that the changes in dates for bringing in Universal Credit and other changes to existing benefits are signs that the machinery of cuts is failing but these cuts are at the heart of ConDem policy and will be pushed through at any cost.

Indeed, the human cost will be high, causing misery and further despair to many. Independence offers an opportunity to be free of the inhumane diktats that Westminster continues to spout. We need to grasp the opportunity for change.