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WILL THE INDYREF CAMPAIGN TOPPLE SCOTTISH LABOUR?



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by Ken Ferguson

DESPITE THE two year long negative scare campaign run by the unionists in Better Together, as we pass midsummer and close on the historic 18 September referendum Yes campaigners remain optimistic and focused.

A glance at the motley band now officially backing the No camp from Tory toffs through Labour time servers to the Orange Order, tells it's own story of its real nature as a support campaign for an outdated vision of a society which suits the political and financial elites it serves.

As far as the three unionist parties, Labour, Tory and the Lib Dems are concerned one of their key motivators is more a concern for the survival of their comfortable world than real concern for the Scots who elect them.

London-based veteran comedian Stanley Baxter, backing a No vote, said "South of the border's been very good to me. I'm very happy in London".

It might have been said by any of the Scots unionist MPs who have spent the last two years lecturing their electors on why they must stick with Westminster with an escalating list of increasingly incredible scares and downright lies.

Undemocratic

Of course the truth is that the UK is run by a parliament elected on undemocratic voting system which guarantees that, whoever wins, policies remain big business and banker friendly with only mild differences in tone between the so called mainstream parties.

It was against this reality that, in the latest foray north of the border by a Westminster "Big Beast" Miliband's "vision" of a No-voting Scotland at the heart of a supposedly renewed and progressive UK had, as one respected commentator said "the impact of a blancmange hitting concrete".

Back on planet Scotland,

It's peoples' power versus London elites in indy battle

PHOTO: Craig Maclean



MASS CANVASS: the RIC's Mass Canvass event on 22 June – nearly 1000 canvassers polled 8317 people in 46 areas, returning a result of 40 per cent Yes, 29.5 per cent No and 30.5 per cent undecided

Labour voters increasingly know that Miliband's chances of winning a Westminster election are diminishingly small and even if he did, he plans to continue with cuts and austerity.

Ranged against this dismal prospect is the highly motivated, broad based and, crucially, mass Yes campaign offering a real vision of real change informed by a growing consensus for a socially just greener Scotland.

This message has been taken out to communities the length and breadth of Scotland in public meetings, debates, street stalls, leafleting and canvassing not to mention thousands of person to person discussions with family, friends and workmates.

Backing this up has been the key development of a diverse and vibrant internet based campaigning with not only sites such as Newsnet Scotland and Bella Caledonia but thousands of individual postings on social media. What has emerged is that a No campaign largely funded

by bosses and Tory money and relying on the old centralised campaign model feeding a tame media scares and smears – including, shamefully the publicly funded BBC – has met a genuine, nimble peoples' response.

Described by none other than former city banker and New Labour minister Baroness Shriti Vadera as led by "grumpy old men" Better Together has responded simply by increasingly hysterical scares and utilised state power in London to tell lies about Scotland.

High summer is normally a time for holidays and relaxation but this is unlikely to see the mass Yes camp scaling down its activities in the weeks between now and 18 September.

For the SSP, the Scottish Socialist Voice and the wider left, the task remains to overcome the fear driven politics of the No camp and win over those absolutely key Labour voters who have been taken for granted by their party and used

as voting fodder for the Westminster careerists.

In public meetings and canvassing it is clear that such voters are increasingly receptive to the message that a Yes vote is not a vote for the SNP but a vote that opens the door to a different approach which is in line with their aspirations.

Crucial to this task will be mobilising the so called "missing million" of non-voters, traditionally described as apathetic, or worse demonised as lazy and feckless by comfortable commentators paid well by posh papers.

Increasingly however in campaigning, particularly in Scotland's deprived areas, another reality is revealed. The cynical city-serving years of Blair and Brown increasingly abandoned such potential voters and reinforced a "they are all the same" scorn for politicians.

Energy and belief

Rather than apathy, non-voting has a range of concrete reasons such as fear of debt collectors using the voter register to pursue Council Tax arrears but at its heart it is founded on a hard headed, evidence based, belief that voting changes nothing.

If the energy and belief of the Yes campaign can convince those voters that this vote on 18 September can lead to change and convince people to translate this into voting then despite the long poll lead for the No camp a Yes vote can be won.

With those most reliable pollster Ladbrokes predicting a 78 per cent turnout, this is a realistic objective and could see a peoples' campaign defeat the politics of fear, war and greed ranged under the increasingly threadbare Union Jack.

by Colin Fox

NO OTHER country in the world is so exercised by such an imminent and far-reaching political decision as Scotland today. Politics has been revitalised here over the past two years. Public meetings, largely organised by the huge grassroots Yes campaign, are being hosted in community centres, churches and village halls every night of the week all across the land attended by hundreds of people.

They illustrate above all a nation engaged. Millions are debating political choices, often for the first time, as our nation faces the independence referendum with an intensity rarely seen anywhere far less encouraged.

This debate has been a godsend for those serious about socialist politics as thousands of people recognise our ideas are as relevant as ever.

This point was reinforced again this week when the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published a report showing the economic difficulties facing the average family. They concluded that the average family with two children needs a pre-tax annual income of £40,600 in order to afford a minimum acceptable standard of living. That figure is £10,000 higher than the average actual income for such a family.

Basic provisions

And a similar report by Unison's Glasgow health branch revealed that Scotland's largest employer, the NHS, has 48 per cent of its staff on certain grades unable to afford basic provisions like books, a warm winter coat or new shoes.

For the Scottish Socialist Party such economic and social realities are at the heart of this debate. A Yes vote in September is not only a vote for independence it is a rejection of the neoliberal economics and warmongering politics pre-



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REALITIES AT HEART OF REFERENDUM DEBATE

MISSING MILLION: we need to persuade those who don't usually vote to support Yes

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

dominant at Westminster. Scottish Socialist Party public meetings on independence now routinely attract hundreds of people. And several more are planned between now and 18 September.

Sales of our independence pamphlet have been unprecedented. More than 700 people have applied to join the party in the last year as a result of our pro-independence position. New branches are springing up across the country. Such interest in our party vindicates the patient and persistent approach we have followed and the determination of SSP members to champion our party's incomparable political record.

The SSP involvement in Yes Scotland, the Radical Independence Campaign and many other pro-Indy groups has helped shape them all. With the polls still showing a No lead it is inevitable people reflect on what that outcome might mean. But this contest is not over.

The prospect of another Tory victory in 2015 is one factor that might lead the Yes campaign to victory. A majority

of Scots have made it clear they will vote Yes if it looks like Cameron and the Tories are set to win another five years in power at Westminster in 2015.

And the impact of the biggest grassroots political campaign since the anti-Poll Tax struggle 25 years ago is another important factor still to be fully felt in persuading 'the missing million' – those who do not usually vote – to support Yes this time.

Opinions

Opinion polls often fail to record these respondents for a variety of socio-economic and statistical factors. Few polls ever record the opinions of Scotland's poorest communities.

But polling done by the SSP, the Radical Independence Campaign and by local Yes groups reveal many thousands of voters in this 'missing' constituency fully intend to say Yes this time round.

And Scotland will never be the same again if they do. The nation will be transformed from top to bottom, despite what Alex Salmond and the SNP imply by keeping the Queen,

keeping the pound and keeping hold of NATO's coat-tails. Quite how many of those engaged in this debate stay involved remains to be seen. Clearly Scottish democracy will be healthier the more that do so.

Be all that as it may, the SSP has re-emerged as a leading force on the Scottish left. Those who talked of 'a post-SSP' political landscape in Scotland over the past five years are now exposed as mere 'wishful thinkers'.

Clearly there can be no talk of a new left in Scotland after 18 September without the SSP. Our party has benefited greatly from engaging in this debate. SSP activists understand just how important a party is in such circumstances.

We have worked with others in the independence movement without hiding our socialist programme or political identity.

And we have both aired and developed our programme for 21st century socialism – a socialism based on democracy, equality and an end to environmental and human exploitation worldwide – and are much the stronger for it.

John Finnie MSP gives his take on campaigning for Yes in the Highlands

MIND THE MIDGES, MIND YOUR LANGUAGE, MIND YOUR FEET

Regardless of location, whether our densely populated urban areas or the ultimate 'low density' housing of the Highlands and Islands, it's vital we maximise participation in our historic constitutional debate. Whilst the message 'vote Yes - build a socially just Scotland' will be the same across the country, there's no doubt that the delivery techniques will vary.

I am a big fan of the architect who designed some of the blocks of houses on the sprawling estates on the south side of Inverness. Walk around a paved path on the outside and deliver to eight homes a minute. Neither the crofting townships of the north-west nor even the bungalow hinterland of Loch Ness-side offer such rapid fire delivery opportunities.

Receptive

A few weeks ago I was leafleting a large area of social housing in Inverness with an active and seasoned campaigner from the Black Isle. As we dispensed sacks full of newspapers to a receptive population, he advised me that "on a good night I can get out 30 or 40 leaflets in the Black Isle".

Why would that be? Well it's not the done thing to walk up to a rural dwelling and not announce your presence, albeit

in most instances the collie will have announced your visit anyway.

So, whilst not necessarily suggesting every leaflet is 'knocked-in' it's important not to simply leave your written message and go off without even passing the time of day.

At the turn of the year I was asked to speak at a Yes meeting on the far north coast. I left Inverness 10am Saturday morning for the three hour journey, en route picking up the local councillor, George Farlow, pooling our tea, coffee and biscuits – there's no meeting without tea.

Before the meeting we met with the local GP to get update on on-going challenges of delivery care at home. It's important to pack as much into a trip as possible.

The meeting took place in a 'closed for the winter' café. Twelve people attended and a 'lively' discussion took place, mainly about equal marriage and the recent changes to crofting legislation. Importantly, everyone seemed to know what the other was going to raise, with little surprise at what was exercising the Free Kirk elder. Of course there was discussion on the constitution but it would

have been both bad-mannered and insensitive not to allow the two other main issues of the day to be discussed first.

To many that may seem a small attendance – indeed that number was replicated at the later evening meeting 70 miles away en route back to Inverness, however, as a percentage of the local population that would represent a huge attendance at a meeting in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The evening meeting followed fish, chips and discussion in the local social enterprise café. Then, following the Yes meeting, where there was more tea, coffee and biscuits, it was off to an office of another social enterprise to discuss funding options and collaborative work with another nearby charity.

All these enterprises had their own identity but shared many activists in common.

As Sabbath approached I headed back to Inverness getting there at about 1am. Total attendances about 24. Total 'reach' immeasurable. To folk in north-west Sutherland Inverness is remote, never mind Edinburgh whilst London is just the place where the land-owners stay.

Folk in the countryside tend to be less upfront about their politics, often keen to listen whilst maintaining their own counsel. Likewise, overt displays of allegiance like posters are relatively rare.

Sunday 22 June was Radical Independence Campaign's Mass Canvass day, except for Inverness and Ullapool were the event kicked off on the Saturday. Whilst odd instances of leafleting may happen on a Sunday, there's no appetite from any political party or referendum campaign group to 'hack off' any would-be voter by knocking on their door on the Sabbath. Telephone pollsters take note.

I'm sure the Highlands is no different from many other rural areas when it comes to campaigning. As elsewhere, there have been some healthy attendances at central towns across the area for meetings and debates and we must build on that public engagement, regardless of the outcome of the referendum.

Great message

The essential Highland campaigners kit consists of: a capacity to listen; a willingness to trek to meet the voter, but watch that barbed-wire fence when trying to approach voter on tractor; an understanding of the diverse nature of ground conditions and animals you may encounter; an understanding of the importance of weather to the campaigner and voter alike; sunscreen, 'sensible footwear' and, perhaps above all, a will not to offend.

Finally, mind the midges, mind your language and mind your feet and you should be ok. Ours is a great message about an opportunity for rural Scotland for all of Scotland.

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by John McAllion

Scottish Labour is now a shadow of its former self

THE BURDEN of delivering a No majority against independence was always going to fall on the shoulders of the Labour Party.

The Tories won only one Scottish Westminster seat at the last election. The Liberal Democrats won eleven but are currently languishing at just 6 per cent in the latest opinion polls, 29 and 25 points behind Labour and the Tories respectively and 13 points behind UKIP. The Coalition parties are losers in the context of Scotland's referendum.

By contrast Labour still holds nearly 70 per cent of Scotland's Westminster seats and is by some distance the main opposition to the SNP in Holyrood. Scotland until relatively recently was one of Labour's tribal heartlands.

Throughout the dark years of Tory UK dominance, Scotland loyally registered Labour parliamentary majorities in opposition to Thatcher and Major. Many of Labour's big political beasts were, and some still are, based in Scottish constituencies.

Shredded base

Labour remains the only element of the British establishment capable of stemming the rising tide of Yes votes. Yet Labour is now but a shadow of the party that once dominated Scottish politics. The latest polls suggest it is on course to lose its third Scottish election in a row to the SNP. It has lost popular support in each Scottish election since 1999.

Its local government base has been shredded by the introduction of proportional representation. Labour now controls just two of Scotland's 32 councils. Its activist base has been hollowed out with the party issuing just 13,000 ballot papers during the most recent Scottish leadership election.

Moreover, Labour's campaign on the referendum has been less than inspiring. The party's decision to join with the Coalition parties in Better Together alienated many of its own activists and sup-



porters. It became necessary to set up a rival campaign "Unite with Labour" to accommodate the likes of Gordon Brown who as well as not wanting to share platforms with the Tories still harboured a burning resentment against Alistair Darling his one-time less than loyal Chancellor and now leader of the cross-party unionist campaign.

Brown not only kept his distance from Better Together but began to develop his own independent No campaign. He has criticised the Better Together tactic of turning the referendum into a contest between Scotland and Britain.

He was particularly dismissive of Tory ministers coming north to lay down the law about what Britain would allow or not allow an independent Scotland to do – no currency union, no more defence orders, etc. He even suggested, to Alistair Darling's horror that a debate between Alex

Salmond and David Cameron would be "a good idea". The separate Labour campaign did allow Labour politicians to develop their own key campaign message: vote no in September and vote in a Labour Government in next year's UK election.

However, with UK opinion polls registering single digit Labour leads over the Tories and showing Cameron and Osborne with a 12 point lead over Miliband and Balls on the economy, the argument that another Labour government is just around the corner lacks any credibility.

As the economy continues to grow many Labour insiders fear that their lead over the Tories will disappear and with it the prospect of another Labour government. Their fears were compounded by the results of the European and English local government elections. Aside from the rise of UKIP, the Tories did much better than might be expected of a party

that has been in office for four years during which they had impose deeply unpopular policies that have hit and hurt millions of voters across the country. More importantly Labour did not do nearly as well as might be expected of a party that is just a year away from forming a majority government.

Taking less than a third of the local government vote and just a quarter of the European vote does not suggest that public opinion in the rest of the UK is swinging behind Ed Miliband and his party.

The personal ratings for Miliband make matters even worse. In one poll 60 per cent of those asked thought he was "not up to the job" of being Prime Minister. More than half thought he was "out of touch" with their concerns and 59 per cent viewed him as "weak".

Poor decision

On a range of policy issues from child poverty to the economy, big majorities thought that a Labour government led by him would fail to deliver. Voters obviously have a problem with Ed and that was the case even before he posed with a copy of The Sun and then apologised to Liverpool for his poor decision making in doing so. Senior figures in the party are now routinely briefing against their own leader and have already begun to plan who will replace him after what they see as Labour's inevitable defeat in 2015.

Their main concern is with UK Labour's future under a different leader. Their disloyalty not only undermines Labour's future election chances, it blows to pieces the case that a No vote in 2014 will open the way for a Labour Government in 2015.

by Lynda Williamson,
Newsnet Scotland

'CYBERNATS': THE ONGOING MEDIA FURORE

THERE IS a radiator salesman from Hadleigh in Suffolk named Phil Neville. Mr Neville recently received a torrent of abuse on social media – some comments expressed a wish for his speedy demise. His crime? He shares the same name as a particularly boring football pundit.

Take a look at any discussion around football on social media and you won't have to dig too deep to find some frank and robust exchanges of opinion. I've even seen some truly vitriolic comments about Strictly on Facebook!

The point is that there are a few numpties on the world wide web.

Perhaps online persona have become like the avatars that some people create in fantasy computer worlds like Second Life enabling them to become the person online that they wish they were in real life. Who knows?

That these people inhabit every area of social media should be a given, the evidence is there for anyone who takes a cursory glance to see, this should not be up for debate. But in one area and one area alone, it seems to be.

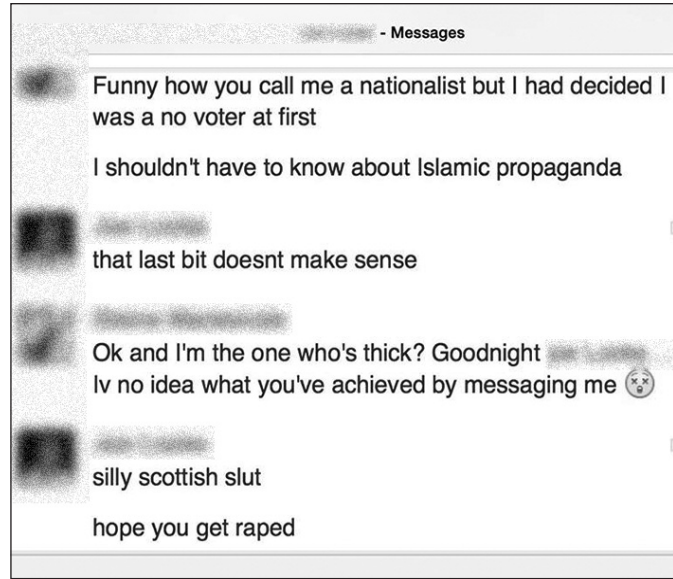
Online grassroots

The No Thanks campaign has nothing equivalent to Wings Over Scotland or Newsnet or Bella Caledonia or any of the myriad of Yes supporting sites.

There is also a kind of online grassroots movement and earlier this year research published by Glasgow University showed that the Yes campaign are romping to victory in the battle for social media.

No Thanks cannot afford to allow this to continue. They cannot beat the phenomenal Yes grassroots activists on the ground with Radical Independence and the SSP targeting the disaffected in our society, arguably the people who have most to benefit from a Yes vote in September. They need to neutralise the online grassroots effect. With that in mind they have embarked on a campaign to demonise the "cybernats".

In this quest they are ably assisted



by the mainstream media who gleefully report the inevitable transgressions of a small minority of Yes supporting fools while ignoring similar transgressions from the other side of the debate even from the pinnacle of the No Thanks hierarchy.

Furore when a certain lady was accused of having links to the Labour Party but deafening silence following Alistair Darling's New Statesman interview when he accused independence supporters of being Nazis. The Nazi accusation is particularly common, it's a lazy insult proffered by those devoid of imagination but it does keep cropping up with monotonous regularity.

Indeed it popped up once again with a future Labour candidate for election in Angus tweeting an image of German youngsters gathered under a Nazi banner in response to an image of five Scots youngsters pictured at an anti-bias rally. It seems that youth is no defence against the more vitriolic element of the modern Scottish Labour party and Kathy Wiles is

a perfect example of that vitriol. While the Nazi insult is the most common it is by no means the only or the worst insult thrown at Yes supporters and ignored by those whose narrative it does not fit.

Coming hot on the heels was a similar incident when a No Thanks supporter hiding under the nickname of 'Kilted Kelpie' tweeted:

"The launch event of 'Sex offenders for YES' is tonight. There's a Yes group for everyone."

Beneath the text was a picture of Alex Salmond stood alongside a young woman with a banner headline which read 'SEX OFFENDERS for YES'.

When researching this article I asked some Yes supporting friends if they had experienced any abuse while online and was truly disturbed to discover that some low life had written a post on Facebook which read: "Silly Scottish slut... hope you get raped."

Yet the mainstream media is reporting that Rory Bremner dislikes the "threats and bluster" of

parts of the debate. He says "It's almost deliberate, this intimidation, and I find that very sinister and unpleasant."

Will reports of Labour election candidates equating Scots youngsters with Hitler Youth make it onto the pages of our newspapers?

But for me the truly baffling thing about all of this is the haste with which officials from the Yes campaign rush to apologise and condemn the numpties from the Yes side while staying eerily silent about abuse is thrown at their own supporters.

Of course they seek to distance themselves, perfectly understandably from abusers but surely they must defend the abused?

Though it's a confident movement that thinks it can afford to alienate its own followers by staying silent on the issue, by trying to seem oh so reasonable, do the Yes campaign risk appearing to tacitly accept responsibility for online abuse?

I sure as hell hope they are not accepting it on my behalf, not after what I've witnessed after a few hours of research.

Of course the spokespeople for Yes must condemn whole heartedly any form of abuse, online or otherwise and we all have a duty to ourselves and to the wider movement to treat everybody we encounter with courtesy no matter how challenging that may be.

Unacceptable

But we must also expect, neighbourly demand swift and robust rebuttal of any suggestion that the problem of online abuse is unique to supporters of independence. That is the narrative of No Thanks and just unacceptable.

Online abuse is perpetrated by a small minority, the vast majority of us will never encounter any, if we do, there are facilities to block people on all the popular social media sites.

So let's continue to win the online debate and let's get out there and talk to people face to face – that's how we will win the ultimate prize of independence for our country and it is there for the taking.

RUCTIONS AFTER THE REFERENDUM workers, Labour and Scottish independence

by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

THE SCOTTISH referendum has added substantially to the stresses and strains between Labour and the trade unions.

On one side of the potential for clashes we have the blind, unthinking loyalty to Labour of the tops of many of the trade unions; either blatantly through affiliation to the Tory-funded, Labour-fronted Better Together, or increasingly in recent months via the United with Labour front for unionism.

Lined up against such trade union ‘leaders’ is a growing battalion of union activists and members who see Scottish independence as a rapid escape route from the dictatorship of the Tories.

Political education

At a UK-wide level within the trade unions this might not be an issue of prime importance; but within the Scottish union memberships it is a decisive turning point, another factor in the abandonment of Labour by big chunks of the working class.

Scottish workers and working class communities have been en-

gaged in the politics of the referendum debate like no other issue in living memory.

Questions of profound significance about what kind of society we live in and what kind of society we want to construct under Scottish self-government have been debated in community halls and school assembly rooms every night of the week, in every corner of the nation, with tens of thousands participating. It is a mass political education system that means nothing will remain as it was after September 2014.

And the exposé of Labour as open collaborators with the avowed Tory enemy of workers has added immensely to the process of workers unshackling themselves from their old Labour loyalties.

The British and Scottish Labour leaderships are increasingly the chief barriers to Scottish independence. As the battle for the hearts and minds of the working

class majority population heats up, the Tories, Lib Dems and mainstream media are more hindrance than help to the unionist cause; they are widely recognized as workers’ enemies.

Hence the rolling out of Gordon Brown as newly-discovered evangel of workers’ solidarity, promising “justice with Labour”, etc.!

Of course many workers are liable to fall for Labour’s lies, given the residual roots of what used to be Labour in the mass of the population, going back several generations. That danger is heightened by the same Labour leaders’ cynical portrayal of the referendum battle being between them and the SNP – another lie!

A substantial minority of workers, traditionally Labour voters, have had these myths burnt out of their consciousness at public meetings of the SSP, or other Yes meetings with SSP speakers. Socialists are in the best position to crush the

lies of Labour mis-leaders in working class audiences.

We have exposed the fact that when Labour claims independence would break the unity of the working class, it was 13 successive years of Labour governments that banned workers’ solidarity, legally outlawing the right to take action in support of fellow workers, under threat of seizure of trade union funds.

Labour lies

We’ve exploded Labour leaders’ lie that voting Yes is condemning workers in England and Wales to permanent Tory rule: only twice has the Scottish vote been essential to a Labour government being elected, one of which was the brief eight months of Harold Wilson government from February to October 1974.

We’ve explained that far from abandoning the working class down south, independence would usher in the opportunity to lead by example, by shaping a society in favour of the working class that would act as a beacon to fellow workers in our neighbouring states.

And SSP speakers have been instrumental in reminding thousands of the realities voting No and then seeking “justice with

Labour leaders lie that voting Yes is condemning workers in England and Wales to permanent Tory rule – only twice has the Scottish vote been essential to a Labour government being elected

Labour” at Westminster in 2015 would mean: it was Labour in office under Brown, Blair and Alastair Darling that announced 100,000 civil service job losses; abolished the lower 10p tax rate for the lowest paid; implemented rampant privatization; destroyed Final Salary Pension Schemes; and presided over the most unequal division of wealth since 1886, according to Oxfam.

Labour’s attachment to the UK state is an expression of its deeper ideological devotion to capitalism and its state institutions.

Since at least the 1990s, Labour has transformed into an openly capitalist party. But precisely because of its working class origins of a century ago, and the remaining institutional links between Labour and the majority of the trade unions, that makes Labour the chief political obstacle to the advancement of the working class, let alone full blown socialism.

Capitalist Labour

By clinging onto traditional working class voters, whilst preaching and practicing neoliberal capitalism, Labour is involved in a monumental deceit that upholds the power and profiteering of the capitalist elite – the billionaires who rule Breadline Britain.

The same applies to foreign policy, which is only an extension of domestic policies: it was Labour that dragged Britain into the killing fields of Afghanistan and Iraq, clinging onto the coat-tails of USA imperialism.

The debates at trade union branches and public meetings on the referendum have raised issues that can’t simply be bottled up and put in cold storage again after September.

These include the call for control over trade union decisions by the Scottish membership; the formation of industry-wide shop stewards committees across national boundaries (and not just restricted to the borders of the current UK, in this age of multinational capitalism); and the treacherous

STRANGE ‘SOCIALISM’: in the past year, Scottish Labour leader Johan Lamont has denounced Scotland as a ‘something for nothing society’ and threatened to remove free prescriptions, over-60s’ bus passes and free school meals



role of Labour in their undisguised collaboration with the sworn Tory enemies of the working class.

After September 18, we are likely to see eruptions, schisms and a hemorrhaging of members from Labour in Scotland.

If, as we hope and expect, a Yes vote is won, the tops of Labour at UK and Scottish level will never be forgiven for their anti-working class collaboration with the Tory enemies of democratic self-rule.

If their efforts were to succeed in getting a No vote, hundreds of thousands will neither forget nor forgive their role in blocking workers’ escape route from brutal Tory dictatorship. And after a while, those in uproar at the Scottish and British Labour leaders would include tens of thousands conned into voting No who then realized their betrayal, as the assault on jobs, pay, benefits and services began to bite deep.

Unprincipled

If, with the assistance of the growing Labour for Independence trend, we win a Yes vote, all hell will break loose in and around Labour in Scotland.

MPs will vie with MSPs for parliamentary seats in an independent Holyrood – mostly unprincipled jockeying for parliamentary ambi-

tions; rarely if ever as a principled left/right split.

Those Labour members who’ve had the courage to campaign for independence will face stark choices in an independent Scotland: join with other genuine socialists in the SSP to fight for a socialist majority in the 2016 elections, or stay in the Labour Party in the hope of transforming Scottish Labour into a socialist force.

Of course a political programme for radical socialist transformation is at the heart of this question, rather than names and party labels.

Policies that could mobilize working class people in a movement built on the shoulders of the referendum campaign and that challenges capitalism would include: a decent living minimum wage; reversal of Westminster’s cuts; massive increases to pensions and benefits; defence and extension of a modern public welfare state; abolition of all anti-union laws and introduction of workplace democracy; reversal of past Tory and Labour privatisations; democratic public ownership of Royal Mail, energy, transport, construction, banks; progressive taxation of the rich and big business; full employment through creation of decent, well-paid jobs and apprenticeships in housing and the

green energy sector; removal of Trident and opposition to involvement in imperialist wars.

But where would such a programme leave ‘Scottish’ Labour? The Labour Party in Scotland under Westminster rule is a mere appendage of a British party that is firmly hitched to capitalism and besotted with winning middle-class swing voters in so-called Middle England.

In other words, fundamentally and utterly opposed to any suggestion of socialism.

In the event of independence, Labour in Scotland would be obliged to reposition itself.

Not a principled autonomy or independence from the capitalist British Labour Party – based on the principles of the right to national self-determination and therefore pursuit of an independent Socialist Scotland – more an unprincipled readjustment driven by self-preservation and parliamentary ambitions in an independent Scottish parliament.

The central question would still remain: what ideology and political programme would drive such a Scottish Labour Party in an independent state?

Lamont ‘socialist’?

The performance of the parliamentary wing of Labour in Scotland bodes ill for those dreaming of a socialist revival in Scottish Labour’s ranks. For instance, only two Scottish Labour MPs voted against the recent Tory cap on welfare benefits.

I’ve witnessed some in Labour for Independence claim – in their argument that independence would revive Labour as a socialist force – that Scottish Labour leader Johann Lamont is actually a socialist, but hampered by the London-based domination of Ed Miliband et al.

It’s a strange version of socialism that denounces Scotland as a “something for nothing society”, threatening to remove free prescriptions, over-60s’ bus passes or free school meals; or that besmirched the Scottish working class as “not genetically pro-



FORCE FOR CHANGE: alongside the SSP, socialists in the Labour Party and trade unions, plus newly awakened socialists in RIC and Yes groups across Scotland, and socialists currently in the SNP can help forge a mighty force for fundamental socialist change in Scotland and beyond PHOTO: Simon Whittle

grammed to make political decisions” – both declarations being made in the past year by the same ‘socialist’ Johann Lamont.

A Yes vote may embolden some in LFI and the Labour Campaign for Socialism in challenging the Scottish Labour leadership. But the fundamental problem they would still face is the lack of any groundswell in the working class towards joining the Labour Party en masse to reclaim and convert it into a socialist party.

In fact, the opposite is the trend. At least a whole generation of trade unionists and working class communities have experienced nothing but disappointment, disgust and despair at their experience of Labour in government at council, Holyrood or Westminster levels.

And their most recent experience is of the same Labour being on the wrong side – united with the Tory class enemy – during the referendum battle.

Far from any movement of workers being attracted to join the Labour Party, unions like USDAW have had members resigning and threatening to resign due to the union’s ultra-Labour loyalist affiliation to Better Together; a mistaken, but entirely understandable conclusion by workers who are fu-

rious, and a graphic indication of the deepening chasm between the trade union ranks and Labour.

A clear and growing majority of activists and union reps in the likes of UNISON and UNITE are for Yes, which brings them into conflict with the party their unions are still affiliated to.

Regardless of whether it’s a Yes or No majority in September, the case for breaking from Labour has grown in the trade unions; exponentially so compared to when the SSP launched our ‘Make the Break’ campaign in January 1999.

Trade union branches and especially union activists are key to the renewal of socialism in Scotland, alongside young people and those currently not in a unionised workplace.

Severe limitations

But that won’t be achieved by trying to breathe life into the Labour Party. The severe limitations of that strategy – even when applied by the biggest trade union in the country – were highlighted in Falkirk, with all the consequences for Unite the union and it’s activists at Grangemouth refinery.

The limitations – indeed the futility of that strategy – were further underlined by last year’s Labour

conference voting – unanimously! – for public ownership of Royal Mail and the railways, only to have the Labour leaders spit in the face of their own party conference, declaring within minutes that they will do no such thing on winning power at Westminster.

Workers convinced of the need for radical change, including through the mass learning process of the referendum, would do much better to devote their talent and energy alongside those of us already organised in the SSP, in constructing a mass, working class socialist party. Realignment on the Scottish left in the event of independence will strengthen that strategy immensely.

That is especially so given the thousands of socialists who have up until now chosen the SNP as the biggest vehicle to travel to independence in. On reaching that destination – the *raison d’être* for the SNP over 80 years – they will then confront the choice of what kind of Scotland to build with the powers of independence.

Whether to surrender to a tartan capitalism, ‘more of the same’ but under the Saltire – or do battle for a full-blown socialist programme for Scotland, as part of the international struggle for socialism?

Thousands of SNP members on demos, rallies and public meetings have said to the SSP: “When we get independence, we’ll be with you.”

Make the break

These pro-independence socialists need to ‘make the break’ from an SNP party whose dominant leadership have shown their dedication to capitalist economy and capitalist institutions through policies such as lower Corporation Tax; membership of the nuclear, war-mongering NATO; support for a medieval monarchy; and their implementation of Westminster austerity through cuts imposed by SNP-led councils.

Together with the SSP – which for all 16 years of our existence has persistently fought for socialism and Scottish independence – socialists in the Labour Party and trade unions, plus newly awakened socialists in RIC and Yes groups across Scotland, socialists currently in the SNP can help forge a mighty force for fundamental socialist change in Scotland and beyond.

Nothing will remain the same after 18 September – provided we fight to shape Scotland into the socialist society workers need it to become.

by Jim McVicar, SSP National Treasurer

Donate to SSP indy appeal

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

The Scottish Socialist Party, 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 Scottish Socialist Party 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 Scottish Socialist Party, 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 independence 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.

• Update: SSP Fife recently found an old branch bank account with a sizable balance. They've donated £1,000 to our appeal. Branches – check your accounts!

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.

FOR A MODERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC ★

Colin Fox

Scottish Socialist Party

FOR A MODERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The brand new pamphlet by SSP co-spokesperson Colin Fox. Order your copy: scottishsocialistparty.tictail.com Or send £5 (includes p&p) to: Scottish Socialist Party, Suite 370, 4th Floor, Central Chambers, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6LD Please make cheques payable to 'Scottish Socialist Party'

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by Roseanna McPhee
and Colin Turbett

SCOTTISH GYPSY TRAVELLERS FACE CONTINUED DISCRIMINATION

SCOTLAND'S LONGEST standing ethnic minority, the Scottish Gypsy Traveller community, face continued discrimination despite the recognition in recent years of full ethnic minority status. It is emerging that local authorities are circumventing their legal responsibility under government regulations to assess and plan for Gypsy Travellers by simply stating that there is no such community in their area and that provision is therefore unnecessary.

Local plans, which have to be endorsed by the Scottish Government, are the means for this process, but Renfrewshire Council's latest plan ignores the presence of a number of families who have been trying to get planning permission for settlement in the Linwood area.

Forced dispersal

Traditional stopping places in Johnstone, Linwood and Langbank in neighbouring Inverclyde, have been closed off or subject to forced dispersal, so that there is nowhere now for Travellers to stop in a large area of the West of Scotland.

Neither Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, nor East Renfrewshire have site provision for Gypsy Trav-



RICH CULTURE: Shamus and Roseanna McPhee, brother and sister Scottish Gypsy Traveller activists, are fighting back

ellers: the site in Linwood was closed a number of years ago – Gypsy Travellers being blamed for vandalism when the reality was a site that was neither welcoming nor maintained properly.

Forcing the SGT community into stopping places where they are neither welcomed nor provided for, only increases tensions with other local residents, often in an atmosphere stoked up by racist elements. Similar processes are happening in other

areas such as North Ayrshire, and Dumfries & Galloway. The excuse, which often goes unchallenged, is that of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour – as if these things were absent in mainstream communities!

However, contrary to expectations that this community are unable to articulate and effectively advocate their views, members of the SGT community are fighting back. In a letter to Renfrewshire Council highlighting their

breaches of Scottish Government law and European protocols regarding planning and provision, activist Roseanna McPhee argues a case that officials and elected members will not be able to ignore.

Last resort

Citing UN, European and Scottish Government policy she goes on to quote a 2013 Scottish Parliamentary Equal Opportunities Committee Inquiry which heard that “labelling as illegal a community’s action in seeking accommodation options where no others are available, invokes a criminal justice response that really ought to be the last resort.”

Sadly public views are prejudiced by the TV images of the Big Fat Gypsy Wedding variety rather than the reality and poverty of life for Scotland’s Gypsy Traveller community. Their rich culture and way of life is being eradicated through the actions of a society unable to tolerate difference. Socialists support their right to their culture and condemn racism and prejudice in all its forms – whether institutional or individual, as they feed off each other.

A sporting chance?

Preview: **Endurance** by **Catrin Evans and The Women’s Creative Company**. The Arches, Argyle Street, Glasgow, 24–27 July, various times

ENDURANCE IS a theatre project which has brought together over a dozen women from across Glasgow to show the achievements and challenges of sportswomen from across the commonwealth nations.

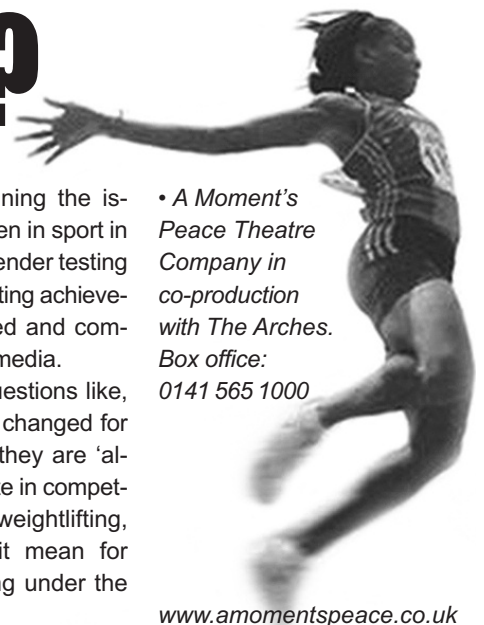
“While it is fairly easy to find out about a white man who sprints for Australia, getting information on, for example, a female triple-jumper from Ghana has proved a lot more difficult”, says Catrin Evans, artistic director of the Women’s Creative Company. But it is these women’s stories that Endurance attempts to bring to a wider audience.

The women involved in the project have been researching a number of sportswomen

whilst also examining the issues around women in sport in general such as gender testing and how their sporting achievements are reported and commented on in the media.

It also poses questions like, have things really changed for women now that they are ‘allowed’ to participate in competitive boxing and weightlifting, and what does it mean for women to be living under the ‘British Empire’?

• *A Moment’s Peace Theatre Company* in co-production with *The Arches*.
Box office:
0141 565 1000



www.amomentspeace.co.uk

My name is Ena McLean. I am a member of the Scottish Socialist Party. I have never spoken at a public meeting in my life. I am not politically clever or savvy so I won't be getting into party politics. I am here as an ordinary citizen to have a conversation with you about the coming referendum.

I am sure that some of you are finding it difficult to come to a decision about independence. The more you listen to the Yes/No debates the more confusing it gets. Who do you believe? Who can you trust?

The so-called experts can't agree about anything. They contradict each other all the time. We've had scare tactics, promises of good times to come. Now both sides are being nice to each other. I'm really confused. So I decided to ignore them all and base my decision on Scotland as it is now and Scotland as I want it to be. My conclusion is that the only way to get the Scotland I want is to make a complete break with Westminster.

Career politicians

I am absolutely not anti-English. But I am completely anti-Westminster. In my opinion, Westminster is stuffed full of career politicians who yearn to be lords and ladies and millionaires, who are there solely to protect the interests of the very rich and powerful.

The English, Welsh and Irish working class are suffering the same Westminster imposed austerity as the Scots. The big difference between us is that we have a fantastic, once-only opportunity to create a new Scotland. A fairer and more equal democracy.

Just imagine if we could change the fact that one in three children in Glasgow alone live in abject poverty. Forget about the numbers for a minute and think about this in

'The only way to get the Scotland I want is to make a complete break with Westminster'

ENA McLEAN is a veteran socialist, a warm, lively woman in her seventies who lives in Knightswood, Glasgow. She rejoined the SSP last year. She was due to speak at a recent SSP public meeting in Knightswood on the socialist case for independence, but was ill on the day and couldn't deliver her speech. But Ena is keen to share her thoughts through the Voice...

human terms. It means that one in three kids go to school on an empty stomach, or go to bed hungry in a cold home that the parents cant afford to heat.

I'm not talking about dysfunctional families, where drugs or alcohol abuse are an issue. I'm talking about families who are in work but earning such abysmally low wages that it's a constant struggle to make ends meet. These are the families who are using food banks and pay day loans.

We have become a low wage economy in a rich country. Stagnant wages and the ever-rising cost of living are putting families at risk of real hardship. There is a better way, but as long as we're tied to Westminster we are never going to find it.

Imagine too if we could change the fact that the sick and disabled are compelled to undergo humiliating assessments by profiteers who have no understanding of the effects of the illnesses and

disabilities on the individuals they are assessing.

People who are affected have to go through those assessments on a regular basis just in case they should wake up one morning and find that where yesterday they could only walk 25 yards today they might be able to walk 26 – so they should be in a job.

Fiendish plans

It's not enough to be sick or disabled, you have to be punished by having to worry from one assessment to the outcome of the next. This is the policy of Iain Duncan Smith. I listened to him on the Andrew Marr show a few weeks ago. He was outlining his fiendish plans for further reforms of welfare.

On the same programme he was asked to comment on the Tory MP who had been reprimanded for using taxpayers' money to make mortgage payments on a house her parents were living

in. Iain Duncan Smith sat there and made excuses for her.

She made a mistake; the press were out to get her; blah, blah, blah. On the one hand he is devising punishing plans for the sick, disabled and unemployed and on the other he is defending an expenses cheat. This is typical of the arrogance of the privileged. Better together with these posh parasites? I don't think so!

The Westminster government are planning more austerity cuts which will plunge thousands more into extreme poverty. We can stop them by becoming independent.

A Yes vote is not a vote for Alex Salmond. It's a vote for the people of Scotland to be able to start over again and create a New Scotland. How many countries get a chance to do that? Let's not waste that chance.

I'll finish by stealing a couple of words from the Bard. Let Scotland become a 'burning shining light to a' the place.

by Stephanie Pride

SNP AND LABOUR FALKIRK SPAT MIRRORS NATIONAL HOSTILITY

IT SAYS a lot about the state of local politics in Falkirk that one socialist can rudely heckle another during what is ostensibly a debate about independence.

I'm not particularly proud to say that I was the heckler and the other socialist (by his own description) was Michael Connarty, MP for Falkirk East, and one of the few Labour rebels to vote against the benefits cap at Westminster.

Connarty, who declared himself a socialist three times at a recent referendum hustings organised by the Falkirk Herald, was clearly desperate to parade his left-wing credentials to an audience that appeared evenly split between the Yes and the No camps, but was overwhelmingly anti-Tory.

While I have nothing against Connarty, who I am sure is sincere in his desire for social justice, his view that the best way to achieve working class solidarity and a nuclear-free Britain is by staying part of the union and putting your faith in the Labour Party was deserving of derision.

On the Yes side, the SNP's Clare Adamson MSP was equally keen to prove her left-leaning credentials. In a bid to outflank the Labour opposition, she denounced a UK minimum wage that she maintained was a tenth of the national average!

Circus of rivalry

Needless to say, it wasn't long before the two sides were slugging it out over some highly contestable facts and figures, with only Patrick Harvie MSP prepared to acknowledge that not every point made by the other side was illegitimate.

Indeed, the presence of the Scottish Green Party leader really showed up the circus of the SNP-Labour rivalry with its hair-splitting hysteria and earned by far the greatest applause from an audience sick of the sideshow of SNP and Labour bickering.



HYSTERIC RIVALRY: (l-r) Labour's Michael Connarty and Karen Whitefield, chair Ian Scott, the SNP's Claire Adamson and Patrick Harvie of the Greens

PHOTO: Michael Gillen

Of course there is nothing new here, and the picture in Falkirk mirrors the quality of the national debate over independence.

For some years, Labour and the SNP have been locked in an increasingly bitter power struggle in Falkirk, with the nationalists gaining ground in recent times. However, it is Labour who rule the roost on the council, with a 14-13 split in their favour - despite the SNP winning a greater share of the first-choice vote.

For the SNP, it must have hurt to lose power on the cut of a pack of cards when both sides were tied in 2007, while it rankled even more to see Labour go into coalition with the Tories to achieve an overall majority in 2012.

Since then, the SNP group has boycotted meetings of the council in protest at the 'undemocratic' carve-up of executive power, despite doing exactly the same thing themselves on other councils. Leading activists have wasted no time in accusing Labour of suppressing criticism and dirty tricks - even shortening the height of a flagpole bearing the saltire 'for political reasons' (a claim which turned out to be groundless).

Given their populist stance on community issues, such the

local campaign against coalbed methane extraction in Airth, the SNP have effectively cast themselves as the champions of grass-roots democracy against an out-of-touch Labour Party machine hell-bent on power at all costs: simultaneously 'in hock' to the unions, 'contemptuous' of its membership and 'in bed with' the Tories (when its most prominent former member is not drunkenly aiming punches at them!).

That they have been able to do so is testament to their hard work on the ground, not least in the Yes campaign, while the local Labour Party has lurched from one debacle to another and could even lose their once safe West-

minster seat (currently occupied by the ostracised Eric Joyce) at the next general election.

For all their posturing, however, there is little to choose between the two main social democratic parties in Scotland other than their stance on independence, and as Patrick Harvie pointed out at the local hustings, a lot of their manufactured differences come down to who is in power.

Real alternative

For example, in the Scottish Parliament it was Labour who argued for imposing a condition on public contractors of offering the living wage, while the SNP opposed it on the grounds that it could fall foul of EU competition laws. Harvie said the positions could well have been reversed had Labour been in power, although the Nationalists in particular have a record of blaming other institutions for their own shortcomings, which would somehow all be overcome if they presided over an independent Scotland.

In truth, neither party can deliver on its rhetoric and it is up to the likes of the Scottish Socialist Party to expose this and offer a real alternative to the rejection of politics which is so often the public response, not least in Falkirk.



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

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Exhibition on Glasgow's links to slave trade

How Glasgow Flourished 1714–1837

A temporary exhibition on show at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow until 17 August

by Dominic Bascombe, Assistant Organiser, National Union of Journalists in Scotland

HOW GLASGOW Flourished is a wide ranging exhibition covering much of the city's development through the 1700s under the reigns of the Hanoverian kings George I, George II, George III, George IV and William IV, right up to the start of Queen Victoria's reign.

With some 230 objects, 40 per cent of which have not been previously on public display, it should come as no surprise that like the city's international connections, this exhibition was deliberately conceived to coincide with the Commonwealth Games being held in Glasgow.

Contrary to popular belief, much of the city's landscape was developed during this 1700s period including the open spaces of George Square, Buchanan Street, and Argyle Street. An often overlooked period, the exhibition shows how famous Glaswegians came up with ideas and inventions that changed in-

dustry and trade across the globe. However one aspect of the city's history that isn't hugely covered is its connections with the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Last October, celebrated internationally as Black History Month, the Scotland office of the National Union of Journalists hosted an event at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow, looking at Scotland's connection to slavery and the Caribbean. A key criticism from participants was just how little that connection between Scotland's largest city and the horrific slave trade was discussed at a national level within Scotland.

This exhibition, unfortunately does not take us much further in that discussion. Whilst the exhibition does mention the city's slave trade links, there is little depth to it.

One exhibit points out: "Slavery on American, Caribbean and Indian plantations as well as cheap migrant labour in Glasgow were all part of 'The Glasgow System' which enabled businessmen trading in tobacco and sugar to grow wealthy... In 1807 the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was passed by parliament. The British government was forced to make generous compensation payments to merchants for their loss of income. Glaswegian business men invested this money in their city."

Quite rightly, the exhibition does point out that Glasgow's slave connections are still present in many of the city's landmarks and street names including Jamaica Street et al. But it is also present in other famous buildings such as the Mitchell Library.

Why is this not better known? Why are there no official commemorations of the city's

slave links? Most importantly why has the city, and indeed the country, not seen fit to publicly recognise its slavery connections through a broader public education initiative and possible apology or at least an official position of 'regret'?

Scotland's influence continues to be felt in the Caribbean today as many Scots settled there, running plantations and creating families. Scottish family names and landmarks can be found across many of the islands, Jamaica and Barbados in particular. For example, Hampden was one of Jamaica's oldest sugar and rum estates. The house there was built by the Stirlings of Keir in 1779.

With the opportunity to send crops from the Caribbean back to Glasgow for refinement, slavery was a cheap way to keep production costs low and price of the products competitive.

In fact Scottish merchants encouraged others to join in exploiting the trade in humans. George Bogle III wrote many letters from India to his family at Daldowie House near Glasgow informing them about the cheap Indian labour available, as an incentive for fellow Glaswegians to invest there.

Whilst the 'How Glasgow Flourished' exhibition does provide an overview of a very specific period of the city's history, it is important that Glasgow and indeed Scotland is better informed about its connections, and in particular its connections with slavery. Let's be completely open about who we are and how we got here. A national exhibition examining this in more detail, alongside increased focus in schools, perhaps during Black History Month, would be most welcome.

INDYREF GETS ARTY

THE FESTIVAL of the Common Weal, 6 July at 12-6pm at The Arches in Glasgow, celebrates left music, arts and politics and brings together various left and progressive organisations and campaigns to celebrate left politics, music and culture.

The Radical Independence Campaign will have a stall at the event and will be speaking in one of the many discussions taking place on the day. The festival includes a 'Live Arch' for music, comedy, spoken word and film screenings, a 'Talk Arch' for debates and Q&A, a 'discussion arch' to discuss the ideas of the Common Weal Project, and an 'Arts Arch' for producing live art at the

event itself. There is also a family area and the event is family friendly.

Some cinema dates – on Sat 12 July, 11am-1pm, a special screening event at the Filmhouse cinema in Edinburgh will feature two hours of the best of cultural filmmakers and activists on the indyref campaign.

A range of filmmakers have been brought together into one energetic reel to show their different and inspired takes on the importance for everyone of owning the future in an independent Scotland.

The event will see Ken Loach's Spirit of 45 examining the creation of the welfare state, the recent Scotland-wide mass participation feature We Are Northern Lights from Nick Higgins, and the hilarious music videos of National Collective's Lady Alba. Also on the reel is the personalised documentary of Igor Slepov for Bridg-

ing the Gap and Scottish Documentary Institute, the crowd-sourced feature documentary Scotland Yet which gets to the beating heart of the current campaign, and films of young first-time voters and inspired activists from RIC Edinburgh.

And the Glasgow Film Theatre spotlights Scottish history, culture and identity in their 'To See Ourselves' screenings and events. Filmmaker Eleanor Yule and Dr David Mander launch their book The Glass Half Full: Moving Beyond Scottish Misery on Monday 14 July, with an illustrated talk which defines the genre from its cultural roots in literature to its flowering on screen.

A special big screen treat in the GFT's programme is the 1974 TV film of John McGrath's play The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil on Sunday 10 August at 5pm. The play

surveys two centuries of Scottish history from the Battle of Culloden to the coming of North Sea oil, and it's followed by a panel discussion examining the film's portrayal of the exploitation of Scottish people.

John Byrne's six-part TV follow-up to Tutti Frutti – Your Cheatin' Heart (unseen since 1990) is also at the GFT. Made entirely of Scottish film archive, From Scotland with Love (Sunday 31 August) is a feature film by award-winning director Virginia Heath, with a transcendent score by Scottish musician and composer King Creosote. Followed by a Q&A with director Virginia Heath and King Creosote, with King Creosote also playing a couple of tunes live from the film's soundtrack.

• See filmhousecinema.com glasgowfilm.org & cwfest.com

by Bill Bonnar

BUSH AND BLAIR'S WAR UNDERPINS IRAQ CRISIS

DESPITE TONY Blair's pleas to the contrary, the current crisis in Iraq is a direct consequence of the American war against that country and its subsequent destruction.

It is worth reminding ourselves why America attacked Iraq. It certainly had nothing to do with Saddam Hussein being a brutal dictator. The United States has supported brutal dictatorships around the world as it once enthusiastically supported Saddam Hussein.

And it had nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction, stopping the spread of international terrorism or heaven forbid, establishing democracy.

In reality, it was about installing a dependent pro-American regime in Baghdad and gaining strategic control over Iraq's oil. We don't need the Chilcot Enquiry findings to tell the world what the world already knows. We actually need the Chilcot Enquiry to help fuel the campaign to try Tony Blair as a war criminal.

Consequences

The consequences of the invasion have been dramatic.

Upwards of a million people killed and millions now living in exile. The complete destruction of Iraq's economy. The collapse of basic services such as water and electricity. The disintegration of the institutions which held the country together and resulting sectarian strife of almost biblical proportions.

All this more than a decade after the invasion and with untold billions of dollars poured into the country to try and keep it afloat.

The current crisis has been described as an attempt by an Islamic fundamentalist army to take control of the country. To say that this is a gross exaggeration is an overstatement. The group in question, ISIS, are certainly playing the lead role but are being assisted by a gener-

IN BUSH & BLAIR'S NAMES: the illegal war on Iraq caused the complete destruction of its economy and the collapse of basic services like water and electricity



alised Sunni uprising against the regime in Baghdad.

This includes remnants of the old Baathist regime, Sunni tribal groups and disaffected sections of the army. What unites them are grievances against the Shia dominated government in Baghdad; a regime propped up by Shia militias and American money. These grievances include turning the Sunni population into second class citizens in their own country, collusion between Shia death squads and the Iraqi army and the general malaise in which the country finds itself.

Iraq is no longer any kind of unitary state; that was smashed to pieces by the American invasion; rather a patchwork of ethnically divided regions. In fact ISIS have declared the establishment of an Islamic state stretching from Syria to Iraq. Putting it back together again will be extremely difficult. The starting point must be the creation of an inclusive, democratic and secular state.

The conflict also highlights a wider issue. In the Arab world the main struggle is between the forces of secularism and that of

Islamic fundamentalism. Secular forces embrace a wide range of movements and issues including progressive and left forces, those fighting for civil rights and the emancipation of women, for democracy and modernity.

The main aim of the left is to ensure that in this struggle secularism triumphs and that the left achieve a leading role. Islamic fundamentalism is the polar opposite of this; authoritarian, socially conservative, anti-democratic, anti-modern and embracing a vision of society which is deeply reactionary.

All conflicts in the Arab world; no matter how diverse; must be seen within this context.

Among the Sunni population of Iraq are many who do not want to see the establishment of an Islamic state and there is already some evidence of armed conflict between these forces and ISIS.

While recognising the genuine grievances of the Sunni people and we should vigorously oppose ISIS and support those, mostly Baathist forces who oppose them. However, this conflict cannot be resolved without a political set-

tlement in Baghdad. The starting point must be the removal of the Maliki Government.

Although elected it is a government which lacks any real legitimacy; its victory obtained through a combination of bribery, electoral fraud and the repression of opponents.

The aim must be to replace this by a government of national unity. Following, there must be a genuine programme of nation building aimed at restoring the economy and infrastructure, and a political program which includes moving towards a more federal structure ensuring rights for all groups and communities within the country.

American domination of the country must be brought to an end including the removal of American bases.

Future

Ultimately, the future of Iraq can only be secured through the establishment of powerful left forces aiming to take the country down a very different road from that of the past.

The country has a strong history of mass left movements particularly the Iraqi Communist Party, before it was destroyed by Saddam Hussein in open collusion with the CIA who supplied the regime with the names of tens of thousands of Iraqi communists.

The corruption and brutality of the Baathist regime under Saddam Hussein brought the country to the edge of a precipice. The American attack on Iraq destroyed it.

Only the re-establishment of a strong secular state, led by the left and moving in the direction of socialism can safeguard the interests of the Iraqi people.

by Allan Grogan,
Labour for Independence

OTHER THAN the term nationalist, the term most commonly used by the no camp describing Yes voters is the term separatist as in to separate or create division. Yet it can be argued that this notion of division has been evident as part of the United Kingdom for the last 60 years.

Since the end of the Atlee Government in 1951, the UK has gradually shifted towards a 'Me First' society. The theory behind this is that if the richest get richer then the wealth will trickle down to the poorest. Yet this is very rarely the case, that is why the UK is now the 4th most unequal society in the western world.

How in this case do the people of a country so unfair and unequal not rise up? In order to continue this profligation, diversions have to be created to ensure the public do not focus on how corrupt the current system is.

These diversions aided by right wing press such as the Daily Mail, take the focus away from the real issues and create a tension and separatism within society. Immigration is an obvious and lasting avenue for rationalisation of poverty and inequality.

'British' jobs

This is not anything new. In the '50s unemployment was blamed on the Irish and Caribbean migrant taking jobs away from "British" people, this continued with Asian immigrants and now Eastern Europeans. Of course this pretence only goes so far and so in recent years politicians and the media have found a new channel for shifting the focus away from the real issues. Attacking the 'undeserving poor' is the way to ensure deep rooted divisions within the working class.

This diversion has proved particularly successful thanks to an onslaught of political accusations

The politics of separation



INDEPENDENCE:
it's not the destination,
it's merely the beginning
PHOTO: Craig Maclean

and continual media enforcement of this. One needs only to look at the Channel 4 show Benefit Street to see the major attempts to create tension between the working poor and poor.

Throughout this campaign I have met people who fully believe that the reason they are struggling is down to those who won't or can't work. The reality of the situation of course is very different. The UK has one of the lowest levels of social security in Europe.

The fact that people who work 40 hours a week are receiving less than those on social security is not an indictment of unemployment wealth, rather the low paid, zero hour culture that is prevalent within our society. Yet this story is all too often untold, leaving those in abject poverty to fight over the scraps off the corporate table of wealth. The Labour Party, used to stand up to these myths and fight

for a more fairer society, yet those days seem to be a thing of the past in Westminster. In the past Labour used to raise funds for campaigns by going to the miners and social clubs. They used to work with the trade unions with the mutual interest of protecting the people who had elected them.

Now far removed from their trade union links they host fundraising dinners at £1000 a table. Who can afford that?

The same businesses and interest groups that seek to maintain the same cycle of me first politics. Scotland deserves better, a society which represents the needs of all not just those that can afford to have their say.

The purpose of the Common Weal, is to create an 'All of Us First' society, ensuring that we tackle the real causes of poverty and inequality. Independence offers us this opportunity, the

chance to say we will not tolerate excuses and diversions over real answers to social issues.

The opportunity to say we will no longer accept playing off religions, races or genders against each other. That we can't play off young against old, rich against poor, poor against the poorer, that there is a better way.

We deserve better

On 19 September, after a Yes vote, the easiest thing to do would be to continue as a smaller version of what the UK is. But we deserve better than this, we can do so much better than this.

Issues at the very heart of poverty and health issues must be addressed, jobs must be created, pride must be restored in all forms of employment. It won't be easy, but nothing worth fighting for ever is. This campaign has seen the largest civic movement in recent history, millions of Scots yearning, demanding a better way, we owe this to them that we deliver on the ideals put forward in this campaign.

Independence isn't the destination, merely the beginning. The hard work starts there. The opportunity given to us with independence must not be squandered, we should make no excuses or diversions, we owe that much.

I look forward to working with comrades within a real Labour Party, and members of all political parties and none in achieving a better way, a better Scotland and a better tomorrow.