

# Scottish Socialist

# Party

from **Richie Venton**  
SSP national trade union  
organiser

**35 years an organised socialist  
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## HOW DARE THEY SPLIT THE SSP!

Dear comrade,

I write to you as a socialist and trade unionist whom I value, in sorrow and in anger at the wreckage being done to the party I helped to initiate, organise and build.

**I am not a member of any faction; I am a loyal, committed SSP member who appeals to you to save the SSP as Scotland's class-struggle socialist party, the vehicle for working class struggle and socialist change, for an independent socialist Scotland.**

Tommy Sheridan and a few others are threatening to wreck the party of socialist unity that hundreds of decent, honest socialists have built through years of selfless commitment. **The SSP remains the natural home for the cream of Scotland's trade unionists and working class.**

Look at our unrivalled track record of struggle, solidarity and socialist leadership in every major and most localised strikes and struggles for better conditions since the day we were formed.

The firefighters; nursery nurses; public sector pensions battle; railworkers' campaigns; NHS workers' rights; postal workers' jobs, conditions and privatisation; civil service jobs and pay; BBC jobs, pay and pensions.... to name but some. Look at the SSP's policies - £8 minimum wage, shorter working week, abolition of anti-union laws, public ownership, union democracy, MSPs on skilled worker's wage, etc.

**There is no place for two socialist parties in Scotland - no political justification in Tommy or anyone else splitting away to form a new party with policies shamelessly stolen from the SSP's manifestos.** The only winners from such wrecking tactics would be the pro-market parties that abhor trade unionism and socialism.

Tommy's proposed split-off is an act of utter disloyalty and irresponsibility to the hundreds of thousands of working class people whose hopes have been raised by the Scottish left uniting into the one party - the SSP.

It would be a particularly cruel deceit of those courageous trade unionists who fought for and won affiliation of the RMT and CWU to the SSP. These workers did not affiliate to Tommy Sheridan - they affiliated to the PARTY whose working class socialist policies and fighting record matches their aims and aspirations. Why should they be dragged off into the wilderness by a split-off from the SSP?

Hot on the heels of his legal victory against the dirty tabloid rag *News of the World*, Tommy Sheridan declared he would challenge Colin Fox as SSP convener - a divisive act of revenge towards those decent, honest socialists with the courage to tell the truth.

Tommy was contracted by the anti-SSP, pro-New Labour tabloid *Daily Record*, paid £30,000, put up in a top hotel, and whilst in bed with these enemies of socialism, launched his front-page diatribe that he intends to 'destroy the scabs'. This thuggish language has failed to intimidate those of us with the courage and integrity to tell the truth - however unsavoury the truth might be.

Now, because he has no confidence that he would win a democratic election for SSP convener, he wants to split the party built by those whose blood, sweat and tears put him into parliament.

In his statement calling for a split-off, he accuses others of "a fixation with personalities"! Why should the principled socialist unity of the SSP be wrecked for the sake of one man's career? Since when should one individual's control and power take precedence over the greater good of the socialist party that has stormed Scotland with our open, honest, democratic socialist vision?

**The SSP remains the champion of socialist unity. We remain Scotland's only trade union party. Our policies and principles remain unchanged, untarnished and as urgently relevant as ever in the class war against poverty, inequality, war and capitalism.**

**It takes courage to be honest, but only an honest, open, campaigning socialist party is capable of winning mass support for the vision we all hold dear - of an independent socialist Scotland.**

Far from being 'scabs', 'liars' or 'conspirators' in 'the mother of all stitch-ups', I and others have upheld the honesty and integrity of the SSP, refusing to rewrite history. We have refused to add fuel to Tommy's 'mother of all inventions' that the SSP is a party indulging in frame-ups, forged minutes and monstrous methods that Stalin would have envied.

We refused to join him in scorching the very earth the SSP stands on.

Read the real facts of the choices we faced once Tommy defied all friendly advice from me and others and forged ahead with his court case. By doing so he put the party on trial as much as *News of the World*.

I am a loyal, dedicated socialist who does not have a penny to his name because of working for the socialist cause for decades.

I appeal to you to read on and join us in defending the very integrity and existence of the SSP. No split-off!

Yours in solidarity, honesty and socialism,

**Richie Venton**

**REPLY WITH YOUR VIEWS: [ssp.glasgow@btconnect.com](mailto:ssp.glasgow@btconnect.com) 0141 429 4200**

# HOW DARE THEY CALL US SCABS! Stay with the SSP!

## Do our accusers know what a scab is?!

Which picket line have I or the 'SSP eleven' ever crossed? What strike have we broken or undermined? When have we sought personal or financial gain out of defying the majority decisions of a workers' organisation?

Using 'scab' as a term of abuse against fellow socialists at best devalues the whole meaning of the word in the class struggle. Such anathema, such a vile judgement on my integrity as a socialist of 35 years of selfless activity, cannot become an accepted 'fact' through repetition in the socialist and trade union movement.

As the repeatedly, unanimously elected SSP national trade union organiser, untold damage could be done to my name amongst trade unionists who have learnt to respect the SSP *partly* through my efforts, even though they have not yet joined us. Imagine asking workers to join a party whose trade union/workplace organiser really was a scab!?!

**I appeal to you not to remain silent on this. Silence is in danger of giving consent to a slur on my reputation.**

Far from being a scab, I am proud of my 35 years of struggle for socialism, including organising solidarity AND giving strategic and tactical advice and leadership to **hundreds** of workplace strikes and factory occupations.

I was the organiser of 1,200 Merseyside socialists who led the mass movement, including regional general strikes, which defeated Thatcher's government in the mid-1980s. This gave a massive boost to the forces of socialism that

Tommy's mis-named *SSP Majority* faction made a cold, cynical calculation when they portrayed his libel action against *News of the World* as part of the class struggle - and that we had to choose between him and them.

They then branded 11 socialists as scabs - and call us 'collaborators' with Murdoch's rag.

This way they hope to win the support of trade unionists in particular - out of their healthy instinct for solidarity.

### Examine the facts:

- One man made sure SSP members were forced to appear in Court - Tommy. It was him that took legal action, not NOTW. We repeatedly advised him against this, warning it would drag his name through manure AND embroil the SSP in what is nothing more nor less than an unsavoury celebrity sex scandal.

- Once summonsed as witnesses, what were we supposed to do? Not turn up? Face warrants for our arrest? Go on the run (with or without our families)?

It is grotesque distortion to say we 'collaborated' with NOTW - we were hostages, not witnesses - dragged there by Tommy's wreckless, selfish actions.

- It is an insult to my intelligence and integrity to say I sided with *News of the World* against Tommy. If that had been the REAL choice, does anyone seriously think I would have abandoned the principles I have upheld since my school days?

- We faced a choice (under oath) of EITHER admitting the truth about why we asked Tommy to resign as convener [precisely to prevent him being exposed as a liar and hypocrite whilst still SSP convener] OR corroborate his monstrous allegations about being framed, stitched up, dumped for factional reasons - with forged or

went on to lead the anti-poll tax movement and the subsequent growth of socialism in Scotland.

I was at the heart of the 1993 Timex dispute; co-opted onto the Glacier Metal workers' factory Occupation Committee during their stunning victory in 1995; in 1995-8 organised what the Liverpool dockers' stewards called 'the best Support Group in Europe'; led the SSP's action in support of the nursery nurses and firefighters; spearheaded the SSP's part in battles on pension rights and civil service jobs.

**I stand firmly for a class struggle socialist party - and believe that is what the SSP continues to be.**

**I am proud of my role in building socialist unity** - being one of the initiators and founding organisers of both the Scottish Socialist Alliance and the SSP.

I was one of 4 SSP negotiators who brought the SWP into the SSP in May 2001 - in pursuit of socialist unity.

**I have never sought to undermine Tommy Sheridan,** although I have never been his or anyone's sycophant.

I did my best to unite the party in the 18 months after Tommy's resignation, fully involving him in all our campaigning in Glasgow region and the trade union work - even when I got criticism from some comrades for my approach. But I condemn utterly Tommy's wreckless assault on the party and people who put him into his parliamentary position. No individual is greater than the movement.

**I appeal to you to remain loyal to the SSP.**

'dodgy' minutes to back it up. Would you want to be a member of a party that stooped to such disgusting, dictatorial, lying methods? I certainly wouldn't!

- Virtually NO SSP member disagreed with our sad, unavoidable decision to ask Tommy to resign as convener at the vast number of well-attended meetings in 2004.

- If we had not kept a true and accurate record (minutes) of why the most effective socialist convener in decades had been asked to resign, whose version would you now believe? The truth - or the lie created by a very effective orator and media operator in defence of his own reputation?

- Whatever you think of us keeping minutes, even if they had not existed we would have been quizzed by the QC about our RECOLLECTION of the EC meeting which asked Tommy to resign - that's what we actually faced in court.

- Do you think we could have got away with lying in court but telling the truth to the SSP membership? Apart from the legal risks, how the hell can a party of our public standing get away with lies in a public courtroom, followed by a different public explanation outside the court - and retain any respect? An isolated sect or underground conspiracy might get away with that - but not a broad, open, campaigning socialist party that working class people can believe in - which the SSP has always aspired to be.

- **STAND UP FOR THE PARTY'S INTEGRITY.**

- **CONDEMN THE 'SCAB' SMEARS.**

- **MOVE ON AND KEEP THE SSP UNITED WITH OUR SOCIALIST AIMS AND CAMPAIGNS.**