

Scottish Socialist



Party

2015 General Election manifesto

**FOR AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST SCOTLAND:
STANDING UP FOR
SCOTLAND'S WORKING
CLASS MAJORITY**





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INTRODUCTION

The outcome of this General Election hangs in the balance. Labour and the Tories are running neck and neck in the polls. Neither has sufficient support to form a government. Neither enjoys the confidence of a majority of voters. Each may try to govern as a minority or more likely form a coalition with the much-reduced and much-despised Lib Dems.

David Cameron's plea to be given a second term rests on the premise that the Tories have steered Britain out of a recession and out of the record indebtedness Labour left behind. But his appeal appears to have fallen on deaf ears largely because millions of people across Britain have seen no real improvement in their standard of living and are in fact £1,800-a-year worse off than they were in 2010. [Source: TUC]

The widespread hostility towards the Tory/Lib Dem Coalition and their austerity measures should mean Ed Miliband is well ahead in the polls. So why isn't he?

The answer is that people recall Labour's own insipid economic performance last time. And their uninspiring programme and leader intends to implement 90 per cent of Tory/Lib Dem cuts should they win on 7 May. There is a palpable lack of enthusiasm for Ed Miliband because he offers no real alternative to the Tories. And yet Labour's problem is more fundamental than that. No one knows what Labour stands for anymore. They do not inspire confidence among working class people looking for change and desperate to see an improvement in their standard of living.

If the Tories lose, Cameron will be forced to resign and will most likely be replaced by another Eton public schoolboy Boris Johnston or George Osborne. If Labour loses, Miliband will be similarly dumped.

The other main 'loser' in this election may well be UKIP's Nigel Farage. For years the darling of the right-wing media who offer him every platform to espouse his odious view that immigrants and Europe are to blame for the economic and social crisis caused by City bankers. It is clear UKIP will win barely a handful of seats. And in such circumstances the three pro-EU parties at Westminster are unlikely to grant him the IN/OUT referendum on Europe he demands.

For working people however one thing is clear this election will change very little – 8 May will follow 7 May as usual. Austerity and cuts in public services will continue to bite. The jobs market will continue to be dominated by poverty wages and zero hour contracts. Our public services will continue to deteriorate in quality and reach. And the corporate elite who hold Britain to

ransom will continue to call the shots through the politicians they keep in their pockets.

In stark contrast to the inconclusive outcome expected at Westminster however May's General Election in Scotland, the first test of public opinion since the independence referendum, looks set to produce a dramatic reversal for Labour. They currently hold most Scottish seats. But the polls suggest Labour could lose two thirds of them as its chronic political decline, a process the Scottish Socialist Party first identified 16 years ago, reaches a dramatic climax.

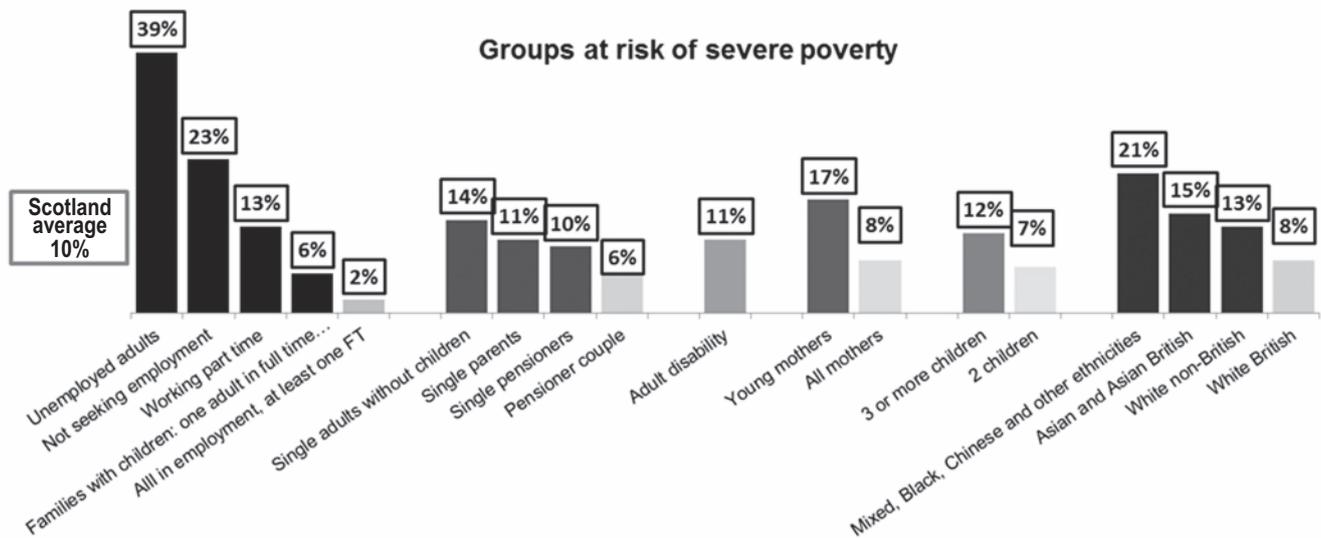
The independence referendum was the last straw for many Labour voters who saw the party of Keir Hardie, Anuerin Bevan and Tony Benn 'get into bed with the Tories'. And to compound their sense of betrayal Labour backtracked on 'The Vow' Gordon Brown made at the height of the referendum debate to deliver substantial new powers to Holyrood.

This widespread desire for more powers has unified former Yes and No voters. The party seen to be associated most with that outcome is the SNP. And their perceived ability to force the issue at Westminster has transformed the political scene in Scotland in a way not seen in 40 years.

It is ironic that responsibility for Labour's imminent collapse in Scotland lies with their most electorally successful Prime Minister. Tony Blair's legacy will not be the Iraq War and his lies above all, nor his support for privatisation of the NHS, education and our public services, nor tuition fees, or his vicious attacks on the poor, or his cosy relationship with George Bush and with Rupert Murdoch at News International. It will in the last analysis be his conviction that 'ideology is dead' and that 'all that matters is what works'. Hundreds of thousands of Scots were further angered by Johann Lamont's revisionist claim that universal benefits represented 'the something for nothing culture'.

It is a matter of public record that the Scottish Socialist Party wanted to see 'Independence Alliance' candidates contest all 59 Scottish seats this time round. We felt that was the best way to inflict most damage on Labour and maintain the strength of the broad independence movement. We wanted the SNP and the Greens to join us in presenting unified single candidates in each constituency. But it was not to be. The SNP rejected our offer.

We are therefore standing in a limited number of seats to present the socialist alternative to neoliberalism, maintain our own profile and provide vital experience for those hundreds of new Scottish Socialist Party members who have joined the party in recent months.



All four mainstream parties stand condemned by Scotland's appalling levels of poverty and inequality

A recent Scottish Government report concluded that more than half a million Scots live in poverty. In 2012/2013 for example 4 per cent of Scots were living in extreme poverty. Over 510,000 people, including 100,000 children and 80,000 pensioners living in households where the income was lower than £11,500. A further 230,000 had household incomes lower than £9200. [*Scottish Government's 'Severe Poverty in Scotland' report – March 2015]

Working age adults and children were more likely to live in poverty particularly after housing costs. In 2012/13, around 10 per cent of working age adults and 10 per cent of children were living in severe poverty, as were 8 per cent of pensioners. After housing costs, 16 per cent of working age adults, 15 per cent of children and 6 per cent of pensioners in Scotland were living in severe poverty. Over the last decade, while the rate of relative poverty has fallen, a greater proportion of households in poverty were in severe or extreme low income in 2012/13.

The statistics also show that employment is no longer a protection against poverty as 44 per cent of working age adults in extreme poverty lived in households where at least one adult was in employment, as did 60 per cent of children. Half of children living in extreme poverty were in households where at least one adult was in full time employment.

The Scottish Socialist Party believes this is the most important issue in this election and we have no confidence in any of the other parties' half-hearted efforts to turn this dismal situation around.

The other parties contesting these elections may cry crocodile tears about this widening

divergence in earnings between working people and their bosses but they stand full square behind the neoliberal economic system that manufactures such inequalities. The Scottish Socialist Party does not. We offer working class people the democratic socialist alternative to neoliberalism. There is, we insist, nothing new, liberal or democratic about the systematic and widespread exploitation of Scotland's working class majority.

Our support for a £10-an-hour living wage and an end to zero hour contracts forms the centrepiece of our commitment to working people in Scotland. It stands alongside our commitment to independence and our support for extra powers devolved to Holyrood to protect working class Scots from the ravages of further Westminster attacks.

INDEPENDENCE DEFERRED

‘Supporting Scotland’s democratic right to self-determination doesn’t make you a Scottish nationalist it makes you a democrat’ – Colin Fox, Yes Scotland Advisory Board member and SSP joint national spokesman.

The result of the referendum was decisive. The Scottish people made it clear they preferred more powers for Holyrood at this stage because that in their view offered sufficient protection from the political ideology prevalent at Westminster.

The SSP wants to see further powers devolved to Holyrood as promised. In our submission to the Smith Commission – reproduced below – we made it clear we would continue to advocate full powers for our Parliament. Whilst we continue to support an independent socialist Scotland, a modern democratic republic, as democrats we accept the 18 September result and recognise the vote was an endorsement of the ‘Devo–Max’ option where all powers except Defence and Foreign Affairs should be devolved to Holyrood.

MORE POWERS FOR HOLYROOD

The Smith Commission turned out to be the proverbial ‘damp squib’ recommending a set of wholly inadequate and very limited additional powers. We want far greater and more far-reaching powers than that. For the Scottish Socialist Party the power to change things in favour of Scotland’s working class majority is crucial. We want to prize economic and political control out of the hands of an unelected, corporate elite in order to eradicate the widespread poverty, inequality and injustice so prevalent in 21st century Scotland.

The Scottish Socialist Party has supported independence since our inception in 1998. We campaigned for an independent socialist Scotland and have been prominent in this debate for the past 16 years. As one of the founders of the cross-party ‘Scottish Independence Convention’ in 2005 and the ‘Yes Scotland’ coalition in 2012 together with the SNP and the Scottish Green Party, we were represented on the ‘Yes Scotland’ Advisory Board throughout the referendum campaign.

There can be little doubt Scotland is far more broadly engaged and politically energised today than it was before the independence debate began. We regret the Commission’s decision to uniquely exclude the Scottish Socialist Party from its multilateral deliberations. The fact that all 5 other parties involved in the referendum

campaign were included and the SSP was excluded shows, as far as we are concerned, poor judgement on the Commission’s behalf and reflects a rejection not only of the spirit of this debate, but also the specific instructions laid down by the Prime Minister that this discussion should involve ‘cross-party talks and facilitate an inclusive engagement process across Scotland’.

The excuse offered to us, that only parties represented at Holyrood were to be invited to participate fully, ignores the fact that this referendum was not a Parliamentary event but a rather unique national plebiscite.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses in the Commission’s approach we made the following submission in good faith and believe our proposals, as outlined below, are in keeping with the wishes the Scottish people expressed democratically on 18 September 2014.

The Scottish Socialist Party believes the powers bestowed on Holyrood by ‘The Scotland Act’ 1978 must be significantly augmented. We support the devolution of all fiscal and tax raising powers for example to allow Holyrood to eradicate the terrible social problems, stark inequalities and appalling deprivation that blights this wealthy nation of ours. We believe the Scottish people have little faith that such outcomes will ever be achieved via Westminster.

It cannot surely be acceptable to anyone in this debate that one in three children in some areas of our country live in poverty, that 800,000 are now classed as ‘working poor’ because their pay levels are so low, that nearly one in three households continue to suffer the indignity of fuel poverty and that 157,000 families languish on the apparently never shortening waiting list in need of a decent home to live in. Yet that is the stark reality of 21st century Scotland. This is not the type of socially divided, low wage economy our people wish to build. And the Scottish people have shown time and again they want to see the economic and financial powers to deal with these matters devolved to Holyrood.

We further contend that the referendum highlighted the need to build a more prosperous, fairer and more democratic Scotland. Far too many of our countrymen and women are denied the chance to live in such a land and fulfil their potential.

STANDING UP FOR SCOTLAND'S WORKING CLASS MAJORITY

The SSP has consistently fought for the interests of working class Scots against their exploiters, for the millions against the millionaires, for labour against capital.

We are a working class party who intend to replace capitalist exploitation with socialist democracy – including democracy in our workplaces and communities.

1. JOBS FOR ALL – DECENT JOBS!

The Tory/Lib Dem Coalition boast of falling unemployment but beneath the statistics lurks an ugly reality – of 1.5 million new jobs created in the UK since 2010 only one in 40 are full-time and permanent. There are 80,000 fewer full-time jobs in Scotland in 2015 than in 2010. And 32 per cent of the new jobs are self-employed. Most people would prefer a secure job but can't find one. 80 per cent of the self-employed now live in poverty.

The working class is cursed by casualisation with insecure, temporary, part-time and low-paid jobs the main alternative to unemployment. Hundreds of thousands of people now struggle to survive on 8-12 hours a week. There is a vast pool of people desperate for extra hours who are abused by unscrupulous employers who use them only in busy spells with no overtime or premium payments for anti-social periods.

Many workers rely on two or three jobs to pay the bills, losing out on paid breaks, sick pay, holiday pay and other in-work benefits. Under-employment is the new 21st century variant of the mass unemployment previous generations endured.

Zero Hours Contracts - zero rights

The pinnacle of job insecurity and lack of workplace rights are the notorious Zero Hours Contracts. An estimated 200,000 workers in Scotland are living with this constant insecurity.

It means being contracted to work but with absolutely no guarantee of how many hours you will get each week.

Workers on Zero Hour Contracts are expected to be on call, unpaid, waiting to find out when they're wanted. When people decline a shift offered to them they are frequently not offered any more thereafter, as bosses exercise their power to punish them.

These obnoxious forms of modern serfdom are not isolated to the outer fringes of the economy they are at its epicentre in every High Street and retail park, fast food outlet, university and social care provider in the land.

Our grandparent's generation would never

have put up with such an affront to their security of employment. We believe in full employment with equal rights and in-work benefits for all part-time, fixed-term contract and agency workers.

The Scottish Socialist Party would abolish Zero Hours Contracts and legislate to provide secure employment with guaranteed hours for all, whether part-time or full-time.

2. AUSTERITY

Before the last election Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and UKIP politicians went before voters with plans to slash public spending and sell off our public services, supposedly to reduce the debt taken on by the British government when it bailed out the banks.

As many economists have pointed out Britain has had a National Debt or deficit for over 100 years. So when Nick Clegg claims on TV [The Leaders Debate –2/4/15] that the country pays £42billion-a-year in interest as if it was unprecedented he is quite wrong.

The economic illiteracy of austerity has been exposed a thousand times over since David Cameron took the helm. His government is pushing our social security system to breaking point, with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) pressing staff to sanction claimants to meet arbitrary quotas. Around 650,000 people were sanctioned in 2011, when unemployment peaked – but that number rose to nearly 900,000 in 2013, despite statistics purporting to show unemployment nearing pre-2008 levels.

In the past year, more people were sanctioned than fined by the courts. Dr David Webster of Glasgow University, giving evidence to a Westminster inquiry, said the DWP ran “an amateurish, secret penal system” with little accountability. The welfare state that provides a safety net for vulnerable people is being dismantled.

Millions of pounds from Holyrood's budget for devolved policies have been spent mitigating the effects of the deeply unpopular bedroom tax and the abolition of council tax benefit, which would have otherwise plunged thousands of families into debt.

The SSP will bring down the housing benefit bill by building 100,000 affordable homes for rent over four years, rather than letting money continue to flow into private landlords' pockets. We would reinstate housing support grants to provide councils with funding to build and repair homes.

Last year, research funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that women, ethnic minorities and disabled people

have been hit the hardest by the UK's austerity agenda. The Tories have used immigrants as a scapegoat at every opportunity for the economic crisis caused by their friends in the financial sector.

Across Europe, austerity brought a backlash in Greece, Spain and Ireland where an organised movement has emerged, rejecting the right-wing economics that dominate Europe.

In Scotland, 1.6 million voted to reject the British state last year. Many rightly viewed independence as a blow against Thatcherism and its legacy, opening an avenue to a divergent political future.

The SSP is at the forefront of the movement against austerity because there is a better alternative.

3. POVERTY PAY

Poverty pay is now endemic in Scotland. It is outrageous that in the 14th-richest nation on earth we have one million people living on or below the breadline. Some 52 per cent of those in poverty are in work. Traditionally employment was seen as the route out of poverty, but as wages have fallen as a share of national wealth low paid work has become the biggest source of poverty.

Two-thirds of people who found employment in 2014 were paid less than £7.65-an-hour.

The government boast that 1.2 million workers will 'enjoy' a 20p increase in the minimum wage in October 2015, rising to £6.70-an-hour.

The SSP regards that level of wage as inadequate. It is far too low to be a 'living wage'. We support a legally enforced living of £10-an-hour for all over 16.

We call for that £10 rate now not 2020 or some other distant date – based on the modest formula of a legally enforced minimum set at two-thirds median male wages in Scotland. We also insist this should be accompanied by equal pay for women.

The government admits that you need to be earning £10-an-hour in order to pay your own way today. They accept that anyone earning less than £10-an-hour will still qualify for top-up benefits because their wages are not high enough to live on.

We share the policy of the Bakers' union (BFAWU), and indeed the entire TUC, which voted unanimously for "a £10-per-hour minimum wage for all workers" at its 2014 Congress.

The SSP demands:

- A legally enforceable living wage of £10 now, for all over 16, with equal pay for women.
- Carers' Allowance to be set at the £10 minimum wage level.

- Inspection of the accounts of any Small and Medium Enterprise which claims they can't afford £10-an-hour, with government subsidies in cases of genuine proven need.

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

- A minimum of 6 weeks paid annual leave for all workers, plus public holidays (including defence of the May Day public holiday).

- 12 months' statutory paid maternity leave without loss of rights; and one month's statutory paid paternity leave – with partners being given the option of transferring some of their maternity/paternity leave to each other.

Protect jobs and services

The financial power to intervene in the Scottish economy to protect jobs and services under threat should also be devolved. We believe the Scottish public made it clear throughout the referendum that they wish to see key industries and services vital to our economy, like The Royal Mail, our railways and the energy sectors, returned to public ownership. Such powers would then ensure that decisions about how our services and industries are run in Scotland would rest with the Scottish people and would be driven by social need not corporate profit alone.

It is clear that the privatisation agenda, so prevalent in the policies of successive Westminster regimes, has little support north of the Border. The Scottish people have made it repeatedly clear they prefer public ownership to privatisation and the SSP supports the view that the power to return industries and services to public hands must also therefore be devolved to Holyrood.

Power to eradicate poverty

The Scottish Socialist Party believes financial and legal powers to protect Scotland's employees in both the private and public sector from 'poverty pay' and exploitation are also essential. Millions of people in Britain are now poor and in work. They earn a pittance and rely on state benefits to make ends meet. That, in our view, is not the 'full employment' the Scottish people support. A competitive, modern Scottish economy cannot be constructed on slave wages.

We therefore suggest all powers over the national minimum wage be devolved to Holyrood and we support the establishment of a statutory new 'Living Wage' as the Scottish Trades Union Congress and others have advocated.

Moreover as current Employment laws offer little meaningful protection to workers from 'slave wages', indignity and humiliation at work

or the bullying of unscrupulous employers we recommend all Employment legislation should also now be transferred to Holyrood.

And since a large majority of our citizens wish to belong to an appropriate trade union that might afford them some protection at work we believe such powers should also be transferred from Westminster to Holyrood. In such circumstances the worst anti-union laws in Europe would have to be immediately rescinded.

The Scottish Socialist Party supports powers being ceded to Holyrood to allow the introduction of a statutorily enforceable Living Wage as recommended by the Trades Union Congress and the Living Wage Foundation. But we would go further and insist that the most effective way to tackle the problem would be to introduce £10-an-hour for every employee in Scotland now. This is the level researchers have found a person needs to be earning in Scotland today in order to pay their own way and not have to rely on additional state benefits because their wages are so low. Under current circumstances the taxpayer is in effect subsidising bad employers.

Rescind the anti-union laws

The SSP also believes employment legislation should be devolved to Holyrood to establish a level-playing field between employees and employers in Scottish industrial relations.

In the 30 years since the miners' strike of 1984/5 collective bargaining rights for organised trade unions have been virtually banished from three-quarters of workers, leading to lower wages, worse health and safety, and a general climate of fear in UK workplaces.

Unscrupulous employers and governments have driven down workers' rights using the most repressive battery of anti-trade union laws in the whole of Europe. Devised by Thatcher they were retained by New Labour during their 13 years in government and added to by David Cameron since 2010.

The Tories want to make it impossible to exercise the right to withdraw your labour in defence of wages, jobs or rights at work. No other party has pledged to repeal these anti-trade union laws. The SSP will work with the STUC in campaigning for the Scottish Parliament to have the powers to implement a Charter of Workers' Rights, including:

- The guaranteed right to join a union and help organise it without fear of victimisation.
- rights and facilities for union reps and officials to openly recruit to the unions in all workplaces.
- defence and restoration of the 'check-off' system of collecting union subs.

- guaranteed rights and facilities for elected union reps to represent members during working hours.
- full legal employment rights from day one of employment.
- abolition of all fees for Employment Tribunal hearings.
- trade union recognition in all workplaces where members join.
- reinstatement of full, free collective bargaining in all sectors and workplaces, including on wages, conditions, training, equalities, health and safety.
- the constitutional right to strike after a simple majority vote, including the right to take solidarity action with fellow workers, and removal of the ban on so-called political strikes.
- workers' control of health and safety at work through elected health and safety stewards.
- boards of management to have a majority made up of elected, accountable representatives of workplace unions and the wider working class, to establish genuine workplace democracy.

Jobs, pay and workplace rights are central issues for the SSP. These issues more than any show working people whose side political parties are on. We stand for decent, dignified, secure, well-paid jobs and workplace democracy.

4. FUEL POVERTY

With fuel poverty now also a major problem in one in three households in Scotland, we believe the government needs to act against profiteering energy companies by imposing a 'windfall tax' on their profits. This could pay for additional fuel-poverty programmes to protect the most vulnerable and extend energy efficiency schemes. Both measures represent a wise long-term investment as far as we are concerned.

And the power to ensure renewable electricity generated in local communities is publicly owned and made freely available to those local communities most affected – particularly since many are not on the national gas grid – is also recommended.

The SSP would return the oil and gas industry to public ownership.

Another industry with vast job expansion potential is the renewable energy sector. Scotland's offshore renewables industry has been described as 'the Saudi Arabia of green energy.'

George Osborne's recent Budget handed over £1.3 billion in tax cuts to North Sea Oil operators. If they'd been taxed at the same level as in Norway, that would have raised an extra £118 billion over the last decade for investment in clean green energy.

Private ownership of the renewables sector means profiteering by big landowners and multinational energy companies.

The SSP demands:

- Democratic public ownership of all forms of energy, including renewables, oil, gas, electricity, hydroelectric, to democratically plan investment, massive job creation and production that would benefit both people and planet.

5. FRACKING

The Scottish Socialist Party opposes onshore hydraulic fracturing in Scotland. We believe the evidence from Australia and the United States, where energy companies have been extracting gas using this method for decades, has shown short and long term damage to the environment.

We have been prominent in local campaigns across Scotland opposed to fracking. SSP Councillor Jim Bolland led the successful campaign in West Dunbartonshire to ban fracking, making it the first Scottish Council to do so.

We believe the companies involved in fracking show far too little regard for the damage they inflict in local communities in their pursuit of profit.

The SSP advocates a responsible energy policy that ensures long term supplies and yet protects the environment. That is why we favour greater investment in renewables where Scotland has the potential to be a world leader.

6. TAX-RAISING POWERS

The Scottish Socialist Party believes all taxes and duties raised here in Scotland should be spent here. And that includes Income tax and National Insurance Contributions, VAT, duties on alcohol, tobacco and fuel, Corporation tax, Capital Gains Tax, Road Tax, oil revenues, Air Passenger Duty etc. Such revenues could then be directed towards the social democratic measures the people of Scotland support such as the eradication of poverty, the introduction of a living wage for all, public ownership of vital industries and services, and the provision of free public transport to combat climate change and greater social mobility.

We reject the claim made by some English Tory MP's in particular that Scotland would lose out in such circumstances as we are apparently 'subsidised by taxes raised in England'. The fact is for the last 35 years Scotland has paid in more into the UK Treasury in taxes than we ever got back in service provision. Last year for example 9.8 per cent of all UK taxes were collected in Scotland despite having only 8.4 per cent of the UK population. The devolution of Income tax alone for

example would, we estimate bring in £11 billion to the Holyrood exchequer annually.

We also recommend the power to introduce 'windfall taxes' on those corporations declaring excessive profits – such as the energy firms in recent years – should be devolved.

And we must also move to ensure the burden of taxation moves progressively from the poor to the rich. The legal power to pursue those who seek to evade their obligations by secreting their wealth abroad in so-called 'tax havens' is also a measure we believe should be devolved. All such revenues recovered could then be used to fund 'poverty busting' initiatives.

7. REPLACE THE COUNCIL TAX WITH AN INCOME-BASED ALTERNATIVE

One way to shift the burden of tax from the poor to the better off would be to replace the unfair Council Tax with an income-based alternative.

The Scottish Socialist Party advocates the introduction of a 'Scottish Service tax' to pay for local government services raised via a levy on an individual's income. Their tax obligation would rise as their earnings rise. Under our plans someone whose income is less than £12,000 pays nothing, those on the Scottish average of £17,800 would pay less than they do at the moment in Council Tax and as incomes rise so does the person's tax bill.

Across Scotland, hard pressed families are facing up to additional pressures being placed on their living conditions by local government. The first is the round of cuts and austerity programmes that Labour, the SNP and the Tories are pushing through at local level. The second is the regressive Council Tax which ensures the richest pay a far smaller share than anyone else. For whilst the gap between the richest and poorest grows wider and wider, the Council Tax ensures those with the most will never pay more than three times those with the least. Proportionally this means those least able to pay face the highest tax bill.

The Scottish Service Tax will not be based on arbitrary household bandings that favour the rich, but on a progressive income tax model, recognising the ability to pay. The proposition is simple and the scheme works like this:

- the first £0-£12,000 of income would be tax-free
- Income between £12,000 and £30,000 would be taxed at 4.5 per cent
- Income between £30,000 and £40,000 would be taxed at 15 per cent
- Income between £40,000 and £50,000 would be taxed at 18 per cent
- Income between £50,000 and £90,000 would be taxed at 21 per cent

- Income above £90,000 would be taxed at 23 per cent

For example, on an income of £16,000 a year, the first £12,000 is under Band 1, so you would pay no tax on that. The following £4000 would be taxed at 4.5 per cent, under band 2, giving you a total bill of £180 each year under this example.

Under these proposals not only would enough revenue be generated to avoid implementing cuts to local services, but the system by which such revenue is generated is far more equitable, leaving up to half of all families and households facing a lower tax bill, whilst only the richest 16 per cent or so would find themselves paying more, at a rate much closer to their fair share.

Protecting communities against brutal cuts is entirely possible. Not only will the SSP continue to oppose cuts at every stage, we will further continue to work to provide clear and well costed alternatives to the brutal austerity that have imposed upon us.

8. HOUSING

Scotland suffers from an appalling shortage of affordable housing. With 157,000 families now on the waiting list the problem is getting worse not better. The Scottish Government is facing a losing battle as things stand without the money or the powers to effect change.

The Scottish Socialist Party calls for a massive social house building programme to be undertaken and the powers and resources needed for such a plan are now urgently required. Monies raised from the new property development tax in Scotland could in our view be used to part fund this much-needed new social housing plan.

The SSP aims to build 100,000 new social housing sector homes over the lifetime of this Parliament. Built to the highest environmental standards these homes would be available for rent to the neediest first. As well as solving the chronic housing shortage this programme would also create thousands of jobs and apprenticeships, giving decent wages and dignity to young and older workers alike.

The Scottish Socialist Party believes that the private sector cannot meet Scotland's housing needs. The SSP believes housing is a social need and should be met with social provision. Whether provided by local authorities or housing associations this represents a better model for the delivery of good quality housing at reasonable rents which actually meet the housing needs of the whole people. The SSP also takes the view that people do not simply live in houses they live in communities and social housing provider's needs to invest in the economic and social developments of their

local communities. Scotland suffers from widespread shortage of good, affordable housing; a by-product of the disastrous Right to Buy Scheme now thankfully abandoned. An SSP government would commit itself to a substantial house-building programme as part and parcel of an ambitious programme of social and economic regeneration. At the same time it would take action to support hard-pressed mortgage payers while bringing in tough regulation to control the private sector.

We promise:

- to build 100,000 new social sector houses available for rent over the four years of the Parliament, to the highest environmental standards in Europe.
- an emergency action programme to renovate and install free insulation in every social sector house in Scotland.
- to take the construction and supply industry into democratic public ownership.
- to create thousands of jobs and 5,000 apprenticeships per year for a massive building and renovation plan, with guaranteed trade union rights and conditions, with a ban on blacklisting and jobs and proper justice offered to all past victims of blacklisting.

9. FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

To help Scotland meet our international climate change obligations to reduce CO2 emissions a raft of powers need to be devolved. The Scottish Socialist Party advocates free public transport on all buses, trains, trams and ferries in Scotland. This measure has many advantages but it is primarily an initiative designed to encourage people to leave their cars at home and dramatically reduce the level of hazardous pollutants like CO2 and Nitrous Oxide [NO] in the atmosphere. This measure would also offer significant extra help to those poorer parts of our society who use public transport most and it would therefore assist greater social mobility.

The cost of such a measure is estimated to be around £500million per annum measured by the loss of current revenues and the cost of extra rolling stock, buses and infrastructure required to cope with the increased demand. The Scottish Socialist Party believes the revenues from Road Tax and Air Passenger Duty in Scotland could be used to offset these costs.

Such a joint approach to pollution and social mobility has been introduced with remarkable success in many cities in Europe and North America. Again this is a power presently retained at Westminster that Scotland could benefit from devolving.

The SSP is unique in advocating free public transport. The measure has been adopted in

many cities in the world but Scotland would be the first country to implement it as a innovative contribution to combating CO2 emissions and address the poverty and social isolation suffered by hundreds of thousands of Scots. It would greatly assist Scotland's battle against pollution and climate change. It would also create skilled manufacturing jobs to build fleets of trains, buses and ferries, as well as directly creating jobs on an integrated public transport network.

The SSP demands:

- the return of all forms of transport into public ownership, with democratic, elected boards of management involving workers, communities, passengers and representatives of local and national government.
- investment in the infrastructure and workforces to establish a fare-free public transport network.

10. WELFARE

The need to develop welfare policies in keeping with Scotland's social democratic and socialist values is sharply posed by legislation passed at Westminster, which does not complement these aspirations. Indeed the entire tenor of the debate on welfare at Westminster seems predicated on holding claimants to account for an economic and financial crisis they did not cause. Such an unjust approach is understandably unpopular and unsupported in Scotland.

The changes to housing benefit proposed with the hated 'bedroom tax' show just how alien such an approach is to Scotland. That is a proposal that would never have won a majority at Holyrood. The people of Scotland wish, in our view, to see housing benefit powers devolved as well as a wide range of other measures designed to close the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor in this country.

That is the direction the people of Scotland, on both sides of the independence debate, would like to see welfare and tax policies move.

Clearly closing the inequalities gap involves growing the Scottish economy, but it also requires new power are devolved to Holyrood to ensure far greater investment in the high quality public services upon which the poor rely disproportionately.

All welfare spending decisions affecting Scotland should therefore in our view be devolved to Holyrood not just housing benefit as some in the 'Better Together' campaign have suggested. Unemployment benefit, disability allowances, pension rights, tax credits, child benefit, etc all should be devolved

in order to again reflect our social democratic values not the neoliberal concepts prevalent at Westminster.

Citizen's Income

The SSP would introduce a Citizen's Income (CI) to address the widespread poverty and inequality in society today. Paid by government to all adults without means testing the CI would replace most existing benefits (income support, child benefit, tax credits, jobseekers allowance, state pension, pension credits) and would form part of wages for those in work (and taxed proportionately). In addition to eradicating poverty, a CI would rid the social security system of its current stigma and provide everyone in society the freedom to flourish. People would have the financial freedom to volunteer, care for relatives or children, learn, or be artistically or musically creative. There would be the freedom to take work only when employers pay sufficiently to make it financially worthwhile. It would assist those starting up small businesses who often struggle during the early stages to get a sufficient income to live upon. A universal benefit, CI would reduce stigma and promote solidarity. The CI would become a source of pride for Scotland, like the NHS, and would send a strong signal that everyone in our society is valued no matter their personal circumstances.

Supporting carers

With the passing of the Self-Directed Support Bill there should be more options for carers and those they support. Unfortunately this is not the case. There is a postcode lottery with different criteria applying throughout Scotland. More and more services usually offered by local authorities are being farmed out to charities. We will campaign to make day centres and respite provision a choice open to carers. We call for an end to the care tax where disabled people are asked to contribute money from their disability benefits as a contribution to their direct payment. Carers often feel patronised by those representing them. We will campaign for a carer's Parliament with real power to define policies with representation decided directly by carers themselves. Carers need regular respite. We will ensure carers have at least 14 nights of respite a year or the equivalent in hours when it suits them. Carers should have a choice of the service provider of their choice. We oppose the closure of day centres and resources which people with disabilities regard as a place to meet their friends. We recognise the social model of disability where there should be access for all in all areas of our community and will fully support projects that enable this.

We believe carers should receive a living wage. After all carers contribute ten billion pounds in unpaid care. We know many carers work over sixty hours a week. As a start though we would fund forty hours a week at the rate of a living wage. We call for every school to have a young carer's worker to offer practical support. For older young carers we call for added support when applying for further education and employment.

Benefits

If there is one group of workers who have borne the brunt of Tory and Lib Dem attacks it is those living on benefits. The last five years have seen an unprecedented and vicious assault on the lives of the most vulnerable. Private companies such as ATOS and MAXIMUS have been employed to hound people off Disability Living Allowance. The SSP believes people with disabilities should be offered support to find work where it is relevant and at the individual's own pace. The atrocious attacks on people with disabilities witnessed in recent years is entirely driven by ideology in a brutal attempt to make sick people pay for a financial crisis caused by the bankers.

Benefit sanctions are having a detrimental impact on many individuals' lives. We will end the need for people to have to apply for over 60 jobs a day to receive their Job Seekers Allowance. We condemn the use of language such as "skivers" to define people in receipt of benefits. The Scottish Socialist Party backs an immediate and complete end to the welfare sanctions regime.

11. HEALTH

Scotland is widely known as the 'sick man of Europe' because of its higher mortality rates in comparison to the rest of the continent. We have a higher rate of heart disease, cancer, stroke, alcohol- and drug-related deaths, as well as a higher prevalence of mental health problems. Health inequalities, the differences in health outcomes we see across the population from rich to poor, are also wider. This means where you are born determines how long you are likely to live, and how long you are likely to live in good health – a damning indictment of 21st century Scotland. The most important factors which determine the health of the population relate to the socioeconomic inequalities in society; housing conditions, the availability of good quality work, transport and the social security system. The SSP's policies across all of these areas would mean that the health of the Scottish population would be radically improved, and the health inequalities across the population would be radically reduced. The SSP supports a publicly owned and run, free,

NHS, including prescriptions, optical care and dentistry. The NHS is the most effective and efficient way of providing high quality health services in the world. The NHS in England however has been disbanded by the Tory/Liberal-Democrat Coalition (building on New Labour privatisations and legislation prior to 2010) and now represents only a 'badge' and a funding stream from government. Private providers have been contracted to provide services for profits and the remaining publicly owned facilities have to compete to continue to provide hospital and primary care services. Over time in England this will lead to a complete privatisation of the system with massive profits extracted and the public will be forced into a situation where they have to take out private health insurance to be able to access a full range of health services.

In Scotland we are in a better position with very little involvement of multinational companies in delivering NHS services. However, we must not be complacent. We oppose the use of private financing deals to build or maintain parts of the NHS – this is a policy which is now draining money to private companies from our health boards.

The pharmaceutical industry makes a huge profit out of the NHS (as a customer) and also the academic expertise and training provided through the Scottish education and research funding systems. Yet, we remain at the behest of the pharmaceutical industry in relation to the research areas they prioritise, the quality (or lack of quality) of the research they do and the production and marketing of medicines that they undertake. We therefore propose to reassert the role of the Scottish Medicines Consortium in assessing which medicines are effective and which should be funded by the NHS. We also propose to build a publicly-owned pharmaceutical company for the NHS in Scotland to take the profits out of the system as much as possible.

There is also a renewed danger of privatisation in Scotland with the creation of Joint Integration Boards as part of the integration of health and social services. Private companies are circling around looking for a way to make profits out of the system – profits that would only be extracted by reducing the amount and quality of services provided, and through attacks on the wages and conditions of staff. This is even more acute with the international TTIP agreement which the UK government is forcing through which may lead to private companies suing the government if they are prevented from bidding to run the NHS.

The SSP is committed to a fully publicly owned and run health service. We work to

ensure the NHS is accessible to all as part of a universal service, but which also meets the greater need in the nations most deprived areas. It makes most sense to spend NHS resources in preventing ill-health occurring rather than treating health problems after they occur. To that end, we support increased investment in primary care whilst maintaining the current network of local district general hospitals and the services they provide.

We support the increase in direct employment of GPs and dentists (and other parts of primary care) within the NHS. We support a convergence of pay across the NHS grades with no workers or contractors receiving less than a living wage of £10-per-hour.

12. EDUCATION

Austerity politics have taken their toll in education, as in every other part of the public sector. Over the last few months campaigns have had to be initiated in Falkirk and West Dunbartonshire to prevent Councils reducing the amount of hours children are taught in primary education. This shows how the funding pressures from the Westminster government are now threatening the very fabric of this key service.

Whilst our devolved Parliament has so far avoided the Coalition's dismantling of state education in England, it does not mean that Scottish education is immune from cuts. Schools in Scotland have been through a period of significant change with the introduction of new National Qualifications which have brought new challenges to pupils, teachers and parents. The fact that it has been introduced against a background of a reduction in teaching posts of 4000 since 2007 gives some insight to pressures faced by those who work in education. This has led to retreats on promised reductions to class sizes.

Colleges have also gone through a prolonged period of uncertainty and change with mergers that have often taken place against the wishes of staff. College places have been cut and press reports suggest as many as 10,000 are on waiting lists for courses. With 1 in 5 young people currently unemployed there is a crying need for more college places, not less.

We may have avoided tuition fees in Scotland but university students are still graduating with an average of £22,000 of debt and working class young people are still dramatically under represented at our universities.

The biggest disgrace of all however, is that by far the biggest determinant for educational attainment remains income and social class. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

children from our poorest communities will be 10-13 months behind in educational attainment by the time they are 5. Whatever warm words we hear from mainstream politicians about education they mean nothing whilst the obscenity of wealth inequality continues to grow as a result of their continued policies of austerity.

The SSP will:

- fight poverty and inequality to close the attainment gap in education.
- return teacher numbers to pre-2007 levels.
- retain qualified teachers in every nursery
- close private schools – for a fully comprehensive, publicly owned and accountable education system.
- oppose all cuts in hours for primary education

Higher education

The Scottish Socialist Party supports free education at all levels and believe it should be accessible to all. We are pleased that in Scotland students do not have to pay tuition fees however things are far from perfect. Higher education in Scotland, like the rest of the economy, is being subjected to increased marketisation with profit increasingly taking precedence over providing an intellectually inspiring experience for students. This is exemplified by the fact that lecturers and tutors, people at the pinnacle of their professions, are increasingly finding themselves on exploitative Zero Hour Contracts worrying about whether they'll have a job at the end of the academic session- this is not acceptable. Students, like the wider population, are struggling to cope with rising costs- rents in particular are out of control.

The SSP will reverse the marketisation of the higher education system, egalitarianism and democracy, not profit, should be the tenets of our higher education system. The SSP supports the re-introduction of student grants as a means of overcoming student poverty. We also support giving students the right to claim housing benefit. We call for investment in good quality, affordable accommodation for students. We believe education is for all and would increase the provision of adult learning programmes, as well as ensuring that employers support staff that take time off for training or educational purposes.

13. ENHANCING DEMOCRACY

The historic independence debate also proved there was an enormous appetite in Scotland now for extending democracy – economic, social and political democracy – to a population eager to take on greater responsibility. And there will be widespread agreement between all parties that Scotland's democracy could well do with it. Civic participation in local government by-elections for

example in recent years has become a national embarrassment at times with successful candidates emerging with as little as 10 per cent of the electorate supporting them. Many will wonder how long the 97 per cent registration level achieved for the referendum will hold or the 91 per cent turnout rates achieved in some areas without a profound change in culture?

The challenge for the Smith Commission then is to bring forward recommendations which allow Scotland to harness and channel all that energy and enthusiasm for our ongoing political benefit by developing a model for greater democracy in 21st century Scotland.

The Scottish Enlightenment provided the world with much scientific and democratic rationale centred on the principle that national sovereignty ultimately rests with the people. The SSP believes the tremendous democratic awakening of 2013/14 represents another period of democratic enlightenment and renewal and it provides Scotland with a golden opportunity to adapt our political and civic institutions to make them fit for purpose. This adaptation should include the following initiatives:

A written constitution

The referendum debate offered up the possibility of a Written Constitution for Scotland and revealed Britain is one of the few countries in Europe not to have one. The SSP believes Holyrood should be afforded the power to come forward with such a Written Constitution for Scotland that sets out and enshrines the values upon which we wish to build our modern nation. The Scottish Government's proposal to begin a wide consultation on the matter enjoyed support on both sides of the independence debate. We believe it is therefore an issue the Smith Commission should examine further and build on the cross-party progress made on the matter over the last few months.

Votes at 16

And there can surely be little doubt that one of the many successes of the referendum was the level of engagement and participation of 16 and 17 year olds voting for the first time in Scottish history. The SSP believes 16 and 17 year olds should continue to enjoy the democratic franchise in all future elections in this country from now on.

A modern democratic republic

We also believe it to be an outdated anachronism that Scotland's Parliament must seek the permission of an un-elected, unaccountable and unrepresentative monarch before any of its laws can be enacted. We believe such a situation is not only un-democratic but also anti-democratic. The case

for a national debate on whether Scotland should have its own elected Head of State accountable to, and representative of, the people they purport to serve is in our opinion overwhelming and long overdue. The conclusion of the Scottish Enlightenment that 'the sovereignty of the Scottish people' is utterly negated by laws protecting 'hereditary privileges' and 'the divine right of Kings/Queens'. The fact that every MSP in Scotland, elected their constituents, must swear an oath of allegiance, not to those they were sent to serve but to a monarch is completely ludicrous in this day and age. Bills passed by the Scottish Parliament can just as easily be signed into law, not by the Queen as at present, but by the Presiding Officer/Speaker.

Extending democracy in this way is, in our opinion, the best tribute the Commission could pay to the tremendous civic renewal seen this country has seen as a consequence of the 2014 Constitutional debate.

The Scottish Socialist Party supports a modern, democratic, republic for Scotland. The British monarchy is antiquated, class ridden and anachronistic. The world today is guided by values of democracy, accountability and equality, which are the antithesis of monarchy.

The SSP stands alongside those who seek to extend democracy and equality. We support a wide range of democratic reforms, including economic and local, which we believe are urgently needed.

Our case for extending reason and democracy today belongs in the Scottish Enlightenment tradition. 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. Yet such values are uppermost in working class people's ambitions today for the type of world we wish to see.'

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 British political life. It is most certainly not an institution content to amuse tourists, entertain foreign dignitaries or fill the pages of *Hello* magazine. The 'State Opening of Parliament' is after all not yet a privilege afforded to 'Posh and Becks' or the latest winner of *I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!* 'Her Majesty' is there to remind us of the class nature of British society and its 'pecking order'. Both Houses of Parliament [one anti-democratic and un-elected, the other corrupted

by big business and its cash] are frequently summoned to attend 'Her Majesty'.

Those who argue in favour of keeping the monarchy on the grounds that she brings in millions of tourists might wish to reflect on the fact the Queen's home at Windsor Castle was only the 24th most popular tourist attraction in the UK last year. As the campaign group 'Republic' points out York Railway museum drew more crowds than any Royal attraction last year. Perhaps we should make 'Thomas the Tank Engine' our un-elected, unrepresentative Head of State?

Human rights protection

Human Rights legislation is another area that tends to highlight the gulf in attitudes between Westminster and Scotland. Westminster is fostering an agenda that seeks to roll back progressive Human Rights legislation emanating from Europe and the international courts. Scots on the other hand tend to support the protections such laws bring to vulnerable groups and minorities. We therefore believe the power to implement and oversee all Human Rights legislation should be devolved to Holyrood.

14. IMMIGRATION

And if there is one issue above others which shows the growing chasm between the politics of Westminster and the political centre of gravity in Scotland it is surely immigration.

The Scottish Socialist Party believes immigration brings substantial economic, cultural and social gains to Scotland. We warmly welcome those new Scots who have chosen to come here and make this country a richer place as a result. We highly recommend that powers should be urgently devolved to Holyrood to enable Scotland to implement the inclusive, beneficiary policies we need rather than suffer at the hands of xenophobic bigotry and an anti-immigrant atmosphere that is now gripping Westminster by the throat.

The Scottish Socialist Party believes immigrants who come here make this country wealthier and more diverse, not poorer. We recognise that migrant workers pay far more taxes into the UK Treasury than they take out. The NHS and other key services and industry have benefited enormously from the efforts and skills of immigrants over many decades. Immigrants come here for work not our 'generous' benefits – £70-a-week Jobseekers Allowance. Young workers from Poland, Spain and elsewhere have successfully helped halt Scotland's chronic population decline. Our quality of life in Scotland is greatly enhanced by our treasured multi-culturalism and such a rich and diverse community of peoples.

Scots have emigrated for centuries in search

of a better life. People who uproot themselves and their families and travel thousands of miles in search of a better life here should be given a warm welcome and receives our admiration for their courage and determination. We Scots know all about emigration. It is an experience Scots families have been forced into for generations.

To those angry about immigration we adopt a patient and persistent constructive dialogue that reminds them 'It wasn't immigrants who cause the collapse in our living standards.

It wasn't the Romanians who caused the worst recession in 80 years or the Bulgarians who bankrupted the economy.

It wasn't immigrants who embezzled £100billion by avoiding their tax obligations.

It wasn't immigrants who introduced the bedroom tax or sold off the Royal Mail.

It wasn't immigrants who forced one million households in Scotland into fuel poverty.

15. EUROPE

The EU is ultimately run, as far as the Scottish Socialist Party is concerned, for and by the large European multi-national corporations. It is a neoliberal trap. If it is ever to be run in the interests of the peoples of Europe, all 500million of us, then a clear, democratic, socially just pan-European plan needs to be set out and implemented. This bold political proposition may sound utopian in the current climate but it is one the SSP and many sister parties across Europe have been working towards for decades. It is to say the least linked to the success of the working class movement across the continent.

Notwithstanding its challenges this approach is more attractive to us than the idea of leaving the EU and somehow seeing greater democratic and economic progress being achieved in the UK and across Europe separately and yet simultaneously.

For these reasons and upholding principles of international solidarity the SSP is committed to working in a pan-European socialist alliance to achieve our goal of a socialist federation of European nations.

An in/our referendum

Whilst big business in Britain is determined to see the UK remain in the EU the Tories are all over the place. They have been split on Europe for 40 years. David Cameron must constantly try to placate two opposing factions of his party. On the one hand he says he is not against a referendum but will try to avoid one by trying to renegotiate EU Treaties to Britain's advantage. Should that approach fail, and the odds are stacked massively against him, he will campaign to stay in the EU. There is no certainty however that the British Conservative

Party as it presently stands will survive the battle so deep are the divisions. UKIP is the embodiment of that Tory fault line.

Labour is against a referendum on Europe arguing it is not the priority at this time. If there is a referendum they will campaign to stay in although some Labour MP's will rebel.

The SNP by and large take the same view as Labour as do the Liberal Democrats.

Arguing against a referendum in the current atmosphere however looks increasingly anti-democratic and smacks of defeatism.

The SSP are proud internationalists. We have no truck with the outlook of 'Little Englanders' [or 'Little Scotlanders' for that matter] who want to pull up the drawbridge as it were and leave the EU. We favour closer ties between all the peoples of Europe on a democratic and socially progressive basis. We are in favour of commercial trading and equality as well as enhancing closer social and cultural links with our 500million European neighbours. But the Treaty of Rome, the foundation stone of the EU, is essentially an exploitative corporate charter a boss's edict to do what they like with workers in all 28 countries. The policies pursued by the EU are based on upholding the rights of capital. The treaties signed in Maastricht and Lisbon set down terms even more beneficial to corporate Europe and even more detrimental to the working class majority across Europe.

Is it better to leave the EU then than try to change it from within?

The SSP's view is that working class people in Britain are being fed an illusion by UKIP [and others] that leaving the EU will somehow make things better. It will not. Therefore notwithstanding the views of a sceptical public we challenge Europe's corporate elite by linking up with other like-minded allies across Europe to democratise and socialise it. That is far better done on a continental basis than at UK level where the neoliberal right entrenched in their City of London redoubt are far more dominant.

Leaving the EU puts the British working class at the mercy of the UK ruling classes and those right-wingers behind Farage who will feel emboldened by their success.

The British ruling class and its big corporations are very heavily pro-EU since it is in effect their toy. But they are no friends of the working class either here or abroad.

16. CLIMATE CHANGE

The Scottish Socialist Party believes lobbying corporations to behave more responsibly with regards to the environment is futile. Corporations have one priority – profit. Only policies putting people and planet before profit can tackle the gathering social and

environmental crisis in an effective manner. We believe priority should be given to production for need not profit resulting in sustainable products meeting needs and, for example prioritising sustainable homes over Trident missiles. We accept that environmentalism cannot happen in a vacuum. If we are to establish ourselves as a living, breathing example of sustainability, we will need to face down not just climate sceptics but the profit driven destruction of profit hungry multinationals. We seek a world that is sustainable, forward-looking and in which people can thrive.

The SSP demands:

- a 90 per cent reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide internationally by the year 2030 together with significant reductions of other greenhouse gas emissions.
- investment in alternative energy technologies, including community-owned wind farms, tidal power clean coal technology and hydro.
- public and community ownership of energy, including oil, wind farms, electricity, coal and gas, with a proportion of all profits ring-fenced for investment in alternative energy.
- an end to the imposition of pre-payment meters on those who owe debts to gas and electricity companies.
- refunds backdated by five years to households which have been forced to pay the higher charges associated with pre-payment meters.
- increased taxation on aviation fuel, with revenue used to improve high-speed rail and ferry links between Scotland and mainland Europe.
- resistance to the building of any new nuclear power plants in Scotland, and the setting of a clear timetable for the decommissioning of existing nuclear power stations.
- legislation making it illegal to own, as well as to import, illegally logged timber.
- all biofuels to have sustainability and greenhouse gas certification.
- the establishment of elected anti-pollution boards at national and local level to monitor and enforce pollution controls, and for these boards to have the power to impose penalties.
- the rural economy to be geared towards providing quality local foods for regional markets, rather than exports.
- local management of sea fisheries, based on the Finnish model, where environmental sustainability is a key priority alongside community sustainability.

Renewables

Dramatic change in Land Reform Policy which would return all land, and seabeds from the Crown Estates to the people of Scotland. This includes all country homes. In the creation of a Scottish Republic a gesture of goodwill in

line with historical association would result in the leasing of Balmoral as a country home, (With a vastly decreased land mass.) This would be offered at an annual fee to the Crown Estate and subject to Scots laws and taxes.

An 80 per cent reduction in subsidies for landowners for placement of onshore wind farms. Further subsidies will take the form of energy cost reduction and a lasting agreement that wind farms will not be built in areas of farming or agriculture.

An increased role for the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) to ensure the safety of wildlife and conservation.

Creation of a Scottish Renewable Energy Commission (SREC) which would regulate and tender all renewable licenses for wind farms. The commission will also be responsible for ensuring any private companies involved in the manufacturing or servicing of turbines adhere to a minimum £10-an-hour living wage for all workers and the ascension of workers to the company board of directors.

An agreement that all manufacturing of turbines will take place in Scotland with specific consideration of urban areas designed for regeneration.

A further agreement that an additional 1 per cent of all profits be placed into the existing National Renewables Infrastructure Fund (NRIF) which will be matched by the government to ensure continued stability in spite of any future economic downturn.

If these criteria are not met tendering will go to the newly formed Scotland Renewable Company (SRC). Which will launch a bid in each tender creating a nationalised renewable energy company.

An appeal to be launched to the European Commission that the creation of off shore wind farms must be nationalised in the interest of national security, if such a bid is successful then above measures will not be required. The SREC would continue as an advisory commission in terms of licensing and play a larger role in the manufacturing and servicing of renewable energy.

Trident

The SSP have been active in the peace movement for decades now. We have always supported the need to rid Scotland of Trident. We believe the £100billion earmarked for Trident would be much better invested in housing, healthcare, education, social services and eradicating inequality which would lead to a stronger society. Scottish CND have said the time-scale for removing weapons of mass destruction from Faslane and Coalport would take two years. We support this view. We will

continue to protest against their existence until Scotland is nuclear free. We have also expressed our solidarity with the workers at Faslane and Coulport. We will ensure their skills are used elsewhere for peaceful purposes.

Defence

The Scottish economy is too heavily dependent on defence industries and MOD contracts as far as we are concerned. Outside the food industries it would appear Scotland's only volume manufacturing nowadays relates to defence and armaments production. This is not the type of economic balance the Scottish Socialist Party supports. We are wholeheartedly opposed to the further militarisation of Scottish society. Far too many Scots are employed in industries dedicated to killing our fellow human beings. We favour diversification of all those jobs and industries currently connected to arm manufacturing and so called 'defence' in favour of peaceful, peacetime progressive production. That would surely be Scotland's peace dividend following the end of the Cold War.

17. EQUALITY

The SSP fully supports the Equalities Act 2010. However the creation of an equal society means society must provide the resources to support this legislation. This includes full benefits for disabled people which reflects the average wage.

We advocate Supported Employment initiatives, not benefit sanctions, for all disabled people who want to work.

Above all, we work in consultation with those groups who represent the voices of people discriminated against and minorities to develop a grass roots democratic infrastructure throughout government and policy making bodies, ensuring that all public decisions must include an equalities impact assessment.

18. WOMENS RIGHTS

The SSP as a party campaigns for equal rights for women. We don't just campaign for them, we founded our party on equality. We are the only political party to introduce 50/50 gender balance throughout our party.

Women have paid the price for austerity and cuts. In fact 85 per cent of austerity cuts and tax changes have been borne by women, making women's lives much harder. We stand for the immediate reinstatement of tax credits and housing benefit cuts.

Women's incomes are directly affected because they are concentrated in low paid jobs, they also take most of the responsibility in caring for children and elderly relatives. This role is undervalued and under resourced.

We would introduce a £10-an-hour minimum wage to tackle low pay and a carer's allowance

which reflects the average worker's wage. We would introduce a minimum 12 months maternity leave on full pay, for all workers, with the right to return part time if preferred.

The SSP campaigns against the sexual exploitation and objectification of women. We support legislation to decriminalise women involved in prostitution, recognise men who buy sex as abusers, and increase police resources to enforce a clamp down on kerb-crawlers in red light districts.

We support a zero tolerance approach to men's violence against women. We would introduce full funding for Women's Aid and other agencies which provide refuges, helplines and drop in centres for women who have experienced violence and abuse.

In addition we support equal representation of women at all levels of government. This is vital on the road to reaching equality for women.

19. ECONOMIC POLICY

Central to the economic policy of the Scottish Socialist Party is the belief that key industries should be brought into public ownership and placed under democratic control. These would include the rail network, the energy companies, the banks and oil industry. Many of these industries had been in public hands in the recent past until a disastrous wave of privatisation stole them from the Scottish people. It is our belief that Scotland's national interests would best be served by returning them to public ownership while expanding this programme into other areas. At the same time we would challenge the extensive support given by government to large private companies in the form of grants, subsidies, tax breaks and infrastructure support. Our view is that where public money goes public ownership should follow. A socialist government would reject the idea that the private sector is central to Scotland's economic development and well-being. This strategy is consistently failed despite the best efforts of successive governments. Future development will be promoted by expanding the public and state sector and this will drive the social and economic programmes of government. The disastrous free market ideology which has done so much damage to society will be replaced with a strategy based on social ownership, planning, regulation and the moving towards an social-economic system which puts the needs of the people first; socialism.

Public ownership

The Scottish Socialist Party wants to see the railway industry returned to public hands as a publicly owned utility to benefit and improve our public transport network in favour of ordinary people to create and develop jobs and using

modern technology to support our environmental aims as part of an overall public transport system run for people and not for profit.

The national rail network should be run as a public service to benefit all the people as opposed to the ideology tool for the Tories and there friends in big business who are more interested in profit than providing good efficient rail and public services ,still the same twisted ideology of privatisation that was behind the recent attack on the east coast main line and the selloff of the governments stake in the euro star both very short term methods aimed at making a quick buck for the Tories and their liberal coalition friends, not being used for investment in the railways ,but to help tackle the deficit which in reality meant election bribes for the Tories and their friends in the City Of London.

The majority of people connected with the railway industry in particular passengers and railway staff are in favour of re nationalisation and surveys that have been carried out show a majority percentage of the population are in favour of the railways being publicly owned.

The Scottish Socialist Party are committed to the public ownership of the railway industry and would renationalise it in the united kingdom as a matter of priority we would also devolve all authority for railways in Scotland and Wales to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh assembly through the establishment of public owned railway companies in both these countries.

20. INTERNATIONALISM

The Scottish Socialist Party believes an independent Scotland can play a positive and progressive role in world affairs. The starting point of this would be the removal of the Trident nuclear weapons from the Clyde and Scotland's withdrawal from NATO. This is an aggressive military alliance which has spearhead conflict throughout the world in defence of capitalism and imperialism.

The SSP has a proud history of supporting the peace movement throughout the world and speaking out against warmongering.

Under an SSP government Scotland would seek to ally itself with other progressive governments and lend support to peoples struggling against imperialism throughout the world. Whether it be support for progressive independence movements as in Catalonia or the Basque Country, links with left governments in Latin America or support for the establishment of a Palestinian state Scotland will prove to be a good friend to those struggling for progress, justice and against global capitalism.

Scotland would also look to play a key role in shaping some of the great international issues

of our time such as Climate Change and World Poverty and would actively side with those who want radical action as opposed to those whose starting point is to defend the interests of capitalism. For the Scottish Socialist Party 'another world is possible' and Scotland can be part of that new world.

21. ANIMAL RIGHTS

The Scottish Socialist Party supports:

- a ban on animal testing for cosmetics, household products and military research.
- a ban on unnecessary use of animal testing in medical research.
- the replacement of the ineffective Dangerous Dogs Act with new non-breed based legislation which recognises the responsibility of owners for aggressive behaviour by their dogs.

HOW IS THIS PROGRAMME TO BE PAID FOR?

The Scottish Socialist Party do not accept the oft heard excuse from the four bosses parties that 'there is no money for this and no money for that'. It isn't true, not when £100billion is to be spent unnecessarily on a second generation of TRIDENT nuclear weapons. Not when we spent £200billion bailing out incompetent greedy bankers. Not when billions of pounds are secreted away abroad annually by wealthy individuals and companies who refuse to pay their tax obligations. Not when the rich have never been so wealthy.

We believe the profits made by multinational corporations need to be taxed at higher rates.

We also favour the 'Tobin tax' on financial transactions which would also see £billions in revenues to the Exchequer.

The rich in Britain have never been so wealthy in all history. Yet income inequalities are wider than ever. That is no accident. It is what the corporations and their politicians intended.

Scotland's socialist party believes action must be taken now to reverse inequality and eradicate poverty.

There is no shortage of funds, there is a shortage of willingness to halt the flow of funds into the pockets of the wealthy and out of the hands of the majority.

The SSP would raise taxes on the wealthy. We would raise Corporation tax to 50p the level it was when Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979.

The financial block grant provided by Westminster is insufficient to achieve the goals the Scottish people expressed over the past two years. Further financial powers must therefore be made available to make the

changes we all want to see. The power to borrow on the international money markets for example just like any other administration is in our view essential. Long-term infrastructure improvements could then be brought forward by the Scottish Government to begin work on those much-needed new projects to modernise national systems, transport links and other key networks.

BUILDING SCOTLAND'S SOCIALIST PARTY

If the polls are accurate Scotland is about to topple the one party state that has existed here for the past 50 years. The socially conservative and politically corrupt Labour Party in Scotland is about to suffer a seismic defeat. And good riddance, for only the most hackneyed Blairite will mourn its passing.

At UK level this election is a stalemate between a government that does not deserve to be re-elected as it has governed for a rich corporate elite that believes it is untouchable and omnipotent, and an Opposition so bereft of ideas that all it can do is ape the reactionary policies of government on all the main issues of our time.

Meantime the vast majority of Britain's population – its working class majority – has suffered a fall in its living standard as its working conditions have atrophied and it faces affronts its grandparent's generation would never have tolerated for a second and is blamed for an economic, financial and political crisis it played no part in creating. The real culprits, the City spivs and greedy 'venture capitalists' walk away Scot free protected by all the Westminster parties.

The Scottish Socialist Party is not part of this criminal conspiracy.

We alone do not stand indicted, responsible for policies that make the rich richer and the poor poorer. We are not the upholders of a free market system based on economic exploitation masquerading as 'liberal democracy' – for there is nothing liberal or democratic about it.

The Scottish Socialist Party stands for an independent socialist Scotland, a modern democratic republic. We want a £10-an-hour living wage and end to Zero Hours Contracts. We want to protect the most vulnerable from the ravages of 21st century capitalism.

We see no reason why Scotland cannot be one of the richest countries in the world and set world class example by reaching levels of equality and social justice no one else has yet achieved.

We will not support privatisation of hospitals unlike the other parties. Nor will we allow

employers to roll back working conditions and wages to levels last seen in the 19th century.

We will not allow immigrants and the poor to be scapegoated for an economic, social and political deterioration caused by a wealthy minority and their corrupt representatives who are motivated by their own financial greed rather than public service or noble ideals and honourable conduct.

The Scottish Socialist Party was formed in 1998 bringing together many different voices on the left in Scotland. We are anti-capitalist. We aim to replace capitalism with a much better economic, social and political system.

We have contested every UK General Election since 1997. We know how expensive they are affairs and how the first past the post voting system provides an unfair advantage to the establishment parties. The media coverage is dominated by a London Metropolitan elite who barely recognise Scotland on a map. But no one else presents the political case we do. No one else can match our commitment to socialist ideas or the needs of working class people.

VOTE SSP ON 7 MAY. FOR WORKERS' MPs ON WORKERS' WAGES

SCOTLAND'S SOCIALIST PARTY DESERVES YOUR VOTE

Our 4 candidates Colin Fox [Edinburgh South], Bill Bonnar [Glasgow South West], Sandra Webster [Paisley South and Renfrewshire South] and Liam McLaughlan [Glasgow East] stand up for working people. They would be workers' MPs on workers wages and would, if elected, take only the average wage of those they represent.

Join the Scottish Socialist Party today and help us build an independent socialist Scotland.

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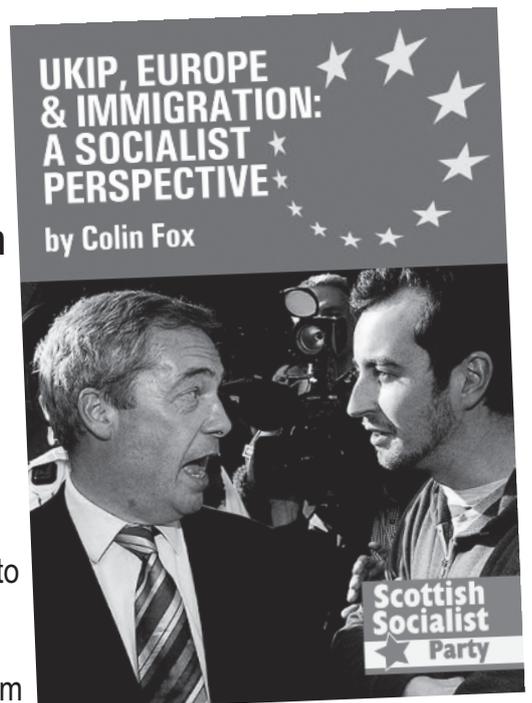
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