

TV news bias: media blackout over study revealing majority of news items favoured No camp
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Euro elections: how to stop UKIP taking a Scottish seat
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£1 • issue 431 • 31st January - 13th February 2014
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Scottish Socialist Voice

REFERENDUM OPINION SHIFTS TOWARDS Yes AS THE NO ICE CRACKS

Latest poll shows large swing to Yes camp and indy support increase from women and youth

Jam-packed Labour For Independence meeting rocks Better Together Labour/Tory coalition



Sillars book maps out socialist action plan for independent Scottish government



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by Ken Ferguson

Indy debate: ice is cracking

A SHUDDER is passing through the opponents of Scottish independence, with the dawning realisation that their bid to freeze out the positive case for a Yes vote in a frost of fear is cracking.

The cross-class alliance of Better Together, which sees the Tories fashion the anti-independence shells and their willing soul mates in Labour fire them, suddenly looks vulnerable.

At the heart of this is the fact that after months of relentless negativity aimed at convincing Scots that they need to stick with an increasingly right wing UK voters increasingly understand what this means.



LABOUR FOR INDEPENDENCE: recent packed Glasgow meeting sent shockwaves through the No campaign

Vote for austerity?

Both Labour and Tory contenders for Westminster power back massive cuts in spending, both back nuclear weapons, both demonise the poor, both support the City-driven greed as they vie to be the most "business friendly". Taken as an offer it amounts to austerity, insecurity, low pay and bosses cracking the whip over workers under the cosh of unemployment and threatened with benefit cuts if they speak up.

In reality the Westminster political class – whatever colour their flag – are wholly owned by the forces of greed and grab of the so called "free market". This results, as we report else-

where in this Voice, in fat cat politicians imposing ever growing attacks such as Labour – yes Labour! – threats to cut benefits of those with literacy problems.

Against this dismal background then the prospect of an alternative way meeting the needs of people over profit in an independent Scotland is gathering growing interest and support. Most spectacularly this was demonstrated in an ICM poll showing the Yes vote growing and No falling back.

However this is simply an indicator of what activists have been reporting for some time now as SSP, Radical Independ-

ence and Yes campaigners find an increasingly receptive ear to their case in public meeting, street stalls and on the doorstep.

Most importantly is the growing understanding that winning the votes of those who vote Labour – or stay at home – to vote Yes in September is the absolutely essential cornerstone to winning independence. That's why that shudder is looking for a spine to run up in the camp of Labour's UK loyalists.

Faced with a growing likelihood of a UK Tory (or Tory/UKIP) government and a Labour Party trashing its own welfare achievements as a "something for nothing" society the way is open for

a radical alternative. The rapid development of Labour For Independence and its endorsement by a growing list a significant Labour figures with a message of a return to core Labour values is important.

Likewise the publication by Jim Sillars of his socialist case for independence also feeds into this growing need to develop a vision of independence as an alternative to Westminster failure. Since it was formed the Scottish Socialist Party has backed both independence and socialism and our message remains the same in the road to the referendum.

Better off with Yes

The key task is to drive home the message that for those who endorse core Labour values that voting Yes, far from voting SNP, is the best way to provide the tools to implement such values.

The broad pro-independence left's task is to press home the message that working class Scots – the majority of voters – will be socially, economically and politically better off with independence. That way lies victory in September.

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by Lynda Williamson, editor,
newsnetscotland.com

A YEAR-long study carried out by academic, Dr John Robertson and researchers from the University of the West of Scotland, found clear evidence of bias amongst the broadcast media in Scotland when reporting on the independence referendum.

The research, which covered the period from September 2012 to September 2013, took in 730 hours of early evening TV news coverage broadcast by the BBC and STV.

Dr Robertson's team watched, noted and carefully tabulated statements broadcast in news programmes, before painstaking analysis revealed that an overwhelming majority of news items were presented in a fashion which favoured the anti-independence campaign.

In his report Dr Robertson suggested that: "One obvious explanation lies in the editorial decision to allow all three anti-independence parties to respond to each SNP statement creating an unavoidable predominance of statements from the former even when these were kept short."

Red/green balance

Of course we all know that the independence campaign does not simply consist of the SNP. TV chiefs could easily have provided more balance if they had only just thought of Colin Fox or Patrick Harvie. You have to wonder why they didn't?

The answer may lie in another part of the report, the part that deals with the tendency to personalise the case for independence using Alex Salmond. According to Robertson:

"Personalisation of political issues is long-established strategy to weaken arguments, shifting focus from collective reasoning or shared values to supposed personal desires and personality traits. Historically, this tendency or strategy has been used to demonise and to undermine numerous political figures in the UK including Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock." Now although this report would have made uncom-



SCOTTISH MEDIA BLANKED ANTI-INDY BIAS FINDINGS

fortable reading for broadcast chiefs, ordinary Scottish workers haven't had much of a chance to read it at all. Indeed if you missed SNP MSP Joan McAlpine's mention of it in her column in the Daily Record then this is the first chance you'll have to read about it in print media. The report was offered to numerous outlets in the mainstream media but not a single traditional newspaper carried it – it seemed almost as though it was subject to a news blackout. If you wanted to find it then you would have to turn to the internet and to citizen journalism.

Newsnet Scotland broke the story in late January and our article took social media by storm. It became one of our most widely read articles ever. With almost 700 re-tweets it was read by nearly 24,000 people.

So how did the state broadcaster react to the popularity of our story and the allegations contained in this peer reviewed report? They fired off a stern email questioning the methodology used and attacking Dr Robertson's credibility, of course. They demanded that he hand over his data and they copied in his boss in an attempt to intimidate.

But when respected former BBC journalist, Derek Bateman joined the row, berating them in his online blog, the beeb could ignore it no

longer. They invited Dr Robertson to defend his research on BBC Radio Scotland during the Saturday morning dead zone. It says much about the BBC that in the face of such overwhelming criticism the only mention of the report was made at 8.20am on a Saturday morning.

Of course this comes as no surprise to those of us who have followed the independence debate closely. The University study merely proves what we have long suspected, that there exists in the BBC institutionalised bias and the most effective way to counter this is through social media.

Citizen journalism

Make no mistake, the only reason that John Robertson was given the opportunity to appear on that early morning radio show was that citizen journalism had breathed life into a debate which the main stream media had tried to close down.

Social media is a powerful tool for those who support independence for Scotland. I say for supporters and not for the Yes Campaign or for the SNP because the independence movement on social media is spontaneous and organic, it is aligned to no particular party or organisation, it is truly a cross party, grass roots movement.

That is why the No Campaign fear it, that is why they try to suggest that it is a sinister and organised movement controlled and directed from some mysterious headquarters at Yes Scotland/SNP/Newsnet Scotland (take your pick).

The Daily Mail, among others, have tried to discredit anyone who supports independence and owns a computer as a particularly nasty type of troll. Their narrative being that the pro-independence side may dominate the debate on the world wide web, but they are a particularly unsavoury bunch, not to be trusted, full of hate.

Don't get me wrong I am not for a moment trying to suggest that there are not some pretty awful things written by anonymous morons and would in no way defend that kind of behaviour. But there is a particular political reason for trying to suggest that this is an exclusively pro-independence phenomenon.

So use the net, log on and get the information you need from sites like ours, from Bella Caledonia, from National Collective, from Wings Over Scotland, but be polite, don't give them ammunition, and when you've got the information you need grab a handful of leaflets and get out into the real world. That is where we are going to win this thing!

by Campbell Martin

LABOUR PARTY ASSUMES JOBLESS MEANS 'THICK'

ATTEMPTING TO show they are as tough on 'benefits scroungers' as the Tories, the Labour Party's spokesperson on Work and Pensions last week announced that the unemployed should have to sit tests in English and Maths. If the out-of-work person failed such a test, a future Labour government would take away their benefit unless they undertook training in the subjects. Remember when the Labour Party was actually on the side of the working class, rather than pandering to the right-wing agenda of the Tories, UKIP and the Daily Mail? I know, it's such a long time ago now that it's difficult to focus on such a Labour Party.

Probably the last Labour manifesto to offer an agenda for the working class was delivered under the leadership of Michael Foot in 1983. Since then, under John Smith, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and now Ed Miliband, the Labour Party has become more and more a clone of the Tories.

Last week's statement of intent by Rachel Reeves MP (Labour's Shadow Minister for Work and Pensions) sought to demonise the unemployed as people of such little worth that they obviously can't even write in basic English or do their times-tables.

Threat

Ms Reeves' added threat of immediately removing benefit from anyone failing Labour's tests simply demonstrates how far removed from reality are Westminster politicians.

The Tory-clone Labour Party would punish someone who fails a test – possibly because they had earlier been failed by the education system – and that punishment would be so draconian as to remove their only source of income. So the Labour slogan for the 2015 Westminster General Election could well be: "Can you spell 'scrounger'? No? Then starve!"

Labour's new 'get tough' policy would apply to everyone claiming

HOW DO YOU SPELL 'SCROUNGER'? Labour's Rachel Reeves and Ed Balls and their MP chums spell it 'E.X.P.E.N.S.E.S.'



Jobseekers Allowance, which means that unemployed university graduates and company managers would be forced to complete tests to show they had a basic grasp of writing and counting. Such a policy could only be introduced by a party that believes the unemployed are thick. Has Labour even considered the skilled mechanic who has been laid-off? Such a person could possess the best mechanically-minded brain and the most skilful set of hands, yet if he or she is not so good at English or Maths, bang goes their Jobseekers Allowance and poverty beckons.

The thinking behind this new Labour policy mirrors the ignorance of the Tories' decision that when the Universal Credit is finally introduced, Housing Benefit will no longer be paid directly to landlords. Instead, the Tory-Lib Dem government says the rent should be paid to the tenant, so the unemployed person learns how to budget and pay their bills.

Apparently, the unemployed have always been unemployed and have never been in a posi-

tion where they worked, got their pay, budgeted and paid bills. The Tory Minister behind this plan is Iain Duncan Smith who lives in a mansion, complete with tennis court, on the Buckinghamshire estate of his father-in-law. Mr Duncan Smith and his posh-boy Tory colleagues fail to understand the reality of living week-to-week on poverty-level benefits.

Here is a little scenario that has escaped their supposedly massive intellects: living on benefits means always having too little money to make ends meet. It is very often the case that inadequate benefit payments are long gone before the next one is due.

The last few days without money are frequently covered by small bank-overdrafts. Under the Tories' Universal Benefit plan, Housing Benefit to cover rent will be paid directly into a claimant's bank account. If the claimant's account is overdrawn (if they have used an overdraft facility) the bank will immediately take-back its money.

If the overdraft was not agreed with the bank, there will also be

charges applied. The result, of course, is that instantly there will be insufficient money to pay the rent because the bank put itself at the head of the queue to get its money. Insufficient money to cover the full amount of rent leads to arrears, which build-up and can result in eviction. If the people of Scotland do not take the opportunity to govern our own country by voting Yes in September's independence referendum, it is a racing certainty that more austerity and more demonising of the poorest members of society will take place following the next scheduled UK General Election (May 2015).

Labour claims it can form the next UK government, but that is unlikely. However, even if they did, Rachel Reeves' announcement of last week confirms the party would continue with Tory attacks on the poor.

England decides

In a nightmare scenario, polls show the Tories are most likely to continue in government at Westminster... but with the possibility of a coalition involving the far-right United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP).

At every UK election since 1955, Scotland has rejected the Tory Party but for the majority of that time we have had them imposed on us by the votes of people in England. UKIP has never even managed to hold a deposit at any election in Scotland (a party requires to receive at least 5 per cent of votes cast to save the financial deposit that must be lodged to fight an election).

If we don't re-take our independence and elect a government we want here in Scotland, the electors of England will decide for us, and the possibilities are far from appealing.

by Colin Fox

PERHAPS THE key question the European elections pose in Scotland this summer is will UKIP win a seat here? While most commentators predict Farage's racists may top the poll in England (in 2009 UKIP got 13 MEP's elected and received more votes than Labour) but they feel UKIP does not have the support to win a seat North of the Border.

But the most recent British/Scottish Social Attitudes Survey shows there can be no room for complacency on this score.

Whilst 57 per cent of respondents in England favoured further restraints on immigrants rights, so did 47 per cent of Scots! This shows the significant challenge the left faces in attempting to overturn such ingrained attitudes. In 2009, the six Scottish European Parliament seats were won by the SNP (two seats), Labour (two), the Tories and the Liberal Democrats. Since then support for Clegg's collaborators has fallen off a cliff in Scotland. Most people do not see them holding on to a European seat here this time round. So where might it go?

Labour did particularly badly in 2009 and might hope for a comparative upturn in its fortunes. But not enough to win a third seat. Both they and the SNP will be focusing their resources on the crucial independence referendum campaign.

The Tories are not likely to advance either so the chances of an unwelcome UKIP victory might be higher than at first expected. The European elections are conducted in circumstances favourable to them.

Anti-EU mood

The prevalent anti-EU mood, the London-based election campaign with Farage at its epicentre, the low turnout and a proportional voting system where UKIP only needs 11 per cent support to get an MEP elected all play to their advantage.

Admittedly, they polled just 5.2 per cent of the vote last time round in Scotland. But a great deal has changed since then. The Social Attitudes Survey reveals a discernible hardening in attitudes towards im-



UKIP/TORY SCAREMONGERS: but it wasn't immigrants who brought in the Bedroom Tax or sold off Royal Mail

Stop UKIP and the Tories scapegoating immigrants

migrants. Moreover, there has been no groundswell of support for the Greens that might act as an alternative 'protest vote'. Perhaps if there had been some kind of Red-Green Alliance, as was mooted at one time, that might have gained traction.

Stopping UKIP therefore means confronting anti-immigrant feeling in Scotland. This runs deeper than we might like to admit, as 25 years of right-wing Daily Mail propaganda has taken its toll among what Marx called the 'lumpen' layers of the working class. Moreover, the Westminster parties all continue to aid UKIP by pandering to its notion that immigrants – and claimants – are fiddling 'our generous benefits system'.

The Tories, Labour and the Liberal Democrats are each engaged in blaming immigrants for Britain's economic crisis. First UKIP created the myth that thousands of Romanians and Bulgarians were headed here. Then the Tories suggest access to the NHS and welfare services should be denied to immigrants until they have lived here two years. Labour then says 'No, it should be a year!' And the Lib Dems add to this appalling carnival of reaction.

What Labour should have said is 'It wasn't immigrants who cause

the collapse in our living standards. It wasn't the Romanians who caused the worst recession in 80 years or the Bulgarians who bankrupted the economy. It wasn't immigrants who embezzled £100 billion by avoiding their tax obligations. It wasn't immigrants who introduced the Bedroom Tax or sold off Royal Mail. It wasn't immigrants who forced one million households in Scotland into fuel poverty. It wasn't immigrants who were caught red handed stealing tens of millions from the public purse at Westminster with their fraudulent expenses claims and 'second homes' scam - it was bankers like Nigel Farage!

Blame-shifting

But of course the Labour Party that would once have proudly taken such a principled position is long gone. Instead they tail end David Cameron's attacks on migrant workers for 'coming over here and taking our jobs' and protect employers who pay them slave wages and protect landlords who charge extortionate rents for flats unfit for human habitation. This government is responsible for the shortage of affordable housing and the inadequacy of public services and yet he blames it

on immigrants. The left in Scotland can counter this 'carnival of reaction' using facts such as these:

- Immigrants who come here make this country wealthier and more diverse, not poorer
 - Migrant workers pay far more taxes into the UK Treasury than they take out
 - The NHS and other key services and industry have benefited enormously from the efforts and skills of immigrants over many decades
 - Immigrants come here for work not our paltry benefits
 - Young workers from Poland and Spain have halted Scotland's chronic population decline
 - Our quality of life in Scotland is greatly improved by our treasured multiculturalism and such a rich and diverse community of peoples
 - Scots have emigrated for centuries in search of a better life
- The SSP believes people who uproot themselves and their families and travel thousands of miles in search of a better life here should be given a warm welcome and receive our admiration for their courage and determination. We Scots know all about emigration. It is an experience Scots families have been forced into for generations.

The 'Yes equals SNP' myth melts as reality of London fat cat rule bites

by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

THE GROUND is shifting beneath the feet of the British and Scottish Labour Party leaderships as working class Labour voters begin to move towards support for a Yes vote in September.

The Tory-funded, Labour-fronted Better Together campaign has hired the willing services of the mainstream media for the past year to peddle their central lie: that a vote for independence is a vote for Alex Salmond and permanent SNP rule.

Their myth is starting to melt before the eyes of working class Scots, as not only the socialist vision of Scotland's future persistently advanced by the SSP gains ground, but also the apparent anti-independence Labour monolith cracks and crumbles.

Leading Labour Party figures and former Labour activists have boosted the momentum towards a Yes vote amongst Labour voters by openly declaring against the unionist dogma of Alistair Darling, Johann Lamont, Ed Miliband and their party.

Packed meeting

The biggest meeting called by Labour Party members for decades in Glasgow was the recent Labour for Independence rally. Well over 200 jam-packed into the STUC building to hear Labour veterans advocate a Yes vote with the purpose of being



ROOM FOR MORE: so many turned up for the Labour For Independence meeting at the STUC in Glasgow recently, extra rooms had to be opened

able to then elect a Labour government that pursued reforms such as a living wage, abolition of the Bedroom Tax, investment in public services, repeal of anti-union laws and removal of Trident.

New analysis by polling firm Ipsos/Mori proves a point identified by the founders of the Scottish Socialist Party over 15 years ago: class is the key determining factor in how people view independence, with the working class and the poorest most in favour, the richest overwhelmingly against.

It is hardly surprising that the rich minority favour continued rule by Westminster. They've been handsomely rewarded for decades by the competing factions of capitalist rule, whether Tory, Lib Dem or New Labour.

When working class people ponder whether independence would improve their living standards, a good starting point is to look at the proven, obscene advantages of UK rule for the rich,

which has robbed Scotland's working class majority of the vast wealth we create by our labour.

In the decade up to 2009, 75 per cent of the additional wealth produced went to those on above-average incomes. A monstrous 40 per cent of it was grabbed by the richest tenth of the population, those least in need of it. That in a period when wages and benefits were slashed, adding vastly to inequality as well as poverty.

And that wealth redistribution from the poor to the rich can't even be attributed to the hated Tories, whose continued rule at Westminster of course guarantees even worse attacks on working people: the entire decade covered by these figures involved a British Labour government!

A new term was coined last month: Fat Cat Wednesday. It refers to the fact that by mid-morning on Wednesday 8 January, just two-and-a-half days after they returned to work, the chief executives of the top 100 UK

companies had 'earned' more than the entire annual average salary of a worker in Britain – £26,500.

These obscenely bloated exploiters have enjoyed a 74 per cent rise in their incomes over the past 10 years – a period straddling both Labour and Coalition governments – whilst workers' wages have seen the slowest rise since 1871!

So much for the mantras of Gordon Brown, Alistair Darling, Johann Lamont and Ed Miliband about us being 'better together', 'united for Labour', 'sharing social justice'.

No matter which stripe of capitalist party is in charge, Westminster is rule by the rich, the dictatorship of capital, in defiance of the wishes of the Scottish people. Voting Yes is the first step to escaping that endless round of suffering for the working class majority population.

Socialist measures

But the SSP regards that as only the start, a means to an end, with a Yes vote kicking the door open to a chance to elect a government of the left, with the powers and political will to tackle poverty and inequality with far-reaching redistribution of wealth and power.

The SSP is helping to forge a force that here and now demands socialist measures after independence is gained, leaving nothing to chance, not relying on the goodwill or whims of any pro-capitalist politicians, but trying to create a



INDY LEFT ALTERNATIVE: SSP national co-spokesperson Colin Fox at November 2013's sold out Radical Independence Conference. Ex-Lothians MSP Colin sits on the Yes Scotland Advisory Board PHOTO: Craig Maclean

movement of working class people that will demand and enforce that change through democratic self-government.

And a socialist vision of Scotland is critical to convincing a majority to vote Yes and thereby win the first ever real chance of socialist change.

That's why we call on the broad coalition that is Yes Scotland to have the courage to go beyond the boundaries set by the SNP government's White Paper. Of course Yes Scotland cannot be expected to adopt the entire socialist programme of the SSP.

But they should acknowledge the growing impact of demands like a guaranteed living minimum wage, abolition of all the anti-trade union laws that have helped drive down workers' living conditions, and public ownership of not only Royal Mail but the likes of transport and energy to banish the atrocities of profiteering and fuel poverty.

Such a prospectus for independence would sweep aside the

vicious myths that voting Yes is voting for separation, isolation and narrow nationalism – the lies peddled by the Labour wing of Better Together in particular, as their unique contribution to confusing and terrifying traditional Labour voters into being saddled with more decades of exploitation by bosses and billionaires whose political parrots rule from Westminster.

Sham consultation

Trade union bosses have mostly either remained neutral on the Yes/No choice, or foisted their union's support for the No campaign on members who have not even been asked their opinions in any democratic fashion.

Udswal leaders didn't even pretend to ask the opinions of Scottish members before affiliating to Better Together. But low paid retail workers, hamstrung by anti-union laws, are wide open to the case for a living wage of £9 an hour as advocated by the SSP, and a charter of workplace rights.

GMB union leaders held a sham consultation before declaring for the No campaign, but are now desperately scrambling to distance themselves for the Tory-funded Better Together, as they realise GMB members are tempted to vote Yes to permanently escape Tory ruination of the NHS, local government and other areas they work in.

The CWU has held a series of debates. They should now respect the opinions expressed at these by members, rather than foist a call for a No vote via the UK-wide CWU conference, as many members fear the leadership plan to do. When the chair of Royal Mail, who worked in tandem with the Tories to privatize it, says independence is "the exact opposite of what we need", surely that adds to the case for a Yes amongst posties?!

The working class holds the key to Scotland's future. They are rightly hostile to the assaults on jobs, pay, benefits, services and our rights from the Etonian boot-

boys at Westminster. But many are also rightly sceptical of an SNP leadership who pledge Corporation Tax cuts to the multinationals alongside promises of welcome social reforms.

But those are not the only choices. Voting Yes does not make you a nationalist nor a supporter of indefinite SNP government. It makes you a democrat who favours the Scottish people actually getting the governments they vote for. And it would kick open the door to radical socialist change that would transform workers' lives.

The SSP will continue to convince working class people and trade unionists to not only vote Yes but get organised to demand such change after a Yes vote. We appeal to the very people with most to gain from independence to see it as a chance to fight for the likes of a £9 national minimum wage at 16; equal pay for women; state pensions and an education grant linked to the minimum wage; abolition of anti union laws; democratic public ownership of energy, transport, banks, big business... Steps towards an independent, nuclear-free, poverty-free, socialist Scotland.

We will continue to combine with others such as Trade Unionists for Independence, Labour for Independence and RIC to win the working class majority away from the clutches of those who have been their worst exploiters for decades.

UKIP nightmare

The ice is breaking under the feet of those Labour and trade union leaders who prefer the threat of Tory or Tory/UKIP rule at Westminster to the opportunity of a Labour government or a genuine government of the left in an independent Scotland.

Join forces with the SSP in turning up the heat, melt the myths of the Labour leaders in the eyes of those workers whose loyalty they've abused for decades, and help carve out a socialist future for Scotland and beyond.

Book review: *The Case For Left Wing Nationalism* by **Stephen Maxwell** (Luath Press 2013, £9.99)

by *Alex Miller*

IN THE 1970s and earlier the prevailing view within the SNP was that a shared sense of Scottish identity could provide the basis for convincing a majority of Scots to support the party's call for independence. The SNP pitched its case for independence in terms of a romantic conception of nationhood, and had a tendency to distance itself from class politics.

The SNP has come some way since then. In part by adopting policies pioneered by the Scottish Socialist Party (such as abolishing prescription charges and introducing free school meals), it is now able to comprehensively outplay the Labour Party in Scotland by positioning itself to the left of the erstwhile dominant force in Scottish politics.

Shift to the right

Even under a system of proportional representation it has been able to form a majority government in the Scottish Parliament. While this has been facilitated by Labour's pronounced shift to the right since the 1980s, it is also due to SNP activists and

THE CASE FOR LEFT WING NATIONALISM

Vision matters even more than realism – I doubt if anything more telling on the spirit of this coming moment will be published than the essays here, from a great thinker and activist.

Stephen Maxwell

Foreword by Tom Nairn
Edited by Jamie Maxwell

intellectuals such as Stephen Maxwell, who argued that the SNP's credibility with both working class and middle class voters depended on it "pursuing a consistent line on the key issues of the day based on an analysis of Scotland's economic and social needs".

Rather than looking to Scotland's past, activists like Maxwell argued that it should look to the future, and through a socialist analysis aim "to establish itself as the radical Scottish alternative to

the Labour Party". Maxwell, who died in 2012, was chair of the left-wing '79 group in the SNP, and in 1981 was expelled from the party, along with Alex Salmond (now Scotland's First Minister) and Kenny McAskill (now Justice minister in the Scottish Government).

In this stimulating and timely collection of his writings from the mid-1970s up until 2011, Maxwell explores the case for Scottish independence that can be constructed on the basis of

broadly left wing arguments. The essays make for fascinating reading and are a very welcome addition to the current ferment of political debate in the lead up to the independence referendum.

While arguing that the prospects for a social democratic Scotland along the lines of the Nordic countries lie in the direction of independence rather than in the return of a Labour majority in Westminster, Maxwell is clear that independence is only a necessary and not a sufficient condition for progressive change, and he is not uncritical of the current SNP Government: in one of the later essays in the volume he points to the great tension between the SNP's current advocacy of a Scandinavian social model that is to be based somehow on an economic policy more akin to the neoliberalism of the (failed) Irish "Celtic Tiger".

SSP's analysis

In many ways, then, Maxwell's critique corresponds to the SSP's analysis.

With the independence referendum looming, it's understandable that in the interests of time, the book has been published without an index or a bibliography. Hopefully the publisher will remedy this in a subsequent reprint or second edition.



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Sillars's socialist programme for independence

Book review: *In Place Of Fear II: A Socialist Programme For An Independent Scotland* by **Jim Sillars** (Vagabond Voices 2014, £4.95)

by *John McAllion*

IN NYE Bevan's seminal work *In Place of Fear*, first published in 1952, Labour's then leading socialist began by posing the questions "where does power lie?" and "how can it be attained by the workers?"

Described by his disciple and posthumous biographer Michael Foot as Bevan's "classic description of democratic socialism", *In Place of Fear* unashamedly made the case for the British Parliamentary road to socialism.

At that time and for the next 25 years there was no serious challenge on the left to Bevan's core idea that wealth and power could only be redistributed in favour of working people through Labour governments democratically controlling and using the full range of economic

and social powers vested in a sovereign Westminster parliament. The disappointment of the Wilson and Callaghan governments, the Thatcher and Major years and the betrayals of Blair and Brown all lay in a future that Bevan would never see. In 1952, Scottish nationalism too was scarcely a blip on the horizon. A single by-election victory in Motherwell in 1945 would be followed by decades in which the SNP were consigned to the political wilderness.

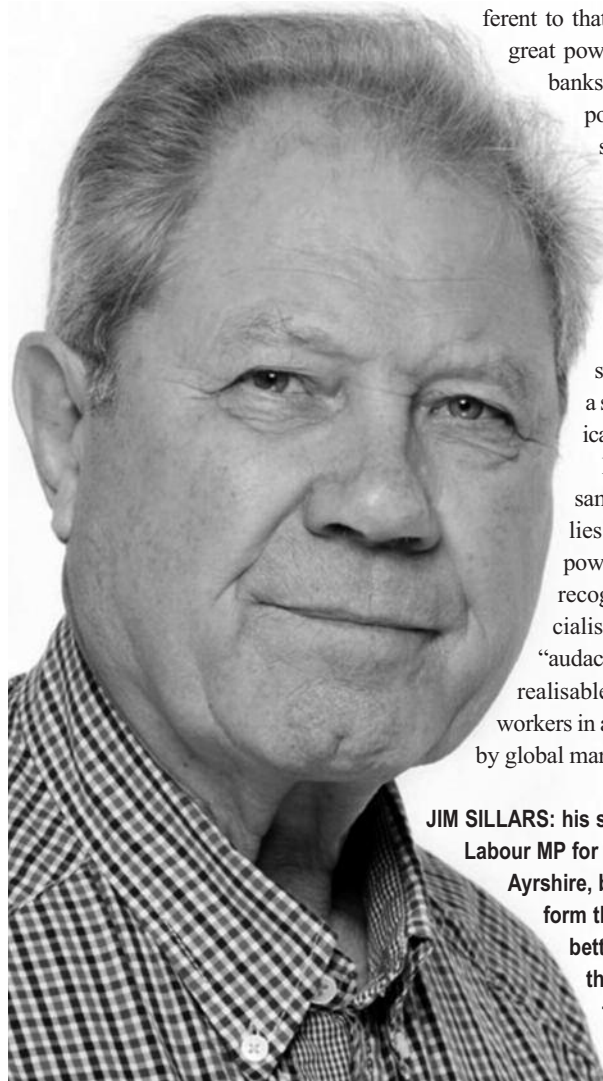
Bevan's *In Place of Fear* therefore lacked any serious contemporary challenge from a socialist or nationalist perspective. His belief in the "sovereignty of the people in parliament" as a sword held by workers and pointed at the heart of capitalism remained in its time the common sense of post-war British socialist politics.

Loans and food banks

More than 60 years later, Jim Sillars, has published a reworking of Bevan's themes in his own version of the old socialist's work, *In Place of Fear II*. Sillars here describes a Britain very different to that of Bevan's day. The one time great power has become a land of "food banks, pay day loans and unremitting poverty"; the old cross party consensus around the welfare state has become a new political consensus behind massive post-2015 spending cuts that will finally destroy what is left of our welfare state; a formerly powerful trade union movement now suffers humiliation at the hands of a single billionaire owner at a chemical plant in Grangemouth.

Like Bevan, Sillars addresses the same questions about where power lies and how workers can take power into their own hands. He also recognises, as Bevan did, that if socialists are to succeed they must be "audacious" and "sensible" in pursuing realisable objectives that will benefit workers in an world increasingly dominated by global markets.

JIM SILLARS: his story as he moved from a Labour MP for the socialist heartland of South Ayrshire, broke with British Labour to form the Scottish Labour Party to better fight for self government and then on to the SNP as a leading figure is part of the fabric of the socialist and independence movement in the modern era



Unlike Bevan, however, he sees the British Parliament as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Scottish socialism, he argues, will be and can only be renewed by the challenge of Scottish independence. A detailed analysis of Sillars' socialist programme for an independent Scotland is well beyond the scope of this current article. It is one man's programme and will lack neither supporters nor critics. His opposition to wind turbines and support for shale gas and fracking will be controversial. So too will his ideas on replacing Council Tax and business rates with a Land Value Tax. His balking at the wholesale renationalisation of our electricity and gas companies is unlikely to be met with universal approval.

Yet, *In Place of Fear II* remains an ambitious, refreshing and long overdue statement of the socialist case for an independent Scotland. It bristles with denunciations of capitalism no mainstream politician would dare utter today. Poverty and inequality can only be tackled, he writes, by taking from the rich and giving to the poor. Capitalism, he reminds us is "a system governed by an amoral principle: that investment will take place only when it can produce a profit". Unlike capitalism, he sees socialism as having the moral purpose of abolishing poverty and creating a fair society. "It is time", he thunders, "to challenge capitalism once again."

Labour disappointment

This kind of language used to be the stock-in-trade of Labour politicians. Bevan's theme of using parliamentary power to redistribute wealth and power in favour of working people was the glue that had held Scottish workers fast to his parliamentary road to socialism. A post-war generation came of age in Scotland believing that the end destination of that road would be an increase in public ownership, more progressive taxation and social protection from the cradle to the grave. Most of them looked to the Labour Party to deliver those ideals through the British state. Most of them, of course, have been sorely disappointed.

It is no surprise therefore that many leading Labour figures from that generation have now declared their intention of voting yes to independence in September. Former Labour MPs, ex-Labour Lord Provosts and council leaders, leading trade unionists have all broke with their former party's line and are now firmly in the Yes camp. These veteran socialists will recognise in *In Place of Fear II* the kind of democratic socialism they have always believed in. They will realise too that, in today's world, that kind of socialism can only be won through the break-up of the same state they had once put their faith in.



ICONIC: Pete Seeger with Bernice Johnson Reagon at the Poor People's March, Washington in 1968

by Voice Reporter

AS THE Voice went to press, news of the death of iconic US folk singer and campaigner for peace, workers and civil rights, Pete Seeger, was announced.

Seeger was a towering figure in the US folk scene for over 60 years and his music was inseparable from the progressive causes of the period from facing down the anti-communist witch hunts, backing workers' struggles, marching for civil rights and opposing US wars from Vietnam to Iraq.

A full obituary will appear in the next issue of the Voice.

'Talking to people on my first SSP stall brought home how many have similar concerns and struggle with the cost of living...'

Helen O'Gorman recently joined the SSP in Dundee. She tells the Voice why...

I HAVE recently joined the Dundee SSP branch and am at the beginning of a steep learning curve, having always been a socialist, but keeping political discussions within the confines of family and friends. Our monthly branch meetings are always interesting and challenging, a change from my usual life of day to day domestic and child care concerns. Talking to people on my first time at the SSP stall in the centre of Dundee, while petitioning against the rises in fuel bills, has brought home to me how many people have similar concerns and struggle with the cost of living.

Among the many issues facing so many people are the problems affecting the community because of the selling off of council houses. This led my neighbour and I to start up a residents association in the council area of the village I lived in previously. Worst affected were the three blocks of flats, about two thirds were in private ownership with common areas neglected and

falling into disrepair. The residents attempted maintenance but this required agreements from the council and owners before and after getting quotes, this took a lot of time and effort, not to mention the money collection, and not too many people volunteered. It was a difficult situation and sad to see the growing differences between the big new homes being built and what seemed like the wilful neglect of working class areas – to what end?

This was one of the many issues building up that concerned me, so I started to look for an alternative to the mainstream right wing 'norm'. So last summer when the independence referendum, and the questions it raised for me, made me look for answers I wanted to hear from real people, not just the media and politicians from the main parties.

In my opinion they have their own interests served by Westminster holding on to Scotland, whilst continuing the myth that Scotland is financially reliant on the Union.

I attended a few public meetings with speakers from several political, environmental and local action groups and was inspired by the energy and drive for fundamental



HELEN O'GORMAN

change and social justice. I didn't agree with everything I heard but this focussed me on what was important to me. I wasn't sure if I would find any one group I would agreed with!

While I knew that public ownership of services, decent social housing, education, workers rights, taxing the rich instead of cutting welfare and an end to the demonisation of the working class were compatible with a left wing agenda, my environmental concerns were important too. Having grown up with the threat of nuclear war and disasters at nuclear power plants on the news, getting rid of Trident and having clean, renewable energy are very important to me. Another important part of quality of life is cul-

ture and the arts, having worked in theatres in my slightly younger days, I appreciate how the arts can open new worlds and ideas up to people and help cross barriers of race and culture through shared experience, not to mention a bit of fun or escapism every now and again.

After seeing the Dundee SSP banner at the Yes rally in Edinburgh last year I looked online for more information on policies and found that the SSP's environmental policies covered these concerns as well as supporting publicly owned, and free, public transport. Sport, culture and the arts are well represented too, another box ticked!

For about 15 years now I've worked with young children and appreciate the effect a good start in life can have, the basics of care, education, nutrition and opportunity to experience as much as the world has to offer. So much of this opportunity is denied because of financial restrictions parents have to cope with, limiting quality of life for families and leaving young people with little to aim for or look forward to.

My hope is for equality and opportunity in a socialist future, I'm looking forward to being a part of that.

by Bill Bonnar

Pro-indy left grows in Catalonia and Basque Country

ON 14 January an estimated 70,000 people demonstrated in the Basque city of Bilbao demanding no return to violence and concessions on the holding of Basque political prisoners.

These demands included ending the harassment of these prisoners and their moving to prisons in the Basque region. At the moment they are held in prisons as far away from their homes as possible; a tactic aimed as much at punishing their families as punishing the prisoners.

The issue of the almost 900 Basque political prisoners being held in Spanish jails and what is widely seen as draconian and vengeful treatment on the part of the authorities is uniting vast swathes of Basque public opinion as was shown by the protest in Bilbao.

The demonstration also illustrates the rise of Basque independence movement and in particular the emergence of Bildu as the largest left wing movement in Europe. Euskal Herria Bildu rose out of the banning of ETA's political wing Batasuna in 2003 and ETA's unilateral ceasefire declaration in 2010.

Left vision

The aim was to create a legal and broad based movement which could unite people around a left vision of an independent Basque state. The party proposes public ownership of key industries, policies to reduce inequality, the strengthening of democracy and an end to repression. It argues for an independent Basque state within the European Union and has an ultimate aim of socialism.

In the most recent elections to the Basque Parliament in 2012 it gathered 25 per cent of the vote, gained 21 seats and emerged as the second largest party in the country. In fact in some large cities like San Sebastian it emerged as the largest



BILDU BUILDS: Basque left party Bildu proposes public ownership of key industries, policies to reduce inequality, and an end to repression

party. The rise of Bildu has shaken the Spanish government and the more conservative Basque political parties.

Bildu continues to suffer targeted repression and this alongside the treatment of the political prisoners is seen, by some, as a deliberate attempt to provoke the movement into returning to the armed struggle.

Events in the Basque Country allied to similar events in Catalonia are leaving the Spanish Government looking increasingly beleaguered. The recent decision by the Catalan Parliament to hold a referendum on Independence was rejected as illegal by Madrid much to the derision of most people in Catalonia.

Fuelled by a seemingly never ending economic crisis, the Spanish state, as currently constituted, is seen as unfit for pur-

pose. This economic crisis, characterised by mass unemployment, particularly among young people, the collapse of the housing sectors and a series of financial scandals which have outraged most people has led to many to look for left alternatives, no more so than in Catalonia and the Basque Country.

This has pushed the pro-independence movements to the left with many arguing that independence cannot be seen as an end in itself but rather the means to a better society.

The Spanish state, like the United Kingdom, was always an imperialist construct in which the dominant Castilian state centred on Madrid expanded through conquest and absorption into neighbouring regions.

This reached its most extreme form under General Franco's

fascist regime when Catalonia and the Basque Country were held under conditions of severe repression with attempts to wipe out the national identities of both regions. Even the respective languages were banned.

The ending of fascist rule and the development of regional government was meant to offset more radical moves towards independence but this has now run its course. The likelihood is that both regions will become independent in the foreseeable with only the terms of that independence to be worked out.

The rise of left parties and movements in Catalonia and the Basque Country has also galvanised the more conservative political elements in these countries. Fearful of being outflanked on the left they have become more strident in their calls for independence, tougher sounding in their discussions with Madrid and have even adopted some of the radical demands of the left. Their aim is to make sure that when independence comes it is they and not the left leading the process.

Strong links

What is happening in Spain has echoes of events in Scotland with intense interest in Catalonia and the Basque Country around the referendum. The belief is that if Scotland can break free of Britain and establish independence this will help galvanise their own movements.

There are also growing links between the left in Scotland and similar movements in Spain. These links have their origins in Scottish support for the Spanish Republic during the civil war and in solidarity work during the dark days of Franco rule.

More recently there have been strong links forged between the Scottish Socialist Party and the socialist movements in Catalonia and the Basque Country.

These links will become all the stronger as all three countries emerge into independence.

Richie Venton speaks to **Gerry McMahon** – worker in the Glasgow DWP and life-long PCS union activist – about the issues facing civil and public service workers in the Scottish referendum, and the response of his trade union

'Indy vote would make workers far better off'

SOME TRADE unions have declared against independence without even pretending to hold a discussion amongst their members. Others wielded the opinions of UK-wide conferences to join the anti-independence Better Together camp, before even consulting their Scottish members, or allowing an informed debate.

The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) is the fifth largest in the country. It is led by a majority on its national executive from the PCS Left Unity grouping, which embraces members of the SSP, other socialist groups, Labour Party and non-aligned left-wingers, and describes itself as 'the socialist group in PCS'.

As a union PCS are taking a radically different route to deciding their stance on the Scottish referendum. They are pursuing a procedure first called for in the SSP PCS annual conference bulletin two years ago, by holding a conference of all Scottish PCS branches to shape the decision of the subsequent UK-wide PCS conference, with circulation of written material from all sides to every union member prior to branch debates and the Scottish PCS conference of branches.

I spoke to longstanding, leading PCS union activist and SSP member Gerry McMahon about the issues facing civil and public service workers around the referendum. Gerry is chair of the big Glasgow DWP branch of the union, and a member of the PCS Scottish Committee.

Richie: What's happening in PCS in the run-up to the referendum?

Gerry: Our union is holding a conference of all Scottish branches on 22 February to decide whether the union calls for a Yes or No vote, or no recommendation one way or the other. Prior to that local PCS branches are holding members' meetings to debate independence and mandate delegates to the Scottish conference.

What's the view of the left in PCS, the PCS Left Unity group?

In early January the Left Unity group within PCS held a Scottish conference where we thoroughly debated the issue and voted overwhelmingly for



GERRY McMAHON

independence, with very little opposition. In fact the real debate was whether to call for independence or take a neutral stance as a union. SSP members in PCS spoke out clearly and unequivocally – as we've done for years – for our union to advocate independence. We warned that neutrality in the referendum on the part of our union would be tantamount to siding with the anti-independence Better Together campaign, because the capitalist, millionaire press already spews out their lies and scare stories on a daily basis, impacting on our union members like on everyone else. We think PCS, as a leading progressive force, is duty bound to campaign for a Yes vote as a real opportunity to then create a more egalitarian Scotland.

How would you answer the allegations from Better Together that civil service workers in various government departments would face potential loss of jobs and conditions under independence?

The leading lights in Better Together have been the biggest enemies of civil service workers. The Tories have attacked trade unionism, including their ban on unions at GCHQ, their privatisation of big chunks of the civil and public services where we work. They broke up national pay bargaining, leading to obscene pay differences between workers doing the same jobs. New Labour, the other major players in Better Together, had 13 years in government to undo all that, but in fact made things even worse. They privatised the National Savings Bank (with its huge base in Glasgow), involving thousands

of jobs. They reinforced poverty pay, and announced 100,000 job cuts. So for these people to talk about workers being 'better together' is like King Herod making an argument for good childcare! The Tory-Lib Dem Coalition is carrying out 3,900 redundancies in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) right now; shutting down Inland Revenue Inquiry Centres; and last week announced privatisation of the Land Registry, causing terrible uncertainty for thousands of staff. So the idea we are 'better together' in the UK borders on farce.

What specific case would you and other SSP members in the union put for independence?

SSP members in the PCS union understand there is a cynicism about politicians, about them being liars. And the idea put forward by the SNP that you can cut Corporation Tax and bring about better lives for workers at the same time is a nonsense. Our vision of independence is markedly different from the SNP's, and we will continue to carve out that distinctive socialist approach to win over trade unionists and communities to voting Yes. For example, independence would open the door to a return to single National Pay Bargaining, ending the vast disparities in pay between government departments. It would allow real investment in public services, so we can collect taxes from the fat cats who avoid tax as a matter of routine. It would allow us to end the squandering of resources on illegal wars and nuclear weapons and redirect them to public services based in the communities where they're most needed. Better Together is close to non-existent within the PCS union. But this campaign is not just about convincing members to vote Yes, but to explain to workers how we can get out of this mess. The SNP promises to involve the trade unions after independence, which is welcome, but it is too woolly and non-specific. Those of us in the SSP will continue to argue for repeal of all the anti-union laws, to win the right to support each other in action on the old philosophy that 'an injury to one is an injury to all'. We want to inspire workers with our socialist vision of an independent Scotland, making working class people far better off.