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Why we are socialists

At the the time of the last General Election in 2001, intellectuals across the world had proclaimed the 'end of history'.

SOCIALISM WAS now dead and buried, the world was growing wealthier and more stable by the year, and soon we would all live happily ever after in a global free market capitalist paradise, courtesy of Microsoft, McDonald's and MTV.

Tony Blair appeared as the living embodiment of the new world and the new Britain of the new millennium. The smiling, happy-clappy New Labour Prime Minister assured us that the class war was over and the old divisions had disappeared forever.

But that was then and this is now. Four years on, and the world has become a darker, more dangerous, more haunted place than at any time for generations.

Yes, we have greater wealth and resources at our fingertips than ever before. Advances in science and technology have given us computers, mobile phones and a vast array of household goods. We have achieved medical advances beyond our wildest dreams. The communications revolution has reduced the world to a 'global village'.

Yet even at this very pinnacle of human achievement, we face a world of fear, war, hunger and disease - a world where the leaders of the western world are dripping with blood from head to toe, a world where 800 million people - 160 times the population of Scotland - go to bed hungry every night.

And while the suits in government, business and the media tell us that there's no alternative, hundreds of thousands of ordinary people around the world disagree - from nursery nurses in



Glasgow, to landless peasants in Brazil and bombed-out civilians in Iraq.

In July, up to 250,000 people will march through the streets of Edinburgh to protest against world poverty when the godfathers of global capitalism descend on Scotland for the G8 summit.

This will be a further show of strength by the growing global mass movement

that is screaming out against injustice and inequality. The slogan now inscribed on banners in a hundred languages is 'Make Poverty History'.

The Scottish Socialist Party will do all we can to build this movement in Scotland and worldwide. At the same time, the central message of our manifesto is this: to make poverty history, we will need to make capitalism history.

Here in Scotland, socialist ideas are alive and kicking. Five years ago, the Scottish Socialist Party burst onto the political scene advocating a programme of radical social change. From a few hundred activists at the founding conference in 1998, the SSP now has thousands of members in hundreds of communities across Scotland, backed up by tens of thousands of solid voters.

The SSP has a well-earned reputation as the party that stands up for ordinary people, whether it be offering solidarity to striking workers, campaigning against the injustice of the Council Tax or taking to the streets in opposition to Blair's illegal war on Iraq.

But it's not just action that makes the SSP stand out - it's our ideas. The SSP is the only socialist party in Scotland - the only party that rejects the free market madness of the system we live under, and the only party that dares to offer a real alternative.

On the face of it, a "free" market ideology sounds like a good idea. Why shouldn't we have the choice of where we go and what we buy when we get there?

Scratch the surface though, and it's

One third of Scots live in poverty, including hundreds of thousands of children and pensioners.

Life expectancy for men in Shettleston, one of the poorest areas of Glasgow, is just 63 years; ten years below the national average.



soon clear that the mainstream political parties offer no more choice than the competing burger fast food chains or pizza parlours.

The packaging comes in four separate colours and there are different logos. But the politics are more or less the same.

Day in, day out, Labour, Tory, SNP and Lib Dems spokespersons churn out the same desperate message:

"We must grow the economy."

But over the past decade or so, the economy has grown and grown and grown in Scotland, across the UK and throughout the Western world.

But for millions in Scotland and hundreds of millions internationally, this economic growth spurt might as well have been taking place on a far flung planet.

One third of Scots live in poverty, including hundreds of thousands of children and pensioners. Life expectancy for men in Shettleston, one of the poorest areas of Glasgow, is just 63 years; ten years below the national average.

We have the highest prison population in Europe per head of population - with half of the prisoners in our jails drawn from the poorest 12 per cent of council wards.

Suicide rates among young Scots men have escalated by 250 per cent in 20 years.

Apprenticeships are a distant memory. Students are forced to work long hours just to pay the rent. Graduates compete for low-paid, dead-end jobs, burdened from the start of their working lives by a vast millstone of debt.

To escape drudgery and low pay, thousands of our young people join the armed forces. Some of them, like Gordon Gentle, have laid down their lives fighting a war that they never believed in.

Armies of middle-aged men are forced to survive on incapacity benefit, after a lifetime of backbreaking work on building sites, in shipyards, down coal mines. Hundreds of thousands of lone parents face a daily battle to pay the bills and feed

Hundreds of thousands of lone parents face a daily battle to pay the bills and feed their children.

Poverty and inequality aren't just confined to the cities and towns of the central belt either - low pay is endemic across rural Scotland.

their children. Poverty and inequality aren't just confined to the cities and towns of the central belt either - low pay is endemic across rural Scotland.

On the Isle of Mull, rocketing house prices and low-paid, seasonal work have left a fifth of the population homeless.

That's where we are in Scotland after eight years of Labour government, and after twelve continuous years of economic growth.



Scotland should be a tremendous country in which to live - a rich country with a wealth of natural resources, a public health system free at the point of use and a well-educated workforce.

In reality, though, Scotland is blighted by a fundamental inequality in society, with the vast bulk of our resources owned and controlled in the interests of a tiny minority.

The mainstream politicians might be obsessed with "growing the economy" - but their obsession is not shared by 98 per cent of Scots.

A BBC Scotland opinion poll published at the start of the 2005 General Election asked 1000 people their two or three greatest priorities in the General Election.

Out of 20 choices, "making the economy grow" came last. Given a straightforward choice between economic growth or redistribution of wealth, 15 per cent chose economic growth. In contrast, 79 per cent chose wealth redistribution.



The Scottish Socialist Party is the party of wealth redistribution.

According to the 2005 Sunday Times 'Rich List', the richest 1000 people in the UK have a combined personal wealth of £250 billion.

Since New Labour came to power in 1997, the richest 1000 have seen their wealth rise by £150 billion.

Last year alone, the wealth of this clique increased by £48 billion - more than £132 million every single day.

The wealth of the UK's richest 1000 is more than the total debt owed by the world's poorest 50 nations. It is more than 4000 times the total sum raised during the recent Comic Relief Red Nose Day appeal. It is the equivalent of the Scottish Parliament's entire spending budget for the next ten years.

On both a local and global scale, capitalism has failed time and again to meet the needs of humanity and has actively contributed to the social and environmental catastrophes we now face.

We live in a world of greater wealth than at any time in human history, yet the gap between rich and poor has more than doubled in the past 40 years - in the 1960s, the richest fifth of the world population had 30 times the wealth of the poorest fifth. The gap is now 74 times.

Despite the dazzling technological advances of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the world's people face brutality and starvation.

Across Asia, Africa and Latin America, the endless plundering and exploitation of third world countries has resigned millions to a life of extreme poverty and premature death.

The gulf between rich and poor on a global scale is almost unimaginable. Sierra Leone is a former British colony in West Africa; a state the size of Scotland, it also has a wealth of natural resources, yet it ranks among the poorest countries on earth, with a gross national income per head of just US \$140 a year.

Sierra Leone has a shocking health record - life expectancy is just 33 years, while one in three children die before the age of five - yet in 1996, Sierra Leone spent five times more on debt repayment to Western banks than on health care.

Last Christmas, ordinary people around the world watched in horror as the full scale of the Asian tsunami unfolded - over 100,000 dead; many thousands more missing; entire communities left without water, food, shelter or contact with the outside world.

The tsunami was caused by nature - but the impact was very much man-made.

When Hurricane Andrew struck the coast of Florida in 1992, it was the costliest hurricane in US history, damaging or destroying over 125,000 homes.

Yet just 66 people died in Hurricane Andrew, thanks to an effective early warning system that allowed over a million people to flee their homes before the hurricane hit.

The bulk of the cost of Hurricane Andrew was met by major insurance firms, while a clean-up operation was underway within hours.

The greatest tragedy of the desperate situation facing millions in the under-developed world is that so much of this suffering is preventable.

Basic rehydration kits cost pennies and could save the lives of thousands of children around the world. Yet, instead of saving lives, the British government spends £75 million a month on the illegal occupation of Iraq.

In total, the government has spent £5 billion on bombing Afghanistan and Iraq - a billion pounds more than they spent on all overseas aid last year.

The cost in human misery is greater still; thousands of civilians are dead and thousands more swell the ranks of over six million refugees worldwide.

Around the world, capitalism represents a system of inequality and injustice.

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Women form a majority of the world's population and do two thirds of the world's work, yet they own just one per cent of the world's property.

A generation after women's liberation, Scottish women still earn just 81 per cent of men's average hourly wages.

The media sells a vision of a 'have it all' society and bombards young women with distorted images of beautiful people and idealised lifestyles.

But in real life, women still do the vast bulk of unpaid housework and care.

Capitalism is a system that breeds division and hatred. It is unable to seriously challenge racism, homophobia and religious hatred, because these problems are rooted in the system itself.

The Scottish Socialist Party is the only party that offers a genuine alternative. We stand for the redistribution of wealth on a world scale; not just to tinker at the edges but to fundamentally change the way in which society is organised.

As socialists, we want to see a society that puts people before profit. A socialist society would be one where goods are produced on the basis of need, not one that pours US \$1000 million into the production of a single stealth bomber while entire communities starve for want of basic tools, or where one in three children in the UK grow up in poverty while the government spends nearly a billion pounds a year on private consultants.

Our vision of society is of one where public services such as health care and education are provided to meet the needs of all rather than being driven by budget restrictions, or handed wholesale

to private profiteers. We would take back into public hands the services and industries stolen from us by successive generations of Tory governments, reversing decades of attacks on vital services and infrastructure.

Far from being the end of history, the 'triumph' of Western capitalism may well mean the end of the planet.

2004 was Scotland's second hottest and third wettest year on record, and scientists continue to warn of environmental catastrophe within our lifetimes.

Radical change is needed if humanity is to have a future - and multinational corporations and Western governments have made it clear that they are incapable of moving beyond minor tinkering at the edges of the gas-guzzling, profit driven system they preside over.

The scientific and technological advances of the last 150 years could be used to ensure a comfortable and sustainable future for all; instead, they have been harnessed to create maximum gain for a tiny minority - and without change from below, the legacy will be the destruction of our own planet.

The Scottish Socialist Party stands for a democratic socialist society that gives its citizens more freedom, not less.

We have no interest in mimicking the monolithic states of the former Soviet bloc - our aim is to shape a new society based on equality, democracy, freedom and diversity.

We reject the shallow impressionism of those who imagine that free market capi-



talism is here to stay. For a million years, since our humanoid ancestors first emerged from the jungles of Africa, human society has evolved through a succession of stages: savagery, primitive communism, tribalism, slavery, feudalism.

Measured against the clock of human history, capitalism has existed for just a few seconds.

Those who believe that capitalism will continue to exist from now until eternity

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fail to understand history and lack imagination.

Like infants, they cannot even begin to visualise anything outside their own little world.

The Scottish Socialist Party is not afraid to stand up and be accounted.

We are a socialist party whose aim is to change Scotland and, along with others internationally, to change the world.

We stand for a world free from hunger and disease, where human beings are treated equally and with dignity - and we believe in starting here in Scotland.

Scotland may be a small country, but we can have a big impact.

In the 18th century, the Enlightenment started in Scotland and spread radical, earth-shattering ideas about science and philosophy to Europe and beyond, challenging the existing orthodoxies and shaping the world in which we now live.

In the 21st century, an independent Scotland could take the lead in the global anti-capitalist struggle, the reverberations of which would be felt the world over.

A socialist Scotland would be a Scotland run for the people by the people.

It would combine public and social ownership with grassroots democracy.

If you are angry with government lies, sickened by the barbarity of the illegal war in Iraq, and believe that the massive wealth and resources of our society can be put to better use than supporting the interests of the super-rich, then it's time to join us.



Twenty reasons to vote SSP

I. For troops out of Iraq

ON JANUARY 7 this year, an American plane dropped a 500 pound bomb on a house in a small village, near the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. The 14 people who were inside the house died instantly.

The US military admitted that it was a mistake. They confessed that the flattened home was not their “intended target”, and issued an apology of sorts.

“We deeply regret,” they announced, “the loss of possibly innocent lives.” Of the 14 who died, seven were “possibly innocent” children who should have been safe, perhaps playing or doing their homework.

The magnitude of devastation Bush and Blair’s war has visited on Iraq almost defies the human imagination.

The respected British medical journal, The Lancet, estimates that 100,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed in just over two years.

Even here in Scotland, thousands of miles from the bombed out schools and hospitals of Baghdad and Basra, mothers are mourning their dead sons, killed in a senseless war for the greed and glory of businessmen, politicians and generals.

The Gentle family live in Pollok, on the south western outskirts of Glasgow. Their only son, Gordon, met army recruitment officers while he was signing on at the job centre. After just six months basic training, he was sent to die in Basra.



Like hundreds of other British and American soldiers, and like hundreds of thousands of ordinary Iraqi people, Gordon Gentle died for a lie.

We now know that Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction never existed.

That was only an excuse, a fiction designed to dupe timid politicians into

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backing this monstrous misadventure. The war against Iraq had nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction.

Nor was there ever any connection between Iraq and the perpetrators of the September 11th suicide attacks.

The religious fundamentalist, Osama bin Laden, and the secular tyrant, Saddam Hussein, had always been mortal enemies.

Equally preposterous is the claim by Bush and Blair that the Iraq invasion was motivated by a desire to bring democracy to the country.

In cities across the world, people face daily repression from weapons stamped 'Made in Britain' or 'Manufactured in the USA'.

When Bush and Blair proclaim themselves liberators, millions across the Muslim world know that these politicians are duplicitous hypocrites who would install Satan in charge of the Middle East provided he pledged obedience to Washington.

It is now common knowledge that the invasion of Iraq was planned long before September 11th 2001.

This war is a war for oil and profit. Profit for companies like security multinational CACI, who gained contracts worth \$66 million in Iraq - including providing interrogators for Abu Ghraib prison. Despite the horrific abuse scandal, they remain officially sanctioned contractors.

Profit for companies like Halliburton, who won over \$8 billion in contracts in Iraq in 2003 alone, including the running of oilfields.

And while they're raking in the profits, the UK and US taxpayers are forking out billions.

The cost of the war to the British exchequer so far has been £6.6 billion - or £220 for every single taxpayer in the UK.

While the occupation of Iraq continues, the bloodshed and chaos will deepen. The Scottish Socialist Party opposed the war from the beginning. We have played a key role in building the mass anti-war movement which mobilised over 100,000 onto the streets of Glasgow in February 2003.

In contrast to parties like the Lib Dems, we continue to oppose the war and reject the idea that we must see this war through to the end, otherwise we will leave behind chaos.

That was exactly the argument of some liberal Americans to justify the continuation of the Vietnam War through the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was also the justification used by some on the international left to back the continued Soviet occupation of Afghanistan during the 1980s.

In both instances, those who argued that "now we're there, we have to stay to the bitter end" were proven disastrously wrong.

In Vietnam and Afghanistan, hundreds of thousands could have been saved if the US and the USSR had not continued



fighting an unwinnable war for years on end.

We will continue to oppose all other wars under the guise of Bush and Blair's discredited 'war on terror' - whether it's Iran, Syria or whoever is next on their checklist of global domination.

The SSP believes that the problem of terrorism cannot be solved by military action. The whole of history illustrates that violent repression breeds resistance and terror, just as the damp woodland breeds mushrooms.

Only political solutions can create the conditions for peace. While Palestine is held in chains by the state of Israel, propped up by billions of dollars of US military aid, the Middle East will never be at peace.

The SSP stands foursquare behind the Palestinian people in their resistance to Israel and in their struggle for an independent homeland. We also support those Israeli dissidents who risk jail for refusing to wage war with tanks and bombs against the sticks and stones of Palestinian children.

We wholeheartedly back the Justice for Gordon Gentle campaign and applaud the courage and determination of Rose and her family.

We fully support any soldiers who refuse to fight in this unjust and illegal war - they should be held up as heroes, not treated as criminals.

Likewise, we defend any workers who refuse to handle materials intended to

wage war, for instance the Motherwell train drivers who in 2003 refused to transport ammunition which was intended for Iraq.

Our six MSPs have repeatedly tried to bring the war on Iraq before the Scottish Parliament. But the Scottish Executive continues to hide behind the skirts of their Westminster bosses, justifying their silence on the grounds that war and peace is a reserved matter.

But the people of Scotland overwhelmingly oppose this war. The SSP stands for an independent socialist Scotland that will never again send young working class Scots to kill and die in unjust, unnecessary wars.

In the meantime, we will continue to pile pressure on the Scottish Parliament to denounce the Westminster government's complicity in mass murder.

The SSP stands for:

■ Troops out of Iraq now.

■ Opposition to any further military action by George Bush in Iran, Syria, North Korea or anywhere else.

■ Support for democratic and progressive forces across the Middle East resisting imperialism and tyranny.

■ Support for the Palestinian people in their just fight for an independent homeland.

■ Support for Israeli dissidents and peaceniks.

■ Support for the Justice for Gordon Gentle campaign which is calling for troops to be brought home.

■ Support for any soldier who defies orders and refuses to fight in this unjust and illegal war.

■ Support for any group of workers who take action to obstruct the war in Iraq.

■ A clear-cut condemnation by the Scottish Parliament of the UK government's shameful involvement in this disastrously ill-conceived war.

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2. For real independence

ON SATURDAY 9 October 2004 the Queen came to officially open the new Scottish Parliament building at Holyrood.

The four main parties curtsied. The Scottish Socialist Party did not. We organised an alternative event at Calton Hill to call for an independent, Scottish republic.

At this Westminster election we make the same call. Indeed, the case for Scottish independence is greater now than it has ever been. Devolution is a halfway house that nobody believes in. It represented a political advance at the time but it has stalled. It is becoming apparent that further political progress in Scotland is dependent upon independence.

An independent Scotland would be a democratic advance. The Scottish parliament has limited powers. Although the Scottish parliament is in the limelight, crucial political and economic decisions are not taken there.

With independence we can evict nuclear submarines from the Clyde; open up our borders to talent, skills and common humanity; shut down Dungavel detention centre and promote Scottish culture at all levels - cinema, theatre, music, sport and television - and in all our communities.

Being part of the UK state has been a deadly business for many in our communities. Generations of young Scots have died in UK wars: economic conscripts from the poorest areas.

There is a proud, radical tradition of opposing war in Scotland that continues today from the opposition of hundreds of thousands of Scots to the current war in Iraq to the campaign of the Gentle family in Pollok who fight on for justice for their son, Gordon.

The 'democratic deficit' that prompted

Being part of the UK state has been a deadly business for many in our communities. Generations of young Scots have died in UK wars: economic conscripts from the poorest areas.

devolution is even greater now. We are a country with a parliament that has no power to stop our participation in a war that the majority don't believe in.

In this light, smashing the British State is not some radical pipe dream or revolutionary slogan.

It is becoming more and more of a practical, peaceful necessity.

While we support independence as a matter of principle, independence alone



*We stand apart from the SNP.
Our vision of independence is very different.
The SNP still, inexplicably, want the Queen
as head of state in an independent Scotland.*

cannot solve the massive social and economic problems facing most Scots.

While the SSP fight for radical social change, New Labour represents the old order. Tony Blair's leadership has put to bed the old lie that the return of a Labour government to Westminster will bring about social change.

In power, New Labour erode our civil liberties, imprison asylum seekers, wage war at George W. Bush's behest while pursuing a ruthless neo-Thatcherite agenda. Power, not social justice, is the aim of the party of Jimmy Maxton and Keir Hardie.

Jack McConnell and his executive act as a powerless, bland Scottish ginger group to this Westminster venture. In spite of the rhetoric, Labour seeks to belittle Scottish political and cultural aspirations.

Their neo-Tory unionism has failed the Scottish working class. In raising the banner of an independent, socialist Scotland, the SSP seek to break the link between the working class and the party whose vicious agenda most working people do not share.

Likewise we stand apart from the Scottish National Party. Our vision of independence is very different. The SNP still, inexplicably, want the Queen as head of state in an independent Scotland.

We reject monarchism with all its connotations of privilege and inequality. The SNP actively campaign to save Scottish regiments of the British Army. We support the creation of a new Defence Force post-independence. It is a strange kind of pro-independence party that defends British institutions in this way.

We reject the gravy trains of both Westminster and Holyrood. Our partici-

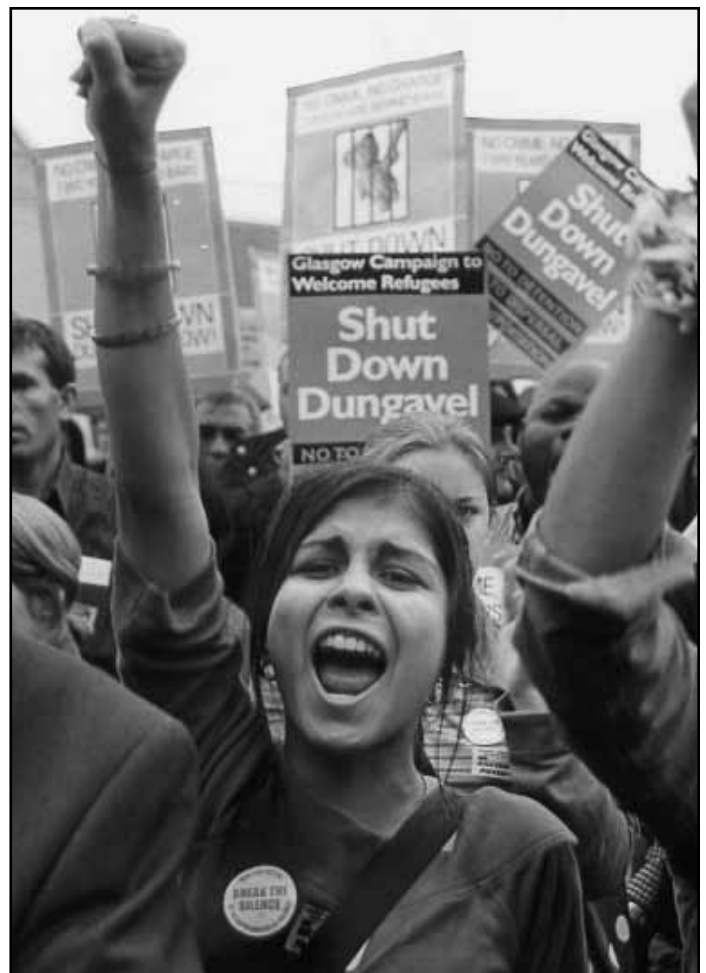
pation is a means to an end. Socialist MPs will take a skilled worker's wage in line with current SSP policy as well as the current practice of Socialist MSPs.

The SNP want to be seen as a mainstream party of government whose populist policies sprinkle some sugar over the residents of Springburn and Craigmillar while directly appealing to the financiers and directors on the Mound.

The SNP leadership have long questioned our party's commitment to independence. The reality is that the SSP campaign for an independent socialist republic in the here and now while the SNP is on the gradualist road that seeks to make devolution work. Independence has been put on the back burner.

Genuine supporters of independence should do some soul searching at this British General Election.

We make no apology for linking inde-





pendence and socialism. There is no contradiction. We are an internationalist party.

We want for the people of Scotland what we want for all the peoples of this world - social justice, cultural co-existence, freedom from hunger and poverty and war.

All our policies hinge on our vision of an independent, socialist Scotland. It is a vision not a utopia. Socialism and independence will positively affect the way we live our lives, the solidarity we can give to other peoples and, most importantly of all, will change this country from top to bottom.

The SSP stands for:

- A fully independent Scottish republic with full control over defence, immigration, taxation, welfare, energy and other areas currently reserved to Westminster.

- An outward-looking Scotland that will extend the hand of friendship to the peoples of the world, including refugees and asylum seekers.

- Continued links with socialists and trade unionists across the UK, Europe

and worldwide.

- Full support for the Declaration of Calton Hill 2004 and full backing for this to be turned into an annual event.

- The establishment of a broad independence convention to unite all those who stand for genuine independence.

- A nuclear-free Scotland that is outside NATO.

- Opposition to the new European Constitution which could be used to block Scotland's right to self-determination.

- A socialist Scotland based on the principles of equality, democracy, liberty, generosity and solidarity.

Socialism and independence will positively affect the way we live our lives, the solidarity we can give to other peoples and, most importantly of all, will change this country from top to bottom.

3. For serious wealth redistribution

LABOUR HASN'T just failed to tackle the UK's massive wealth gap - they've made it worse.

So much so that the gap between rich and poor is greater now than at the height of the 'Greed is Good' years of the 1980s.

New Labour have made it clear whose interests they represent.

The richest 1 per cent of the population more than doubled their collective wealth from £355 billion in 1996, the year before Labour's landslide election victory, to £797 billion in 2002.

Last year alone, the fat cat executives of the FTSE 100 companies awarded themselves a 16 per cent pay rise, taking their pay to a staggering £1.2 million each.

Meanwhile, in 21st century Scotland, one in three children grows up in poverty, while over a million adults live on the breadline.

Scotland is a rich nation with a wealth of natural resources, yet the five poorest towns in the UK are within a 40 mile radius of Glasgow.

Scotland's health record is notorious; men in Shettleston, an impoverished area of Glasgow, have a life expectancy of just 63 years, compared to 77 years in wealthy East Renfrewshire.

The SSP stands for a radical rewrite of the taxation system, setting an income tax that would redistribute wealth from the super-rich and bring an end to Scotland's shameful record of poverty and inequality.

Redistribution of wealth doesn't mean bringing down the standard of living for the teachers, firefighters, train drivers or other skilled workers.

Under our proposed Scottish Service



Tax, 77 per cent of the population would be better off than under the grossly unfair Council Tax.

But those who would be forced to pay more are the tiny minority of the population who possess a vast chunk of the nation's wealth.

Under Thatcher, Major and Blair this elite has grown richer by the day, assisted by extravagant government tax hand-outs.

Even up until 1988, when Thatcher was still Prime Minister, the highest tax rate was 63 per cent. Under New Labour it is just 40 per cent.

Meanwhile Corporation Tax on big business has been slashed from 53 per cent to just 30 per cent in 25 years. Under New Labour, cuts in top rate Corporation Tax amount to £11 billion - over £20 a week for every pensioner in the UK.

The SSP also stands for a clampdown on the £80 billion tax scam that sees the equivalent of three times the total budget of the Scottish Parliament spirited away to overseas tax havens.

Redistribution of wealth also means tackling the poverty faced by those who are unemployed or unable to work.

Benefits for those without children are the same in real terms as they were ten years ago, while many Scots face an old age on the breadline thanks to a pitiful state pension.

A £30 a week uprating of state benefits would cost around £13 billion at UK level, or £1.3 billion within an independent Scotland.

This is almost in line with the tax handouts given to shareholders in New Labour in the form of Corporation Tax cuts, which the SSP would claw back. It is a fraction of the tens of billions that are siphoned off in tax scams by the rich.

Moreover, as most economists recognise, if you give money to those on low incomes they will spend it, rather than hoard it, as the rich are inclined to do. That means that increased benefits, pensions and wages for low income workers will have the effect of stimulating the wider economy, especially small local businesses.

Labour have not only failed to reinstate the link between pensions and average earnings, but have led the attack on public sector pensions while corporate bosses plunder their workers' pension funds.

The SSP is Scotland's anti-poverty party. But we recognise that it is impossible to tackle poverty without tackling wealth. In the words of the famous old Labour manifesto of 1974, "we stand for

Labour have not only failed to re-instate the link between pensions and average earnings, but have led the attack on public sector pensions while corporate bosses plunder their workers' pension funds.

a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families."

The SSP stands for:

■ A national minimum wage of £8.00 an hour - two thirds of median male earnings.

■ A basic state pension of £160 a week and the restoration of the link between pensions and earnings.

■ The abolition of the Council Tax and its replacement with a Scottish Service Tax based on income.

■ Restoration of benefits to 16-17 year olds and students.

■ The restoration of lone parent benefits slashed by successive governments.

■ An overhaul of disability benefits to remove means testing.

■ The immediate uprating of all benefits by £30 a week and further annual uprating of benefits in line with inflation.

■ The introduction of a two tier VAT system, with luxury goods taxed at 20 per cent, and VAT on all other goods slashed from 17.5 per cent to its 1979 level of 8 per cent.

■ A reversal of the cuts in top rate taxation and Corporation Tax carried out by the Tories and New Labour.

■ No dismantling of public sector occupational pension schemes.

4. For an end to low pay and long hours

LOW PAY blights the lives of thousands of Scots, trapping workers in a miserable spiral of long hours and mounting debt.

Labour might have delivered a minimum wage, but at £4.85 an hour, it offers just a bare existence.

One in three Scots earns less than £6.50 an hour - and a quarter of those are in the public sector. Unsurprisingly, low paid workers are predominantly female and often young, disabled, or from ethnic communities.

Unemployment may have fallen since the recession of the early '90s, but the dole queues have been replaced by legions of workers on part time, temporary or "zero hours" contracts.

Millions now work for a pittance while providing the 'flexibility' drooled over by big business.

Scotland's rural areas top the low pay league. Perth and Kinross - venue for next year's G8 summit at Gleneagles - is fifth in the list, with housekeeping staff at the luxury complex earning just £4.85 an hour for a 48 hour working week.

The SSP calls for a minimum wage equivalent to two thirds of median male earnings. Right now, according to trade unions representing low-paid workers, this works out at £8.00 an hour.

This figure has been dismissed as fantasy - usually by company bosses who would not get out of bed for less than a hundred pounds an hour.

We reject the scaremongering of those who say £8.00 an hour would lead to a bonfire of jobs. Only one in ten of those earning under £6.50 an hour work in manufacturing, the sector with the greatest overseas competition.

Most low-paid workers are employed in hotels, restaurants, hospitals and gov-

ernment offices - difficult to spirit away on a cash-saving whim.

In fact, a £8.00 an hour minimum wage would save money. As things stand, big business is subsidised through tax credits and other benefits that are handed out to compensate for poverty pay.

Personal bankruptcies have hit record highs in the last two years. Low-paid Scots are among the tens of thousands struggling with a mountain of personal debt that now totals £136 billion across the UK.

That figure only accounts for official debt. In Scotland's working class communities, illegal loan sharks thrive on poverty.

Low pay goes hand in hand with long hours and poor conditions. Low-paid workers are less likely to be members of occupational pension schemes, creating a lifetime of poverty.

Millions are forced to work long hours to compensate for poverty pay.

The UK has the longest working hours in Europe - 43.3 hours on average compared with 37.7 in France and 38.5 in Ireland and Italy.

The social costs of long hours are incalculable. People working long hours are more likely to suffer physical and mental illness and family breakdown.

Back in 1964, the Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, forecast that, as a result of the technological revolution, working hours would be slashed to 20 hours by the year 2000.

Since then, the technological revolution has progressed at breakneck speed with items in everyday use that would have seemed like science fiction back in 1964.

But instead of the working week



shrinking, it is growing longer as big business battles to squeeze every last penny of profit from employees.

The SSP supports a maximum 35 hour working week for all workers - creating jobs and ending the epidemic of stress-related illness.

By implementing a universal £8.00 an hour minimum wage and a 35-hour working week we can begin to tackle the real roots of poverty in Scotland.

The SSP also campaigns for improved maternity and paternity rights.

We call for statutory 12 months' maternity leave, with full pay and the job held open on return, without loss of continuity of service, promotion or wages.

This should include the right to return part-time or full-time before that, at the mother's request.

We further call for at least one month's paternity leave, to be available at any time covered by maternity leave - and with the right of parents to transfer some of their maternity leave rights to their partner.

We campaign for a minimum five

weeks' annual leave in line with other European countries and for that leave to be available to all workers, regardless of length of service, age, occupation or size of workplace.

We fully back the call by the STUC for St Andrew's Day to be made a public holiday and will campaign for at least an additional five public holidays a year.

The SSP stands for:

- A national minimum wage, for all workers and trainees over 16, without exception, which is the equivalent of two thirds of median male earnings - or £8.00 an hour.

- A 35 hour maximum working week for all, without loss of earnings, as the first step towards a four-day, 32 hour working week.

- 12 months statutory paid maternity leave without loss of rights.

- One month's statutory paid paternity leave.

- Five weeks minimum annual leave for all workers.

- An extra five public holidays a year.

5. For the transformation of Scotland's health

DEVOLUTION OF health policy has failed to protect the Scottish health service from the New Tory ideologues in Westminster.

Within Holyrood, the drive to turn health care into a commodity to be bought and sold has accelerated in recent months.

Meanwhile communities across the land are in revolt against hospital closures and cuts in GP availability. At the same time, the health gap between rich and poor has widened into a chasm.

A working class man from Shettleston in Glasgow is three times more likely to die before he retires as a stockbroker from the affluent south east of England.

At any given time, around one in five Scots is experiencing mental health problems. Suicide rates, especially amongst young men, are among the highest in Europe.

Yet in many areas of the country, mental health services remain underfunded and overstretched.

The SSP does not offer empty promises but solutions. These solutions are not

easy and will require to be fought for by millions of patients, families, trade unionists and professionals.

The SSP will campaign not just to defend and extend our existing services, but for emergency action to reduce demands on the NHS.

Pro-health measures from the cradle are necessary to stop people ending up in their graves prematurely.

We want a long term, three generation plan, drawn up by health professionals, nutritionists, health trades unions and anti-poverty groups to turn around Scotland's shocking health statistics.

With the political will, backed by proper funding, we can dramatically reduce heart disease, lung disease, cancers, diabetes and other illnesses linked to poverty, smoking, alcohol, drugs and diet.

We propose measures such as universal free school meals with milk and water; free fruit and veg for expectant mums; free admission to local authority fitness facilities including swimming pools and gymnasiums; locally run community supermarkets to sell high quality



local produce at the cheapest possible prices; and a total ban on the advertising of tobacco, alcohol and junk food.

We also campaign for free prescription charges. Every year, 75,000 Scots go without their vital medicines because they can't afford the prescription charge.

This in turn leads to millions of pounds being wasted in subsequent hospital treatment.

These are not instant panaceas. But they would be an investment in our children's future and their children's future.

In the meantime, we need a radical expansion of existing health services.

Health care has always fallen victim to the priorities of war and armaments. The record investment trumpeted by Blair now is only a record because it's been so poor in the past; lagging well behind most of Europe throughout the second half of the 20th century.

Moreover, massive quantities of that investment seep into the coffers of big business: the pharmaceutical companies, the PFI consortia, the private health insurers and providers, the business consultants.

Cuba has a GDP per head just one fifteenth the size of Scotland's GDP. Yet there is one family doctor for every 100 families and another doctor for every major workplace.

That is partly because the Cuban government invests heavily in health; and partly because there are not the same elitist, academic barriers that lock talented people out of medical training in this country.

In our much wealthier land, we have to wait five hours to speak to a nurse in a call centre for out-of-hours services.

In regions of Scotland with half a million people, only five GPs are available for overnight house calls.

The under-resourced Primary Medical Services Bill that led to this dire situation was opposed in the Scottish Parliament by the SSP.

The SSP campaign for free prescription charges. Every year, 75,000 Scots go without their vital medicines because they can't afford the prescription charge. This in turn leads to millions of pounds being wasted in subsequent hospital treatment.

Lack of direct capital investment and slavish adherence to the dogma of PFI has led to further loss of beds, services and staff.

In the last five years, 20 per cent of all NHS beds in Scotland have been lost.

Some of those bed losses are a result of the welcome move of many people with learning difficulties or mental health problems out of hospital into the community and other forms of care.

But for far too many, care in the community means too little care or none.

As well as a massive expansion in the NHS, we need a massive expansion in social care.

Since Thatcher, swathes of NHS responsibilities, including elderly care, have been transferred to local authorities and the private sector.

Instead of society pooling the risks and pooling the costs of health and social care, those facing old age, or burdened by ill health or disabled by society, have to bear the burden themselves.

The SSP will fight to implement the founding principles of the NHS, funded by direct, progressive taxation. Under the Scotland Act, control over the NHS is fully devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

But we are caught in the devolution trap. Holyrood has control over NHS Scotland - but does not have control over taxation.

While the NHS and other public services are funded from a block grant allocated by Westminster, the Scottish Parliament is forced to operate within narrow boundaries.

The crisis in the NHS is further evidence of the need to move on from devolution towards an independent socialist Scotland with full control over its own economy.

This would allow us to clear out all private contractors from the NHS, eliminate poverty and create an NHS that would set a model for the rest of the UK and Europe.

The SSP stands for:

- An expanded Scottish National Health Service fully funded by progressive taxation, publicly owned and delivered free at the point of need.

- A democratic Scottish NHS with elected Health Boards and the involvement of trade unions and local communities in the planning and management of health care.

- An end to PFI and the clearing out of all private contractors, such as Sodexo, from our hospitals.

- A comprehensive mental health service for children, adults and the elderly in all parts of Scotland

- The abolition of prescription charges, eye test charges and dental check-up charges.

- The incorporation of all private medical facilities and resources into the NHS.

- A living wage for all NHS staff including nursing students.

- The establishment of a publicly-owned pharmaceutical industry in Scotland.

The SSP will fight to implement the founding principles of the NHS, funded by direct, progressive taxation. Under the Scotland Act, control over the NHS is fully devolved to the Scottish Parliament.



- An end to elitism in the medical profession with fair access to medical training for all.

- The incorporation and expansion of holistic and complementary therapies into the NHS.

- Universal free meals with milk and water for all school students.

- Free fruit and veg for expectant mums.

- A ban on tobacco, alcohol and junk food advertising.

- Free toothbrushes and toothpaste for all children

- Free admission to local authority fitness facilities.

- Comprehensive sex education and free contraception, including the Morning After Pill, to reduce unwanted pregnancies and delayed abortions.

- Support for a woman's right to control her own fertility with an end to the requirement to obtain the signed permission of two medical doctors before terminations.

- Properly funded research into the unprecedented rise in autism.

- The option of separate vaccinations for measles, mumps and rubella as an alternative to the triple vaccine.

- A full inquiry into the Hepatitis C scandal and compensation awarded at levels agreed with the patients and families.

6. For survival of the planet

SOCIALISTS AND Greens have much common ground. We are both committed to the preservation of the planet, to curbing pollution and using the land to provide good, nutritious food for all.

We have worked together and to great effect in resisting, for instance, GM crop trials in the Highlands and Tayside and the proposed M74 motorway extension in south east Glasgow.

However, the SSP believes that you can only tackle environmental destruction by tackling the causes of environmental destruction.

Initiatives where the onus falls on the individual, for example to recycle more household waste or use less energy domestically, are worthwhile and commendable.

But these efforts are made in vain if we fail to take on the main polluters, the major industries and multinationals, who conspire to promote a culture of over-consumption and waste, all in the name of profit.

Free trade, as advocated by the ruling coalition in the Scottish Parliament, the UK government and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) sounds fair, but isn't.

It is a system that puts the needs of major companies before those of communities, and which puts profit before every other consideration, be it human well-being or environmental sustainability.

Free trade and environmentalism are mutually contradictory. Asking capitalism to protect the planet is like asking a pack of hounds to protect a fox.

Moreover, the battle for the environment is closely tied up with the battle for social and economic justice.

Environmental devastation is disproportionately visited on the poor of all



countries, including Scotland. Toxic dumps, opencast mines, incinerators, nuclear waste dumps, major motorway projects are rarely sited in affluent neighbourhoods.

The politics of the environment cannot be separated from class politics.

We recognise that threat posed by climate change is real, immediate and far more malignant than any other challenge facing modern society.

Yet market-driven solutions to carbon emissions are invariably slow, lack coherence and infuriate local communities.

We generally support the expansion of windfarm development whilst recognising that transnational corporations like ScottishPower will always act to maximise profit and can never be accountable to local communities.

In the long term, the future of the planet can only be safeguarded by economic and political change and the creation of a truly democratic social system based on the principles of democratic

ownership and control over the natural resources of our planet.

In the meantime, the SSP will fight to defend Scotland's environment.

We will work together with expert environmental groups from Scottish Environmental Link (including Friends of the Earth Scotland, the World Wildlife Fund, Transform Scotland and Greenpeace) to evolve an agreed strategy which will ensure that we play our part in the international drive to reduce global warming and protect our natural habitats.

We acknowledge the impact of road and air traffic in accelerating global warming.

We will seek agreement with environmentalists and transport unions on measures to reduce road and air traffic

But we believe that without cheap, efficient alternative means of transport, attempts to curb aircraft and car pollution will be futile.

That means large scale investment in rail, bus and ferry networks, not just within Scotland, but externally to other parts of the UK and the wider European continent.

That in turn will mean changing the entire ethos upon which public transport is based, from a profit-orientated business venture to a social service like health or education.

The SSP stands for:

- Legislation to make company directors legally liable for the environmental impact of their companies.

- A moratorium on all GM crop trials until research can determine whether GMOs are safe for human consumption.

- A clean-up programme for all identified contaminated land and a tightening of planning regulations to prevent further land contamination.

- A full-blooded Third Party Right of Appeal, to allow local people to resist unwanted planning applications, such as

those for TETRA masts and toxic dumps.

- A reduction in fuel poverty through the installation of double-glazing and full thermal insulation in all public sector housing.

- Public ownership of North Sea oil with a proportion of the revenues to be ring-fenced for investment in research and development of alternative energy sources, such as wave and solar power and biomass.

- The establishment of a publicly owned Scottish national energy company.

- A commitment to bring corporate windfarms into public ownership and to deal retrospectively with any negative impact on the environment.

- No more planning permission for out-of-town shops which encourage car use.

- A major shift of freight from road to rail.

- An end to tax exemption on aviation fuel, with the revenue raised used for public transport including improved ferry services to the Scottish islands and the subsidy of high speed rail links from Scotland to European capital cities.

- Kerbside recycling collections for every household in Scotland.

- All government policy - local, national and UK - to be environment-proofed.

- The phasing out of fossil fuels and nuclear power.

- Work with farmers, shopkeepers, restaurants etc. to shift to locally produced food.

- The establishment of democratically elected bodies to monitor, report and enforce pollution controls, with the power to levy penalties on those who breach guidelines.

7. For resistance to globalisation

ON BOXING Day, as ordinary Scottish people celebrated the winter break with their families, a devastating tsunami caused carnage thousands of miles away across the Indian Ocean.



Across the land, people rushed to donate money to the disaster fund.

By the end of February, £30 million was raised - more than a fiver for every living person in Scotland.

It is this spirit of human solidarity that the SSP seeks to emulate in its view of the world. Our vision of an independent socialist Scotland is not narrow or parochial but international and outward-looking. We stand for building strong links with socialist and radical movements across the planet.

From young people suffering the indignity and violence of military occupation in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan to trade unionists facing death in Latin America for organising into trade unions, the SSP promotes concrete action.

The SSP is a sponsor of the international boycott of Coca Cola, a company which has been implicated in the assassination of trade union activists at their bottling plants in Colombia.

We are affiliated to the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign and played a major part in the election of Israeli dissident Mordecai Vanunu as rector of Glasgow University.

We have built links with oil workers and other trade unionists resisting imperialism. We have raised money and developed links with Afghan socialist organisations.

On every continent of the planet, there are peoples struggling for national liberation and recognition of their distinct identities. As socialists fighting for independence from the British state we want to build links with these radical and in some instances left-wing movements.

This summer, the eyes of the world

will be on Scotland when the political leaders of the wealthiest capitalist states arrive in rural Perthshire for the G8 summit.

Hundreds of thousands are expected to take to the streets of towns and cities across the land to protest against the widening gulf between rich and poor on a world scale.

These mass protests will mark the latest counter-offensive against the forces of war, globalisation, inequality and privatisation.

The anti-globalisation movement first erupted onto the streets of Seattle, one of the wealthiest cities in America, in the closing months of the last millennium.

Trade unionists, human rights activists, radical environmentalists, socialists and others coalesced to create the beginning of a new movement which has since grown into a worldwide movement of millions.

The Scottish Socialist Party fights for an independent socialist Scotland. But we recognise that capitalism is a global system coordinated through organisations like the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the G8.

These institutions represent a tiny minority of powerful and wealthy financial and industrial interests who use their power to shape the world economy to

their advantage. The losers are the vast majority of the world's population.

The WTO, for example, controls world trade - forcing individual countries to open their economies to foreign corporations - who then undermine local production by flooding the markets with cheaper goods manufactured on a massive scale.

The IMF is a bank which lends money and allocates resources to national economies. But it is a commercial enterprise which lends only under conditions that favour the interests of the multinational corporations.

When it gives loans, it does so with strings attached. Invariably, these strings involve mass privatisation and draconian public spending cuts.

The World Bank and the G8 - the organisation of the world's richest economies - Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United States - serve the same interests.

Gordon Brown will try to present himself as a champion of the world's poor at the Gleneagles Summit in July 2005.

But the reality is that these global organisations exist to represent the interests of capital - not the interests of the poor.

They protect the multinationals who switch their investments back and forth across the world in search of cheap labour; they defend the pharmaceutical companies who use their huge legal budgets to prevent poor countries from producing cheap medicines; they support the oil giants and the owners of industry who pollute the planet and refuse to bear the cost of environmental protection.

The Scottish Socialist Party is part of the global movement for justice, equality and protection of the planet.

We will play a major role in the anti-G8 protests in July.

And after the G8 bigwigs have flown off into the sunset in their luxury private jets, the SSP will continue to build the

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movement against capitalism and globalisation in Scotland and internationally.

The SSP stands for:

- Full support for the mass protests against the G8, including non-violent direct action and civil disobedience.

- The closure of the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and other global corporate quangos.

- The immediate cancellation of all Third World debt.

- Democratic public ownership of the

major global financial institutions as a step to ending the exploitation of the world's poor by rapacious multinational financiers.

- A 'Tobin Tax' on all cross-border financial transactions

- Solidarity with all those resisting capitalist globalisation, including environmentalists, trade unionists, anti-poverty campaigners, national liberation movements and small farmers' and peasants' organisations.

- A world-wide alliance of socialist and anti-capitalist parties.

8. For the scrapping of weapons of mass destruction

TWO YEARS ago, the UK followed the US into a war on a sovereign state because, allegedly, it had Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Neither of the aggressors appeared to see the irony of waging war over WMD while having, between them, the biggest nuclear arsenal in the world.

One of the supreme ironies of the Iraq war is that more and more countries now believe it is imperative they invest in a nuclear capability - or risk invasion by the world's only superpower.

Despite this, we believe the policy of nuclear deterrent is a failed policy.

Since the dawn of the nuclear age, the number of wars has not declined but escalated.

As a result, entire national economies are skewed towards accumulating weaponry, particularly nuclear missiles, in an arms race that only the richest nation on earth can win.

Furthermore, we are not convinced that nuclear war is an impossibility. If George W Bush gets his way, and the US successfully launches the National Mis-



sile Defence system, aka Star Wars, then a limited nuclear war, with Europe, Asia or Africa as its theatre, is a possibility as the American mainland will be shielded.

We, alas, won't be. Against the will of the people of Scotland, we have been forced to live with a devastatingly

destructive nuclear arsenal just 30 minutes' drive from the centre of Glasgow.

The Faslane nuclear base contains four Trident submarines, each bearing 16 missiles. This in turn amounts to 48 Trident nuclear warheads.

Each of these warheads has a nuclear capability seven times that of the warhead dropped on Hiroshima.

This makes Scotland, in particular the dense conurbations in the west of the country, a target for a direct nuclear or terrorist strike. Trident is also hugely expensive, at a cost of £1 billion a year.

The SSP has consistently opposed the presence of nuclear warheads on our soil, with members and MSPs alike risking arrest to attend the Big Blockade every year at Faslane nuclear base.

We will continue to work shoulder-to-shoulder with organisations such as Scottish CND and Trident Ploughshares to campaign for immediate, unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The SSP stands for:

- The closure of the Faslane nuclear base and the scrapping of Trident with all jobs guaranteed via a diversification programme.

- Support for non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to disrupt the functioning of nuclear bases.

- Support for those arrested and imprisoned for resisting nuclear weapons.

The SSP has consistently opposed the presence of nuclear warheads on our soil, with members and MSPs alike risking arrest to attend the Big Blockade every year at Faslane nuclear base.

- Outright condemnation of nuclear testing by other nations, such as France, India and Pakistan, which causes radiation-induced cancers.

- A united campaign across the UK and Europe to halt plans to establish nuclear weapons bases at Fylingdales and Menwith Hill in Yorkshire.

- A ban on the use of weaponry tipped with Depleted Uranium (DU). These have been used on Iraq since 1991, and in Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo during the 1990s and are known to cause fatal cancers and birth defects.

- A ban on testing DU-tipped missiles including at the MoD's Dundrennan firing range, near the Solway Firth.

9. For strong trade unions

WHOSE SIDE are you on? That's the point blank question posed to all political parties every time workers are forced to strike, picket or demonstrate in defence of their pay, jobs, pensions and workplace rights.

Whilst others squirm in opportunist twists and turns, the Scottish Socialist Party is unreservedly on the side of working people against exploitation by their employers.

For the SSP, solidarity is not reserved for eloquent speeches on May Day. We have a track record of physical, financial, moral and political solidarity - on the picket lines, in our workplaces, on the streets, in the media, in the parliament.

We sided unconditionally with the firefighters, the nursery nurses, the low-paid civil servants in their recent battles against New Labour.

We have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with workers involved in local battles against sweatshop employers. We will continue to campaign alongside the



trade union movement for the outright repeal of all anti-union legislation, and for the introduction instead of a positive charter of workers' rights.

We will fight for the basic legal right to strike without restrictions and without fear of discrimination or victimisation.

The right to strike without victimisation should be extended to solidarity strike action - so-called secondary action, currently outlawed.

This is particularly important since rampant privatisation, which means many workers doing the same jobs - sometimes alongside each other, but employed by different privatised employers - cannot in law coordinate their trade union actions.

The decision to take strike action or other forms of trade union action should be through democratic meetings of union members, without state interference, delaying mechanisms or legal obstacles.

We further back the right of all workers to join a trade union of their choice and for recognition of the union in all negotiations where one or more worker has joined.

Under New Labour, millions are excluded who work in smaller workplaces or have been employed there for less than a year. We support full legal protection from day one of employment, in all workplaces, regardless of the size of the workforce.

We will campaign for workplaces free of harassment, bullying, abuse, sectarianism, racism, homophobia or sexual harassment, with full provision of awareness training and trade union monitoring of anti-harassment policies.

We demand workers' control, through their elected union representatives, over health and safety at work, risk assessments and training.

We condemn the killing fields of Scotland's construction industry, which suffers three times the UK average of injuries and deaths at work, and demand statutory sentences for manslaughter for employers whose proven negligence contributes to workers' deaths.

The SSP is proud to be a party rooted in the working class, with powerful and growing influence in the organised trade unions as well as in the communities where working people live.

We want to break the suffocating, undemocratic grip of New Labour over union political funds.

We campaign for trade unions across Scotland to follow the example of the Rail Maritime and Transport union

We campaign for trade unions across Scotland to follow the example of the Rail Maritime and Transport union and the 4500-strong Scotland No. 2 Branch of the Communication Workers Union, who are both now affiliated to the SSP

(RMT) and the 4,500-strong Scotland No 2 branch of the Communications Workers Union, who are both now affiliated to the SSP.

The SSP fights for all measures that would immediately tackle poverty, increase working people's share of national wealth, improve workplace rights, and make life less stressful for millions who are the wage-slaves of a system that screws from them every last penny of profit, regardless of the human cost.

The SSP stands for:

- The scrapping of all anti-union laws, including laws restricting the right to strike, to picket and to take solidarity action.

- Automatic union recognition where

one or more worker joins a union.

- The right of employees to choose their own unions for negotiating purposes rather than be forced to accept compliant unions that sign up to sweetheart deals and no-strike agreements.

- Workers' control over health and safety.

- Action to end bullying, abuse, sectarianism, racism, homophobia and sexual harassment in the workplace.

- An end to New Labour's near monopoly over union political funds.

- Statutory sentences for manslaughter for employers whose proven negligence contributes to workers' deaths.

10. For fast, cheap, accessible, quality public transport

BETWEEN 1994 and 2000, the volume of traffic on Scotland's roads rose by 29 per cent (compared to 21 per cent for the UK as a whole).

The Department of Trade and Industry predicts it to rise again, by 35 per cent, by 2020.

This is disastrous for human health and for the health of our natural environment.

Carbon emissions from cars have been linked, not just to respiratory illness, but even to the development of fatal cancers. Children born near traffic hotspots are two to four times more likely to die of cancer before the age of 16 than other children.

Moreover, in line with the Kyoto Protocol, the UK is required to cut carbon emissions by 60 per cent by 2015. This means slashing car use as fuel emissions



are one of the main sources of green-house gases.

Car use has rocketed partly in response to deteriorating public transport. Decades of privatisation, deregulation and soaring fares have literally driven millions to travel everywhere by car.

Meanwhile, millions of Scottish low income households do not have access to cars and are more isolated than ever before, as car culture spreads with the replacement of local shops, cinemas and other facilities with out-of-town-shopping malls.

The SSP has linked up with others to fight the North East M74 extension through south east Glasgow.

Its projected cost, even before the first bulldozer has moved in, has escalated from £250 million (2002) to £1 billion (2004), making it the most expensive road-building project in Scotland's history.

This six-lane, elevated motorway will attract tens of thousands of extra vehicles into Scotland's already most congested and polluted city, bringing with it light pollution (from the 24 hour lighting running along it), noise pollution, and air pollution.

We will campaign for the money earmarked for this project to be diverted into establishing and maintaining an integrated, publicly-owned transport system with cheap fares both for those using busy routes and those dependent upon quieter, unprofitable routes - for instance those living on satellite housing schemes or in rural areas.

The SSP opposed the Edinburgh road toll congestion charge as a flawed scheme riddled with anomalies and problems.

We are not opposed to fair, progressive congestion charges linked to ability to pay, backed up by immediate investment to improve transport links between our centres and outlying towns, villages and housing schemes.

The SSP has linked up with others to fight the North East M74 extension through south east Glasgow. Its projected cost, even before the first bulldozer has moved in, has escalated from £250 million (2002) to £1 billion (2004), making it the most expensive road-building project in Scotland's history.

But while our buses and trains remain in the hands of profit hungry corporations such as Stagecoach and First, blunt instruments such as road tolls to cut car use are doomed to fail.

The SSP stands for:

- Democratic public ownership of ScotRail, CalMac and the major bus operators.

- A vast expansion of rail, involving the reopening of old railway lines and stations closed down in the days before the threat of road congestion and carbon emissions were fully understood.

- The construction of a Central Scotland Rapid Transport Network, involving 50 new stations, 500 miles of track and 360 miles of upgraded lines from Dundee to Ayr.

- Light rail/tram systems in Scotland's four main cities, with ten minute services.

- An expansion of the Glasgow underground to include the large peripheral housing schemes of Easterhouse, Castlemilk, Drumchapel and Pollok.

- The complete reopening of the old Waverley line from Edinburgh deep into the Borders.

- A price cap of 10p a mile on all public transport by road and rail.

- Enforced standards of accessibility on all public transport.

- The scrapping of plans to build the £1 billion M74 extension with all public cash saved to be ploughed into public transport.

- The bringing back into public ownership of trunk road maintenance.

- Special road tolls based on mileage for heavy goods vehicles to offset the £100 million maintenance costs for Scottish roads.

- Expansion of low cost park-and-ride schemes.

- An extensive network of safe, well-maintained and well-lit cycle tracks.

- The bringing of conductors to Scotland's urban buses to speed up traffic, improve convenience for passengers and create jobs.

- The creation of democratically

elected transport bodies in all regions of Scotland to plan public transport provision.

- Free travel passes for pensioners, under-18s, disabled people, carers and benefits claimants.

- A Road Equivalent Tariff to break down the isolation of our island communities.

- Faster, cheaper and more frequent ferry and rail services to shift passenger traffic from air to rail and sea to help curb pollution.

11. For an expansion of social ownership

WAVES OF privatisation swept through the UK during the 80s and 90s, resulting in the private ownership of more than 60 public companies.

Gas, electricity, coal, nuclear power, shipbuilding, the airlines, railways, and bus companies were all sold off at Poundstretcher prices.

The gigantic con-trick of using PFI/PPP to build schools and hospitals, conceived by the Tories and given birth to by New Labour would, we were told, protect the public purse by letting private companies bear the risk of expensive building projects.

In practice, the invasion of our schools, hospitals and other public services by private profiteers has been a calamity for the public, the workforce and the taxpayer.

In the mythology of New Labour, private ownership equals dynamism and efficiency, whilst public ownership equates with bureaucracy and sloth.

This is nonsense and does not stand up to serious scrutiny. Far from being swashbuckling entrepreneurs, the new owners of our former public assets are

get-rich-quick spivs with little knowledge of their new bargain basement possessions.

They have cut staffing to the bone and mauled pay and conditions, including health and safety standards. The involvement of private contractors has turned many of our hospitals into a public disgrace with deteriorating standards of hygiene and nutrition.

Financially, PFI is nothing more than a hugely expensive method of borrowing. The main beneficiaries of PPP and PFI schemes are the banks and building companies who are guaranteed to amass vast returns on their investments, while our children are left with a colossal debt millstone.

For all their claims to self-sufficiency, the private profiteers have also eaten their own bodyweight in public subsidies.

Overall, UK spending on the rail industry has reached £3.8 billion a year. Even allowing for inflation, this amounts to four times as much as the old British Rail received in subsidies in its best years.

There were not even checks in place to

ensure the privatised utilities would pay tax in the UK. In 2001-2, Virgin Trains raked in more than £40 million in profit, as well as over £600 million in subsidies.

But as the company is (cutely) registered in the British Virgin Islands, it paid only £6 million in tax. To stem this haemorrhage of public money into private coffers, the rail industry must be brought back into public ownership.

But we must do more than simply replace one privately-owned, chaotic, money-driven system with a similar, but publicly-owned one.

We need a genuinely democratic railway industry, overseen by a board of trustees representing the rail workers and rail users, as well as central and local government.

As well as bringing back into the public sector those industries, services and utilities privatised over the past 30 years, the SSP also stands for the extension of public ownership into other sectors of the economy, including land, construction, finance and manufacturing.

One of the first acts of a future socialist government in an independent Scotland would be take into public ownership the key North Sea oilfields and installations.

The scramble for North Sea Oil during the 1970s should have served as a salutary lesson in the pitfalls of allowing our resources to be grabbed by private capitalists. A distinctly laissez faire stance by successive governments resulted in our oilfields being colonised by foreign multinationals.

The contrast with Norway and other oil-producing countries is stark. Norway is no socialist country yet the Norwegian government at least understood the advantage of establishing a state oil company as the major player in its oil business. This meant both control of the industry and tax revenues stayed at home.

In contrast, Scotland has neither control of its oil, nor does it receive any seri-

ous economic benefit. Currently, £40 million a day is extracted from the North Sea. Of that £40 million, Scotland's receives just £1.6 million. In contrast, the oil companies grab £25 million - more than 15 times Scotland's share.

Although North Sea oil and gas supplies have grown less plentiful over years, they remain an important strategic asset for the foreseeable future and should be controlled by the people of Scotland.

The SSP believes that the case for a socially planned, democratically-managed economy is more clear than ever before. We are committed to building a new socialist Scotland which will stand up to the forces of privatisation, globalisation and capitalism.

The SSP stands for:

■ An end to all PFI schemes and the clear out of private profiteers from Scotland's public sector.

■ The bringing back into public ownership of those industries and services privatised over the last 20 years.

■ Defiance of European Union rules on tendering, which leads to privatisation of vital services including transport.

■ The reclamation of Scotland's oil for the benefit of the people via democratic social ownership of the industry.

■ A struggle to shift the balance of economic power from the corporations to the people through public, community and social ownership of our resources.

■ An independent socialist Scotland based on the democratic ownership and planning of all our resources as a step towards the achievement of democratic socialism internationally.

■ New forms of public and social ownership which rejects top down bureaucratic models of state nationalisation in favour of democratic control by workers, communities, consumers and representatives of local and national government.

12. For diversity and tolerance

THE SCOTTISH Socialist Party stands against the tide of right wing opinion that suggests that immigration is a problem to be solved.

Migration has been a natural human activity for as long as we have existed as a species. Scotland itself has never been an ethnically pure nation.

For thousands of years, wave after wave of immigrants poured into this country from Ireland, England, Scandinavia, Italy and Eastern Europe. In the second half of the 20th century, Scotland's national identity was further enriched by migration from Asia, especially Pakistan, India and China.

And in recent years, people fleeing persecution and poverty from Africa, the Middle East and other parts of the world have come to make Scotland their home.

Nor has migration been a one way voyage. Over the centuries, millions of Scots have uprooted themselves in search of a better life in far flung corners of the world.

Today's so-called immigration problem is rooted in scarcity and inequality. Poverty, famine, persecution, tyranny and war: these are the circumstances that provoke large scale emigration.

People fleeing from these problems don't generally travel far - usually to neighbouring country which is often as poor as the country they have left.

A small percentage of the world total of refugees and migrants have come to the west.

Whipped into a frenzy by some politicians and by sections of the press, some people fear that they will suffer from increased competition for jobs and housing or that their schools and hospitals will become overcrowded.

In our insecure society, where people are pitted in constant competition with



one another, fear lurks not far below the surface.

Yet fear of asylum seekers and immigrants is as irrational as childhood terror of wolves or vampires.

For example, across the UK asylum seekers account for 0.3 per cent of NHS users. They do not threaten jobs because they are banned from working. Those who do receive benefits are paid a pittance - often less than half of Income Support.

Yet on the other side of the balance sheet, migrants - including refugees and asylum seekers - make an estimated net contribution of £2.5 billion to the UK economy, the equivalent of 1p saving on income tax.

Without migrant workers, the economy would fall apart with industries such as food production and processing, hospitality and catering and the health service faced with immediate collapse.

These are the jobs that many UK citizens will not take because of poverty wages and shocking conditions.

Scotland, especially, faces a population meltdown in the coming decades. The Scottish Executive estimates that by 2027, the working age population of Scotland could fall by 250,000.

This in turn would mean plummeting tax revenues, public spending cuts, falling school rolls and fewer consumers - creating a vicious cycle of economic decline.

While New Labour and the Tories compete to be the most macho in their opposition to immigration, they simultaneously promote policies that create migration and refugees.

Globalisation is hyper-Thatcherism on a vast scale. It has worsened conditions for much of the world's population and destabilised civilised societies in large parts of the globe.

As the chaos worsens, the UK state is afraid of the numbers of refugees and migrants that the globalisation project is creating.

Rights to protection and safety that used to be guaranteed by the United

Nations Charter on Refugees are under threat, with three pieces of legislation in six years and more to come.

The British government aims to refuse entry to women and children fleeing violence, and only allow entry to those that big business can immediately exploit.

Most people in Scotland welcome refugees and believe they should be allowed to play a fuller role in Scottish society by being allowed to work.

While standing shoulder-to-shoulder with anti-racist and pro-asylum campaigns across the UK, the SSP believes that Scotland should have full control over asylum and immigration policy.

We would fight to ensure that Scotland abided by the UN Charter and took responsibility for refugees fleeing violence, famine and persecution.

We would scrap all racist and repressive asylum laws.

On a more basic level, a socialist Scotland would oppose the globalisation project internationally while aiding the development of community-owned



industries across the third world. In general, if people are free from poverty, persecution and war, they will choose to stay in their own country.

By leading the fight against the international arms trade and the impoverishment of the majority of the world's population, we would help people to live in peace and security.

Migration will still continue as it always has done, but by alleviating poverty in Scotland we can reassure people that immigrants are not strangers to be feared, but people with skills and talent and the capacity to help us build a better society.

The SSP stands for:

- The immediate closure of Dungavel incarceration centre.

- Full implementation of the UN Charter on Refugees.

- The scrapping of all racist asylum and immigration laws.

- An independent Scotland with full control over immigration and asylum policy.

- Refugees and asylum seekers to be encouraged into Scotland rather than driven out.

- A socialist Scotland that will spearhead the fight internationally against globalisation and that will campaign for the cancellation of all third world debt.

- Set up a hardship fund for immigrants who are denied access to legal aid, housing benefit and social security benefits under the 12-month rule and to campaign for its eradication.

- Refuse the use of any public facilities to known racist organisations such as the British National Party and the National Front.

- Ensure that all public information is provided in the main languages of Scotland's ethnic minority communities.

- The funding of schemes to encourage young Scots to teach and work in development projects across the globe, adding to their educational experience and personal development.

- No testing of asylum seekers for diseases on claiming asylum.

I 3. For equality and respect for all

THE SSP wants to see a truly tolerant society that would encourage equality and challenge sexism, racism, homophobia, disablism, sectarianism and discrimination towards young people and older people.

There is no place for racism in our society. The idea that people can be judged by the colour of their skin or their cultural background is abhorrent.

The SSP is striving to build a society where discrimination against women has no place and where women have full social, economic and political equality.

The SSP recognises the double oppression women face under capitalism.

In 21st century Britain, where women have supposedly already achieved equal rights to men, women are still paid on average 20 per cent less than men.

When property, pensions and savings are taken into consideration, the gap between men and women is even wider.

Childcare costs on average £150 per week in Scotland. This has an impact on the living standards of many families.

It also undermines the ability of many women to go back to work.

Between one in five and one in seven women have been the victim of rape. Violence and abuse against women could end through a zero tolerance approach that includes prevention, protection and provision for women and their dependents experiencing violence.

Sexism is sustained by the mass media, which continues to reduce women to the level of sexual objects.

Prostitution and trafficking of women has increased in recent years with more and more women at risk.

In Britain, every year over 100 men kill their intimate female partner or ex-partner. An estimated one in five women experience violence from an intimate male partner. Between one in five and one in seven women have been the victim of rape.

Violence and abuse against women could end through a zero tolerance approach that includes prevention, protection and provision for women and their dependents experiencing violence.

Women are the majority in society. But there are also minority groups who suffer daily discrimination.

The SSP is striving to build a tolerant socialist society in which anti-gay bigotry has no place.

We envisage a society in which diversity is strength and where each individual's contribution is valued.

The SSP was among those organisations which stood up against the hysterical tabloid media campaign to keep Section 2A (Section 28 in England and Wales).

The SSP wants to tear down the barriers that prevent gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people playing an equal part in society.

We support equal rights for gay and lesbian couples in parenting, fostering and adoption.

We back the principle of a Civil Registered Partnership, which would be open to same-sex partners and would give the same status to people living together as married couples.

We would also support and fund community projects such as LGBT centres and phonelines throughout the country.

The SSP also seeks to create a society in which disabled people can play a full and active role.

This means providing support, resources, technology and training. We will fight for adequate funding to ensure there are no obstacles to disabled people living a fulfilling independent life.

Most reasonable people would agree that we need to tackle racism, sexism, homophobia and the like.

But Scotland has its own special problem that is often not even recognised as a problem. Sectarianism is a blight on Scottish society. It has divided our people, caused misery, violence and death and stained Scotland's reputation abroad.

At the same time, we recognise that it is not always a straightforward matter to define sectarianism.

In the West of Scotland, there are strong links with both sides of the political-religious divide in Northern Ireland. The Scottish Socialist Party accepts that



everyone has the right to express their political views and to celebrate their culture and traditions - providing these activities do not cross over into religious hatred and bigotry.

While we will not necessarily agree on every detail of exactly how to tackle sectarianism, we will work with other political parties, churches, football clubs and campaigns such as Nil By Mouth to help eradicate this scourge.

The SSP also respects animal rights. We wholeheartedly supported the ban on hunting with hounds and we believe that there is the need now for a thoroughgoing review of animal welfare.

The SSP stands for:

- Legislation to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status or religious belief.
- Equal representation for women at all levels of government.
- Free publicly-funded nursery places for all pre-school children
- Equal access for all women to abortion services regardless of where they live in Britain
- Full funding to services which sup-



port women - and men - who have suffered violence, abuse, rape and child sexual abuse.

■ Free environmentally-friendly sanitary protection for women.

■ More women's refuges and safe housing.

■ Equal rights for gay and lesbian couples in parenting, fostering and adoption.

■ Support for a Civil Registered Partnership, which would give the same status to people living together as married couples.

■ Support for community projects such as LGBT centres and phonelines throughout the country.

■ Replacement of the Disability Discrimination Act with fully comprehensive, enforceable civil rights legislation as demanded by the disabled peoples' movement.

■ Free access to disability-related services, aids and assistive technology.

■ Full funding for community care.

■ Increased support for carers.

■ Enforced standards of accessibility on all public transport.

■ Legislation to ensure all new public housing and buildings are barrier-free.

■ The conversion of all existing public buildings to ensure access for disabled people.

■ Housing to be adapted on request to meet the needs of disabled occupants.

■ An anti-sectarian programme of education for use in our schools.

■ Practical support to the campaigning activity of Nil By Mouth to ensure that the problem of sectarianism is not swept under the carpet.

■ A ban on the testing of animals for cosmetics, household products and military purposes; and an end to unnecessary testing in medical research.

■ An end to battery farming and other forms of intensive farming.

■ An end to the abuse of animals in entertainment and sport.

14. For an end to pensioner poverty

THE SCOTTISH Socialist Party rejects the myth that we can no longer afford to treat our elderly citizens with dignity and respect.

According to economists, the UK is the fourth richest state in the world.

Yet our pensioners are among the poorest in Europe. The basic state pension is a pitiful £77.45.

That can be topped up to a woefully inadequate £105 a week under the Minimum Income Guarantee - but only after pensioners have undergone a humiliating means test.

Now the government plans an onslaught against the pensioners of tomorrow.

Right now, public sector workers are entitled to take voluntary retirement with full pension rights. But from April 2005, anyone retiring at 60 will lose up to one third of their pension.

The right to agreed early retirement before 55 will also be abolished, even for those made redundant.

On top of that, draconian attacks on public sector pension schemes are planned. Workers earning £7000 a year and over will be forced to increase the percentage of their salary that goes into pension contributions from 6 per cent to 7 per cent - which means an effective 1 per cent pay cut. For higher paid workers, the increase will be even steeper.

Earnings included in calculating the future pension of public sector workers - such as overtime and bonuses - will now be disregarded under government plans.

Instead, only the basic salary will be used to calculate pensions. This could mean a pension cut of up to a third for many staff.

The UK lags way behind other Euro-



pean countries in its treatment of pensions.

In Britain, workers get 37 per cent of their working-life earnings on retirement on average, including occupational pensions.

This is less than half the proportion for Sweden, where pensioners get 76 per cent of their working earnings.

In France, the figure is 71 per cent and in the Netherlands, 70 per cent.

The government claims that rising life expectancy forces them to make these cuts. It is true that the number of pensioners will rise from 11 million now to 17 million by 2050.

But at current pension levels this would mean a small 0.7 per cent rise in the proportion of GDP spent on pensioners, from 5 per cent to 5.7 per cent.

This figure is still way behind other European countries.

The SSP campaigns for a total over-

haul of pensions. We would start with a £160 across-the-board state pension for all, index-linked to prices or earnings, whichever is the higher.

According to research by the Family Budget Unit, a £160 per week state pension is the minimum required for a pensioner or pensioner couple to reasonably live on. This is not an extravagant demand. It would restore the living standards of pensioners in real terms back to the early 1980s and would be the equivalent of £4.00 per hour for a full-time worker - less than the national minimum wage. It would also eliminate the need for costly means testing.

It would also help combat sexist discrimination against women pensioners whose earning potential throughout their lives is reduced by child bearing and rearing.

The SSP also believes that the whole pension industry should be publicly owned and democratically controlled. Instead of pension funds being used like betting chips on a world casino roulette table, they should be put to constructive use in expanding and maintaining our social infrastructure.

Instead of costly PFI schemes and other expensive private ventures to build new hospitals, schools, houses or prisons, a nationally controlled pensions industry would allow guaranteed cheap funding for public capital expenditure with a reasonable rate of return to ensure all future pension payments from the fund can be easily met.

The current National Insurance pot is reckoned to be in surplus by some £30 billion. Compulsory contributions from all employees and employers into the state pension scheme would guarantee its future.

The SSP supports the mass action by trade unions across the UK to defend pension rights. We will link up with other socialist parties, pensioners' groups and trade unions to fight for a

fair deal for pensioners across the UK. A £160 per week state pension could easily be afforded by scrapping nuclear weapons, clamping down on multinational tax scams and forcing the rich to pay their fair share of taxation.

Even a modest 10p extra income tax for those on over £50,000 a year and 20p for those on over £100,000 would raise in excess of £6 billion more a year.

Meanwhile, estimated lost revenue from multinational and super rich tax evasion annually is around £35 billion.

At the same time, we will fight for a fully independent Scottish Parliament with full powers over tax and welfare, including pensions.

An independent socialist Scotland would set an example to the rest of Europe by using our wealth to provide the highest quality of life for our pensioners anywhere in the world. As well as a reasonable state pension, this would include free travel, free heating, free social housing, free phone rental and free TV licenses.

The SSP stands for:

- A £160 basic across-the-board state pension, linked to prices or earnings, whichever is the higher.

- Total opposition to government attempts to dismantle occupational pension schemes in the public sector.

- Reduction of the retirement age to 55 across all sectors of employment, for men and women (except for industries where it is already lower than 55, such as the fire service).

- Retirement at 55 to be genuinely voluntary, with the right to continue part-time or full-time beyond that age

- The public ownership and democratic control of the pension industry.

- Retirement at 60 with full pension rights.

- Free travel, free heating, free social housing, free phone rental and free TV licenses for all pensioners.

I 5. For a brighter future for our young people

THERE IS a myth that young people aren't interested in politics - don't believe it.

In 2003, thousands of Scottish school students walked out of school in protest at Bush and Blair's invasion of Iraq.

Since then, young people have been at the forefront of the anti-war movement. Young people also lead protests against Nuclear Weapons, the incarceration of asylum seekers and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act.

So why do two-thirds of young people ignore elections by not voting? The truth is, they just aren't interested in politicians.

Since the last election, New Labour, supported by the Tories and the tabloid media, have gone to war on young people, scapegoating them for Scotland's social problems.

Every day in the media, young people are blamed for vandalism, street crime, and anti-social behaviour with no right of reply.

The SSP rejects that crude generalisation of young people and will give Britain's youth the respect and opportunities they have a right to.

Many of the general policies in this manifesto will benefit young people. But the SSP will also address some of the specific problems young people face.

The SSP stands for full participation in political life of all those age 16 and over. This means supporting the right of young people to vote at 16, and to stand for election.

We also support the rights of students and school students to play a bigger role in shaping education with the right of school students to get organised and

participate in decision making. Responsibility for education lies with the Scottish Parliament.

Our Holyrood Manifesto 2003 sets out the detail of a socialist education policy for Scotland.

This includes restoring student grants, abolishing all fees, replacing the undemocratic FE boards of management with new elected boards, encouraging diversity and experimentation with different educational methods and establishing a national education forum involving teachers, parents and school students to help shape and monitor the curriculum.

The SSP stands for a revolutionary change in the way society is organised. We know that this cannot happen without the enthusiasm, energy and ideas of young people.

Our policy on youth is not directed by think tanks in back rooms, but by the hundreds of young people who have already joined our ranks, and play a leading role in the party and our campaigns.



For the past five years, the SSP has provided inspiration and vision.

Where the mainstream parties play on fear and anxiety, the SSP appeals to the dreams and ambitions, the hopes and aspirations of young people.

Where other parties promote warfare, capitalist greed and consumerism, the SSP champions peace, community action, solidarity and socialism.

The vibrant youth wing of the SSP, Scottish Socialist Youth, provides a space where young people can exchange ideas and get involved in action.

SSY welcomes the involvement of any young person who wants to help in the fight for a socialist world.

See: www.ssy.org.uk

The SSP stands for:

- Votes at 16 - 16 and 17 year olds can work, pay taxes, join the armed forces and legally marry, but still have no democratic voice.

- The right to stand for election at 16

- An £8 minimum wage for all - including under 18s who are currently exempt from the national minimum wage.

Where the mainstream parties play on fear and anxiety, the SSP appeals to the dreams and ambitions, the hopes and aspirations of young people.

- Restoration of the benefits stolen away by Thatcher from 16 and 17 year olds in the 1980s, including housing and welfare benefits.

- Funding of local youth facilities in every community run democratically by and for young people.

- The organisation of community youth forums across Scotland to identify what amenities are needed in each local area.

- The funding of 5000 new apprenticeships.

- The establishment of democratic school boards which would include parents, teachers and school students.

- The establishment of a Scotland-wide school students union to give support to those facing bullying, harassment and discrimination and to represent students on school boards.

I 6. For quality, barrier-free housing for all

EVERY WEEK, Scotland's broadsheet newspapers publish glossy magazines extolling the wonderful housing boom which we are supposed to be undergoing.

Certainly, for many home owners, the annual rise in the value of their homes has outstripped the value of their annual salary.

But for hundreds of thousands of families in Scotland, especially those on low incomes, this housing bonanza might as well be taking place on a distant planet.

Soaring house prices means that many workers on low to medium salaries are excluded from the housing market.

At the same time, the collapse in public rented housing combined with the disastrous right-to-buy policy means that many families are condemned to serving life sentences in dilapidated tenements in run down, crime ridden housing schemes.

One of the principal reasons for escalating house values is the acute shortage of high quality housing in pleasant and safe surroundings.



Statistical trends show that the number of first time buyers in Scotland is dwindling rapidly - down from 50 per cent of the market in 1994 to 20 per cent of the market in 2004.

What we now have is a sellers' market rather than a genuine growth in the number of new home owners. Young families especially have been left high and dry by rising house prices.

The mainstream parties, competing for the votes of Middle Scotland, concentrate almost exclusively on appealing to private home owners. They have little or nothing to say about public and social housing, which they believe is a relic of Scotland's industrial past.

The SSP in contrast believes that public and social housing is more important than ever before and holds the key to averting a future housing calamity in Scotland.

If the public sector fails to provide high quality housing at affordable rents, then more and more low and middle income families will be forced to take out extortionate mortgages.

This in turn will decrease the disposable incomes of many families, heightening Scotland's poverty crisis and widening the gap between the affluent minority and the disadvantaged majority.

The provision of public sector housing in Scotland has almost ground to a halt.

In the late 1970s, over 50 per cent of Scottish households lived in rented, public sector housing, mainly run by councils.

Today just 16 per cent of Scotland's households live in council housing, with another 10 per cent in the housing association sector, including bodies like the GHA in Glasgow, while 67 per cent of all stock is owner-occupied.

Even in the heartlands of public sector housing such as Glasgow, owner occupiers now constitute a majority of households.

On top of that, Glasgow's private rented housing sector has grown to 15 per cent of the total.

Contrary to mythology, this change has not been driven from below, by the people of Scotland, but has been imposed from above by successive governments who are ideologically obsessed with the private sector.

For 25 years, public housing has been hammered. Housing subsidies to councils were slashed to ribbons. Rents were driven up to exorbitant levels. Council house building shuddered to a virtual standstill.

And on top of that, the right-to-buy policy forced councils to sell off their best stock at bargain basement prices.

The house building trends, even since 1994, are stark.

During the last 20 years 217,000 former council homes have been bought under the right-to-buy policy.

But just 2,782 houses have been built by local authorities and 41,000 by housing associations. This figure of new social housing fails to even match the figure of 44,000 public sector houses demolished over the same period.

As a result of demolition and the right-to-buy, a quarter of a million homes have disappeared from public control in the last ten years while new house building has virtually collapsed.

This in turn has contributed to the staggering rise in homelessness. Under New Labour, since 1997, the number of homeless households in B&B accommodation has grown by 358 per cent.

This is due fundamentally to lack of available public sector housing. And despite the fact that the Scottish Parliament has enacted some of the most radical homelessness legislation in Europe, the problem continues to worsen in Scotland.

Housing charities have also expressed concern at the growing ghettoisation of public housing. It is no accident that the uptake of housing benefit in Scotland of 440,000 households is almost identical to the provision of public sector housing.

Glasgow City Council estimates that 62 per cent of households in the social housing sector are single parents. The majority of these households will be low paid or benefit dependant.

The SSP has been in the forefront of opposing large scale stock transfers. Our opposition has been vindicated by experience.

Glasgow's new housing provider, GHA, was recently found wanting when 81 per cent of their homes failed to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

This standard is designed to ensure that every house in Scotland meets minimum standards in tackling repairs, central heating, insulation and dampness.

The Scottish Executive have set a target that all homes in Scotland should meet this standard by 2015.

We believe that with the political will, this target can be reached within the next five years.

The failure of the GHA should lead to the conclusion that there should be no



more large scale stock transfers and that those which have already taken place should be reversed.

At the same time, we want greater democratic participation in the running of the public sector, including the involvement of tenants and trade unions representing the housing workforce.

The tenant movement in Scotland is now extremely weak and non-existent in many areas, although there are some important struggles against housing stock transfers, including in Edinburgh, Dundee, Renfrew and the Highlands.

The SSP supports the establishment of national, regional and local tenant forums funded by local authorities and the Scottish Executive.

These forums should also be involved at all levels of housing strategy and investment.

Some of Scotland's worst housing is in the private sector, especially in rented accommodation.

As a minimum, all tenants renting privately should have the same rights as those in the public sector.

At the same time, action must be taken against rogue landlords who fail to comply with statutory repair notices.

Where statutory obligations are repeatedly flouted, property should be confiscated and transferred to local authority control.

Again we call for all rented accommodation to be brought up to Scottish Housing Quality Standard within the next five years.

The SSP also believes that we need an emergency programme of house building and renovation.

When the STUC made representation to the Scottish Executive challenging the stock transfer in Glasgow, the Executive made it clear that the GHA could not meet the improvements promised because of the shortage of skilled construction workers Scotland.

There is now a desperate need to train new skilled workers. We call for the training of at least 2,000 new apprentices every year within the construction industry.

This could be done through a public agency that would work with the construction industry, the STUC and further education colleges.

In the long term, Scotland needs a publicly-owned construction industry to meet the needs of future generations.

Under the devolution settlement, that would be impossible to achieve.

The crisis in housing, including the spiralling problem of homelessness, will only be ultimately resolved by independence and socialism.

What the SSP stands for:

- A four-year £1 billion investment programme that would build 50,000 public sector houses and renovate and improve tens of thousands more.

- A major renovation programme to include all stock except where tenants themselves favour demolition.

- The cancellation of Scotland's £3 billion housing debt

- All homes to be barrier-free to meet the needs of disabled people.

- The transformation of our housing schemes, using environmental artists, landscape gardeners and others with relevant skills to help turn our housing

In contrast to the mainstream parties, the SSP believes that public and social housing is more important than ever before and holds the key to averting a future housing calamity in Scotland.

schemes into pleasant places to live.

- A national construction apprenticeship programme of 2,000 apprentices every year.

- All houses in Scotland to meet the Scottish Housing Quality standard within five years; and for this standard to include strengthened environmental criteria such as efficient insulation; and environmentally-friendly construction methods and planning consent.

- Abolition of fuel poverty in all of Scotland's homes by 2010.

- Reduction of all public sector housing rents by 25 per cent.

- The right-to-buy scheme to be replaced with a rent bonus scheme to all tenants based on length of tenancy

- An end to all large-scale stock transfers and the reversal of those that have already taken place.

- An expansion of tenant participation and rights through the establishment of national, district and community-wide forums

- Proper tenant representation for private rented sector tenants.

- The extension of the Scottish Secure Tenancy to private rented sector tenants.

- All homes identified as 'below tolerable standard' in the private sector to be brought into public ownership if the landlord fails to bring them up to standard within a six month deadline.

- An end to public funding of private home ownership.

- A single survey agency, under the control of the Scottish Executive, for homebuyers and owners.

17. For a new rural revolution

THE SCOTTISH countryside is in deep crisis. Small farmers are going to the wall as the big four supermarkets, who have the market in a stranglehold, conspire to pay less than the cost of production.

Meanwhile agri-business thrives, turning the land into vast cash crops and intensive meat factories.

The traditional, rosy-cheeked image of country life is in sharp contrast to the reality. Farm and rural workers are amongst the lowest paid sectors in the Scottish workforce.

Rural communities are being run down: local shops driven out of business by giant, predatory retailers; village schools shut down because PPP investors see no profit margin in small-scale construction and maintenance; health services centralised and deregulated by remote NHS bureaucrats; and private bus services bodyswerving the quieter routes where money cannot be made.

All of which leaves the rural population increasingly stranded, and increasingly alienated from the urban theatre of politics. But socialism offers solutions to this rural crisis and our active membership in areas as far apart as the Western Isles and the Borders illustrates the growing influence of socialism in the Scottish countryside.

The SSP wants more support from the Scottish Executive and local authorities for farmers' markets, for smallholdings and family farms, and for organic and natural methods of farming.

We also campaign to suspend indefinitely all future planning applications for large supermarket outlets, particularly where there is a thriving local economy in place.

Otherwise the Big Four (Tesco, Asda-Walmart, Morrisons and Sainsbury) will destroy local shops and businesses, from greengrocers and butchers to pharmacies and post offices, and generate a car-dependent culture to boot, given that most new supermarket sites are out-of-town.

The SSP believes that all of Scotland's land belongs, by right, to the people of Scotland. We are committed to the public ownership of all our major land resources, from big farms (250 acres+) to estates to wilderness areas.

We would not seek to bring small-scale enterprises, such as family farms, into public ownership, nor to necessarily alter the current use of land.

We acknowledge the great expertise of local workers in establishing and managing forestry and deer farms, for instance, and want to harness the knowledge and skill of those already working the land.





We also understand that certain tracts of land, wilderness areas and wildlife habitats, should be preserved as a resource for all, run by a democratically accountable, elected body.

We also call for a right-to-buy scheme for tenant farmers, who often pay extortionate rents regardless of how much money they make year on year, yet who have farmed their particular acreage for generations.

Rural areas suffer brutally low wages. The Borders and Galloway are the low pay capitals of Scotland.

In most of Scotland, the majority of farmers are tenant farmers, paying high rents and taking in an average gross income of only £10 - 12,000 per annum.

Farm workers are therefore unaffordable or only at very low wages, a fact exploited by agri-business.

Affordable housing in rural areas is a growing problem. However, we do not support the indiscriminate construction of private housing developments in greenbelt areas.

We recognise that there is not a shortage of housing per se, but of affordable housing. We oppose the destruction of the greenbelt by private developers building housing that is out of reach for people on average incomes.

On the other hand we believe there is an urgent need to build at least 10,000 affordable new homes for rent or part

purchase by 2008 in the most desperately pressed districts of rural Scotland. The right-to-buy policy has been especially damaging to Scotland's rural communities, particularly in scenic areas.

The policy, now under review, should be reversed immediately as part of a long term project of housing regeneration.

Scotland's fishing fleet is dying.

Yet the Common Fisheries Policy, through which increasingly draconian quotas are imposed, is failing in its objective of preserving white fish stocks in the North Sea.

The reason is clear - industrial fishing, where giant trawlers owned by large companies Hoover up the fish stocks, thereby imperilling the future of these precious fishing grounds.

Their only interest is immediate profit.

Once they fish a ground dry, they can move on but this is something that local fishermen from out of Peterhead, Fraserburgh and elsewhere in Scotland cannot do.

We believe that the best custodians of the seas are not European bureaucrats making deals in distant offices but the people who work the fishing grounds and in whose direct interest it is to preserve them for the future.

For Scotland's 100,000 island dwellers geographical isolation is compounded by the natural barrier of the sea. The SSP campaigns for a Road Equivalent Tariff (RET), based on the Norwegian model, which works on the principle that a ferry fare for a bus, lorry or car is equivalent to the cost of the journey by road, over the same distance.

Currently, ferry fares are disproportionately high for relatively tiny distances, making transport links with offshore communities hugely expensive. Based on 2003 figures, a Calmac car fare from Gourock to Dunoon, a journey of 4.72 miles, costs £7.25. The RET, if based on 35 pence a mile, would be £1.65.

On all fronts, housing, jobs, poverty,

fishing, farming and transport, rural Scotland gets a raw deal. The SSP is not just an urban, central belt party but a movement that aims to transform the lives of people in every corner of Scotland, from the Shetland archipelago to the Mull of Galloway.

The SSP stands for:

- Full trade union rights and protection for farm workers.
- Employers to face stiff penalties and substantial compensation pay-outs for sacking agricultural workers because of the new minimum wage.
- Subsidies, where justified by an independent audit, to support employers upon the introduction of the new minimum wage.
- Public and community ownership of Scotland's vast landed estates and corporately-controlled farms.
- An elected accountable body to safeguard wilderness, natural habitats and

other landscape of special interest.

- A construction programme of at least 10,000 affordable new rural homes for rent or part purchase by 2008.
- An end to the right-to-buy policy to preserve remaining rural council housing.
- Reinstatement of the full Borders rail link.
- A Road Equivalent Tariff scheme to aid Scotland's island communities, with a special Shetland weighting to compensate for the vast distance between Shetland and mainland Scotland
- Immediate withdrawal from the Common Fisheries Policy with a 25 mile offshore limit, within which only Scottish fishermen can fish.
- Local management of fishing policy, based on the Faroes model, where fishermen, representatives of the local community and environmental scientists work together to fashion a fishing industry that sustains both people and marine life.

I 8. For sensible solutions to hard drug abuse

THE SSP believe that prohibition has failed to make any impact on illicit drug use.

Official figures show that, in the last four years, the number of Class A drug misusers in Scotland has risen by 12,657.

This is despite an increase of over £100m in funding for the 'war on drugs'.

The continued harassment and imprisonment of cannabis users is a vast waste of the time and resources of police, courts and social services.

Virtually every study undertaken has found that cannabis is less dangerous than alcohol or tobacco.

The time and money devoted to this futile crusade to clamp down on



cannabis would be better spent fighting poverty and the root causes of drug misuse.

Meanwhile, the horrendous death toll of Class A drug misusers continues to spiral and cause untold misery for individuals, families and communities across Scotland.

At the same time, criminal drugs gangs grow richer, more powerful and more violent.

Not just our urban communities, but now many of our rural communities are blighted by organised crime, funded by drugs sales.

This brings in its wake associated violence, sex crime, theft and destruction of property.

The SSP believes it's time to call a halt to the failed war on drugs and adopt a radical new strategy.

This would involve the legalisation of cannabis under license and regulation for medical and personal use, in order to break the link between the sale of dangerous hard drugs and relatively harmless drugs such as cannabis.

It would involve treating hard drug abuse as a social and medical problem, rather than a criminal problem.

A first step in that direction would be to provide pharmaceutical, clean heroin on prescription.

This would bring the full scale of Scotland's drug problem out into the open. It would reduce the grim toll of drugs deaths caused by adulterated heroin.

It would reduce crime by removing the need for addicts to take desperate measures to pay for their habit. And it would undermine the illegal barons by seriously reducing the market for hard drugs.

Where such radical action has already been piloted, such as in Switzerland, it has been a resounding success. There is an overwhelming case for change in Scotland, to break the vicious cycle of addiction, desperation and crime.

As well as having a serious illegal drugs

The continued harassment and imprisonment of cannabis users is a vast waste of the time and resources of police, courts and social services. Virtually every study undertaken has found that cannabis is less dangerous than alcohol or tobacco. The time and money devoted to this futile crusade to clamp down on cannabis would be better spent fighting poverty and the root causes of drug misuse.

problem, Scotland also has an even more serious alcohol problem. A huge proportion of violent incidents, including murder, serious assault and domestic brutality is rooted in alcohol abuse.

Alcohol abuse is also a colossal drain on the resources of the NHS and is a major contributory factor to the third world levels of life expectancy for working class men in some parts of the country.

We recognise that Scotland's severe drugs and alcohol problem is partly rooted in poverty and despair.

In the long term, we want to build a society where instant oblivion to blot out the reality of everyday life is a less attractive option.

In the meantime we will campaign for improved treatment and rehabilitation services for those suffering from alcohol and drug addiction.

The SSP stands for:

■ The legalisation and licensing of medical and personal use of cannabis.

■ The decriminalisation of all drug use, with addiction and abuse treated as a medical and social rather than criminal problem.

■ Breaking the grip of organised crime by offering clean heroin on prescription to addicts.

■ The establishment of a network of community-based rehabilitation services staffed by trained drug workers. This would include education, family

facilities, outreach work, welfare and needle exchange.

■ An expansion of properly trained therapists to assist those who abuse alcohol and drugs, with special emphasis on providing assistance to the escalating number of crack cocaine addicts.

■ A ban on alcohol advertising.

■ An all-out education and propaganda offensive against Scotland's binge-drinking culture.

19. For a free, fair and open society

OUR PRIVACY is under threat as never before. And that isn't just a problem for people who have 'something to hide'.

Under the guise of the war on terror New Labour has mounted an onslaught against civil liberties so far reaching that it threatens parliamentary democracy itself.

The Terrorism Act 2000 and the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 gave far-reaching powers to the state.

Under these laws around 550 people, mostly Muslims, have been arrested, yet a tiny fraction - just six individuals - have actually been convicted of any offences.

The Regulation of Investigating Powers Act 2000 (aka the Snoopers' Charter) allows government officials to access encrypted electronic data in the name of national security, to prevent crime or to protect the UK economy. Refusal to comply can result in a two year jail sentence.

The Civil Contingencies Act, introduced in November 2004, goes even further. If the Government decides that a civil 'emergency' exists they can suspend virtually any laws, even constitutional legislation protecting our rights.

They can force an individual to do anything they say. They can destroy or confiscate property without compensation. They can ban movement, freedom of the press or anything else they want, and imprison anyone who doesn't comply.

The Act has been compared with Hitler's 'Enabling Act' of 1933, which provided emergency powers which were used to uproot democracy.

We call for the abolition of all these new laws designed to give the government greater control over our lives at the expense of our privacy and human rights.

We also call for a campaign of non-compliance with ID cards, another frightening move towards a Big Brother state.





ID cards were proposed as a means to combat terrorism.

The Government is now admitting that the cards are unlikely to have any impact on terrorism, but they're going ahead with the scheme anyway.

Meanwhile, the new Freedom of Information Act doesn't have the teeth to force the government and private companies to be open about their activities.

We are being fleeced through PFI contracts, yet we don't even have the right to find out the details. And private companies have more access to politicians through lobbyists than ever before.

All around the world, civil liberties are under attack, with governments playing on the genuine fears of people to get them to give up rights and freedoms.

The SSP is committed to actively resisting these infringements on civil liberties and to fighting for a free and open society.

However to be open and free we must also be safe and secure. Many people in Britain live in fear of crime yet will never be subject to it.

We need to be released from the fear that crime might happen to us.

Working class communities bear the

brunt of most crime that is committed. As a general rule, people living in the poorest areas suffer a disproportionate share of street violence, domestic violence, housebreaking, car theft, mugging, vandalism and other forms of anti-social behaviour.

As a party which draws most of its support from working class communities, the Scottish Socialist Party stands for radical action to reduce crime.

But that means first and foremost tackling the roots of crime, which include alcohol abuse, hard drug addiction and poverty.

Most crimes of street violence are associated with drunkenness.

Many serious assaults and murders are linked to racism, sectarianism and homophobia.

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One woman every three and a half days is killed in Britain by her male partner or ex-partner.

A significant proportion of criminal activity, especially acts of theft such as burglary, muggings and shoplifting, are carried out by the growing army of young heroin addicts, desperate to feed their habit.

Other crimes such as car theft, vandalism and gang-fighting could be reduced by providing attractive amenities for young people such as clubs, drop-in centres and sports centres.

Many people living in crime-scarred communities have little confidence in the police or the legal system.

There is a general perception, grounded in reality, that the police and judiciary are heavily biased in favour of the rich and powerful.

Vast resources are deployed to counter legitimate political protests, including anti-nuclear demos at Faslane and community protests and into the upcoming G8 Summit where legitimate protesters and activists want to protest in peace.



Many people living in crime-scarred communities have little confidence in the police or the legal system. There is a general perception, grounded in reality, that the police and judiciary are heavily biased in favour of the rich and powerful.

The SSP stands for:

- Greater accountability over judges and sheriffs that would allow them to be removed from their posts if they have lost the confidence of the general public.

- A reduction in the prison population by expanding alternatives to custody for offenders.

- The establishment of domestic violence courts and rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators.

- Closer monitoring of dangerous offenders sent back into the community.

- Expansion of psychiatric services, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities.

- Greater community control over policing.

- An independent police complaints authority.

- Public disclosure of all surveillance of political activists under the Freedom of Information Act 2005.

- Repeal of the Civil Contingencies Act and other repressive legislation.

- A Scotland-wide campaign of non-compliance with ID cards.

- An end to the deplorable practice of internment without trial.

- An extension of Freedom of Information to open up the operations of big business to public scrutiny.

- Opposition to privatisation and PFI in the prison service and for private jails to be brought back into public ownership.

20. For a more colourful Scotland

SCOTLAND IS rightly proud of its cultural and artistic heritage. In the arts, cinema, theatre, and the written word Scotland has a long and noble tradition.

In recent decades, a diverse array of Scottish writers, poets, artists, musicians, film makers and theatre groups have made a dazzling contribution to our society.

This is despite severe under-funding of the arts. The UK as a whole has one of the lowest per capita spending levels on the arts in the western world.

Like our public services, the arts have fallen victim to the creed of private greed, with corporate sponsorship now one of the main sources of funding.

In the long run, this privatisation of the arts will lead to stultifying conformity and the marginalisation of art that cannot be exploited for profit.

Even the Scottish Arts Council has become obsessed with financial viability and a tourist-driven cultural agenda.

The SSP rejects this approach. We believe the way forward towards a further cultural renaissance in Scotland is by rejecting both elitism and commercialism.

We campaign for an arts policy that reflects the diversity of Scotland, and will encourage everything from ballet to bhangra, from opera to open fire folk sessions, from poetry to popular music.

We want to broaden both access to and participation in the arts and break down the artificial barriers dividing so-called “high brow” culture from popular culture.

The SSP will seek to engage with those who share our vision of a culture that is open and affordable to all.

We will also continue our practical



commitment to promoting arts and culture in Scotland. The SSP has been the main driving force behind the Edinburgh People's Festival of the past few years and has staged a number of key cultural events across Scotland, including cinema, music, comedy, drama and debate.

Over the past few years a range of artists have supported SSP events, including film-makers and actors, Ken Loach, Paul Laverty, Davy McKay and Peter Mullan; political comedians Mark Thomas, Mark Steel, Miles Jupp and Sandy Nelson; musicians Dave Anderson, Dick Gaughan and Brian McNeil; writers James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, Alan Spence, Iain Banks and Tom Leonard; and musicians from Belle and Sebastian to Asian Dub Foundation.

The newspaper of the SSP, the Scottish Socialist Voice, provides topical coverage of the arts in Scotland and internationally from a socialist perspective.

We believe culture is a vital component in the well-being of our communities and of society as a whole and we recognise the valuable role that artists can play in the struggle for a better Scotland and better world.

The SSP stands for:

- A doubling of Scotland's arts budget
- An increase in arts spending in schools and colleges.
- A national theatre company for Scotland.
- The replacement of the Scottish Arts Council with a more open, democratic and representative body that truly reflects Scotland's cultural diversity.
- Transfer of power over broadcasting from Westminster to Holyrood.

■ Increased funding to European levels of opera, ballet and theatre.

■ A drive to take the arts to the Scottish people in local venues as opposed to an over-concentration on big city centre events.

■ More investment in community-based arts ventures.

■ Free access to all publicly-owned cultural and recreation centres including art galleries, museums and sports centres.

■ A commitment to revitalising the Gaelic language, including aiming to offer lessons to all adults and children who wish to learn the language.

■ Equal status for Gaelic, Scots and English.

■ Additional resources to assist the development of our ethnic cultures.



Join the fight for a socialist Scotland

THE SCOTTISH Socialist Party is Scotland's newest, fastest growing and most radical political party.

Just six years old, the SSP now has six MSPs in the Scottish Parliament and scores of branches across Scotland.

Inside the Scottish Parliament, the SSP has already emerged as the most effective, dynamic and radical opposition to the New Labour/Lib Dem coalition.

Just months into the parliament, the party has launched a series of bills, with others in the pipeline, that will have a far-reaching impact on the lives of millions. Legislation that is being championed by Scottish Socialist MSPs include bills to:

- Provide universal free school meals.
- Scrap the Council Tax.
- Abolish prescription charges.
- Improve drug treatment facilities.

All six Scottish Socialist MSPs also honoured their election pledges to live on no more than the average wage of a skilled worker. Each of these MSPs donates half their salary to the party.

The SSP is more than just another electoral party whose sole ambition is to get politicians elected into parliaments and councils.

All six Scottish Socialist MSPs also honoured their election pledges to live on no more than the average wage of a skilled worker. Each of these MSPs donates half their salary to the party.



Most of our activity is conducted outside parliament, on the streets, in the communities, in the workplaces, in the universities and colleges.

Since 2001, the SSP has been the most active anti-war party in Scotland.

From day one, we opposed the deceitful "war on terror".

Day in, day out, the SSP fights all forms of injustice at local, national and international level. As well opposing the murderous warmongering of Blair and Bush, our campaigning work includes:

- Fighting low pay and long hours in the workplace.
- Resisting privatisation in all its forms and guises.
- Challenging racism and other forms of bigotry and discrimination.
- Defending local facilities from closure.
- Opposing extravagant spending on new urban motorways.

- Standing up for a better deal for pensioners.

- Exposing cruelty to animals.

- Challenging all threats to public health, from nuclear waste dumps to GM crops.

- Participating in direct action against the weapons of mass destruction sited on the Clyde.

- Assisting those resisting military, national and political oppression across the globe.

- Promoting redistribution of wealth from rich to poor, in Scotland and internationally.

- Campaigning for the closure of Dungavel detention centre and for the rights of asylum seekers including the Ay family, Mercy Ikolo and Pastor Daly.

- Organising the Calton Hill Rally For an Independent Scottish Republic as an alternative to the royal opening of the new Holyrood Parliament.

The Westminster elections are conducted under the undemocratic first past the post system. This means that the ballot is unfairly biased in favour of the millionaire parties of big business.

As a working class socialist party based in Scotland, the SSP can never hope to compete on a level with the London-controlled parties of the rich.

But our aim is not to send politicians to disappear into the pampered palace of Westminster; our aim is to send a message of socialism, peace and justice reverberating across Scotland.

In the last Westminster election, the SSP won over 70,000 votes - the biggest vote for a socialist party in Scotland in any General Election since 1935.

This time we hope to surpass that vote.

Every vote for the SSP is a statement of defiance against war, poverty, inequality, privatisation and capitalism.

Even if we did not win a single seat, 70,000 plus votes for the SSP will confirm that socialism is alive and on the march in Scotland.



And if we do elect an MP, that Scottish Socialist MP will spend most of their time and energy here in Scotland, building the movement for peace, independence, wealth redistribution and socialism and standing shoulder-to-shoulder with working people fighting for their rights, with communities fighting hospital closures and with other campaigns.

We're asking for your vote - but even more importantly, we're asking you to become active in the fight for socialism and independence by joining the SSP.

You don't have to agree with every detail of this manifesto.

The SSP is a broad, inclusive party encompassing all shades and hues of socialism in Scotland.

But if you agree with our general vision of an independent socialist Scotland, please get in touch now and sign up to join the Scottish Socialist Party - the party of the future.

PHOTOS BY:
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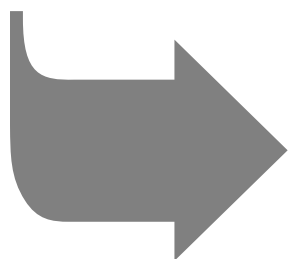
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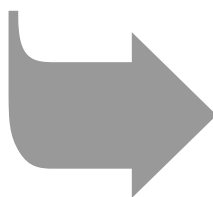
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