

**Leading indy figures write for the Voice: John Finnie MSP, the RIC's Jonathon Shafi and the SSP's Sandra Webster share their indy visions**  
• see pages 7, 10 & 13



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# Scottish Socialist Voice

**As the campaign enters its last 100 days, Jim Sillars says...**



*by Jim Sillars*

**IT'S NOT** sensible to ignore polls, but they have one glaring fault – they examine opinion at present, but cannot now measure opinion on polling day as it lies in the future.

My experience over a very long time is that the present can be very different from the future, with the future being dependent on things that no pollster can measure.

## **Mislead**

Polls at present show a gap between Yes and No. They have a methodology I am not equipped to challenge. What I can do from experience is show that polls can mislead if construed as the present representing the definite future.

• continues on page 4

**YES  
WE  
CAN**



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# Thousands attend late night anti-rape 'peace walk'



PHOTO: Amanda Johnston

**IN GLASGOW**, after a spate of recent sexual assaults and rapes across the city, Govanhill women Amanda Johnston and Ashley Crossan organised a peaceful midnight walk at Queen's Park on Monday 9 June as a "show of solidarity, in support of the victims of rape".

The march, which attracted thousands on the night, with tens of

thousands more supporting the event online, was billed as "a call to action; to encourage more police presence and support in this area and to make sure that these kind of attacks...never happen".

Amanda and Ashley said they were "tired of harassment and fear of assault being part of our daily lives" and they vowed to write to Police Scotland,

Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and Glasgow City Council leader Gordon Matheson, calling for answers to public safety concerns. "The walk was just the start," they added. "This does not end until our streets are safe."

• All donations to Rape Crisis Scotland at: [rapecrisiscentre-glasgow.co.uk/index.php?id=149](http://rapecrisiscentre-glasgow.co.uk/index.php?id=149)

**FOR A MODERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC** ★



Colin Fox



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by Colin Fox

## THE INDEPENDENCE

debate passed another milestone on 9 June. With less than 100 days to go now, the debate will intensify as September's crucial vote approaches. And Scottish Socialist Party activists will continue to be at the forefront of the campaign, organising a series of public meetings across the country on the socialist case for independence.

The polls currently suggest the No side has a lead of between 6-20 per cent and this in itself reflects the great degree of uncertainty in the result. Whilst John Curtice from Strathclyde University, the pre-eminent psephologist in the country, points out that of the 65 polls conducted since this campaign began in June 2012 only one has put the Yes side ahead, both sides recognise there are no prizes for leading at this stage in the debate. The only 'prize' that matters is the vote on 18 September.

## Volatile polls

Underneath the headline figures however, the polls still reflect a certain volatility. Many No voters for example admit to being 'open to persuasion' still and 20 per cent of voters as a whole remain 'undecided'. The Yes side has ample time therefore to secure the support necessary to win.

The task facing the Yes side is clearly considerable but our message remains popular and inspiring.

Our vision for Scotland is of a country economically wealthier, socially fairer and politically more democratic than that offered by the No side. And none of us should lose sight of how attractive that message is.

We are perfectly entitled to run our own country and we

# Stepping up the Yes campaign with less than 100 days to go



**GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN:**  
tens of thousands of activists are working away in more than 250 local Yes groups up and down the country

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

are fit to do so. And we will be better at it than Westminster, the City of London and the Bank of England who run it as things stand.

Furthermore, with independence, we can avoid the £25 billion of public spending cuts heading our way as part of the austerity measures intended for us by both the Coalition Government and 'Her Majesty's Opposition'.

Independence also means there is no risk of another Tory government being elected to rule over Scotland next May.

"A No vote is not a vote for no change," announced the united forces behind Better Together/No Thanks/United With Labour somewhat confusingly this week.

They intend to offer more powers to Holyrood in the event of a No vote, they say, with income tax powers and control of some welfare responsibilities mentioned.

But the fact remains they are offering Scots the chance to control just 40 per cent of our own budget (the other 60 per cent will be retained by Westminster). I likened their proposals on BBC Radio Scotland's Big Debate last week to walking into a car dealership to buy a new car and being offered one with only two wheels. 'It has 40 per cent of the power you need,' says the salesman!

Of course any new powers such as these need to be agreed by a Westminster Parliament packed full of hostile Tory and Labour MPs, repelled by the idea of handing any more powers to Holyrood.

The Labour Party and the Tories know this mood at Westminster but they prefer to keep that information from Scots voters ahead of September's vote. So the likelihood is even these limited new powers will not arrive at

Holyrood in the event of a No vote. This point illustrates well why this referendum is still there for the winning.

Another important feature of this debate not being picked up by the polls is the impact that the hugely impressive Yes Scotland grassroots political campaign is having. Tens of thousands of activists are working away in more than 250 local Yes groups up and down the country, canvassing, conducting stalls in streets and town centres and organising hundreds of public meetings to reveal the breadth of support now being won to the pro-independence camp.

Yes Scotland is the biggest political grassroots organisation seen in Scotland since the anti-Poll Tax campaign 25 years ago.

## Merits of indy

The task for all of us in the Yes camp and the Scottish Socialist Party over the next three months remains to persuade everyone we can of the merits of independence.

The SSP will be stepping up our activities across the country over these final few months to raise the socialist case for independence, particularly with the country's working class majority. They will be the ones who determine the outcome of this vote.

There are thousands of potential new members out there for the Scottish Socialist Party. We intend to recruit as many as we can over the next few months by explaining the SSP's impeccable record in advocating an independent socialist Scotland – a modern democratic republic.

And I particularly look forward to outlining the SSP's work in building up the Yes vote over the past two years when I address the Yes Scotland lead volunteers convention in Stirling.

*by Jim Sillars*

**IT'S NOT** sensible to ignore polls, but they have one glaring fault – they examine opinion at present, but cannot now measure opinion on polling day as it lies in the future. My experience over a very long time is that the present can be very different from the future, with the future being dependent on things that no pollster can measure.

Polls at present show a gap between Yes and No. They have a methodology I am not equipped to challenge. What I can do from experience is show that polls can mislead if construed as the present representing the definite future. Polls cannot take account of the impact of a campaign which takes place between the present and the future.

### **Below the radar**

In 1968, Senator Eugene McCarthy (not Joe) challenged President Lyndon Johnson, in the New Hampshire Primary, on the Vietnam War. Johnson had stacks of money. He bought up television and radio advertisements which drenched the community with his messages. McCarthy had no money. The polls gave him between 10-20 per cent. He seemed headed for a crushing defeat.

But below the radar of the media, he had an army of 3,000 young students, ringing bells, chapping doors, talking to the people. When the

# Yes we can

**YES HE DID:** in the 1988 Govan by-election, not one poll showed that Jim Sillars would win but he won the Westminster seat comfortably



results were announced pollsters, media and Johnston were stunned. McCarthy got 42 per cent to Johnston's 49 per cent. The key to that 42 per cent was the people-to-people contact through canvassing.

Before then, in the 1948 US presidential election, Harry Truman was written off by the pollsters and the media. As the final polls closed, the front page of the Chicago Tribune proclaimed: "DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN."

But Truman won. His campaign had very little money. What he did have was a campaign among the people, and that was missed by the pollsters and elite journalists.

In the 1970 general election, Labour were a steady 12 points ahead of the Tories led

by Edward Heath. Labour lost. In February 1974, the Tories were so far ahead of Labour at the start of the campaign, it was to be a walkover. But the campaign turned in the second week, and the Tories lost.

In the 1988 Govan by-election, not one poll showed that I would win. The gap was wide. The Labour candidate was so confident that at the various hustings he was very nice to me, as though I deserved a pat on the back for bothering to turn up. What Labour hadn't reckoned with was the relevance of the campaign I ran, at a time when the Poll Tax was being imposed – an issue Labour ran away from. I won.

The lesson to be learned from all of the above, is not that the polls are wrong at any time in the present, but that it is the campaign leading up to the day the votes are cast that matters.

There is no scientific measurement of the impact of a campaign, just a political one when the ballot boxes spill out their contents, and the reality, not the forecast, emerges. I am not writing this to give you false cheer in the

face of the polls at present which show the No camp ahead. What you get out of a campaign is related to the energy and the worth of the cause you put into it.

In campaign terms, of being in touch with people on their doorsteps and at meetings, the Yes side is away ahead. There is a charge of energy in the Yes campaign, a confidence in what we can do with the power of independence to transform the lives of the working class.

There is no such vision from No. Just a dirge about what we cannot do. There is, however, something missing in the Yes campaign, as we have concentrated on the positive policies we offer. It is the truth about what a No vote will bring upon the heads of the people. That is what we have to drive home.

### **Failing UK state**

Yes has not done enough in telling the truth about the dreadful state of the UK economy, it's £1.3trillion national debt now, heading towards £1.5trillion in 2017.

It's time to explain that after the Westminster election of 2015, no matter which government is in, there will be £25billion of cuts to public services and benefits. A No vote means more austerity, in a UK economy that is skint.

Of course there are very rich people, but some can be rich in a poor state, and it is vital that we get across to the Scots that a No vote is a vote to stay with a failing state that can only bring them more policies like the Bedroom Tax and deep cuts in benefits. Tell the truth about No and we will win.

**“ There is a charge of energy in the Yes campaign, a confidence in what we can do with the power of independence to transform the lives of the working class... ”**

by Ken Ferguson

# BIG BEASTS PLAY UNION JACK CARD

IN THIS issue of the Voice, we mark the opening of the last 100 days to the historic September independence referendum with contributions from key campaigners on the indy left.

However, the 100-days landmark was also marked – rather akin to Nessie at the start of the tourist season – by the appearance of that creature so beloved of mainstream political scribes, the Big Beast.

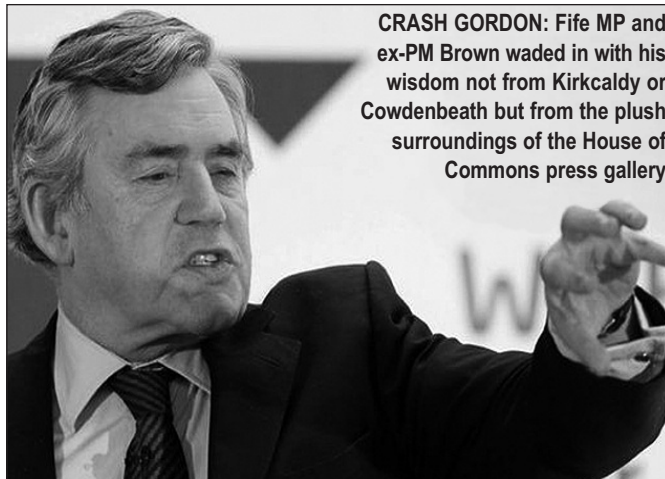
Like Nessie, this creature has a mythical status and, at least in the notebooks of those journalists who write what passes for political news, is rather fearsome.

Its appearance is supposedly a “game changer” as it brings tactical wisdom, vast political experience and that highly prized commodity “gravitas” to bear to forensically demolish the case of opponents. Thus they strike fear into puny opponents, slay their arguments St George-style and, their work done, retire to their equivalent of moated castles on the board of multinationals, think tanks or the sleepy benches of the House of Lords.

## Crude message

First of these creatures to break cover was the ex-socialist and incorrigible warmonger, Lord Reid of Cardowan. One time student communist John Reid has a not very subtle line in flag waving loyalty to the British state and “British” values and is a particularly ardent fan of Her Majesty’s forces. In a manner which earned him his reputation as supposed bruiser, the former war minister shamelessly harnessed the sacrifice of the D-Day dead in service of the union.

The crude message was that those storming Hitler’s Atlantic wall were better together and that somehow the fact that eventual victory over Nazism was achieved by that unity seals the case for the union. Of course, the glaring omission from this tale is that the victory in Normandy was



**CRASH GORDON:** Fife MP and ex-PM Brown waded in with his wisdom not from Kirkcaldy or Cowdenbeath but from the plush surroundings of the House of Commons press gallery

won by troops including those from already independent Canada and those wicked separatists from the US among others.

The point is that like much of the British bulldog stuff spouted by unionists as they oppose independence, it’s pretty shallow stuff from a pretty toothless bulldog.

But star billing in the Big Beasts parade was reserved from the leader of the pack, Brontosaurus Brown, regarded as the biggest hitter of them all by some of the No camp’s own separatists in the whimsically-named ‘United With Labour’. The grumpy ex-PM and Fife MP Gordon Brown offered us his wisdom not from Kirkcaldy or Cowdenbeath but from the plush surroundings of the House of Commons press gallery.

This lunch club for the political correspondents is, of course, Big Beast Brown’s natural habitat as he shared his wisdom with us through the pens of the unionist press and in the columns, via a feature, of the house journal of metropolitan liberalism, The Guardian. But rather than some flash of new insight into the debate, the tired politician offered us the same tired arguments

about the attractions of the union. His minders let it be known that Brown – still a sitting MP – was “temporarily” rejoining the front-line in a bid to save Britain.

Of course, despite his billing as a leading thinker, Brown is in fact a calculating Labour tribalist and at that level, his peroration did not disappoint. Blaming the Tories for turning the indy debate into a Britain versus Scotland match, he neatly also framed his detested Labour rival Alistair Darling who has presided over this strategy for Better Together.

As a crowd pleasing morsel for his journalistic hosts, Brown also threw in the bone of demanding

Cameron pick up the challenge of a TV debate with First Minister Salmond. Overall, the intention beneath the smokescreen of a demand for a new Britishness is just a crude as Reid’s earlier effort.

It can be summed up simply as the two aims of ‘blame the Tories and Labour-rivals if No loses’ and ‘claim the credit for riding to the rescue if they win’.

## Real issues

Of course, just like the Commons’ watering holes, all this is a galaxy far, far away from reality.

On planet Scotland, whichever brand of unionist comes out on top if there is No vote, cuts and austerity, nuclear weapons and war are the menu if we remain locked into a rapidly declining and creaking UK. That’s why it is vital that all those Big Beasts be put out to grass by a Yes vote which opens the way to real change, dealing with real issues, free from the rose-tinted imperial nostalgia of the can’t-do unionists.

Winning the working class majority to a Yes vote has to be the left’s number one priority in the remaining days and weeks to the referendum. Eyes on the prize!



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SSP councillor Jim Bollan told the Voice the background to this latest attack on democracy

# Scottish Socialist councillor suspended for third time

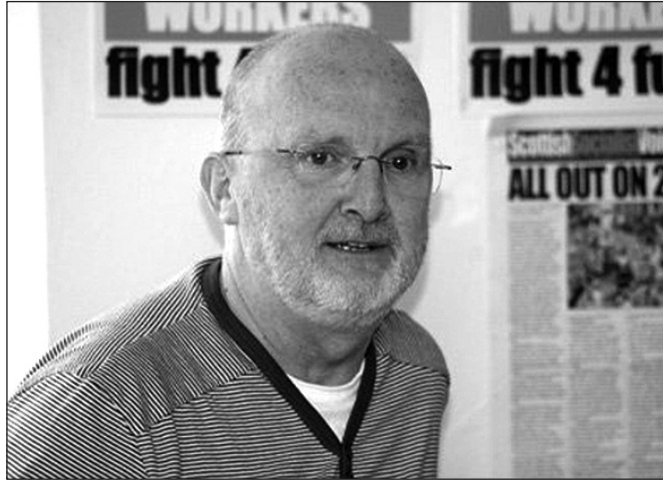
AS A proud activist in the Scottish Socialist Party and a councillor in West Dunbartonshire, it has become an occupational hazard to be reported to the Standards Commission for Scotland by the Labour council leader councillor Rooney and the chief executive White.

The Standards Commission for Scotland is an unelected quango set up by the Scottish Government to regulate the behaviour of councillors in Scotland. My recent suspension of nine months from attending council, committee or sub committee meetings is draconian and another attempt to restrict me as a socialist opposition councillor from holding the right wing part time Labour administration on West Dunbartonshire Council to account.

## Political malice

It will not work. The thought-police will not win. I will continue to scrutinise, expose and hold the establishment on the council to account.

There is no doubt there is political malice behind the only SSP councillor on the council being reported to the Standards Commission in a council where democracy, accessibility and accountability have been dispensed with in favour of giving



**BOLLAN:** "This cements the inequality which is pervasive in our society"

the Corporate Management Team unprecedented delegated powers, so much so that the officers effectively run the council.

What crime did I commit to receive a suspension of nine months? I publicly commented that I felt a senior officer who had been recruited from another Council had a "highly questionable recent work record" after the officer in question was part of a modernisation project which was supposed to save the council £1.9million but actually lost £400,000. The officer received a final written warning for his part in the loss making enterprise.

I was also punished for failing to declare a non-financial inter-

est while arguing for a grant for a community group in the ward I represent who were on the brink of closing due to the lack of finances. I admitted this error – hardly hanging offences.

Contrast this excessive sanction for an SSP councillor with that of a Renfrew Labour councillor who sat on a committee which awarded his employer a substantial grant, without declaring he had a financial interest as an employee. He was suspended for four weeks earlier this year, missing one committee. Equal treatment?

The 'regulation' of councillors is part of a system that seeks to prevent legitimate chal-

lenge in local government. It appears if you conform and bend the knee to the system then you will be treated lightly.

If you question, challenge, expose and scrutinise on behalf of your constituents, then you will be marked for special treatment by the establishment.

My suspension has left a disproportionate democratic deficit for the 13,000 constituents in my ward. I am the only SSP councillor on West Dunbartonshire Council. The other groupings on the council are plural and would have cover if any of their members were suspended.

## Attack

Constituents have been denied full representation by a system built to smother legitimate scrutiny and freedom of speech. I will be unable to table items for discussion for nine months. This is an attack on democracy. It is an attack on representation. It is an attack on accountability. It also cements the inequality which is pervasive in our society.

The undercurrent of why my politics are being attacked is my opposition to the right wing Labour groups "transformation" agenda which is an attempt to turn the local authority into 'West Dunbartonshire Council PLC'.

As an SSP activist, the messages of support I have received since my suspension was announced on from council unions, staff and constituents has been incredible.

The struggle continues. The SSP will not conform or bend the knee. We stand as a party who have representation, equality and accountability at the heart of our programme for socialist change in Scotland.

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Jonathon Shafi of the Radical Independence Campaign explains why they are organising a mass canvass

# WE MUST WIN INDYREF FOR OURSELVES

**ON RECENT** mass canvases in Glasgow we have found there to be a very large number of undecideds. Scanning social media reports it seems to be the case that there remains a high number don't know in places all over Scotland. As a result many have asked why this is the case. Are there any particular issues? Is there anything we can change about our messaging? And so on.

In truth there is no magic wand, or simple solution to this. This article deals with a specific form of being 'undecided'. One person may be balancing the arguments, carefully, critically. They may be tuning into every debate, reading the latest developments and speaking to friends about the referendum. But another, bigger, section are not really 'undecided' on the basis of the arguments as such. They are undecided because they have not yet thought about it in any serious way.

## Representation

This in part helps explain why undecided voters are so high in areas where there is low voter turnout. The richer you are, the more your interests are represented and reflected in the political and financial institutions.

Thus, there is a reason to take an interest, because your own interests are more likely to be acted on institutionally.

Conversely, in areas where the interests of the electorate are not even an after thought, alienation from the political process is deep. Indeed this alienation is in and of itself a long-term process of demobilisation. Structural and social issues coalesce to create a barrier to political action, including the fact that daily life is enough of a struggle.

When people ask why there is disengagement, this is the reason. It's not just because people



don't trust politicians, or that people feel there is no point in political engagement because they have not seen any evidence to suggest their action makes a difference.

These are not unimportant – but the problem is systemic in nature. In essence the neoliberal democracy is limited to the parameters of the interests of big capital, and in addition the tapestry of organisations, groups and community facilities needed to catalyse and maintain a culture of political engagement have been systematically undermined, shut down and shattered by years of strategic neglect.

Permanent austerity is now the over-arching strategy which incorporates all of this, underlined with an ideological demonisation and a

further fracturing of our society along the lines of race, benefits claimants, the 'work-shy' and so on. They have not just been cutting services, they've been destroying democracy along the way.

If this is the problem, then the solution to the democratic deficit is obvious. Rebuild a culture of solidarity, reverse the upwards distribution of wealth and power and energise community programmes, cooperatives, public meetings and so on.

That will take nothing short of a mass social and political renewal which will require a strategy based on the long-term detoxification of neoliberal failure. But to make an immediate impact to mobilise the Yes vote in the concluding months of the referendum, we need to mobilise on

a mass basis. That is why RIC has called for a national mass canvass on 22 June. We start from a simple premise. No one will win the independence referendum for us. There is not one argument alone that can win. No single party will be enough.

Our success will be guaranteed through the mass organisation of ordinary people.

History is in our hands. Together we can set out a course to engage with thousands of people to promote our perspective: radical, meaningful social change, through independence for Scotland. If you have campaigned for years, then now is the time to redouble efforts. If you are new to campaigning, now is the time to get involved.

## Mass canvass

All of this is why the Radical Independence Campaign is calling a National Mass Canvass on 22 June across the whole of Scotland. Canvasses will run in all of the major cities but also across many towns, villages and islands, maximizing geographical coverage and inclusion.

Everyone is welcome to join. Whatever group you are in, we will promote your 22 June event.

Our previous mass canvass sessions, in housing estates such as Castlemilk and Drumchapel, have provided voters with the opportunity to discuss their concerns about the referendum on a one to one basis. They have been hugely popular.

This personal approach has been welcomed by residents with many stating that they were feeling neglected and their questions were not being answered. The Radical Independence Campaign is aiming to change this by speaking to as many people as possible about issues that affect them and the world around them.

We believe that engagement is key to winning. We need to listen, as well as promote our vision. Join the 22 June day of action.

• See [www.riccanvassing.org](http://www.riccanvassing.org)

by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

**SINCE OUR** formation in 1998, the SSP has consistently fought for an independent socialist Scotland. We are the one and only party to have done so for the past 16 years – tirelessly. Throughout the two years of the referendum campaign, we have championed the central argument that the Scottish working class majority are key to the outcome, having least to lose and most to gain – with the potential power to then go on to transform an independent Scotland into a socialist democracy.

It seems the enemies of democratic self-determination – the Unionist parties of Better Together – have woken up to this, in a perverse fashion. That Tory-funded Fear Factory has been fronted by

from their Tory paymasters in the No camp, by trying to breath life into United with Labour – the Mini Me Labour offshoot of Better Together. Like any one of successive Tory and Labour governments, these characters rely on sub-contractors; United with Labour, and figures like Brown, have been hired as sub-contractors to do the Tories' dirty work amidst the working class.

This move is rooted in the growing revolt within the trade unions at Labour being part of the toxic Better Together. Even the Scottish organiser of ASLEF, the first trade union to rush through affiliation to No well over a year ago, with no genuine prior debate amongst members, admitted last week “on reflection it might have been better not to have joined Better Together”.

He said so at the end of a Yes/No debate called by rank and file mem-

the message conveyed; the keynote arguments to convince working people they will be better off under independence. Imagine there'd been no 1707 Act of Union, that Scotland was not part of the so-called 'United' Kingdom. Imagine we were having a referendum in September to *join* the UK. Would any self respecting worker vote to join a United Kingdom with a record number of billionaires – 104 – and where the richest 1,000 enjoyed a massive 15 per cent to their incomes last year, to a mind boggling £518billion – whilst many workers haven't had a pay rise in four or five years, and millions more have had 'rises' that are drastic cuts compared to inflation?

Would workers be wise to vote to be part of a state where the richest ten people in Scotland – yes, ten – have nearly have the wealth of the annual

avert starvation for her child. Scotland is a net exporter of food, yet we rely on over 1,000 food banks to avoid starvation in the 21st century. Why would we want to give a vote of confidence to that obscene track record, by voting to stay in the UK?

Gordon Brown and others in the Labour hierarchy have awoken to the fact growing numbers of their own traditional working class voters see a Yes vote as a 'get out of Tory jail card', or even a rapid escape route from a real and possible Tory/UKIP prison.

So Labour peddles the line 'vote No in 2014, vote Labour in 2015'.

They try to seduce workers with the words of Ed Miliband that “we're only one Christmas away from a Labour government”, with promises of “justice under Labour, a sharing of the greater resources of the UK across the regions”.

## BREAK FROM BILLIONAIRES'

Labour for the past two years. They've built a cottage industry in the manufacture of lies, scare stories and attempts to intimidate working class Scots with the core message that we are too poor, too small and too thick to handle independence.

The crowning glory of this insult has to be Johann Lamont's utterance that “the Scottish people are not genetically programmed to make political decisions”.

### Change of tack

Now the Unionist cabal are trying to switch tack, in panic at the backlash their insults, negativity, and orchestrated threats (for instance, about currency) has created amongst working class people.

Whilst Alistair Darling (of the rich) still peddles No's doomsday scenarios about independence, other sections of the Labour hierarchy fear they've been rumbled as Tory collaborators, and have wheeled out Gordon Brown to tempt traditional Labour voters with a different shade of Unionist lies. Brown is trying to distance Labour

bers through the Bathgate ASLEF branch, where I spoke for Yes (against a member of Labour's Campaign for Socialism and Red Paper Collective), at the end of which 85-90 per cent of the train drivers present favoured a Yes vote!

In the final months of the campaign, Yes Scotland needs to roll up its sleeves, shelve caution and hesitancy, and get struck into Labour's cruel deceit of the Scottish working class. Along with hammering the false Labour promises, Yes Scotland needs to make its positive vision more concrete, on key issues like wages, jobs, services and workers' rights. The pro-independence movement has worked wonders in canvassing and street activity, and the SSP, RIC and Yes groups have also revived the age of the public meeting, with hundreds cramming into dozens of community halls every night of the week. Another arena we need to systematically target are the workplaces, directly – as well as via where workers live, and through trade union meetings.

But then the crunch question is

Scottish Government's budget for the other 5.3 million of us? Or where the richest one per cent have as much wealth as the poorest 54 per cent of the population? Or where billionaires glut on their wealth, with tax cuts for them by Westminster, whilst two million children in the UK are in poverty – an absolute majority of them in families with one or more parent working? If most workers wouldn't vote to *join* such a dysfunctional state, why should they vote to *remain* part of it – which is what a No vote means?

### Breadline Britain

Billionaires' Britain is Breadline Britain. A recent TV programme, Breadline Kids, told the story of a man who had to stop working when his teenage daughter was diagnosed with leukaemia, and then had to scrimp and search for food for his two kids, especially when his benefits were delayed.

And like him, the story of the mother on zero hours contracts, a proud woman who nevertheless was forced to turn to food banks to

In a recent interview Alistair Darling showed no sign of being ironic when he offered workers “the security of being part of something bigger, with a share of the larger resources”. But what has been the real life experiences of 'justice with Labour', as measured by 13 successive years of British Labour governments? The most regionally unequal state in the whole of Europe. A state where 87 per cent of all the working cranes right now are in London and the South East. Where London's growth rates in the recent 'recovery' are over twice (nearly five times in some cases) that of other areas of the 'United' Kingdom.

But this is not just geographical inequality. It's a class divide that dwarfs the Grand Canyon. London sucks in labour and capital, with massive property booms and obscene profiteering in the City of London casino economy. Meantime in the real city of London, a property company called Property Partners has installed metal spikes to stop the homeless from sleeping outside the doorways of their building!





**JOHANN LAMONT:**  
 "Scotland will not be getting more money. It will simply be accountable for raising more of its money. I hope that dispels some myths"  
 PHOTO: Craig Maclean

# BREADLINE BRITAIN

When Gordon Brown tries to scare workers about the security of their jobs and pensions should they vote Yes, we need to remind the same workers it was Labour in government, with Brown at the financial helm, that demolished Final Salary Pension schemes; provoked public sector strikes in defence of pensions; abolished the 10p tax rate for the lowest paid; and announced the slaughter of 100,000 civil service jobs back in July 2004. That's justice, Labour style!

And worse is yet to come if a majority of workers are conned into staying chained to Westminster rule, the dictatorship of capital. Only an estimated half of the Tory-Lib Dem's public sector cuts have been implemented. And that's before adding on the additional £25 billion of butchery announced by Gideon Osborne before Xmas. Even if Labour achieves the unlikely by winning office in 2015, they have declared they will sustain the Tories cuts. And even the limited concessions on extra devolution verbally promised in recent weeks by

Labour, Tories and Lib Dems are neither guaranteed, nor a route out of the fundamental problems of poverty and inequality we face in Billionaires' Breadline Britain.

If these opportunists were serious about added powers being devolved to a Scottish parliament – as opposed to trying to con us into a No vote with empty verbal gestures as they see workers attracted to the chance of real powers to change things through independence – why wasn't a package of legislation on this included in the recent Queens Speech at Westminster? Johann Lamont has at least let the cat out of the bag, in an article in the Northern Echo, where she clarified Labour's promises on pathetically minor extra powers for Holyrood over income tax:

## Living wage

"Scotland will not be getting more money. It will simply be accountable for raising more of its money. I hope that dispels some myths".

And none of their verbal promises offer any power to increase the level of the national minimum wage in a

devolved Holyrood. Nor the levels of pensions, nor benefits. Yet we live in a slave labour economy, one of the root causes of people relying on food banks to fend off starvation.

The current 'adult' minimum wage is worth only 35 per cent of average wages in the UK. Even a modest catching up with the 46 per cent of average wages enjoyed in France – hardly a socialist nirvana! – would mean £8.14 an hour minimum. And if this country matched New Zealand's national minimum wage as a proportion of average earnings, it would rise to £9.55 an hour. Hardly a king's ransom, but a real transformation of millions of workers' lives.

The Yes campaign has a chance and a duty to focus on issues like a decent living minimum wage for all over 16, with pensions to match: the SSP has campaigned for at least £9 an hour, based on two-thirds of male median earnings. The Yes campaign likewise needs to make more of a vision of massive re-industrialization of Scotland, centred around house building to tackle the 157,000-strong waiting list, and

green jobs in the potential Saudi Arabia of clean, renewable energy that Scotland's offshore conditions alone could create. Well paid, dignified jobs and apprenticeships.

And defence industry workers could be guaranteed decent, secure jobs as part of such a plan, by designing and constructing the engineering equipment for the green energy sector. Instead of relying on war and slaughter for work, the shipbuilders on the Clyde could use their skills to build such equipment, on top of the need to build a fleet of ferries.

Industry experts calculate that the insane £3 billion spent to build each aircraft carrier could instead be used to build 200 new ferries, and that would generate ten times as many jobs in the yards! And Scotland needs 100 new ferries to replace the ageing domestic fleet and meet new EU regulations on clean fuel.

As a modest minimum, all that could create five times as many shipyard jobs as now exist, a sharp rebuttal to the vicious scaremongering and blackmail of the Unionists.

But such a plan can only fully succeed if energy in all its forms, and the shipyards, are taken into democratic public ownership – something the three factions of Thatcherism who dominate Westminster would never countenance.

## Transform Scotland

As we enter the last phase of campaigning, targeting workers with concrete alternatives, explaining how their lives and standards of living could be transformed – provided independence is used to reshape Scotland from top to bottom – is critical to winning a Yes majority. And the talent, knowledge of life and work, and the vast levels of thinking and engagement this campaign has stoked up all bode well for the future.

We need to hammer the lies of Labour, remind workers of their real track record, and paint a picture of how Scotland could be if the working class majority seize the chance and then construct a socialist government in an independent state. Workers have least to lose, most to gain, by breaking from the Billionaires' Breadline Britain.

by Sandra Webster

**WE HAVE** now approached the end game of the campaign that will hopefully deliver a Yes vote in the referendum. There is still much to fight for. Any victory will only be won by ensuring that those who do not normally vote feel included and that their vote is valuable.

For those of us who are involved in the independence campaign, we may be surrounded by the passion and vigour of other Yes campaigners. It is too easy to lose perspective and, from our Yes bubble, forget that there are many others who remain to be convinced. It is these voters who may hold the balance of power if they decide to vote or not.

For me, when canvassing, there are four types of voters. There's the Yes and No camps who have already made up their minds, those who are undecided but there's also those who say they have no intention to vote.

These non-voters tend to be young people who seem disillusioned with the political system. The messages of the Yes and Better Together have not had much impact. It is these voters who we must reach.

## Labour voters split

The latest Ipsos MORI poll suggests that working class men have mostly made up their minds. Interestingly many have not listened to the Labour Party who traditionally expect to have their ear. There is almost a 50/50 split with Yes and No voters. This bodes well for the future make-up of a Scottish Parliament in which people no longer vote on traditional lines but expect more from those who claim to represent them.

So far, only 28 per cent of women have declared they

# INVOLVEMENT IS KEY TO WINNING YES VOTE

**SCOTLAND CALLING:** our campaign targets people in poorer areas who are more likely to support the Yes camp but are less likely to vote

PHOTO: Craig Maclean

will vote Yes. So our campaigning must reach out more to women.

The SNP in Scotland's Future have fallen into the trap of many other election campaigns before them by concentrating mostly on 'women's issues' like childcare, which was given priority.

Time and time again, it has been demonstrated by women voters that they care about more issues than just childcare. Women For Independence must be applauded for their intervention and targeting women voters but in these last 100 days we must prioritise new ways of reaching women.

At all the public meetings I have attended, women have been the minority in the audience and often on the top table. We have to bring the debate to women where they are, in communities, not

expect them to be able to attend the traditional meetings.

For me, this means ensuring that the voices of ordinary women are heard. In our own party, so many women have found their voices as part of the Yes campaign. These are the ordinary women who are respected in their communities and who will be listened to. With so many women undecided and still making up their minds, it is crucial we reach out to them where they are.

The campaign must also target those from more deprived areas who are more likely to support the Yes camp but are less likely to vote. The Radical Independence Campaign have begun mass canvassing in schemes from Drumchapel to Pollok. After the Pollok canvas, they had a public meeting which attracted

150 people. One person said this was the first time anyone had knocked on his door and asked him what he wanted. For all of us involved in campaigning for a Yes vote we have seen so many people becoming interested in politics again.

This interest should not come to an end after the referendum. That is when the hard work starts and it is important that more people are involved in the political process. That will bode well for an independent Scotland.

These are areas in which we live and work and it is crucial we engage people and distribute voting registration forms so people are encouraged to vote. It is up to us to encourage our friends, neighbours and family members to vote in the referendum. In these last few days which will fly by, as the past two years have, it is our responsibility to campaign both individually and as a party.

## Target activity

Wear a Yes badge and encourage a conversation as part of your everyday life. As a branch, have public meetings in your local areas. Encourage women to be on the platform and give them encouragement and support to speak out.

Have voter registration forms on your stall to hand out. Remember that almost 38 per cent of people are undecided – they will win the Yes vote.

We also need to think outside the box too and target activity to reach people in their communities. Public meetings alone are not enough.

How we win the referendum is important and encouraging many more people to get involved will bode well for democracy in an independent Scotland.



by John McAllion

# It's a myth that Scottish MPs can save England from Tories

**DURING** A recent televised debate with Jim Sillars on Scottish independence, George Galloway warned that the absence of Scottish MPs at Westminster would result in an English Tory Government south of the border.

According to George, the withdrawal of the current 41 Scottish Labour MPs from the anti-Tory opposition on the green benches would inevitably concede an overall Tory majority in the House of Commons. This particular argument echoes one of the great myths that have dominated Labour thinking on independence since the post-1967 rise of the SNP following Winnie Ewing's spectacular success in the Hamilton by-election of that year.

## Celtic fringes

It has long been argued within the party that the strong Tory vote in England makes Labour increasingly dependent for a parliamentary majority on support from its Celtic fringes in Wales and Scotland.

Roy Jenkins, a Labour Cabinet Minister in the 1970s, argued that "if you do not have Scottish members of parliament playing their full part in Westminster then the Labour Party could pretty much say goodbye to any hope of a majority ever in the UK."

Forty years on, Anas Sarwar, head of Labour's current No campaign, similarly suggests that the absence of Scotland's Labour MPs will lead to a "right wing Tory government across the rest of the UK".

In reality, all three of the doom-sayers could not be more wrong.

All of the polling evidence from actual general election results undermines their central thesis that Labour cannot win in England alone. In the party's 1945 and 1966 election victories, Labour won 164 and 66 more seats than the Tories in England. It even won more English seats than the Tories in the closely fought election of October 1974.



**OPPOSITION?** Labour would implement £25 billion of Tory-planned cuts

In the three most recent election victories between 1997 and 2005, Labour had majorities over the Tories in England alone of 164, 158 and 91 respectively. When Labour wins comfortable majorities in the House of Commons it does so because it wins majorities in England. Labour majority governments do not require the support of Scottish MPs. Six of the Labour governments elected since 1945 would have been elected anyway without any assistance from Scotland.

Moreover, if Labour in the rest of the UK were to embrace electoral reform and agree to elect the House of Commons by proportional representation, the party would pretty much guarantee the end of majority Tory governments anywhere on this island.

Labour, of course, refuses to do this because it has entered into a Faustian pact with the Tories to cling to a first-past-the-post electoral system that guarantees both parties a continuing duopoly of power in a democratically flawed British state. The threat of Tory darkness engulfing the rest of the

UK endures not because the people of Scotland seek self-determination, but because the main anti-Tory party in the rest of the UK has refused to challenge the core structures of a deeply flawed British state.

The English and the Welsh working class are free to determine their own economic and political futures by taking up the challenge of constitutional reform. All they need is political leadership capable of rising to that challenge.

A Yes majority in September will not therefore condemn the rest of the UK to perpetual Tory rule. However, nor will a No majority in September rescue Scotland from a deeply reactionary future already planned by the current Coalition government for a post 2015 United Kingdom.

Those who vote No in 2014 in the expectation that a Labour government will be elected in 2015 to reverse the massive cuts planned by the Coalition should think again.

To win a UK election in 2015, Labour needs to do well in the

South of England. There are 59 UK parliamentary seats in Scotland. South of a line drawn from The Wash to the Bristol Channel (effectively the south-east of England) there are 302 parliamentary seats. Any political party looking to win in 2015 must pitch its policies and its appeal to voters south of that line.

Scotland's 41 Labour seats matter little if Labour cannot win four times that many seats in the south east of England.

To make the necessary inroads in the south, Labour has conceded the Coalition's arguments and shifted its policies accordingly to the right. An incoming Labour government has promised to implement the £25 billion of public spending cuts planned by the Coalition for 2015/16.

It has accepted the Coalition's cap on welfare spending. It has promised to eliminate the deficit in public spending within the lifetime of the next parliament.

It will implement the Coalition's policies on public sector pay and pensions. Like the Coalition it promises to get tough on immigration. The list could go on.

## 2015 Tory govt

Yet a Labour victory in 2015 remains far from certain. Following the European and English local government elections, there was a consensus that the Tories had done much better than could be expected of a party that had been in government for four years while Labour was doing much worse than would be expected from a party expecting to move into government in a year's time.

If change is really coming to our politics, it can only come from one direction – a Yes majority in 2014. There really is no alternative.



*by Voice Reporter*

# BBC STRIKE BALLOT CALLED FOR

**NUJ MEMBERS** at the BBC have voted to ballot for industrial action, including strikes, after dismissing a “derisory” pay deal of 1 per cent. There are growing problems for the corporation as members at BBC Scotland have already threatened to ballot over deteriorating industrial relations in news centres north of the border. A mass meeting of Mothers and Fathers of Chapel from every BBC centre has voted for a motion which calls for major reform at the corporation to address the huge differential between the pay of journalists and programme makers and the senior management.

The motion called for a radical overhaul of executive pay and perks. It noted the salary of Tony Hall, director general, and Anne Bulford, managing director, is £450,000 a year and James Purnell, director, strategy and digital, earns £295,000. The meeting earlier this month, which took place in London with dozens of reps in attendance, heard that managers still received car allowances and generous expense accounts.

They expressed their anger that while staff are being expected to “get austerity”, management continued to enjoy high salaries but are also recruiting more managers at enhanced rates by bypassing the BBC’s normal recruitment procedures.

This expansion of fat cat posts comes

when BBC executives are discussing up to 600 redundancies in news over the next year. After the meeting in London, Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said:

“The union has argued for a genuine alternative to the excessive payments to managers and the waste in the corporation.

“There are structural changes that can be made that would result in fair pay and free up cash for programming.

“Our calculations show that if pay was capped at £150,000, this would free £20 million which could be spent on journalism and programming. This would be to the benefit of the staff and licence payers.

“We also want to see the BBC management in the run up to the licence fee deal and charter renewal fighting on behalf of the corporation and battling to maintain the high standards and quality programme-making that has made the BBC one of the premier broadcasters on the globe.”

In a lengthy motion the union has called for an overhaul of executive pay and perks. It condemns what they describe as the behind the scenes slotting of senior managers into grade-eleven, where as a result 66 per cent of those in this bracket now earn salaries above the ceiling of the grade. It highlights the NUJ demand for a cap on

salaries of £150,000 which would release £20million into the BBC’s budget, each and every year, a situation that would go some way to protect jobs and salaries. Scottish organiser Paul Holleran told the Voice:

“The two tier treatment is unacceptable both in respect of job cuts for the workers and new posts for bosses and of course the derisory pay offer.

“The reps were really angry at the threat of more job cuts in News and Radio down south but also potentially in Scotland.

“We need more journalists not fewer, particularly in Scotland in a year of phenomenal number of high-brow events and specifically the independence referendum.”

The anger in Scotland is exacerbated by recent decisions to drop programmes such as Newsnight Scotland and Headlines without proper consultation with the workforce.

The announcement that high profile presenter Gary Robertson has been told they are not renewing his contract because of budget problems has already led to high level talks between management and the union in Scotland and further talks are planned. The UK-wide ballot will run from 20 June to 11 July and the NUJ are seeking a similar approach from sister union BECTU as part of joint union campaign.

# Donate to SSP indy appeal

*by Jim McVicar, SSP National Treasurer*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## HOW TO PLEDGE AND DONATE MONEY

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

- Paypal: [jim.sspfinance@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:jimmcvicar.scottishsocialistparty@hotmail.com)

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

by John Finnie MSP

**THE QUEST** to find a comparator for our constitutional debate invariably leads commentators to Quebec.

Whilst the 1995 vote was narrowly lost 49.42 per cent Yes and 50.58 per cent No, the verdict of psephologists on the 1980 referendum was that the defeat was “because a French-speaking politician (Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau) was able to return to his native land and appeal to his brethren.” Is such a turn of events likely with our debate?

We Scots were to have been seduced by Alistair Darling, charmed by Michael Moore, coerced by Alistair Carmichael then overpowered by the interpersonal skills and consistency of message by failed Chancellor and Prime Minister, Gordon Brown.

Vladimir and Barack, and in between Eddie Izzard and ‘Gorgeous George’, were to have supplemented by David Bowie’s proxy plea. None have done the trick of killing off our aspirations for a better future. Billy Connolly isn’t going to come riding over the hill on his three-wheeler to sort us out, not least as both sides of the discussion claim him as theirs. No-one is coming. Indeed Better Together may have rumbled that the less ‘big hitters’ they send north the better it is for them.

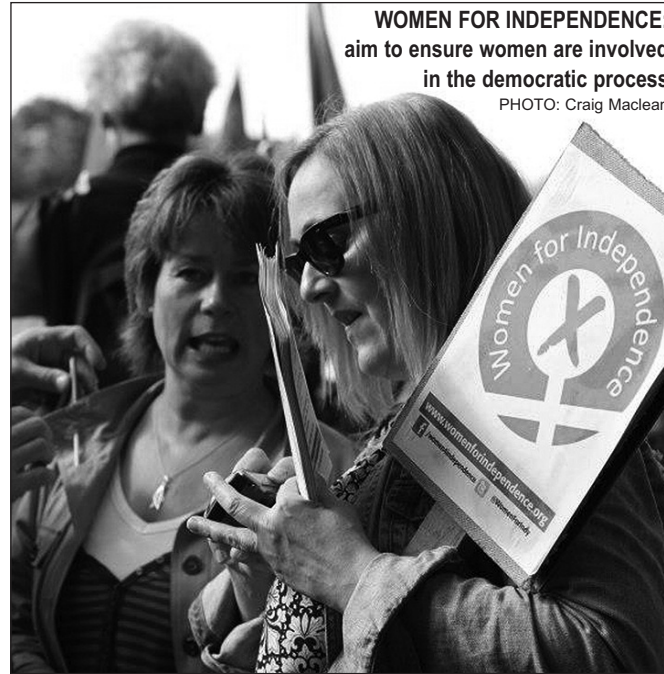
### No’s sick message

The No campaign has recently plummeted to new depths, even for them, and caused alarm amongst the parents of children living in Scotland treated at Great Ormond Street Hospital. They lied that future treatment was in doubt, a sick message they sought to spread via now withdrawn cinema ads.

So, in the time that remains, I will be out and about telling the truth that the independence referendum is ‘an opportunity’, with few guarantees.

Vote No and you are guaranteed more austerity – with 60

# Lets not fail for lack of effort in final 100 days



per cent of the cuts still to come. You are guaranteed a cap on welfare. You are guaranteed the renewal of Trident – £1.43 billion already spent on early design. And, in the growing unlikely event of Labour winning next year’s election, you are guaranteed attacks on welfare benefits for the under 25s.

We must give be clear and concise information on issues such as pensions to those for whom voting Yes seems a personal gamble, our older folk. Despite unequivocal assurances from the UK government minister responsible that pensions paid for will be honoured, our unionist opponents still seek to create doubt from public platforms and bill poster boards the length and breadth of the country, because they understand this can resonate with those most likely to vote, pensioners.

To deliver our positive message of a more equal Scotland we must redouble our efforts, particularly face to face contact

with voters. We must seize this opportunity or our laudable aspirations will be cast aside by whoever forms the next UK government.

We know the unionists will continue to attack Alex Salmond and the SNP, however, the referendum campaign has long moved beyond any individual or party and now involves many who have never engaged in politics of any description before who share our vision of a better tomorrow.

Majority government has earned the Scottish Government the legitimate right for their White Paper to be the basis of the constitutional discussion.

However, we must emphasise ‘other versions are available’ and they collectively make a strong, shared case for social justice.

We are now into the period when neither side will expend any effort seeking to win over die-hard opponents. All energies must be directed to win-

ning over the significant percentage of voters who are ‘undecided’ to our campaign.

Great effort must be put into addressing an apparent deep-seated ‘conservatism’ of women on this issue. I remain ready to help with any aspect of the campaign; however, I believe it’s the various women’s groups rather than another middle-aged, grey-haired politician who’ll more likely triumph with this hugely important and potentially decisive group.

So that’s all those who are going to vote, what about the ‘missing million’ those, primarily from our most disadvantaged communities for whom the idea of a participative democracy means nothing?

### Pivotal role

I am supporting the Radical Independence Campaign’s mass canvass to reach these excluded people. We must explain the pivotal role they can play in changing UK plc, run by and for elites. It’s a challenge but we owe those communities our time and effort and we will be rewarded with support.

My independent status sees me detached from party machines, particularly the mighty beast that is the Scottish National Party’s electoral apparatus, however, between now and 18 September I shall be working with anyone and everyone to secure our nation’s future.

I understand there have been 49 independence referendums across the world. Some have been official, others unofficial. Some have been successful, and others have ended in failure.

Let’s not fail for lack of effort – let’s get out and talk.

A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens by **Guy Standing**, published by Bloomsbury Academic

by *Stephanie Pride*

**THE PRECARIAT**, according to the author, is an emerging class growing in number and “characterised by chronic insecurity, detached from old norms of labour and the working class”.

Made up of sections of the old working class without stable employment, migrant workers and the well-educated forced into temporary jobs beneath their skill level, it is a disparate grouping created by the needs of global capitalism for a ready supply of “flexible” labour.

For Standing, members of the precariat (the title of his previous work, sub-titled *The Dangerous New Class*) are denizens, not citizens – increasingly stripped of their rights and separated from traditional means of asserting them, such as trade unions.

They are typically to be found doing casual work, on short-term or zero-hours contracts, at the beck-and-call of employment agencies and dependent on whatever top-up benefits they can squeeze from the state.

**Debt-ridden**

There is little positive in such a mode of existence, which is often degrading, debt-ridden and desperate. But in contrast to other groups, members of the precariat are less likely to define themselves by their work, which is purely instrumental, and more by their life and values outside of work.

Standing, an academic and former International Labour Organisation researcher, is not a believer in the old values of labourism and thinks activists should develop a new form of progressive politics to address the structural changes in society.

Some of the changes he identifies are the fragmentation of the old working class, the loss of ‘the commons’ (or the common-wealth of society), the undermining of the principle of universalism in welfare rights, and the fact that many jobs are no longer a reliable route out of poverty.

What is less clear is the kind of movement that is required to reverse these trends – although he puts forward a compelling case for a basic citizen’s

# You have nothing to lose but your zero hours contracts



income as a vital first step.

Much of this book is a trenchant critique of neoliberalism of the kind that has become the dominant ideology of western democracies, and he is forceful in illustrating its many contradictions.

For example, he cites the hypocrisy of the architect of British welfare reform, Iain Duncan Smith, restricting entitlement to benefits (“something for nothing”) while accepting over £1million in farm subsidies from the EU for living on a 1,500-acre estate inherited by his wife.

He also shows how the utilitarianism that underpins neoliberalism has been used to marginalise and demonise minorities, who are cast as a “threat” to the majority (most effectively in the anti-immigration rhetoric of the recent European elections), while pandering to an imagined, middle-ground majority whose opinions can be manipulated to support the consensus of the mainstream political parties.

For Standing, it is wrong for anyone to support a policy that makes the already disadvantaged even worse off, citing the quote attributed to Pastor Martin Niemoller on the rise of the Nazis in 1930s Germany, to the effect that by not

standing up for one targeted minority after another, no one will be left to stand up for you. Instead, his approach is based on rights, be they civil, cultural, political, social or economic, and these are at the heart of his proposed charter, whose articles frame the more positive aspect of the book.

**Sound principles**

Taken in isolation, some of these articles sound technocratic in nature, but they are all based on sound principles of social justice.

The problem is, no western state is ever likely to put such a charter into practice (witness the Freedom Charter of South Africa) – as Standing tacitly acknowledges in pointing out how far the parties of the social democratic left (most notably the UK Labour Party) have gone in accepting the neoliberal consensus. Clearly there is much work to be done, and for the author it is the progressive elements of the precariat that are in the best position to do it.

Freed from the shackles of labourism and with little to lose but their zero hours contracts, only time will tell if they (we) really are ‘the new dangerous class’.



by Pam Currie

# MAYA ANGELOU

## A loss mourned, a life celebrated

**THE WRITER** and activist Maya Angelou passed away last month, a loss mourned and a life celebrated around the world. Well known for her autobiographical writings including *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou was also celebrated as a poet, a performer, an actress, a public speaker and above all as an activist and an advocate for the rights of the oppressed.

Angelou was born into poverty in the segregated US south in 1928; following her parents' separation, she and her younger brother were sent to live with hard working, God-fearing grandparents, subsequently returning to her mother and new boyfriend.

Angelou was subsequently raped by this boyfriend, who was convicted but unpunished by the courts. He was later murdered; and this trauma and upheaval impacted hugely on a young Angelou, who was subsequently mute for several years.

It was these brutal early experiences which formed the basis of the first part of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, which met with public outcry in many American states for its painful accounts of violence, racism and sexual abuse.

Following the publication of this book in the late '60s, Angelou went on to publish six further volumes of autobiographical writing, all in her own inimitable style – and all highly-recommended reading.

### Roar of defiance

Angelou's poetry was always an inspiration; a roar of defiance but in one and the same breath a belly laugh, an absolute performance which ink on paper could never do justice to. She can be seen on YouTube performing *Still I Rise*, an anthem of a poem which tackles head on the racism and sexism she faced as an African American woman.

In a few short stanzas, the poem tells the story of African-American oppression and its roots in slavery, and in particular, the contradictory images of African American women – dangerous, sexualised, 'sassy' – and throws them back in the faces of the oppressor: "I rise, I rise, I rise."

Playing this clip just a few weeks before her death to a mixed class of white Scottish and African Access Social Science students in the college where I work, the energy and passion of Angelou's voice was unmistakable, and her work never failed to engage adults who 'didn't do poetry'.

Angelou's contribution went way beyond her writing, of course. After a rootless and dif-

ficult period as a young adult, during which she held down a range of jobs including spells as a sex worker and latterly as a singer and actor, she spent several years in Africa with her then partner, South African civil rights activist Vusumzi Make, and her young son.

Returning to the US in 1965, she worked closely with both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, and was devastated by their deaths. In the '70s, '80s and indeed, until



MAYA ANGELOU: 4 April 1928 – 28 May 2014

just a few months before her death, Angelou worked as a writer and performer, teaching in Universities and reaching tens of thousands through a public lectures and speaking engagements around the world.

### Voice for women

Angelou was a voice for women who were completely invisible in the 1960s, and who are often still rendered invisible and silent today: black women; working class women; survivors.

She lived through a period of immense social change, particularly in her native US, but she didn't allow her iconic status to leave her as a toothless 'national treasure'; she challenged, critiqued and spoke out right to the end.

• See Maya Angelou reciting *Still I Rise* on YouTube: <http://tinyurl.com/n7o69sh>

### 'Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou

*You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

*Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.*

*Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.*

*Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,  
Weakened by my soulful cries?*

*Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own backyard.*

*You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.*

*Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?*

*Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.*

*Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.*

by Calum Martin,  
Edinburgh Universities  
SSP

## FRENCH UNIVERSITIES

are famous for the political energy their students have shown throughout history.

The involvement of French students in the strikes and political unrest of 1968 are well remembered, and even now strong support is provided for strikes along with engagement with campaigns that stand up against racism and discrimination.

Many in France still regard student politics as an important contributor to grassroots political movements today. Meanwhile, in the Scotland of 2014 student activism also has a useful role to play.

The Scottish Socialist Party has been enjoying a substantial resurgence in its student groups at universities such as Edinburgh and Stirling.

## Strike support

At Edinburgh, for example, this academic year has seen both SSP support for staff strike action and a campaign by SSP students against the xenophobic policies of UKIP and the Tories.

The University of Edinburgh is a wealthy institution but highly unequal in its distribution of that wealth.

Recent years have seen the pay gaps between university staff and the bosses continue to widen with increasing speed. In the last five years alone, staff have seen the value of their wages fall by 13 per cent whilst management executives have rewarded themselves with mass increases in their own pay, with an average increase of up to £22,000 in some areas.

Indeed several vice chancellors across Scotland and the UK now earn well in excess of £400,000 a year.

After five years of seeing pay conditions rapidly worsening, staff voted overwhelmingly for



POSITIVE IMPACT: the SSP has enjoyed a resurgence in its university groups such as Edinburgh and Stirling

# SSP in resurgence at Scottish universities

strike action organised by multiple trade unions.

Unions including the UCU, Unison and the EIS all committed themselves to take action and SSP students across Scotland have been supporting the strike.

Visible on the picket lines with placards and leaflets, the SSP was clear in its support of the strike with the party's tradition of standing resolutely on the side of working people against exploitative bosses carried through to another new layer of SSP activists and supporters.

Those watching the BBC news on 6 February would have seen SSP placards proudly at the fore in the footage of the Edinburgh College strike rally at the Scottish Parliament.

Further industrial action had been planned but has subsequently been called off, following the resumption of negotiations.

The success of UKIP in recent European elections serves as a reminder of the drift to the political right that the UK is currently experiencing.

The rise of UKIP has driven

home the need to directly challenge the increasingly xenophobic anti-immigration policies of UKIP and the Conservatives.

Meanwhile at Edinburgh University, SSP activists can stand fast knowing it was the Edinburgh University SSP Society which has spearheaded that challenge this year. Stalls on campus carried a petition which condemned politicians who blame immigrants for problems caused by the neoliberal economics they promote, declaring that such policies have no place in Scotland today.

## Flagship meeting

Indeed the Edinburgh University SSP meeting on independence and immigration proved to be the flagship of our public meetings so far this year.

Running out of space in a venue with a capacity of 70 stands testament to what SSP student groups are capable of organising on campuses across Scotland.

That particular meeting was a part of the independence campaign drive by the Edinburgh University SSP in the month of March

(affectionately known as the 'March for Independence' campaign) which saw SSP students organise two street stalls and a public meeting on campus every week for the entirety of March.

The Edinburgh University SSP can safely be said to have made a mark on both the course and the tone of the referendum debate on campus this semester at Edinburgh University, carrying forth the SSP vision of an independent socialist Scotland.

The Edinburgh University SSP already has one event lined up for next semester. Edinburgh's next academic year starts eleven days before the referendum and the Edinburgh Uni SSP Society's final event of the campaign will be on 11 September – with exactly one week left to go.

The Society's work will carry on beyond the referendum however, with SSP student groups at Edinburgh, Stirling and beyond continuing to strive to advance the SSP.

This semester has been positive for the SSP, and following semesters promise to offer even more.