

# Scottish Socialist VOICE



OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup>  
PEOPLE  
FIRST

MARCH & RALLY  
GLASGOW GREEN  
11.30 MOVE OFF 12 NOON  
TO KELMINGROVE PARK  
RALLY 1.30 TILL 3PM

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A SCOTTISH SOCIALIST PARTY PUBLICATION

# MARCH AGAINST THE CUTS!



## Join the protests on 1 October!

# POLICE GUARD FASCIST RALLY

by Liam Turbett

**THERE** was a definite sense of déjà vu in Edinburgh last Saturday 10 September, as the far-right Scottish Defence League attempted to hold their latest ‘demonstration’, with hundreds of anti-fascists gathering to oppose them.

But, unlike last time around, the script could’ve been written well in advance for the way in which events would play out today. And indeed, it had been – Lothian and Borders Police saw to that.

Having been turned down on their initial proposal to hold a march through the city centre, the SDL were forced to make do with a police sanctioned “static protest” outside the Apex Hotel on Waterloo Place, at which they gathered from early on.

Anti-fascists were meanwhile meeting at the foot of the Mound, where a rally had been organised by Unite Against Fascism. After hearing from several trade union and political party speakers, a short, five minute march along Princes Street took place.

However, upon nearing the prearranged spot for a ‘second rally’, it became clear that the march was, in fact, being directed straight into a ‘designated protest area’ surrounded by metal barriers. When a sizeable section of the march stalled and attempted to resist entering this area, and to encourage others not to as well, UAF stewards rapidly intervened.

We had to enter the protest area, we were told – and through a mixture of lies, confusion and just following the crowd, most did.

Around 40 remained outside, staying mobile and attempting to reach the SDL –



**RACISTS: SDL/EDL penned in a side street by the Edinburgh Police**

both to ensure that they would not be allowed a demonstration publicly, and to let them know that there was an anti-fascist presence in Edinburgh that day.

But with the vast majority of the anti-fascist demo, which had numbered up to 4-500 people, being herded into a pen, there was no scope for the kind of blockade of the SDL that took place last time they visited Edinburgh.

A major police operation involving at least four Scottish forces saw riot vans, prison buses and dozens of officers lining the streets. In this context, it wasn’t a victory for anyone but the forces of the state, who gave a textbook performance in flooding the streets with officers, keeping two opposing sides apart, maintaining order and having the whole thing over and done with by 2.30pm.

Some sections of the anti-fascist movement – namely Unite Against Fascism – are already declaring a massive victory on the streets of Edinburgh. But in reality, the SDL still numbered around

100plus supporters, were able to have their demonstration on Waterloo Place, and then leave pretty much of their own accord by Calton Hill.

Of these 100 or so, though, a sizeable contingent had travelled from England – banners and hoodies were seen from Luton and Newcastle EDL divisions, alongside the EDL splinter group the “North West Infidels”.

The SDL are not in a position of strength; whether they were strengthened by the day’s events though, is difficult to say.

It’s particularly ironic that the SDL demo was facilitated by the police at the same time as continuing efforts are being made at Holyrood – literally minutes away from where the demo took place – to clamp down on sectarianism and religious hatred.

Given the EDL and SDL’s links to Loyalist paramilitaries and, in the case of the SDL, a tendency to focus on loyalist bigotry as much as anti-Muslim sentiment, this approach from the police seems to fly in the face of the

direction being taken by the Scottish Government.

Anti-fascists can claim a success in that the SDL were not able to venture beyond a tightly controlled cordon. The very fact that there was opposition to them in the streets today was key in ensuring that they were unable to come into contact with the general public (with the exception of the unfortunate couple having a wedding inside the same hotel).

But the willingness to accept “designated protest areas”, while allowing the police to “do their job” of penning in the fascists in their protest area, is extremely dangerous territory not just in the fight against the far-right, but for the progressive movement as a whole.

These very same forces who have spent weeks now fetishising the riots and anti-police sentiment today walked into, accepted and pulled others into a dystopian nightmare-esque vision of “legitimate” protest in “designated” confines. They shall not pass – the police cordons, that is.

# SHERIFF PUTS THE BOOT INTO ANTI ZIONIST CONVICTED OF DEFACING THE ISRAELI FLAG

by Ken Ferguson

IN a tense courtroom packed with Palestinian supporters in Fife's historic county town of Cupar Sheriff Charles MacNair, who last month convicted student Paul Donnachie of racism for defacing an Israeli flag, stuck the boot in in his sentencing.

Ignoring what is understood to be a social work recommendation for a suspended sentence MacNair sentenced Paul to 150 hours community service and ordered him to pay £300 "compensation" to his arch Zionist accuser.

An immediate appeal against verdict and sentence has been lodged.

Even the Sheriff seemed to realise that his sentence was only part of the wide ranging impact that the case has had on Mr Donnachie.

In a pre determined move St Andrews University expelled Donnachie by letter within an hour of his conviction while his co-accused Sam Colchester, who was found not proven, was suspended for a year.

As and when Donnachie is able to resume his studies he will now face rocketing fees which have, in effect, increased his fine by more than £20,000.

The Sheriff's hard line in the case is in sharp contrast to his kid gloves disposal of a case of a teacher convicted of



assaulting two students in 2008 who he admonished on the grounds that conviction would seriously impact on his career and he had been provoked.

Donnachie however, who has now seen his academic career abruptly terminated and faces a huge fee penalty if he restarts and apologised to his accuser for his actions while drunk was shown little such mercy.

Whatever the outcome of any legal process it is clear that the attempts by gleeful Zionists to use the bizarre ruling by Sheriff MacNair to block solidarity will fail miserably.

Anyone who needs convincing that this case stems from a shameful and desperate Zionist campaign to boost the fortunes of the increasingly isolated Israeli apartheid state need only read the Zionist's own words.

Paul Morron of the Jewish Chaplaincy, spelt it out starkly saying:

"As far as I'm aware, this is the first time a Scottish court has ruled

that because a Jewish person's identity is associated with Israel that criticism can, as in this case, constitute racist aggravated behaviour."

Across cyberspace and the media a well organised, full scale Zionist campaign building on this verdict is in top gear to criminalise opponents of Israel's repression and portray opponents as racists.

In sharp contrast however were the words of Leehee Rothschild, an Israeli activist with the organisation 'Boycott from Within', who attended the Cupar sentencing who said "Not only is state oppression making it increasingly difficult to criticise and boycott Israel from within, this Scottish Sheriff is attempting to make it difficult to criticise Israel from Scotland."

Her view was echoed by pro-Palestinian groups, including Neturei Karta, an orthodox Jewish group formed in Palestine before Israel was established there, describing his conviction for racially aggravated conduct towards an American Jewish student as "ridiculous".

Israel is a country, not a race Neturei Karta's

Rabbi Aaron Cohen said adding:

"Zionism and Judaism are two opposite and incompatible concepts. Zionism with its aim of a state for the benefit of a specific group in someone else's land is by definition a sectarian and racist philosophy. For the Sheriff to mistakenly conflate Jewishness with being a 'member of Israel' is simply wrong, and this conviction is clearly ridiculous."

As the legal fight to overturn the Cupar verdict goes on the reaction of the supporters of the fight for Palestinian rights will refuse to be silenced by either the Zionists or Sheriff MacNair and the campaign to win the aims of the world wide Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions campaign will grow.

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# 9/11 AND THE THREE LEGGED ROBOT MULE

by Roz Paterson

**FOLLOWING** the Twin Towers attacks on 11 September 2001, America embarked on the kind of crazed spending spree you might expect of a heartbroken teenager with a fistful of credit cards.

Alas, the budget wasn't blown on T-shirts and mobile phone accessories, but on two murderous, illegal wars, nuclear weaponry, R&D in advanced military hardware, including unpiloted planes, robot mules and impenetrable body armour and, naturally, the endless cost of mopping up the mess.

In one short decade, an unimaginable \$7.6trillion has been squandered in this way, and yet no one is safer or enjoying greater democracy because of it.

Indeed, hundreds of thousands of people are dead because of it, and millions more are unemployed, sick yet unable to access any kind of medical attention, experiencing cuts to their educational and childcare budgets, watching their communities die from federal neglect, and so on and so on, because of it.

The decade since 9/11 has been one of catastrophic decline for almost everyone other than Lockheed Martin, BAE Systems, Boston Dynamics and other such global giants, dedicated to the pursuit of killing human beings as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The US Defense budget has risen eight per cent per year since 2001, equating to a bigger spend than when the Korean War was at its height.

And what did American citizens get for their money?

More Drones, the



unpiloted planes that, last month, killed 168 children in Pakistan. And new line in crowd control whereby microwaves are deployed to instantaneously heat the water in a person's upper epidermis to such an extent that they are stopped in their tracks. It is described as being a bit like sunburn, but when was the last time sunburn stopped you in your tracks?

Hellish, burning pain is perhaps a bit more like it.

Microwaves can also stimulate the area of the ear around the cochlear to create an intense, loud noise that, yes, stops you in your tracks.

Like a dog whistle, it is not.

This may have been developed with more than a glance at the Arab Spring.

A device that dissolves people power without those troublesome, PR-unfriendly photos of dead bodies in city squares surrounded by trigger-happy soldiers, is terribly handy when fledgling democracy

threatens your access to cheap petroleum.

We don't want them going all Mossadegh on us, after all.

There's more!

Yes, the economy may be in tatters, the school system going down the pan, New Orleans still in ruins, but for a mere \$32million, the military might soon have two prototype Robot Pack Mules from Boston Dynamic.

The Legged Squad Support System (LS3) may be capable of carrying up to 181kg a distance of 32km at 16kph, without having to stop to re-fuel.

Sure, this doesn't address the issue of under funding in the fire service - incidentally, despite playing a prominent and heroic role on 9/11, firefighters were then forced pay-cuts, lay-offs and stringent budget cuts - but it does mean America still has the biggest, baddest army in the whole wide world.

Not an army of workers, however.

According to the Political Economy Research Institute's 2009 study, when compared to other ways that money could have been spent, every \$1billion spent on the military, costs 3,222 jobs.

At the very least. Military spending cuts are now on the cards, but only because the leap in military spending since 2001 was indefensible, and because America's economy is nose-diving.

But don't be fooled. They're tiny spending cuts, equating to less than one per cent, in fact, and will still see military spending at its highest since World War II.

War, for America, has always been about profit, but this time around, it's very clear that the profit is for the very few, and the people who are paying for it are the very, very many. Including not just ordinary American citizens but anyone, anywhere in the world, who raises their head above the parapet and dares defy the last superpower standing.

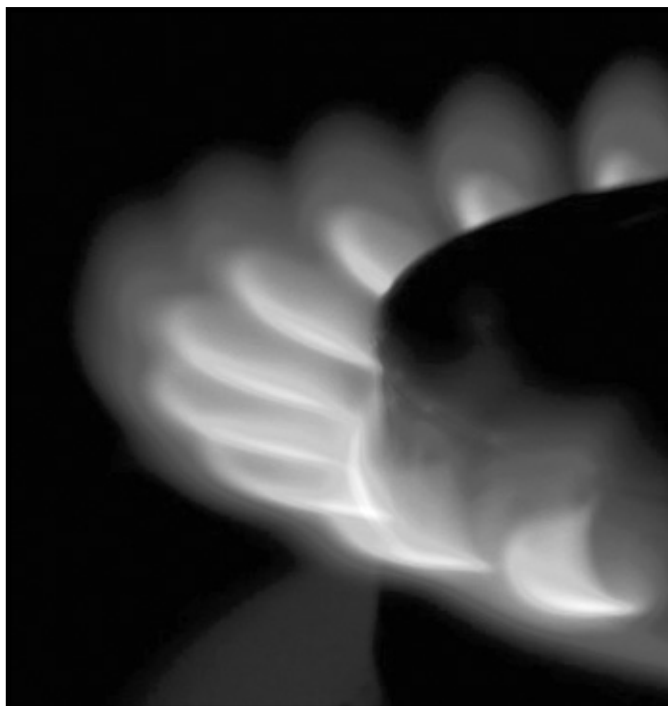
# FURY BUILDS AGAINST ENERGY RIP-OFF

by Colin Fox

**FIGURES** released this week reveal fuel poverty levels in Scotland significantly higher than previously reported. According to the Scottish Government the average household spends 14 per cent of its income on gas and electricity, compared to 8 per cent in 2005. Since the official definition of 'fuel poverty' is reached when a household pays 10 per cent or more of its income on gas and electricity this means the average household is now a great deal worse off than Ministers suggested last month when it estimated 770,000 Scots households were in difficulty.

Furthermore the latest figures refer to 2008/09 and therefore do not include the rises of 17 per cent and 19 per cent announced by the power corporations in the past two years. Campaigners suggest that the category of 'extreme fuel poverty' reached when households spend 20 per cent of their income on gas and electricity now includes hundreds of thousands of pensioners and families with children.

Lucy McTernan of Citizens Advice Scotland said thousands more people are now approaching her organisation for help as the huge rise in numbers in fuel poverty show the pressure now facing family budgets. 'Many families have already reached the limit of what they can afford to pay. People who are struggling financially face a very stark choice. They skip meals in order to pay fuel bills instead. The UK Government needs to re-evaluate the energy market and start helping those in fuel poverty.'



Gas and electricity prices have doubled in Scotland since 2005. Wages, benefits and pensions, to say the least, have not. Consequently more than one million families are living without sufficient heat or light.

Scottish Socialist Party members campaigning on this issue have met thousands of people furious at the worsening situation. They are furious both at the power companies whom they feel are profiteering but also at the inertia of Government in the face of this ever worsening situation. In fact the response of Government at Westminster and Holyrood has been only to make matters worse.

The UK Chancellor George Osborne has cut the winter fuel allowance paid to pensioners and the grants available for insulation and replacement of old inefficient boilers.

For their part the SNP Government at Holyrood has abandoned its manifesto commitment to eradicate fuel poverty in Scotland by 2015

and cut the support they give to families wishing to install new boilers or insulation by 30 per cent.

The SSP has written to Alex Salmond demanding that he acts to help hard pressed families. In reply he voiced his concerns but offered no practical assistance to boil another kettle or heat a child's bedroom.

We have also written to members of the Scottish Fuel Poverty Forum such as Help the Aged, the National Union of Students, NHS Greater Glasgow, the Poverty Alliance and the Children's Fuel Poverty Coalition asking them what impact the soaring levels of fuel poverty are having on their client groups and what choices people are having to make on other aspects of the household budget in order to pay gas and electricity bills.

The Scottish Socialist Party has demanded that Governments at Holyrood and Westminster intervene to cap these bills and deal with the immediate problem as

well as provide a coherent and sustainable energy policy for the long term. We have suggested that when a household can show its energy bill to income ratio has reached 9.95 per cent they should automatically qualify for government support to prevent them falling into fuel poverty. This scheme can be paid for by a tax on power company profits so that the industry has an incentive to prevent customers falling into this trap. We also demand that the Government double the winter fuel allowance to pensioners, not cut it. Currently it is a one off payment of £250 for over 60's and £400 for over 80's. That is patently not enough when the average combined bill for gas and electricity is almost £1,500 a year.

Shelter in Scotland has concluded that we need to build 100,000 energy efficient new houses for the public sector annually to replace those dwellings unfit for human habitation on energy efficiency grounds. We agree.

In the long run however, if we are to escape the effects of rising cost of the ever diminishing oil and gas reserves, we need to invest in renewable forms of electricity generation. Diversifying away from costly and toxic fossil fuels is vital and we need to ensure that the benefits of all these new technologies are localised first and foremost. Which in turn means that the energy industry needs to be returned to public ownership so that the heating needs of the population are always put ahead of the financial interests and the greed of private company stockholders.

# PEOPLE FIRST – NOT PROFIT

by *Richie Venton, SSP national workplace organiser*

**EVERY** passing day adds its own story of ruthless exploitation and suffering for the profit of the few; its own reason why we need to muster a mass STUC demonstration in Glasgow on 1 October, to bolster the resistance to cuts from all quarters.

The STUC itself has unveiled research showing nearly half a million Scots – 17.5 per cent of people of working age – are either unemployed, under-employed or cast aside like garbage under the government title ‘economically inactive’.

That’s a waste of 500,000 lives; a dead end for young people starting out on life’s journey; and a colossal loss of potential production of socially useful goods and services. Put another way, that’s capitalism.

## Worse to come

International capitalist institutions like the OECD forecast even worse to come; that the UK’s economy is grinding to a halt, with less than one per cent growth this year, some of them predicting ten years of austerity. Incredibly, in the same breath they urge Cameron and Clegg’s Coalition to ‘carry on cutting’ – despite the growing evidence that every wage cut reduces spending power and adds to the dole queues... which reduces tax revenue, which the Twin Tories use to ‘justify’ more cuts...

Meantime bankers and bosses raised their bonuses by 70 per cent in recent years, whilst making wages as a share of national wealth their lowest in 50 years.

## Human cost

Facts and figures only hint at



the human toll of cuts to jobs, services, benefits, pay and pensions.

Quarriers workers are being told to cut their wages by up to 23 per cent, £400-500 a month, plus cuts to pensions, sick pay and maternity pay. The bosses at one of Scotland’s biggest social charities fail to spot the bitter irony: Quarriers was founded to help vulnerable kids and adults in 1871, but in 2011 they are forcing dedicated, decent workers to sell their cars, leave their homes, and make their kids suffer.

No wonder these UNISON members have been driven to take strike action, demanding proper funding and defence of their wages, braving the torrential rain to win an outpouring of public support for their stance.

As one of the Ardrossan pickets told SSP members, “They said pay rises would only be given when they made a profit, but Quarriers is a not-for-profit charity organisation.”

Another added, “If Quarriers get away with this, I won’t be able to afford to pay my mortgage. What am I supposed to do then? This is a charity that looks after children, but their plans would put my children out of their home.”

## Workers and communities rebel

Communities are in revolt, and workers squaring up for a fight-back, after years of setbacks.

The families of disabled adults are leading the struggle against closure of Glasgow’s Accord Centre by Labour city councillors – who plan to demolish it, renege on their pledge to replace it, and use the ground for a bus park for the 11-day Commonwealth Games.

The same Labour politicians have the breathtaking cheek to join the local community, also in Glasgow’s east end, against closure of Lightburn hospital – which the Labour council voted in favour of closing when it was initially mooted! The lesson: gather 14,000 signatures on the petition against closure, mount demos, and even axe-wielding politicians can be ‘persuaded’ to ‘side’ with you!

## March, occupy, strike

We need more than one string to our bow in resisting the cuts.

Local, community-led demos help highlight the atrocities faced by working class people, pressurising those with the power to decide – whether councillors, Health Boards or the Scottish government.

Direct action protests and occupations – like those staged by disabled workers when they occupied DWP buildings in

anger at closure plans for Remploy factories – convey something of the rage felt by those at the receiving end of cuts by a class of callous, feral, upper-class hooligans.

But one of the most powerful weapons of all is united, widespread strike action against cuts.

## St Andrews Day Showdown

For the past year, SSP members have campaigned in the unions for a one-day strike of the entire public sector. The PCS union led the fight for a co-ordinated November public sector strike at TUC conference, and pressure for this unity in action has been mounting from the membership on other union leaders.

Even the EIS leadership – who scandalously led members to accept £45million cuts just months ago – last week announced a strike ballot.

Scottish UNISON’s Local Government conference recently voted by 4:1 for a one-day strike on pensions.

Now, in a monumental breakthrough for the anti-cuts movement, TUC conference has voted for a united strike on 30 November – St Andrews Day – with at least ten unions balloting members for what would be the broadest strike action since the 1970s.

Members in PCS, NUT, UCU, ATL, UNITE, UNISON, GMB, NASUWT, EIS, NIPSA will almost certainly be joined by FBU and Prospect.

And the Prison Officers Association – banned from strike action by the last Labour government! – have pledged to strike in defiance of this outrageous anti-working class law.

Provided union activists, stewards and branches now

launch an unprecedented campaign of persuasion in the workplaces, this could mean up to 3 million workers bombarding both Westminster and Holyrood with their colossal power against cuts.

Because whilst this 'day of action' is on pensions, that is but the latest, most common thread to all the cuts, the vehicle to ventilate the fury of millions at the butchery of jobs, services and wages as well as pensions.

### Build mass People First demo

The STUC's People First demo on 1st October is the perfect means to tie these strands together. By uniting disparate community struggles into a mightier force, alongside trade unionists and students in revolt.

By boosting the fighting morale of workers, helping persuade them to vote for a

mighty strike of the entire public sector on St Andrews Day.

By putting tens of thousands on the streets as the smug, arrogant Tories hold their conference, we can also put the Scottish government on the spot, as they announce their Spending Review, expected to involve £2 billion in cuts for the next two years.

The People First demo is more than an end in itself: it is

a means to demand the funds to protect every job, service and source of income; to demand 'No cuts – tax the rich'; to demand that Holyrood defies the Westminster Butchers, who have no mandate to rule and ruin Scotland.

Build the demo. Build the resistance. Build for a one-day public sector strike. Build a Scots rebellion that declares 'people not profit'

# QUARRIERS WORKERS FIGHT GOES ON

by *Mhairi McAlpine*

ON 6 September, Quarriers workers across Scotland staged a one day strike in response to the intransigent position of the Quarriers Board of Management. Back in April, management came out with proposals to cut staff pay by up to 27 per cent, reduce entitlement to sick pay and increase pension contributions.

The best efforts of the Unison negotiating team were in vain when after three months the best offer on the table was cuts of up to 23 per cent. Quarriers refused ACAS arbitration, removed permission for UNISON to arrange meetings on Quarriers premises, started disciplinary action against a number of staff members who had made people aware of the situation that they were facing and latterly has made moves to de-recognise the union.

These attacks on pay and conditions would have severe consequences for the two thousand Quarriers staff, many of which talk of having to sell their homes and cars to make ends meet in the straightened circumstances that they would find themselves in - which is why the determination to fight these new contracts is so strong.

A rally held at George Square on 6 September saw hundred of Quarriers workers and sup-

porters gather in pouring rain to demonstrate their opposition to these measures. While everyone there was completely soaked, their spirits were not dampened as "It's Raining Men" blasted from the sound system after the speeches and workers danced in the middle of the downpour.

For all of the dire consequences facing the Quarriers workers, this □

fight is bigger than just them. The justification for the proposed pay cuts is a reduction in the amount allocated to care services by the public sector. This has implications both for carers and for those who require care services.

Disabled people reliant on the services provided by Quarriers will also see the quality of their care diminish.

The pay cuts being introduced will take workers pay down to just above minimum wage. It is unlikely that such poor pay will attract the specialised and committed staff required for such a responsible job.

Disabled people both living independently and those reliant on state supported services are being heavily hit by the cuts. From the unfair and poor assessments being conducted by the French multinational ATOS under contract by the Department of Work and

Pensions, which submits people to humiliating assessments before throwing them off essential benefits, which they need to retain dignity, to services for disabled people being slashed across the board, such as the Accord Centre in the East End of Glasgow or the respite childrens care service in Renfrewshire which have ceased causing severe difficulties to over 100 local families, disabled people are paying the price for the bankers' recklessness.

The majority of Quarriers workers, nearly 80 per cent, are female - reflecting the gendered nature of the provision care - most carers both paid and unpaid are female.

The comprehensive spending review leaves women bearing the brunt of public sector spending cuts to direct benefits, the indirect effects have not been calculated, but are likely to be substantial, as women take up the slack as basic state provision is eroded.

Not only will women workers feel the effects of the pay cuts, but women who provide informal and additional care tasks will be put under more pressure as the quality of the care staff reduces in line with the compensation offered, necessitating that they take on a greater role to ensure that adequate care is provided.

Disabled people, women and workers within the care sector are all looking nervously at the Quarriers situation.

What happens here has enormous ramifications for the rest of the sector. If Quarriers manage to reduce their pay rates to just above the statutory minimum, other care service providers will seek to do similar, reducing the quality of care available and increasing the responsibility on informal carers - a responsibility which disproportionately falls upon women.

UNISON are currently running a "Don't Sign!" campaign to buy time for the Quarriers workers to mount a legal challenge to the impending dismissals.

Workers are being asked not to sign the new contracts, but instead hold their nerve and wait for notices of dismissal should Quarriers follow through on their threats to issues them.

It is critical that support is given to the workers at Quarriers, not only for the sake of them and their families, but for all workers in the care sector, for the disabled community and to reduce gendered inequality. In addition to pressurising Quarriers, pressure must be put on local and central government to ensure that minimum standards of care is met and that money is found to provide this.

# SNP ROLL OVER ON CONDEMN CUTS

by Campbell Martin

**THE** Programme for Government, recently announced by First Minister Alex Salmond, is remarkable mainly for one thing...its lack of ambition.

The detail of what the SNP Government plans to do in the current session of parliament is proof, if any more were needed, that the 'party of independence' has become very comfortable managing devolution within the British Union.

To be fair, we should acknowledge that, even with a majority in parliament, the SNP Government has very little power.

For example, the devolved administration cannot introduce a progressive taxation system, under which those who earn the most would be expected to contribute their fair share. The British Government in London doesn't allow Scotland that kind of power, and the SNP seems to have accepted that position (pending an affirmative vote in the promised Independence Referendum).

Under devolution, even with a majority SNP Government, our national parliament is also prevented from legislating on crucial areas like the economy, social security and pensions. So, against that background – and a £1.3billion funding cut from Westminster – how can Finance Secretary John Swinney claim his budget for 2011-12 “will protect jobs, frontline services and economic recovery”?

Of course, the answer to that question is simple – Swinney is talking nonsense.

He's talking nonsense, and he knows it. As Finance



Secretary in the Scottish Government, Swinney has accepted Westminster's cuts, and he's simply passed them on to local government. Far from the claims made in the SNP budget statement and Programme for Government, jobs continue to be lost across the country, frontline services are being savaged, and the economy remains struggling to get off the floor.

Remember when the SNP claimed to 'Stand Up for Scotland'?

Surely a party that genuinely stood up for Scotland would have told Westminster, “We're not accepting your cuts!”

Surely it would have been legitimate for the Scottish Government to have told the Tories and LibDems, “You have no mandate in Scotland for your cuts agenda. You were soundly rejected by the people of Scotland, so give us back our £1.3billion!”

Sadly, the SNP is not that kind of party. Today's 'New SNP' is comfortably at home as part of the establishment, playing the game by Westminster's rules, accepting savage cuts and passing them to already struggling councils. The SNP really could have protected “jobs, frontline services and economic recovery”, but it chose, instead, to be the Tory's little helpers in Scotland.

Instead of challenging the right of Tories and Liberal Democrats to slash our nation's finances, the SNP Scottish Government meekly accepted what Westminster offered, which means Alex Salmond is in no position to announce an ambitious Programme for Government.

Don't get me wrong, there are proposals that will be of benefit – the Alcohol Minimum Pricing Bill and the Offensive Behaviour at Football Bill – and the SNP

should be congratulated for finally addressing issues that have been allowed to fester for far too long.

However, there are also more questionable proposals, ones that reflect the SNP's repositioning to the centre-right.

I remain to be convinced that Scotland needs or will benefit from a national police force, and I doubt very much that the general public will derive a great deal from forcing Scottish Water to 'evolve' into an agency that generates outside income to make it 'financially neutral': but, of course, we'll all sleep better at night knowing the SNP Government has found legislative time to preserve landlords sporting rights in relation to game and fishing.

What about independence? The SNP – the 'party of independence' remember – still appears to be in no hurry to get there, with no advance on a referendum before 'the latter part' of the current five-year parliamentary term.

All of which brings us to the conclusion that the SNP is now firmly settled on the centre-right of the political spectrum, embracing the capitalist system and advocating policies that put the interests of multi-national corporations before the needs of the people of Scotland. Even an independent Scotland under an SNP Government would look remarkably similar to the Labour and Tory UK Governments we've had over the past fifteen years.

That means the fight for a better, fairer Scotland remains to be won, but the case for an independent, Scottish socialist republic has never been stronger.



# THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE UNIONS

As Ed Miliband gets heckled at the TUC conference **John McAllion** takes a look at the value for trade unionists of the link with Labour.

**ERNIE** Bevin, one-time general secretary of the T&G union and right wing Labour politician, used to argue that the Labour Party had grown "out of the bowels of the Trades Union Congress".

Keir Hardie, a founder member of the Party, often referred to the "Great Alliance" between the unions and the Labour Party. Even the great Bolshevik leader Lenin described the Labour Party as "mostly made up of trade unions".

At the time when they made these remarks all three were undoubtedly right. For much of the last century, trade unions and the Labour Party formed the most important relationship on the Left of British politics.

Millions of union members across the island came to see Labour as their natural political home. In the 1951 general election nearly 14million workers voted for Labour. It was then and remains now the highest vote ever recorded by Labour.

Since that electoral high point, Labour's working class vote has been in steady decline.

As the Party swung rightwards in an attempt to woo centrist voters, its links to the unions were gradually weakened.

By the time of the last election, the Party polled just over 9.5million votes. Indeed, by then, the Tories were easily outpolling Labour (40 to 28) among skilled workers. Workers in their millions were no longer identifying with Labour. The "Great Alliance" had run on to the rocks.

Yet today's trade unions remain the main financial



**HECKLED:** Miliband at the TUC

backers of the Labour Party. During the first 3 months of Ed Miliband's leadership, the trade unions coughed up more than £2million or 88 per cent of all funding for the Party's coffers.

Trade union members are deserting Labour in their millions. Trade union bosses, however, continue to spend union money on keeping the Labour Party in business as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

It is difficult to understand why they continue to do so.

Within a month of Miliband's leadership victory, the TUC backed private member's bill to remove legal barriers to industrial action was lost in the Commons because Labour could not muster the 100 MPs required to ensure its survival.

171 Labour MPs, including the leader and his entire shadow cabinet, simply stayed away. They were as determined as the Tories and the Liberals to keep British unions in legal shackles.

When Labour's Lord Hutton published his report attacking public sector workers' pension rights, Labour spokespeople welcomed it as a "sound basis" for further reform.

When the unions began a fight-back against the Coalition's proposals to make workers work longer and pay more for poorer pensions, Miliband denounced their strikes as "wrong" and accused

them of letting the British public down.

As hundreds of thousands of union members sacrificed wages to take to the streets. Labour's Tessa Jowell appeared on breakfast television to reassure the British public that a Labour Government would also cap pensions and make workers work longer.

Labour, she emphasised, was on the side of the public whose services were being disrupted. Labour was not on the side of the striking workers.

Meanwhile, Miliband having secured the leadership on the back of union votes, announced plans to cut the unions' voting strength at Labour Party conference.

Where Blair had ditched Clause 4 to detach Labour from socialist ideology, he now plans to rewrite the party's constitution to break what remains of trade union influence inside the Party.

Labour in future will be a party of communities. Its days as the parliamentary wing of organised labour are now consigned to the dustbin of history.

To make sure the unions were getting the message, Miliband then turned up at this year's Trades Union Congress to reiterate his and his party's opposition to the unions' strategy of co-ordinated

industrial action and civil disobedience in defence of pensions and public services.

He refused to commit a future Labour Government to reversing the 15 per cent cut in pensions caused by switching from RPI to CPI in annual uprating. He refused to back the restoration of trade union rights enjoyed across the rest of Europe.

He defended academy and free schools against state schools. He even defended the role of the private sector in the rail industry. He also lectured the unions about their lack of relevance in the private sector where only 15 per cent of workers were unionised.

In short, he used the Congress to send an anti-union message to the non-union majority of voters in the country.

Labour may depend for its survival on the unions' money. It may even depend on union members to provide it with an activist base. But it has no intention of giving the unions anything back in return.

Labour, like the Coalition Government, can be relied upon to keep the unions under control and subject to the harshest anti-union laws on the continent of Europe.

Miliband was deservedly heckled by the Congress. He and his Party undeservedly continue to receive financial and material support from the very unions that he publicly rebukes and humiliates.

He was accused of being out of touch with union sentiment. In truth he was deliberately out of touch. The unions have become both Labour's financial lifeline and Labour's political punch-bag.

Union members already understand that. They are no longer fooled. Its time for the union leadership to stop fooling itself.

# ONLINE IN THE CYBERWEIRD



**STOP** it! Put it down right now and stop fiddling with it. It will stunt your growth.

The internet has been a godsend for those given to lonely pursuits. If you want it to be, it's just you and a computer screen at 2am, the waft of fag smoke drifting over the cans of Stella littering the desk.

You don't even have to have your conscience as a companion, the anonymity sees to that. You can be whoever you like, indulge your saddest, sweatiest fantasies, some of them maybe even involving George Galloway.

Now, I'm not saying that EVERYONE who 'contributes' to certain left wing blogs is a wanker (did you see what I did there?) but... there are enough similarities between some of the muck that gets sprayed onto computer keyboards in lonely households in the wee small hours and, well, wanking, to make this tortuous online onanism analogy stand up. Missus.

You know who they are, or rather who they pretend to be. They call themselves things like Red Squirrel1917 and spout badly spelt guff like "Tomys worth 100s of youescabs, Hes the real john Mclane". They're not talking

about the one from Die Hard, either. Or maybe they are. Who knows?

If you've been around the left long enough, you probably DO know who they are, but in the real world, they're the kind of farting, gibbering cowards that wouldn't say 'scab' to the scabbiest of horses.

However, we all love a bit of it, if we're being honest about it. Personally, I'm an inveterate forum lurker. Oh aye, got the daft pseudonyms to prove it.

I used to go on 1980s computer gaming forums as Jet Set Silly and get into arguments about the best way to complete Eugene's Lair in Manic Miner. I also go onto birdwatching ones (as Socialist Plover – it's a bird joke. There's a bird called a sociable plover, so, you see... oh, forget it. Arise ye starlings! That's better).

Now, you're sniggering, I can tell. **BUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?**

Trotsky collected cactus and no-one thought any the less of him, except Stalin, and that was nothing to do with cactus.

Anyway. Yes, forums. I used to have a bad habit of reading the fascist forums. Partly, it was research because, as a journalist, I used to do the odd fash story. Partly it was intelligence gathering, to see what the arseholes were up to.

A large part of it, though, was just how godawful it was. There was a masochistic, wobbly tooth, Bargain Hunt (actually, that's a great show) attraction to them which, if I didn't watch it, could detain me for ages.

There weren't many laughs in those online halls of the howling damned, but there was one guy who I used to like. He would come on one of the now defunct forums and call himself something stupid and



Odinish like VikingWolf88, and all he would go on about was his local Chinese and how his pal once got food poisoning from it, and saying we should all eat 'proper' British food like fish and chips.

And this is the best part - he would back up his 'argument', such as it was, with a picture, nicked from the internet, of fish and chips.

And there were hundreds of these posts, all with a different picture of fish and chips.

Now, the man's a scumbag, obviously. Acquaint his head with a shit-filled spring roll, but I did sort of admire his devotion to the task of finding new pictures of fish and chips. It showed some kind of rudimentary intelligence, making him a giant of a thinker amongst his nazi peers.

But it's this masochistic tendency, this flaw in our psychology, that brings so many of us back to certain left wing blogs. The badly spelt bile is almost unbearable, but we scroll down for just one more wee look.

Now, obviously we should ignore it, and many do, and that's fine. But sometimes, the online world bleeds into the real world, and that's where it becomes problematic. During the SSP's recent court entanglement with a certain celebrity charity boxer, I found

myself having discussions about it with friends, and was aghast to hear them spouting, almost word for word in some cases, some of what I'd read in the discussion threads of a well-ish known, ironically titled blog.

These were decent, intelligent people, well disposed towards the SSP, but they'd stumbled across this cache of poison and some of it had stuck.

It didn't take long to demolish the arguments or clear up some of the lies they'd gleaned, but you have to wonder how far this stuff penetrates.

The answer to all of this is for us to have our own, well used, spaces online. There are many good left sites out there now, and long may they prosper, but it would be good to see more.

The price to pay for this, of course, is that they will attract the lonely cultists, shuffling across courageously taking on the might of, er, Jody Marsh.

But let them come. These are our spaces, so they have to play by our rules.

And if that means me having to post a picture of a sausage supper every time some inaqdequate sings the praises of T\*\*\*y S\*\*\*\*\*n, then so be it. I'll assume the daft name and do it so you don't have to.

# CULTURE OF THE LEFT: JOHN BERGER'S WAYS OF SEEING

In the first of an occasional series looking at significant but lesser known ideas from the Left **Alex Miller** explains the thinking of Marxist art critic and social thinker John Berger and his ground breaking work, *Ways of Seeing*, on the significance of paintings.

I can't write very articulately about music and literature, but I can at least appreciate them. Not so with the visual arts, like painting and drawing. I just can't get it, and when I venture into art galleries I usually find myself observing the people who are looking at the pictures rather than at the pictures themselves. John Berger is one of the foremost living cultural critics, and is also well known for his allegiance to Marxism and the left. For a long time I've had an unread copy of Berger's *Ways of Seeing* on my bookshelf, and having read and enjoyed a couple of his recent books – *Hold Everything Dear* (Verso 2007) and *Bento's Sketchbook* (Verso 2011) – the time seemed right to try Berger's classic text on the visual arts.

*Ways of Seeing* consists of seven short essays, three of which consist of images only with no accompanying text. The great virtue of Berger's essays is their ability to provide an intelligent but down to earth alternative perspective to toffee nosed and conservative critics like Kenneth Clark or Brian Sewell. In the first essay Berger examines the consequences for art of the camera's ability to produce mass reproductions of artworks, and argues that contemporary art is surrounded by a "bogus religiosity" that is a substitute for what art lost when mass reproduction became possible. The bogus religiosity resides in their market value, and Berger argues, "It is the final empty claim for the



**Gainsborough's Mr and Mrs Andrews**

continuing values of an oligarchic, undemocratic culture. If the image is no longer unique and exclusive, the art object, the thing, must be made mysteriously so". He argues that the mystification practised by ruling class art critics and historians cuts us off from the window on the past that art can provide, and thereby limits our freedom to change things for the better in the future. Berger's war against mystification can be illustrated through his comments on Thomas Gainsborough's famous portrait *Mr and Mrs Andrews*. These comments are made in the context of a discussion of the special relation between oil painting and property: "a way of seeing the world, which was ultimately determined by new attitudes to property and exchange, found its visual expression in the oil painting".

The conservative art historian Kenneth Clark describes this as "an enchanting work" and accounts for the cornfield in the background in terms of Gainsborough's "Rousseauism", a view of nature as a lost realm of innocence associated with the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau. Berger cuts through the bullshit: "They are not a couple in Nature as Rousseau imagined nature. They are landowners and their proprietary attitude towards what surrounds them is visible

in their stance and their expressions". Indeed, apart from the 18th century attire, *Mr and Mrs Andrews* could easily be relaxing during a break at a Conservative Party conference. In contrast to Berger, however, the art critic Lawrence Gowing suggests that the couple were engaged in "philosophic enjoyment" of "the genuine Light of uncorrupted and unperverted Nature". Berger's reply to this obfuscation is scathing:

"In most cases, the possession of private land was the precondition for such philosophic enjoyment – which was not uncommon among the landed gentry. Their enjoyment of 'uncorrupted and unperverted nature' did not, however, usually include the nature of other men. The sentence for poaching at that time was deportation. If a man stole a

potato he risked a public whipping ordered by the magistrate who would be a landowner. There were very strict property limits to what was considered natural".

In the iconoclastic final essay, Berger argues that there is a direct continuity between the oil painting tradition and the use of advertising in modern consumer society. But in addition to debunking the pretensions of art historians, Berger highlights the positive value of many paintings that buck the tradition: for example, Rembrandt's later self-portraits ask deep questions about existence "using a medium which had been traditionally developed to exclude any such questions".

The book *Ways of Seeing* is based upon a 1972 BBC television series of the same name: given that so much of television from the past is now available on DVD, it is amazing that Berger's series is not available in recorded form. That a series with an almost legendary reputation is not available nowadays itself speaks volumes about contemporary society and art.

It is however able to be viewed on YouTube.

■ *Ways of Seeing* is still in print, and is available in paperback.

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## REMEMBERING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

ON Monday 19 September seven Clarion cyclists will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War by embarking on an Anti-fascista cycle ride from Edinburgh's International Brigade memorial to Cable Street in London.

Their route will take them to International Brigade memorials in Blantyre, Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin, Swansea, Cardiff, Bristol, Reading and finally on to London in time to attend the Annual General Meeting of the International Brigade Memorial Trust. The IBMT works to keep alive the memory of those brave men and women who answered the cry of the Spanish workers when their democratically elected government came under attack from the forces of fascism.

A number of Clarion Cycling Club members fought in Spain and four members of the Club made the ultimate sacrifice ~ their bodies still lie in the rich earth of Spain.

Whilst in London the cyclists will also attend the commemorations of that historic day 75 years ago



when the workers confronted and halted Sir Oswald Mosley as he tried to lead a fascists march through the East End of London on that day the battle cry of the Spanish Republic 'No Pasaran' was heard to echo from the walls of Cable Street.

The Anti-fascista cycle ride will commence following a short ceremony of remembrance at the Edinburgh International Brigade memorial at 9.30 am on Monday 19th September all are welcome to attend, especially welcome would be any cyclists who wish to accompany us to the city limits or beyond.

The cyclist will hold a

similar ceremony at Blantyre at 4pm on Monday afternoon.

They will assemble by the La Pasionaira statue in Glasgow at 9.30 on Tuesday morning to commence their ride to the ferry at Cairnryan.

For more info contact Charles Jepson at clarioncc@yahoo.co.uk

### More Commemoration Events

Tuesday 20 September 2011, Clarion Cyclists ride off from Glasgow's Pasionaria Statue, Clyde Street, 9:30am.

Friday 14 October 2011, 12.30pm Edinburgh

75th Anniversary Commemoration, International Brigades memorial, Princes Street Gardens. Further details to follow. Contact danielgray2009@googlemail.com

Saturday 15 October 2011, Fighting Fascism, Fighting Franco: Scottish Volunteers for Spanish Freedom, 1936-2011. A one-day event to mark the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Mitchell Library & Theatre, Glasgow.

Organiser, Willy Maley. Contact W.Maley@englit.arts.gla.ac.uk

Saturday 21 January 2012, Fife event to mark 75th Anniversary including rededication of Kirkcaldy memorial and 'Antifascistas' exhibition. Contact annetedrylie@aol.com

Saturday 13 February 2012, Dundee marks 75th anniversary with the traditional commemoration in Albert Square at 12noon, plus a programme of other activities still to be confirmed. Contact dundeetuc@ymail.com



## Join the Scottish Socialist Party

Fill in this form and send to: SSP, Suite 370, 4th Floor, 93 Hope St, Glasgow, G2 6LD

Or see our website:

[scottishsocialistparty.org](http://scottishsocialistparty.org)

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