

Food banks: DWP director says people 'welcome the jolt' of benefit sanctions
• see page 7

New pamphlet: For a Modern Democratic Republic by Colin Fox
• see pages 8&9

£1 • issue 439 • 30th May–12th June 2014
facebook.com/scottishsocialistvoice

Scottish Socialist Voice



ANOTHER FALSE FARAGE CLAIM AS HE BACKS THE NO CAMP

"I'M THE only politician keeping the flame of Thatcherism alive," says UKIP leader Nigel Farage.

No he isn't!

All the No men sing from the same hymn sheet, and:

- BACK ANTI-UNION LAWS
- BACK TRIDENT NUKES
- PAMPER THE RICH
- DEMONISE THE POOR
- CUT SERVICES
- BACK PRIVATISATION
- PUT PROFIT BEFORE PEOPLE

As Westminster takes another lurch towards a new Thatcherite nightmare of cuts, sackings, poverty and war, the Scottish Socialist Party says:

VOTE YES FOR A REAL ALTERNATIVE!



facebook.com/ScottishSocialistVoice



@ssv_voice

by Ken Ferguson

FIRST THE context.

Across England, the right wing populists of UKIP emerged from the Euro poll in first place. In Scotland, they came fourth, scraping a seat ahead of the Greens.

That is not complacency, simply fact. But that is not the same as suggesting that the UKIP surge is of no consequence for Scottish politics – it is.

Puzzled commentators who portray the UKIP rise as demonstrating an “anti-politics” mood which is part of a wider mood sweeping both the UK and Europe really are missing the point. The truth is that since the rise of neoliberal economics, which removed all controls on big capital and saw de-industrialisation and mass job cuts undermining living standards, mainstream politicians have increasingly acted as cheerleaders for the fat cats.

UKIP coverage

This process, underway since the Thatcher era and carried on by a deeply compromised New Labour, was masked in the era of cheap and easy credit which ended with the 2008 crash.

Now a brutal reality of falling wages, insecure jobs, benefit cuts and zero hours contracts faces millions and the mainstream parties have no coherent answer since they are actually part of the problem as supporters of the system causing it.

This is the underlying cause of the support for the apparently easy answers offered by UKIP and their European counterparts.

That this was in large measure driven by the saturation coverage of UKIP offered by the mainstream media is part of the reason for their sweeping gains and

Time to be bold in wake of Euro poll



FOUR SHADES OF BLUE: UKIP, Labour and the ConDems offer nothing but different brands of Thatcherism

Now a brutal reality of falling wages, insecure jobs, benefit cuts and zero hours contracts faces millions and the mainstream parties have no coherent answer since they are actually part of the problem as supporters of the system causing it...

a Scottish seat where they are a negligible presence on the ground. However, it also has implications both for the broad sweep of progressive opinion in Scotland and the role it must play in the drive to win a Yes vote in September.

Tentative discussions last year about the possibilities of a Red/Green candidate or slate came to nothing, yet the figures indicate that such a formation might just have mobilised sufficient extra votes to win the last Euro seat and halt UKIP.

More widely it also underlines the urgent need for the ideas and vision of the left

and green forces campaigning for a Yes vote to get beyond the pages of the broadsheet press and present concrete proposals to voters in a clear and popular form.

Loyalty to a party or group cannot be allowed to stand in the way of such an approach, and talk of any one force playing the leading role is this task are deeply unhelpful.

Both the SSP and the Voice have proposed that a way that this can be achieved could be through a Common Programme for the left, covering a range of policies in a succinct statement of what a Yes vote can deliver.

Issues in such a programme could include workers rights, public ownership of green energy, ambitious targets for rented house building, action on low pay and zero hours among others.

Such an approach leaves open discussion of the contents of such a programme and, crucially, does not require the building of new organisations or parties but the support of the existing parts of the independence left.

Key battle

The prospect of a No vote, followed by a Tory/UKIP victory, is indeed close to a Doomsday scenario not just for Scottish democracy but our entire social fabric.

The Euro poll makes the task of winning a Yes vote even more urgent, and in that key battle the role of the left in mobilising the working class majority is central.

by Colin Fox

The prospects for a Yes vote after Euro election

AS THE polls predicted, the right wing UKIP has again dominated the European elections in Britain, winning more votes and more seats than any other party.

And although Farage's party trailed in behind the SNP, Labour and the Tories in Scotland, some 140,000 Scots voted for their 'dog-whistle' brand of racist politics to elect their first representative here. Why did they win? And what are the likely consequences for the independence referendum?

Incredible as it may seem, UKIP, with its Home Counties base and right wing views, are regarded not just as an anti-EU and anti-immigrant party but also as 'outsiders' by the British political establishment. The more Nigel Farage is attacked by the chattering classes and the metropolitan political elite, the more popular he appears to become.

Merchant bankers

This is a remarkable achievement given he is himself part of that elite. Here is a public school-boy, millionaire merchant banker and former Tory, now masquerading as a 'rebel' who sticks two fingers up to EU bureaucrats and corrupt Westminster politicians whilst blaming immigrants and claimants for a crisis cause by merchant bankers!

Whatever else may be said about his odious, reactionary message it is clear, simple and often repeated. UKIP dominated these elections with a view that is not difficult to comprehend.

Those looking for simple answers, easy scapegoats and an



DIFFERENT COUNTRIES: Nigel the first of England, fourth of Scotland, was never off our TV screens and his message was sponsored by several tabloid newspapers

'ordinary guy' hero rushed to him in their droves. His face was never off our TV screens and his message was sponsored by several tabloid newspapers.

Millions of Britons in the middle of the worst recession in 80 years have seen their wages fall 17 per cent on average since 2010 whilst the cost of basic commodities like gas and electricity has doubled. Yet instead of turning to the left for answers, they have turned to the right.

Whilst the turnout in Scotland was only 33 per cent, there is widespread revulsion at the political elite who are seen as both corrupt and completely out of touch with ordinary people and their lives. Like it or not, for millions of voters immigration is now the 'dog whistle' issue at the centre of British politics.

We are asked by UKIP to ignore the fact that immigrants make this country wealthier by coming here, that they pay far more taxes into the UK Treasury than they take out, that our NHS and other key services benefit enormously from their labour, that immigrants come here for work not for paltry benefits, that young workers from Poland and Spain have halted Scotland's population decline, that our quality of life is greatly improved by multiculturalism and that Scots themselves have emigrated for centuries in search of a better life.

The right has persuaded some people that the collapse in their living standards has been caused by immigrants and claimants (who either work too cheaply or not at all) rather than the bankers and corporate capitalism. This ex-

plains why the right has done so well in these elections and the left, such as it is, has done so badly.

The left must do much better in clarifying our message, delivering it with aplomb and confronting the racism of UKIP and its Tory, Labour and Lib Dem 'bedfellows' in this debate.

The results of these elections will of course be fiercely contested in so far as they tell us anything about the independence debate. The Yes side argued UKIP was a xenophobic, far-right, English party by and large rejected by voters here.

Grip of xenophobia

That view is undermined somewhat by the fact 140,000 Scots voted for them. Yet Scotland by and large does reject racist xenophobia whilst England is in the grip of it. UKIP topped the poll in England whereas they came fourth in Scotland.

However, it would have been much better for Yes if UKIP had not secured a Euro seat here.

Finally the last word on these elections goes to that 'expert' on Scottish politics, the Bradford MP George Galloway who apparently suggested UKIP and the SNP were merely 'two cheeks of the same arse'. This idiotic remark surely secures for Galloway the title of the biggest 'arse' in Scottish politics today?

Always the bridesmaid: further disappointment for Greens

THE SCOTTISH Greens' failure will again disappoint those who felt they were the best electoral vehicle for halting UKIP's drive into Scotland.

They secured 8.5 per cent of the vote (up

from 7.5 per cent in 2009). This suggests they lack wider appeal as 'the torchbearer of radical and progressive politics in Scotland' as their election press releases claimed. Writing in

Bella Caledonia, Mike Small of the Scottish Independence Convention went even further:

"The harsh truth is the Greens lack charisma, popularism and bite. The SGP is

rootless and unable to reach beyond the Guardianista."

In due course, the Greens shall reflect on what might have been.

Had they joined a Red/Green alliance proposed by some in

the Greens and the SSP this time last year, it could have made the difference. And it might also have been the test bed for a similar initiative in the more fruitful Holyrood elections of 2016.

by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

THE ELECTION of 24 UKIP MEPs; the fact they topped the poll in England; their massively increased share of the vote (up 11 points since 2009 to 27.5 per cent) and the open calls of some Tories for a pact or coalition with them for Westminster governments, should be a loud, frightening wake-up call to workers in Scotland who are pondering what to do on 18 September.

Largely buried from view by the sycophantic media that has consciously built them up as a means to siphon off the growing disgust with the mainstream parties that might otherwise be attracted to voices on the left – is UKIP’s rank hypocrisy and their viciously anti-working class agenda.

UKIP appeals to people ruined by the crisis in capitalism. The likes of small business people and sections of workers facing destitution and desperation due to the chronic shortage of decent jobs and housing.

UKIP corruption

Untrammelled capitalism, deregulated under successive Tory and Labour governments, has meant a cataclysmic shock to people’s systems, their sense of stability, so some grab at UKIP’s easy sounding explanations: their scapegoating of immigrants, their denunciation of EU bureaucracy, their demonisation of the allegedly ‘work-shy’, and their railing against the corruption of the three big pro-capitalist parties in Britain.

The hypocrisy and inconsistency of UKIP on these issues is nauseating – but rarely if ever exposed by a media which has hoisted them to prominence rather than risk the anger of ruined workers finding a voice on the socialist left. Whilst thundering against corruption and ‘foreigners’, UKIP’s election strategist was Neil Hamilton, former Tory

UKIP: no friend to workers

MP, expelled from Westminster for taking cash in brown envelopes off Mohamed al Fayed.

In the same vein, Farage claimed £2million in expenses as an MEP up to the year 2009 – and chose his German wife from amongst 400 (British) applicants for the job of his parliamentary secretary.

Two of the twelve UKIP MEPs elected in 2004 were expelled for money laundering and false accounts.

Farage was recently rumbled for his secret tax account – a tax dodge – in the Isle of Man, but the mainstream media let it drop as an issue after a few days, in stark contrast to their hounding of so-called benefit cheats, day and daily, for years.

So much for UKIP’s anti-corruption ticket – a potent weapon of appeal amongst a population heartily sick of the corruption of British politics.

UKIP’s brutal anti-immigrant propaganda has not and can not be countered by any of the big

parties in Westminster, for the simple reason they first created the platform for UKIP to pour out their bile, and because they Tory to one extent or another share their scapegoating of ‘foreigners’ for the unemployment and poor housing blighting capitalist Britain.

Right wing claptrap

Not a word from the British establishment that contrary to the xenophobic rants of UKIP, the NHS depends on 40 per cent of its nursing staff and 30 per cent of its doctors coming from abroad, and that it would collapse without immigration.

Not a single headline to highlight the Manchester University report that last year alone, immigrants to the UK contributed (in taxes) over £8.8billion more than they took back in any form of benefit.

One incident sums up the fact that UKIP is dragging the other major parties to the right, rather than Labour countering their

right wing British nationalist claptrap: UKIP pounded the Tories into declaring a ban on all access to benefits and the NHS to immigrants for their first two years of residence.

Labour rightly denounced this as terrible...and then said they would only do it for the first ONE year!!

It’s impossible to counter UKIP on jobs, wages, housing and immigration without advocating a socialist solution to the problems causing havoc to millions facing the consequences of capitalism’s crash.

We need masses of work done, for instance, to tackle homelessness, slum housing, overcrowding and fuel poverty. If the government funded councils and local housing associations to build, renovate and insulate hundreds of thousands of houses in Scotland in the lifespan of the first independent parliament, that would create jobs and apprenticeships, as well as cutting poverty. And the



BRITANNIA WAIVES THE RULES: two of the twelve UKIP MEPs elected in 2004 were expelled for money laundering and false accounts

jobs could be well paid, with a decent living minimum wage, which would counter the ‘race to the bottom’ favoured by capitalist employers and successive Westminster governments. And if some of those doing the work came from abroad, most people wouldn’t care, so long as there were plenty of jobs for all.

Add to that the potential Klondike available from green energy in Scotland, where hundreds of thousands could be employed to develop, build and operate clean energy supplies, not for private profit but for public need.

In turn these and other job-creating measures would require funding from progressive taxation of the obscenely rich – including the ten richest Scots who between them own wealth of £12billion – plus democratic public ownership of energy, construction, banking and transport.

And that’s a million miles from what UKIP offers working class people.

“I’m the only politician keeping the flame of Thatcherism alive.”

It wasn’t Cameron or Clegg who said that, though it could be! Nor Ed Miliband, though in practice it would be true of New Labour’s devotion to the so-called ‘free market’ and capitalist inequality. It was the ‘man of the people’, the cheeky chap down the pub, UKIP’s Nigel Farage.

Privatisation

UKIP has a totally contradictory clutch of policies, designed to fool different people into backing them.

They openly support privatisation of the NHS, to permit people to jump the queue by being able to pay for it.

They want to privatise big chunks of the education system, with vouchers for parents to buy places in private schools.

They generally want more ‘free trade’, ‘deregulation’ of business and rampant privatisation – former City of London trader Farage is truly keeping

the flame of Thatcherism alive. UKIP want to abolish the statutory 5.6 weeks of paid annual holidays workers have won in this country through generations of trade union struggle.

They even want to end statutory redundancy pay – ‘free trade’ capitalism means total freedom to exploit workers.

As well as opposing women on company boards on the grounds that UKIP think women are inferior players of poker, chess and bridge, they want to slash maternity pay by 50 per cent to a miserly £64 a week!

In the face of obscene new levels of inequality – which fuels the anger and disillusionment of millions with the traditional political parties who help create these conditions, which in turn UKIP taps into with populist demagogy – they advocate a flat rate income tax.

So under a UKIP (or Tory/UKIP coalition) Westminster government, low paid workers and the middle class

would pay proportionately far more of their incomes in tax than the bankers, mineral-exploiting capitalists, billionaires and landowners who dominate ownership of wealth.

Race to the top

UKIP plays on real fears and insecurities in the face of a storm of capitalist assaults on working class conditions.

But their policies would lay waste to all the concessions won by past generations of workers; divide the working class and therefore undermine our ability to fight back; and would mean an accelerated race to the bottom for working class people in the jungle of primitive capitalism UKIP favours.

Workers need Scottish independence to escape the prison of a Tory/UKIP government; unity in struggle against capitalist exploitation; and socialist change to ensure a ‘race to the top’ on jobs, wages, housing and democratic rights.

Bill Bonnar examines the European results

A DRAMATIC move to the right or a popular, if misguided, protest against the mainstream political establishment. The European elections results were a mixture of both.

In England, UKIP dominated the political landscape emerging as the largest party while in Scotland they sneaked in the back door claiming the last seat on the list.

Much has been made in the media about UKIP's result in Scotland but its breakthrough has been overstated. UKIP remain a marginal force in Scotland while driving much of the political agenda in England.

Across Europe there were big gains for the Radical Right with its heady mixture of racism, xenophobia and reactionary populism.

A common theme is that these parties have breaking the mould of established politics although it might be more accurate to say that the established political mould was never an accurate reflection of political reality and sometimes reality breaks through.

Establishment

What are described as the establishment parties are in fact parties of the Centre. These parties want to maintain the status quo and their main appeal to the electorate is one of competence. Which party can best manage the system in order to preserve it.

They share the same aims, operate to the same agenda and have more or less the same policies.

That's why there is no real difference between a Labour or Conservative government in Britain, between the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats in Germany or for that matter between the Democrats and Republicans in the United States.

Part of what happened was a backlash against this manufactured consensus; particularly as that consensus argued that there was no alternative to austerity and for the need to support



JOBBIK: the appeasement stance of centrist parties has fuelled a rise in far right movements across Europe

RIGHT GAINS ON HEADY MIX OF RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

those economic forces which caused the crash in 2008.

In Britain, the very sight of David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband – all looking and sounding identical – reinforced the sense that Britain was being governed by a metropolitan elite completely divorced from the lives of ordinary people.

The most worrying aspect in Britain and much of the rest of Europe is that this political disaffection has been exploited so successfully by parties of the Radical Right with big gains by the National Front in France and similar movements in countries as diverse as Hungary and Denmark.

Mass anger against austerity and what are seen as out of touch political elites have found easy targets in migrants and the EU policies which have allowed mass migration across the continent. Although the term Eurosceptic is often used to define these parties this is a red herring.

Most of their votes came from people for whom membership of the EU is not particularly high on their agendas. It was the overt racism and xenophobia of these

parties which allowed them to Hoover up so many votes.

This process was helped by the response from parties of the centre whether conservative or social democrat. Instead of confronting these poisonous movements their approach has been one of appeasement which has only served to legitimise many of their positions.

Whether it be the Conservatives in Hungary whose approach to the openly fascist Jobbik Movement has been to borrow many of their policies or the British Labour Party forever apologising for their immigration policies; their stances have only helped fuel these movements.

Some left gains

It was not all bad news. In some countries popular discontent resulted in increased support for the left most notably in Greece where the Syriza Movement topped the polls and in Spain where there were big gains for the United Left.

In Scotland too much thought has been given to the election of a UKIP MEP. While this has gone some way to spoil the narrative that Scotland and England

are divergent politically it is only up to a point. UKIP scraped in as the sixth of six MEPs with around 10 per cent of the vote.

There were two major reasons for this. One was the astonishing level of publicity the party received with the BBC, effectively pouring UKIP's English campaign into Scotland. In fact, UKIP received more publicity than all the other Scottish parties put together. Second, a tactical split in the anti-UKIP vote with many people voting SNP and others voting for the Greens in an attempt to stop UKIP's election.

If most of those tactical voters had voted decisively for one rather than the other, UKIP would not have been elected.

What cannot be denied is that the prospect of Labour winning the next general election is diminishing rapidly removing won the of the central planks of the No campaign in Scotland.

The next general election will be driven by an agenda set by UKIP with Labour and Conservatives running fast to catch up.

If that is not a reason to vote Yes in the referendum, what is?

by Sandra Webster

THE NORMALLY publicity-seeking Tory employment minister Esther McVey was asked to attend the Scottish Parliament's welfare committee late last month. She declined but instead sent Neil Couling, work services director of the DWP.

It really made no difference that the minister wasn't in attendance as the mandarin spoke with his master's voice. Using cold statistics as his weapon of choice, he attempted to explain that benefit sanctions were good for those who received them, and food bank use was not demand but supply led. He attributed the growth in their usage as people "maximising their economic choices".

Try telling this to the million plus Scots who have been forced to depend on food banks to survive this year. Couling blamed the increase on the Trussell Trust and their "evangelical mission" to have a food bank in every town. He claimed poor people just act the same as rich people in seeking personal gain. Try telling this to a young man who I spoke to yesterday who due to sanctioning has had no electricity in his home for the past four days. No light, heating or access to a hot meal. Is his having to access a food bank an optional extra?

'Welcome the jolt'

Couling had obviously been briefed to deny the link between benefit reforms and sanctions and food bank usage. He dismissed academic research as purely anecdotal. He said benefit sanctions were not meant to be punitive but a "wake up call." People "welcome the jolt".

Rather than describe the stories of individuals shared by the welfare committee he preferred to call them cases. After all when you dehumanise someone there is no need to think about the impact the benefit cuts and sanctions are having

Growth in food bank use just people 'maximising their economic choices'



NEIL COULING:
DWP director said some people 'welcome the jolt' of benefit sanctions

on them. Benefit sanctions have increased 209 per cent since 2006. They silently target people causing misery in everyday lives throughout Scotland.

People become more isolated and know no way to get advice and solidarity. They may be applied by job centres for trivial reasons including not applying for enough jobs on universal job match sites to being late for appointments. Those affected are given no benefit unless they apply for hardship allowance.

Some claim that there may be targets for individual advisers. Couling claimed that job centres had acted in error and were no longer applying this.

It is of interest though that when the Citizen's Advice Bureau in West Dumbartonshire published a damning report into the number of sanctions in their area, the number of sanctions applied decreased significantly. Like his Tory masters, Couling

refused to admit the link between food bank use and benefit reforms it had nothing to do with the DWP. Just an example of people "maximising their economic choices". Since when did poverty and hardship become an economic choice? Like the much maligned 'Toom Tabard', his words are empty and without meaning.

If you convert real lives to case studies it is much easier to implement policies that will impact on so many peoples' lives.

The reforms are part of a campaign to transform the benefit system. It will no longer be a safety net but will provide less than the basics people will need to survive. Couling was quick to compare the amount of people being fed in food banks in Canada to that of the UK.

The Trussell Trust estimated 60,000 people use food banks in the UK while 700,000 people are fed by them in Canada.

In Canada and America they are an essential part of the welfare system not an extra support. Rapidly we are moving towards the position that food banks become an integral part of our community. This would not be acceptable in an independent Scotland.

The language used by Couling shows how the thoughts of Iain Duncan Smith are being translated into the every day lives of people who are on work related benefits. They are accused of lying and using food banks, not out of necessity but to get extra. He compares the poor to the rich who can manipulate the tax system for their own greed but we know there is a vast chasm between their behaviour and the very basic human need of having enough to feed your family and yourself.

At a crossroads

After the Euro results, we are at a crossroads. We may end up with a UKIP/Tory coalition at Westminster. UKIP have been shady about their other views but for libertarian read every man for himself with cuts to services guaranteed, as well as the continuing diatribe of hatred towards the poor.

We also have the prospect of an independent Scotland with the opportunity for change.

A place where no one is left behind no matter their needs.

In the next few crucial months let's campaign for a Yes vote with all our strength. It is a prize worth winning.

The alternative looms in the shadows. Let's keep it there.

THE SSP will shortly publish the pamphlet *For a Modern Democratic Republic*. Written by SSP national co-spokesperson Colin Fox, the booklet highlights the need for an elected, representative and accountable head of state as part of the current debate on Scotland's constitutional future. Here is a taste of the pamphlet's contents.

"And is there anything more absurd than the hereditary principle? It is as absurd as the hereditary mathematician, or a hereditary poet laureate. The vanity and presumption of government from beyond the grave is the most ridiculous and indolent of tyrannies." – Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (1792).

Higher values

The SSP supports an independent socialist Scotland, a modern, democratic, republic. For socialists the entire concept of monarchy is antiquated, class ridden and anachronistic. The world today is guided by higher values of democracy, accountability and equality. This new SSP pamphlet sets out the case for a modern democratic republic and debunks many of the myths and facile arguments offered in its defence.

Our case for a republic stands in our nations finest democratic traditions.

For a modern democratic republic

The same spirit of enlightenment and progress that propelled Francis Hutcheson, Alexander Campbell, David Hume, Adam Smith, Dugald Stewart, Thomas Reid, Robert Burns, Adam Ferguson, John Playfair, Joseph Black and James Hutton in their rational, scientific search for progress and improvement in 18th century Scotland propels us today.

For the SSP, feudal institutions based on hereditary privileges and 'divine rights' passed down to monarchs from 'The Almighty' have no part to play in modern political structures and democratic constitutions let alone at their apex. The British monarchy is clearly not modern, it is

patently not democratic and it is certainly not egalitarian.

People have been making the case for a republic throughout the ages often in the face of severe punishments. They posed questions, as we do again today, because they arise inevitably and because the British political establishment continuously fails to provide satisfactory answers. Can the monarchy ever be defended on democratic grounds? What political role does the Queen play in UK society today? Is her role really as benign as her defendants would have us believe? Or does she in fact hold substantial 'Crown Powers' in reserve for future occasions?

Supporters of monarchy

often take this debate further than they intended and end up dismantling their own case. Take the Tory MP Nadine Dorres for example.

She claimed on television recently that "The Queen's presence on the throne has brought much needed order, stability and continuity to Britain for more than 60 years". If so, this common justification for the Monarchy exposes her to some very serious charges indeed. For the question inevitably arises where did she get those powers? After all monarchists like Dorres like to claim The Queen's is merely a ceremonial role? Clearly they cannot have it both ways.

SNP and monarchy

A more surprising advocate of the monarchy is Alex Salmond. The SNP leader insists in the recent White Paper on independence that "The Queen is Head of State of 15 Commonwealth countries and could easily perform the same function in an independent Scotland".

But our First Minister curiously fails to mention that the 53 other Commonwealth countries refuse to have the British monarch as their Head of State. And in Australia, for example, which has had three

Scottish Socialist Voice
subscriptions

To subscribe to the **Scottish Socialist Voice** – newspaper of the **Scottish Socialist Party** – fill in this form and send it to: **Scottish Socialist Voice, Suite 370, 4th Floor, Central Chambers, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6LD. Or telephone: 07810205747**
Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to 'Scottish Socialist Voice'
Find us on Facebook: [facebook.com/scottishsocialistvoice](https://www.facebook.com/scottishsocialistvoice) & Twitter: [@ssv_voice](https://twitter.com/ssv_voice)
View PDFs at: [scottishsocialistparty.org/category/socialist-voice](https://www.scottishsocialistparty.org/category/socialist-voice)

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

Email.....

I enclose: £5 for 2 issues £10 for 4 issues £20 for 8 issues



MONARCHY IN THE UK: the Queen and Prince Charles have repeatedly defied the democratic will of Parliament

referenda on the issue in recent years, half the country now wants to end this monarchical rule.

Jamaica, another of the 15 nations Alex Salmond cites, has just voted to drop The Queen and become a modern, democratic, republic. The New Zealand Prime Minister also went on record earlier this year to say he fully expects his country to be a republic by the end of the decade. And had Quebec secured its independence from Canada in its recent referendum it would also have replaced the Queen as Head of State forthwith.

So why does the First Minister not mention these facts? Could it be because he knows himself to be on very shaky ground indeed? Because ultimately, he pits Scotland against the democratic tide worldwide.

Whilst no one would argue Britain's political institutions are run directly from Buckingham Palace it would be equally foolish to suggest the monarchy plays no role in political life. It is most certainly not an institution content to amuse tourists, entertain foreign dignitaries or fill the pages of Hello magazine. After all The State Opening of Parliament is not yet a privilege

afforded to Posh and Becks or the latest winner of I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!

Those who would argue this is a benign institution might like to consider two recent articles from The Daily Telegraph and The Guardian that again reveal the Monarchy is not content to keep out of politics, far from it.

The Telegraph reported in January that "at least 39 Bills subject to Royal Approval have been vetoed by senior royals using their power to consent or block laws in areas such as higher education, paternity pay, child maintenance and Iraq".

Defying democracy

They reveal The Queen and Prince Charles repeatedly impeded the passage of Bills awaiting Royal Assent in order to press for their preferred changes, thus defying the democratic will of Parliament.

"Internal Whitehall papers prepared by the Cabinet Office lawyers," says The Telegraph, "show that the Queen vetoed the Military Actions Against Iraq Bill in 1999, which aimed to transfer the power to authorise military strikes against Iraq from the Monarch to Parliament". Meanwhile The Guardian has been locked in a nine-year legal battle with the Government over access to

correspondence between Prince Charles and successive Prime Ministers that allegedly show the heir to the British throne repeatedly tried to impede the will of Parliament.

The Guardian has been repeatedly thwarted by the UK Attorney General's Office, despite winning several court judgements, on the grounds "that it could cause constitutional problems that would seriously damage the Prince's ability to perform his duties when he became King as it casts doubt on his political neutrality". The Government believes publication of the correspondence "may undermine public support for the Monarchy".

The eminent legal scholar John Kirkhope highlights the gravity of such monarchical interference: "There has always been an implication that the monarchs prerogative powers are quaint and sweet but actually there is real influence and real power, albeit unaccountable."

It is clear from both these episodes that the powers of the Monarch real and exercised with astonishing regularity. These episodes serve to remind us of the powers held in reserve by the monarchy for rather more profound

challenges to the constitution. The late Christopher Hitchens put it best when he wrote (in *The Monarchy: A Critique of Britain's Favourite Fetish*, 1990): "Her Majesty's Ministers exercise the Royal Prerogative via 'The Crown in Parliament' avoiding the House of Commons altogether, make Orders in Council [Privy], declare war and make peace, recognise foreign Governments, sign treaties, grant Royal Pardons, grant Royal Charters, confer Honours, confer patronage, establish Royal Commissions – not an exhaustive list but neither is it a record of impotence."

Do people care? The polling company MORI estimates ten million people in Britain want a republic with almost half the population of Scotland said to prefer that option.

Oath protest

The SSP believes is it time for an honest and thorough debate. No other party has the our record of challenging the monarchy and upholding democracy in this country.

Our MSPs protested at having to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen.

We drafted the Declaration of Calton Hill – included in the index to this pamphlet – and we gathered with thousands of others to repeat our call for a modern, democratic, republic rather than attend The Queen's official opening of the new Holyrood building in October 2004.

Ours was the only party to do so. No other party in Scotland can hold a candle to the SSP's commitment to a modern, democratic republic.

We believe the wise words of Thomas Paine (from *National Intelligence*, 1802) still ring true regarding our political rights in the 21st century: "To elect, and to reject, is the prerogative of a free people everywhere."

RMT 'deeply concerned' at award of Scottish sleeper contract to SERCO

by Voice Reporter

RMT ACTING general secretary Mick Cash, commenting on the award of the Scottish sleeper service to SERCO on a 15-year franchise worth £800million, said: "RMT is deeply concerned that this important and prestigious service has been awarded to SERCO, a company with a truly shocking track record in the delivery of public services.

"Quite frankly, with their appalling list of failures in the UK and globally they should never have even been considered as contenders for the Scottish sleeper service. The logical option of public ownership was not even looked at.

Industrial action

"SERCO is a company that has a reputation for promising the earth and delivering quite the opposite as they seek to maximise profits and sweat their assets for every single penny piece. This union is also seriously concerned at reports of financial problems at SERCO and the recent investigations into company practices.

"RMT will be meeting with the other rail unions but I can make it crystal clear that if there is any threat to the jobs and conditions of the staff transferring across from First to SERCO it will be met with fierce resistance including the use of industrial action if required."



YOU KEEP IT ALL IN (THE BANK): Heaton presented an ASBO to Next managers in Glasgow PHOTO: Simon Whittle

Singer presents Next with ASBO

RETAIL WORKERS' union

GMB held a public protest with musician and outspoken socialist Paul Heaton outside Next's Argyle Street store in Glasgow on 22 May.

Ex-Housemartins singer Heaton and the GMB presented store managers with an ASBO for "failing to make work pay for Next staff". GMB say Next should pay wages and enough hours of work for people to live on and as a starting point they should pay £7.65 per hour.

GMB is supporting the current UK tour by Heaton and Jacqui Abbott. Paul and Jacqui used to front The Beautiful South, and have just released a new album,

What Have We Become.

Next employ 50,000 workers at over 500 stores, call centres and warehouses in the UK and Ireland.

In March, Next reported a 12 per cent increase in annual profits to £695million.

Next says it expects profits in 2014 to rise by up to £770million. Next said in January that it is generating more cash than can be invested in the business, so it will pay a special £300million pay out to shareholders.

Next currently pay £6.33 per hour to those 21 and over and £5.47 to those aged 18 to 20. Many jobs are for 12.5 hours per week or less in some stores.

If Next made work pay, staff wouldn't need their meagre wages to be topped up by taxpayers with family tax credits and housing benefits so as to make ends meet, say the GMB.

That Next is over-subscribed when it offers jobs is a reflection on the level of youth unemployment, not that Next jobs are so good.

Mick Rix, GMB National Officer for retail staff, said:

"That is why GMB is protesting outside Next stores as Paul and Jacqui's tour swings across Britain. GMB presented an ASBO to Next because it is an employer that does not face up to its social responsibilities."

Highland MSP John Finnie does a bit of time travelling...

Guns off our streets – starting with the police

IT'S THE summer of 2017, and a hot summer's night in the Highland capital of the newly independent Scotland.

Many of the population have been drinking all day. The town centre party gets out of hand and the armed police officers intervene.

The previous month an officer who had been surrounded by a hostile crowd had fired warning shots in the air. Tonight, a group of young men under the influence of drink and drugs are determined to get the trophy of a police gun.

One of the officers is surrounded and kicked to the ground. In fear of his life, he draws his side arm and fires 'a warning shot'. That shot imbeds in a teenage boy's chest. A night of chaos ensues.

Monday morning and the inevitable press enquiry is 'how could this happen?'

In the late spring of 2014, complaints were received by a Highlands and Islands MSP about changed procedures for Armed Response Vehicle Officers. At that time there were only two officers, or was it four? The MSP took the matter straight to the press and a debate of sorts started.

Closed ranks

The establishment closed ranks behind the decision, taken without reference to the public or their elected representatives, which saw 'standing authorisation' given to those few officer to wear a side-arm at all times even attending road accidents, domestic incidents and monitoring crowds leaving licensed premises.

"Yes, they're armed and have been for some time," the police casually advised an astonished public.

That MSP sought unsuccessfully to raise the matter in the parliament with the First Minister. The following week he raised the matter in the Chamber with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice. The Cabinet Secretary was a former firebrand left wing lawyer. He had opposed a single police service and was a stout defender



of Scots law requirement for corroborative evidence, dispensed with in 2015. He told Parliament this was a decision of a now retired Chief Constable, taken in the final month of the old Northern Constabulary.

Sceptical that the retired chief constable would wish his bequest to the Highlands and Islands to be deployment of armed officers, the MSP eventually secured a meeting with the pleasant Assist Chief Constable responsible who'd failed to respond to a detailed series of written questions he'd posed.

In keeping with his view that this was a major constitutional issue, the MSP had invited all Highlands and Islands parliamentary colleagues to this meeting. They accepted, police made decisions based of the assessed risk to themselves and the public whilst the police accepted that they should assess the impact of their decisions on the public.

The MSPs were assured all assessments had been undertaken. The police said they were "highly sensitive documents" not for public consumption. The MSP felt great frustration with this 'catch 22'. Self-determined confidentiality meant there was no public scrutiny of the factors giving rise to that changed policy. As predicted, a now less benevolent police regime saw no reason for any consultation

before significantly bolstering the number of armed officers routinely patrolling our streets.

The signs had been there but few listened. That same MSP had raised issues about the single service using 'riot vans' in the Highlands. He was told the van had been there all along. It had but it didn't have the big metal windscreen shield which was fitted after amalgamation. Community relations were further eroded when the 'fight against organised crime' hit landward Scotland. The public had been told criminal gangs were trying to infiltrate police ranks. A firm line was to be taken on any business operating as a front for the Mr Bigs.

The centrally-based squad started 'going in hard' on licensed premises and taxi operators. Commentators recognised that this

'hard' approach may be appropriate in isolated instances, when backed by a risk assessment. The on-going campaign against rural pubs in the Borders and taxi firms in the Islands couldn't be justified and was fuelling alienation.

Police boards had been deferential and were dissolved. Those who fought hard to have a scrutiny role for the parliament were no longer MSPs. The parliamentary authorities who had opposed a Police Committee in the first place saw no need for political oversight. No Police Committee convened for the fifth parliamentary session.

The police take delivery of a fleet of armoured vehicles and water cannon next week. The funeral of the young man killed was an emotional affair with significant public disorder thereafter, an early test for the new full-time riot squad now based in the Highlands.

Everyone now agrees the police need protecting. Perhaps just as well those guns were issued without anyone being asked way backed in 2013. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice is due to report to Chief Constable next week.

He will visit the new suite of offices built on the ground kindly donated by the property developer 'with close links to the police'.

That's how it all happened.



Join the SSP

Fill in this form and send it to: Scottish Socialist Party, Suite 370, 4th Floor, Central Chambers, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD. Or phone: 07810205747. Or join the SSP online: scottishsocialistparty.org/join-us

I would like to join the Scottish Socialist Party

I would like more info on the Scottish Socialist Party

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

Email.....

SSP national workplace organiser **Richie Venton** spoke to two of the SSP members who attended the recent PCS annual conference in Brighton.

What were the main two or three issues debated at conference?

Gerry: "The main three issues in my view were industrial action strategy, independence and the merger with Unite."

John: "Unite merger, Scottish independence and the national campaign."

What came out during the referendum debate?

John: "The vast majority of comrades speaking in the debate were Yes supporters."

"The motion to support a strategy of 'PCS informs, you decide' was almost unanimously carried."

We will now be meeting to agree a plan on how to execute this – involving hustings events, asking questions in writing of both

'There were more Yes badges in Brighton than in Glasgow...'

sides and publicising answers to all members in Scotland."

Gerry: "The indy debate agreed a motion to inform members ahead of the vote, and also to hold events across Scotland. Most contributions were again pro-independence."

What was the nature and significance of the debate on merging with UNITE?

Gerry: "Conference rejected a Motion allowing the NEC to enter talks about a merger with UNITE without preconditions. Instead a motion was carried setting preconditions before talks can take place. UNITE's link to Labour was a big problem for the conference, so were less frequent elections and conferences, that are part of the Unite rule book."

John: "The debate – the

centrepiece of conference – involved three different approaches: continued discussions with Unite with no caveats; continued discussions with caveats (on political fund, structures and frequency of elections); and binning the talks completely.

"The first option – the NEC's preferred method – was voted down in favour of the second option (supported by the SWP and others who clearly believe that the caveats will put paid to the merger in all but name)."

How did the SSP impact at PCS conference?

Gerry: "The SSP enjoyed a very successful conference. SSP members spoke in most of the debates. I spoke on food banks, welfare reform and industrial action strategy, John Jamieson and John Davidson both spoke in the indy debate."

We sold record numbers of the Voice, and were very warmly received both when speaking in debates and selling."

John: "We've picked up new members, been prominent in debates and visible both inside and outside of the conference centre all week. There were also more Yes badges in Brighton than I see in Glasgow! YesPCS – with key input from SSP members – held a very successful unofficial fringe event."

"Despite the official fringes – on independence with the Scottish Sec – and Tax Justice with Richard Murphy – taking place in the conference centre, heavily promoted with official PCS coloured flyers and laying on food, we had more attending our unofficial event and have picked up new activists keen to get involved in the campaign."

Donate to SSP indy appeal

by *Jim McVicar, SSP National Treasurer*

THE SCOTTISH Socialist Party has registered with the Electoral Commission as a Yes campaigner for the independence referendum in September.

The SSP, since it was formed, has supported Scottish independence and has campaigned within the pro-independence movement for an independent socialist Scotland as a way of lifting working people out of the misery that pro-market governments have brought to all our lives.

In an independent Scotland, working class people will be better off and Westminster-led Tory governments in Scotland will be consigned to the dustbin of history.

The pro-independence campaign have been out on the streets throughout Scotland, with street stalls, public activity, public meetings and door to door canvassing and whether as part of Yes Scotland, RIC or working independently as the SSP we have received a positive response to our campaign work and canvassing and have received requests from all over Scotland for

SSP campaign material. The SSP, unlike the Tory and Labour joint-unionist campaign, have no friends in big business to bankroll our campaign.

We rely solely on the money we raise from our members, friends and supporters to finance our campaign, and every penny we receive to help promote our socialist vision of Scotland is much appreciated. Our independ-

ence campaign appeal fund has a target of £50,000 and though still in its infancy, has received donations from every corner of Scotland and although £50,000 is a massive amount of money for the SSP to raise, I am confident that we will achieve our target with your continuing support.

That's why I'm appealing to you through the pages of the Scottish Socialist Voice to make a pledge or donation to the independence appeal fund today.

See below for details of how to donate. Thanks for your support.

HOW TO PLEDGE AND DONATE MONEY

- Donate via your local SSP branch
- Send a cheque to 'SSP Independence Appeal Fund' and return to Jim McVicar, SSP National Treasurer, Suite 307, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD
- Text 07810205747 with your pledge amount and email address if you have one
- Bank transfer: SSP Appeal Fund Account, Co-op Bank, Sort Code 08-92-99 / Account No. 65094637

- Paypal: jim_sspfinance@gmail.com
- If you want to help with the appeal fund, or if you need any more details, contact Jim McVicar on 07810205747 or email: jimmcvicar.scottishsocialistparty@hotmail.com

However you choose to pledge, please text Jim the details so we can keep track of all donations.

Positive reaction in Kirkintilloch

by Angus Clark

IN KIRKINTILLOCH, close to 80 people packed into the Miners Welfare for the SSP's public meeting on the socialist case for independence on 30 April. Speakers Jim Sillars and Colin Fox were given a fantastic reception as they outlined their vision. They advanced their view that this was a historic chance to elect a government of the left which would pursue policies which would benefit working people such as a living wage, abolition of the Bedroom Tax, investment in public services, repeal of anti-trade union laws and the removal of Trident.

Colin made the point that the SSP regards this as only the start, a means to an end, with a Yes vote eventually opening the door to a socialist government with the powers and political will to tackle poverty and inequality with far reaching redistribution of wealth and power: "As a socialist, my view is that our most precious asset, worth more than the oil revenue and all the whisky, is the people of Scotland who are capable of running this country and making a success of it. The stakes are enormous and the consequences are enormous. This isn't just a vote for independence but it is a vote to reject neoliberalism and warmongering. These things have held Scotland back and should not be part of a future Scotland. It's about creating a new Scotland based on fairness, social justice and social democracy. The British establishment don't want Scotland to be independent because they gain financially from Scotland."

Worst recession in 80 years

He continued that a Yes vote and the eventual election of a left government would lead to improved working conditions and employee rights, which have been constantly under attack over the last three decades by both Labour and Tories: "We are going through the worst recession in 80 years. A million people are now on zero hours contracts without any security or trade union rights or hope of permanent employment. The working class people in Scotland are held back on employment rights, held back on pensions and held back by another ten years of austerity. We are rejecting that by voting for independence."

Jim Sillars reflected the mood within the audience when he said: "What we can take from this public meeting is that there is now a sense of self-confidence within ordinary Scottish working people and that we no longer need to feel inadequate about what we can achieve. One of the great tragedies of the Scottish working class is that we've believed what they told us, we've believed that we were inadequate."

"We have been caught in a great prison of the myth of our own inadequacies. We need to convince the Scottish working class of their talent and their ability. This referendum is fundamentally about the liberation of the Scottish working class."

There were a broad range of questions from the audience on a number of issues. Many signed up for info on joining SSP Campsie branch. Most of the people attending had never been to a political meeting before, and with massive attendances at other recent SSP meetings in Ayrshire, Govan and Pennilee it shows that more and more ordinary people are becoming more engaged with the campaign as it progresses.



FRESHER IDEAS: Hollie Cameron and Andrew Kinnell of Stirling Uni's SSP Society

Flying the flag in Stirling

by Hugh Cullen

STIRLING HAS a long tradition of left wing politics dating back to the famous heckling of the Queen in 1972 on a visit to the newly built university. Indeed, former Labour MP for Stirlingshire Dennis Canavan, speaking at a Yes event for students at the university last September, remembered the political spectrum of students at Stirling in the eighties to have 'Labour on the right and the Communist Party in the centre'.

Now it is our turn to fly the flag for socialism at Stirling.

This semester was the first for the university's new Scottish Socialist Party Society, and what a successful term it has been! We have quickly grown to be the largest and most active political party on campus because of the tremendous response we have had at weekly stalls and meetings campaigning for an Independent socialist Scotland.

Sandra Webster, Jonathon Shafi from Radical Independence, Green Party activist Zara Kitson and John McAllion spoke at a well-attended

public meeting hosted by the society for students to hear and question the socialist case for independence while throughout the term we also ran a campaign collecting food for the local food bank and showing the damaging effect of austerity in our own city.

We also have a close relationship with comrades in the Edinburgh University SSP Society and the local Stirling Branch with members invited to attend each other's meetings and events. Some society members have even adopted leading roles in the branch and run city centre stalls on top of our on campus activities.

The SSP society works closely with the Yes Scotland Students society and other pro-Yes groups to ensure that the socialist case for a yes vote is heard. We also have a strong relationship with the Forthvalley Palestine Solidarity Campaign with events planned for next semester.

We're looking forward to building on a good start and continuing to welcome new members next semester with our positive vision of a fairer Scotland.

by Dr Serjinder Singh,
General Secretary, Indian
Workers Association,
Glasgow

India at the crossroads

INDIA'S SIXTEENTH parliamentary elections were held over a period of over a month recently and results came out on 16 May.

This was a mammoth operation carried out by the Election Commission of India and the world's largest democratic exercise to elect 543 members of parliament.

Over 800 million people were eligible to vote, the number having increased by 100 million since the previous election in 2009. Bharyta Janta Party (BJP), a right wing Hindu nationalist party got an overall majority winning 282 seats.

Although constitutionally elections in India are designed on British pattern, this party carried out its campaign in the American presidential style for the first time. The Indian National Congress Party, the party of Gandhi, had ruled India off and on for 50 years. It is the first time that another single party BJP has won a majority.

Big business

Politically, for half a century, Indian National Congress or 'Congress' in brief, has been the pocket borough of Indian big business.

The Indian economy had remained closed to foreign investors. A few business houses such as that of Tata (who now own Jaguar in UK and Corus Steel in Europe) and other smaller companies exploited the vast Indian market for decades. If any foreign company was allowed in India, it had to come as a junior partner with an Indian company. Under pressure from rise of China during the late '80s, the ruling Congress party began liberalising the Indian economy in the early '90s.

This helped existing Indian companies to grow and expand rapidly. The Indian corporate sector became too big to stay together under the leadership of traditional houses such as Tata and others.

Earlier, the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Indus-



NEW PM: Narendra Modi (left) greets his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif after Modi took the oath of office at the presidential palace

try (FICCI) was the leading organisation of Indian big business.

However, some newcomers after their latest growth began to feel frustrated and split off from the main body. Such corporate groups were in Delhi and Gujarat state.

The Congress party had been the political front of the traditional FICCI group led by Tata and other traditional houses.

The disgruntled corporate houses such as Ambani found a favourable ruler Mr Narendra Modi belonging to Hindu Nationalist party during the first decade of this century in the state of Gujarat.

Mr Modi as the Chief Minister provided all the facilities such as land and licenses to lucrative sectors of the economy such as power generation to this disgruntled group. Ultimately, Tata group also joined in to set up a car project in Modi's Gujarat state with all the facilities including cheap land.

The Ambani and a few others belonging to Gujarat state in coordination with those in Delhi supported Mr Modi and his BJP party financially and politically. This party apparently was prompted and promised all kind

of support by these business groups and it declared during last year to put up Mr Modi as a Prime Ministerial candidate.

Constitutionally, the parliamentary election system in India is almost identical with that in the UK except for the fact that President of India plays same role as the UK Queen.

As in the UK, a party is not required to declare its prime ministerial candidate in advance; it has to be elected in the parliament house after election.

However, on advice and covert financial support from big business an American Presidential style campaign was planned and executed for Mr Modi.

Mr Modi in his speeches openly declared to help big business in India in the name of 'growth' and 'jobs'.

Although there is a legal limit on the amount of money a candidate can spend in election a lot of resources such as helicopters, media control (Ambani house partly owns several dozen TV channels in India) were put at the service of Modi. Rather than focusing on BJP party as such, like the presidential

candidates in America, focus was on Modi as a person.

In reality, we find the expansion of Indian corporate sector becoming larger and changing its earlier behind the scenes support to its traditional political arm in the Indian National Congress, or Congress Party. This time it opted for supporting Modi of the right wing Hindu nationalist part. The Congress Party lost miserably, winning only 44 seats.

Modi has a terrible record of presiding over communal riots in 2002 when over a thousand Muslims were killed or burnt alive by Hindu mobs in the state capital Ahmedabad where he was the ruling Chief Minister.

His ministers had led the Hindu fanatic crowds to the Muslim areas. As a result of this massacre US authorities had refused him a visa. This ban is now proposed to be removed.

Technically the Indian constitution declares that the Indian state is a Socialist, Democratic, Secular Republic. However, the developments during and prior to this election do not auger well for the immediate future.

New realities

Indian society, too diverse and with huge economic disparities is in for huge shocks and may find it difficult to adjust to the new political and economic realities.

The left in India is almost non-existent except for a few pockets in West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura. These too are rapidly shrinking.

Amm Aadmi Party (common man party) a new outfit suddenly appeared last year representing the disappointment of the poor and middle classes at the existence of huge corruption at all levels of government. However, in the face of corporate support to BJP it could not face the onslaught. India, with its economic growth and evil designs of corporate sector, is at the crossroads.

After spending much of May in Russia, **Thomas Ball** gives his view of current events

I ARRIVED in Russia the day before Victory Day, a celebration of the hard-won Soviet victory over fascism. On every lapel is the black and amber St George's ribbon, Russia's victory symbol. For the USSR, victory in the war came at an awful price – 27 million died, and many cities in western Russia were destroyed.

The Great Patriotic War was an existential war, the second time in 130 years Russia faced invasion from the west. This has been embedded in the Russian psyche since, with the Soviet anthem containing the lines: "We fought for the future, destroyed the invader, and brought to our homeland the laurels of fame. Our glory will live in the memory of nations, and all generations will honour thy name."

As a result of its fear of western threat, the policy of Russia since 1812 has been to maintain a buffer between Russia and the west. It is through this prism that one must look at events in Ukraine to understand Russia's actions.

Borderland

Ukrayina means "borderland", and in 1922, after a series of upheavals and wars, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic became a founding member of the USSR.

Ukraine did not distinguish herself with anti-fascist resistance characteristic much of the rest of the USSR. Whilst Kiev – later awarded Hero City status – fought bravely, the Ukrainian nationalist movement created the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, allied with Germany and guilty of systematic massacres of ethnic Poles.

Simultaneously, the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) emerged, led by Stepan



UKRAINE: does democracy only prevail when it suits the United States?

Ukraine and the perversion of democracy

Bandera. The OUN considered Ukraine's enemies to be Poles, Russians and Jews, and perpetrated pogroms supported by Nazi troops. One of the Nazi government's early decisions was to release Bandera from prison. The OUN received 2.5 million Reichmarks (and arms and equipment) from Berlin to finance its operations, with the Gestapo and Abwehr protecting Bandera and his followers.

To the disappointment of Bandera and 100,000 Ukrainians who fought for fascism, the USSR crushed Germany. To ensure that the west would not be able to launch attacks on Russia, it established satellite states between Russia and the west. When the USSR dissolved in 1991, a major reason it did not descend into civil war was western assurance that

they would respect neutrality of former satellites and republics.

This was breached by the west. In 1999, former satellites Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined Nato. In 2004, Nato engulfed the Baltic republics and Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia.

In Russia, the price of peaceful withdrawal from eastern Europe is viewed as Nato domination of the region.

The last straw for Russia was Ukraine. In the first round of the 2004 election neither Viktor Yuschenko nor Viktor Yanukovich won. A run-off was won by Yanukovich, who was immediately ousted in a coup, the "Orange Revolution", in favour of his pro-western rival. Yuschenko's first decree was to posthumously invest Bandera as Hero of Ukraine. This

came after near-identical revolutions ousted anti-Nato leaders of Yugoslavia (2000) and Georgia (2003).

In the next (2010) election, Yanukovich bounced back, defeating Yulia Tymoschenko by four points. After he rebuffed EU's advances, he was ousted in another coup d'état. This time, the coup was dominated by the fascist Right Sector, which joined the government – BNP, Golden Dawn-style fascists in a government in a European capital.

Neither Moscow nor Ukrainians were prepared to accept another perverting of democracy by western powers. Rusophone regions in Ukraine have declared independence. The fascist junta in Kiev retaliated by sending helicopter gunships and tanks into these cities. Nato, audible in its indignation when Yanukovich sent riot police into the Maidan, is conspicuous by silence when the junta leader, Yatsenyuk, sends soldiers to kill civilians.

Washington

Russia respects Ukraine's independence. But twice in the last decade the Ukrainian people have chosen a pro-Moscow president, only to have him removed at gunpoint, with the result that the fascists who turned so much of Russia into rubble are now in government and on Russia's borders. What, Russians and Ukrainians alike ask, is the point of Ukrainian democracy if it is to prevail only when it suits Washington?

And as for the commitment in 1991 to respect the neutrality of former Soviet republics and satellites?

There are now Nato troops in every country bordering Russia to the west with the exceptions of Finland and Ukraine. If I was a Finn, and I didn't want Nato troops in my country, I'd be hoping very hard that the pro-Moscow elements in eastern Ukraine prevail.

by Jonathon Shafi,
*Radical Independence
Campaign*

A Yes vote has never been so necessary

THE DISCUSSION carried out via the BBC and the right wing press has provided Nigel Farage with an unprecedented platform. On the run up to the election, it was constant. Question Time appearances, Newsnights, televised debates, radio interviews. You name it, he was on it.

Without doubt, the BBC made an editorial decision to transmit the immigration debate through the lens of UKIP.

This is what you might describe as BBC 'common sense'. It partly comes from BBC political editor Nick Robinson, who made his views clear in January this year, when he criticised the handling of immigration discourse on the BBC. "They feared having a conversation about immigration, they feared the consequence," he claimed.

Context shunned

And so UKIP is now to the BBC the pinnacle of the debate on immigration. Farage was made the pivot around which we might talk about immigration. The wider context was shunned and separated out from the 'rise of Farage'.

That context is one of continuing economic crisis and rising inequality. The cycle of poverty is not ending or abating, it is intensifying. The gap between rich and poor is not closing, it is widening to historic proportions.

In these conditions, the far right can capitalise. They offer up a scapegoat for the living conditions of the majority. The Tories have been doing this throughout their austerity agenda. The claim that UKIP represent an anti-establishment force should be immediately repudiated.

In truth, their politics buttress



an establishment whose failure has led to decline. But failure by the political class, and sections of the media, to point this out has normalised a culture of blame, on everyone but the system itself.

That lets the rich and powerful continue to concentrate their wealth and power. The inequality we face now is breathtaking. The combined wealth of the listed 1000 individuals now stands at £518.975billion. That's risen by 15.4 per cent in just one year.

That's a huge rise in such a timescale. Remember, this list is composed of publicly identifiable wealth, and does not include analysis of the wealth

amassed in private bank accounts. In truth it is probable that even this list of the super rich is not representative of an even higher rung of the mega wealthy.

The Queen has seen her wealth rise to £330million after putting on an extra £10million in the last year alone. Of course the wealth of the royal family is far higher – this is only what is publicly available to report.

Joining the British elite are 104 billionaires who in combination muster a total of £301billion. The number of billionaires choosing London as their playground stands at 72, the highest number of billionaires to inhabit any city, any-

where in the world. As a result of decades of neoliberalism, alienation and corporate dominance, so may voters feel alienated from formal politics. When it comes to the European Parliament, that is further heightened.

Despite these worrisome times, there is reason to be confident of progressive change. In amongst the austerity driven crisis of living standards, the development of blame culture and the slow decay of the Westminster establishment, there is a road map for progress in Scotland. That is why we have to get our message out to thousands of working class scots in communities that have been left behind. We have had hundreds of activists carry out mass canvasses, delivering a message that ties a Yes vote with socio-economic progress. But also saying to people that their vote really does count in September.

Mass canvas

On June 22 we will be carrying out the first national day of mass canvassing. We want thousands to come out that day, to argue for a Yes vote, to listen to the peoples concerns, and to re-establish that culture of solidarity that focuses the blame where it really should lie: the big banks and the Tory government.

Our message of determined hope is much more powerful than the toxic politics of UKIP. Door by door we will win that argument. A Yes vote has never been so necessary.