# Radical Independence Campaign statement on UK Supreme Court ruling against a Scottish Independence referendum

## This is a dark day for democracy and signals clearly the rotten, undemocratic nature of our broken, union state.

The unelected judges of the UK Supreme Court are saying that the Scottish Parliament is permanently vassalled to Westminster and its undemocratic parliament, government and state – that the democratic rights of the Scottish people do not matter and can be ignored.

The court is saying that a parish or district council in England has the right to call a referendum on any issue, but what was claimed to be the "most powerful devolved parliament in the world" cannot.

The collaboration of both the UK government and the official opposition in thwarting democracy needs to be answered with a rising tide of protest by the Scottish people, starting at the 15 rallies called in Scotland today.

If the UK government refuses to now give the referendum a legal basis and continues to try to thwart the Parliament, we call for massive and escalating protests across Scotland against this denial of democracy.

# Let the People Decide – not the judges!

The UK now has a prime minister and a head of state who are not prepared to subject themselves to a democratic vote, yet deny the people of Scotland their democratic rights.

The UK government's refusal to countenance democracy also has a profound impact on rights not just in Scotland but across all parts of the UK state – especially for the people of Cymru/Wales and of Ireland in determining their own future.

# When governments reject democracy, it is time for the people to rise up and say: enough is enough!

The UK government is not only denying democracy by the Scottish people, but for all the citizens of the UK state in refusing to put its austerity plans and wage restraint to a vote in an election.

We therefore also call for full support for the battles of the people to win decent pay awards through strike action over the coming months and call for defence of public services against all cuts.

Make the rich companies and individuals who have benefited from profiteering from the crisis pay for it, not force ordinary people to choose between eating and heating over this winter!

RIC will support a campaign of mass direct action – strikes, protests, rallies, civil disobedience – against this rotten undemocratic Tory government.

We call on the Scottish Government and the Westminster

opposition to support such protests.

We welcome the SNP's backing for protest rallies in Scotland this evening over the Supreme Court, but also call on them to support the massive strikes voted for by workers that are due in Scotland over the coming weeks and months and to secure the resources to pay workers the inflation-related pay award they deserve.




Furthermore, following the dreadful rolling back at COP27 of international commitments on climate change and 1.5 degrees from the Glasgow COP last year, we call for an end to all new exploration licenses for fossil fuels in the North Sea, and for massive public investment in renewables, funding for a just transition for workers and for a massive publicly-funded programme of home insulation and other reduction measures on energy instead. We support direct action to achieve these goals.

Calls for the Scottish Government to press on with a non-sanctioned referendum in light of today's ruling are

inarguably complicated by the necessary role of local authorities in organising the voting process, which could not be guaranteed in those circumstances.

Similarly, the SNP's suggestion that the next UK general election could be used as a proxy referendum may falter in a cost of living crisis and would certainly undermine the broad, non-partisan coalition of the grassroots independence movement – as well as putting us up against the troubling introduction of voter ID for Westminster elections.

It is now time for a mass independence movement to mount the most effective challenge possible to the present Conservative UK government, not just on its undemocratic blocking of an independence referendum but also on its right-wing economic policies and their devastating impact on Scotland's people, which need to be opposed in the here and now not just in the future.

Reprinted from the Radical Independence Campaign: https://ric.scot/2022/11/ric-statement-on-supreme-court-ruling/

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# 23 November: Rallies called across Scotland and Europe over UK Supreme Court decision

Rallies in support of Scottish Independence and self-determination have been called across Scotland and Europe for **Wednesday 23 November**, the day of the decision by the UK

Supreme Court on whether to allow the Scottish Parliament the right to hold a second independence referendum.

The Scottish rallies have been called by an ad hoc group Time for Scotland in conjunction with local independence groups and will feature speakers from the independence movement reacting to the decision of the UK Supreme Court.  A pro-EU campaign, Europe for Scotland will also hold meetings/rallies in five cities across the EU.

ecosocialist.scot will have a representative inside the UK Supreme Court in the morning (the judgement starts at 9.45am UK time) and you can follow our coverage on Twitter and Mastodon.  A full analysis of the implications of the verdict will follow on this website.

# Rally locations

The rallies are in the following locations (as at Monday 21 November 14:00) and full details can be found at the Time for Scotland website.

## Edinburgh (main rally) – Holyrood Parliament  5:30pm – 7:30pm

## Aberdeen – St Nicholas Square 5:30pm

## Borders – Selkirk Square and on to Kirk o Forest  6.30pm

**Dumfries – Midsteeple area in the town centre. Beside the Planestanes 5:30pm**

**Dundee – City Square, in front of the Caird Hall 5:30pm**

**Glasgow – Concert Hall steps Buchanan Street 5:30pm**

**Greenock – Lyle fountain in Cathcart Square 5:15pm for 5:30pm**

**Inverness – Inverness Townhouse Starts 6:30pm**

**Inverurie – Inverurie Town Hall 5:30pm**

**Lochgilphead – Front Green Lochgilphead 12noon**

**Orkney – St Magnus Cathedral, Kirk Green 5:15pm**

## Perth – Concert Hall Plaza (outside Horsecross) 5:30pm

## Skye – Portree Sheriff Court, Portree Square (plus street stall in square depending on weather conditions) 5:30pm

The rallies/protests in Europe will be in the following cities, full details from https://twitter.com/ScotlandEurope and on the Europe for Scotland Facebook page

## Berlin – Sinti-und-Roma-Denkmal, Simsonweg, 10117 Berlin, Germany 17:30 UTC+01

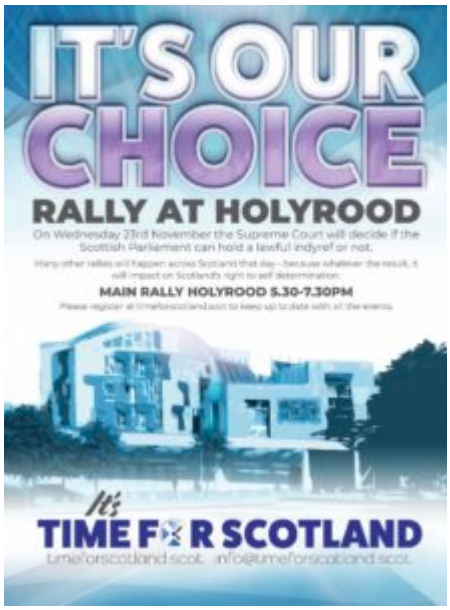
## Brussels/Bruxelles – Coté Schuman, Parc Du Cinquantenaire 19:45 UTC+01

## Munich/München – Café am Glockenspiel Marienplatz 28 5.5tock 18:30 UTC+01

## Paris – The Auld Alliance 80 Rue

[francois Miron 19:00 UTC+01]

[Rome/Roma – Metro Colosseo Via dei Fori Imperiali 19:30 UTC+01]




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# Statement: The rich make us pay for their profits! Let's mobilize against the rise in the cost of living

**The following statement on the cost-of-living crisis across Europe has been prepared by sections of the Fourth International and is signed by ecosocialist.scot.**

# The rich make us pay for their profits! Let’s mobilize against the rise in the cost of living

***For several months now, strike movements and popular mobilizations have been developing in Europe – both inside and outside the European Union – to resist the explosion in the cost of living.***

The price of energy, food, rents, transport has increased over the past two years in all countries, aggravating the living conditions of the working classes already under heavy attack in recent years by precariousness, job cuts with Covid and a fall in real wages and benefits.

After inflation in the EU-27 and the UK of respectively 2.6% and 2.5% in 2021, in August 2022, the CPI year-on-year inflation rates reached at 10.5% and 9.9%, with 12.0% and 13.1% for food, 37.5% and 32.0% for fuels (44.6% and 48.8% in 15 months), (sources STATISTA and ONS). Electricity prices began to rise last autumn across Europe, with gas prices exploding during the same period (well before the Russian military invaded Ukraine), tripling over a year in Germany and the Netherlands, while energy prices doubled for households in Britain. In the all-Ireland energy market, prices have risen across the board, north and south, including in the important cost of heating oil, with government interventions stalled in the north by the collapse of political institutions and the ongoing impact of Brexit.

The driving force of this inflation is found in the stock market speculation on raw materials since the recovery in demand since the height of the Covid pandemic, in the context of an oligopolistic market. The catastrophic climate situation in recent months, drought and heat, explicit consequences of climate change, have worsened this situation, as of course the invasion of Ukraine by Putin’s army. Global oil supply is set

to tighten, intensifying concerns over soaring inflation after the OPEC+ group of nations (including Russia), faced with falling prices, announced at the beginning of September its largest supply cut since 2020. The move comes ahead of European Union embargoes on Russian energy over the Ukraine war. Speculation on energy prices and an explosion of profits distributed to the shareholders of large companies have resulted. Underlying all this, there is an epochal reduction in the availability of fossil fuels.

Marginal rates of profit have risen, not only in large transport, energy and pharmaceutical companies. Profits in 2021 have been historic. In an unprecedented move, the five largest French banks generated more than €31 billion in profits in 2021. Spain's Santander recorded €8.1 billion in net income, Italy's Intesa San Paolo €4.2 billion and Germany's Deutsche Bank €3.4 billion. Volkswagen's operating margin almost doubled to €20 billion. In the first half of 2022, Shell (Netherlands) leads the way with profits of $20.6 billion, followed by BP (UK) with $21.5 billion and TotalEnergies (France) with $14.7 billion.

These few examples of dazzling enrichment, which is also accompanied by the personal enrichment of the propertied class, especially by distribution of dividends and increase of shares value, contrast with the low wage and benefit rises, the drastic loss of purchase power and labour rights, which have increased the impoverishment of the popular classes. The unequal distribution of wealth worsened during the beginning of the Covid years. This inequality has sharpened even more, particularly for women, young people, the racialized working classes, disabled people, and those populations living in the most deprived areas. A study predicts that by the end of the year 80% of households in the UK will be in energy poverty and a further explosion of energy prices is anticipated in 2023.

In this period, neoliberal governments have stepped up tax measures in favour of corporations, cut social spending and

significantly increased military budgets – with the concomitant impact on inflation – further worsening the living conditions of the most precarious. The Ukraine war is instrumentalized by reactionary forces, multinational firms and imperialist powers to push their own agenda, arguing that all military budgets are aimed at helping Ukrainian resistance, which is obviously false. Solidarity against the Putin invasion does not prevent fighting against neoliberal and imperialist agendas and austerity policies directed against the working classes.

Governments at different levels (national, regional, local) have introduced support aid systems, energy price ceilings or transport packages, so the weight of inflation on popular classes is uneven depending on the state, but these systems are temporary and do not make up for the increase in the cost of living.

Material conditions, including the interminable wait for the next pay or benefit cheque, have become the essential concern for the vast majority of the working class. Energy, food, housing costs are essential for everyone and these costs are all increasing to unbearable levels

Such a situation is intolerable.

Many struggles have taken place in recent months:

Across the UK state there has been a significant increase in national strikes since the spring despite the most repressive anti-strike laws in Europe – particularly in transport, on the post, in telecoms and in several major ports. A significant vote has just been won for strikes by university lecturers, while schoolteachers and health workers are also balloting. On the other hand, there have been signs of fragmentation of action on the rail and mail by the leaderships of those unions. There is a significant level of public support for the strikes that are taking place. This is combined with political

action especially around the right to food and the right to housing. A six months' rent freeze has been imposed across Scotland by the devolved government there.

At the same time, we have seen the development of a movement to boycott the payment of energy bills with "Don't Pay UK" across Britain and in Italy, especially in Naples. In Germany, the demonstrations on the left have so far been limited to the oppositional left and some trade unions. This weakness is due mostly to the fact that the leadership of the big industrial unions, the chemical workers union and the metal workers union, are embedded in a tripartite structure which is proposing relief measures for the population. The far right tries to profit from the huge price increases with demonstrations that outnumber those of the left. Huge demonstration occurred in the Czech Republic on 3 October. Several days of strikes called by the trade unions, demonstrations against the high cost of living have taken place or are scheduled (in France 29 Sept, 16 and 18 October, 21 September and 9 November in Belgium). In France, strikes developed around the oil refineries, with workers on strike for four weeks.

Attacks on living conditions will worsen further in the coming months, particularly with the planned increase in contracts and energy prices, and the end of measures which partially cushioned their impact.

In Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, France, we see different political currents with different motivations attempting to divert popular classes' anger away from the capitalists responsible for this crisis and moreover refusing concrete measures to be taken immediately to protect and improve the level and conditions of life for the poorest and most precarious part of the population. At the time when the far right is seeking to exploit this situation, it is our responsibility to seek to organize the broadest class, social and political fronts to

impose social demands, the requisition of the wealth produced and the organization of public services for the benefit of the popular classes by aiming at capitalist profits. We particularly want to see the whole movement devoting resources to organizing and supporting the most precarious.

In these mobilizations, we stand for:

• Increase in wages and benefits at least in line with inflation, with particular protection for those on low incomes, and “uberized workers”, who are de facto employees of capitalist groups

• For automatic increases to keep pace with inflation – a sliding scale of wages and benefits with real measures of inflation determined by organized workers and benefit recipients themselves.

• Abolition of gender inequality at work; give effect to the principle of equal pay for men and women for work of equal value

• Access to free childcare for any child that needs it

• Abolition of VAT on food and energy and reduction and freeze of rents and prices of basic necessities

• Increase of effective tax rate on wealth and profit

• Free local and regional transport, growth of public transport systems

• Free power and heating corresponding to people’s basic needs

• Energy, banking and transport companies, to be socialized under democratic control by workers and users

• Audit of the public debt with citizen participation leading to the cancellation of the illegitimate debt as a way of finding more room for an increase in social spending and in

the struggle against the ecological crisis.

• Massive investment into renewable energy, no new fossil fuels – for the decommissioning of nuclear.

At a time when ultraliberal governments are developing, attacking democratic rights, including in alliance with neo-fascist forces as in Sweden or Italy, it is vital that the anti-capitalist forces, the workers' movement as a whole, develop an emergency plan against the high cost of living and inflation to support all the already existing popular mobilizations and develop them while fighting attempts by the far right to exploit popular anger.

*16 November 2022*

**Signatures**

**Belgium**: -SAP-Antikapitalisten / Gauche anticapitaliste

**England and Wales:** – Anticapitalist Resistance

**France**: – Ensemble ! (Mouvement pour une Alternative de Gauche et Ecologiste)

– NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste)

**Germany**: – ISO (Internationale Sozialistische Organisation)

**Greece**: – TPT (Fourth International Programmatic Tendency) & Magazine "4" – Greek section of FI

**Italy** : – Sinistra Anticpapialista

**Norway**: – FIN (Fourth International in Norway, Forbundet Internasjonalen)

**Portugal** : – SPQI : collective of FI activists

-Toupeira Vermelha: collective of FI activists

**Scotland**: – ecosocialist.scot

**Spanish State**: – Anticapitalistas

**Sweden** : – Socialistik Politik

**Switzerland** : – BFS/MPS (Bewegung für den Sozialismus/mouvement pour le socialisme/movimento per il socialismo)

– solidaritéS

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# COP27- still fiddling while the world burns

The ecosocialist alliance issued a statement on 5 November 2022 for COP27, which was supported by anti*capitalist resistance and others.

## COP27- Still Fiddling While the World Burns

**COP 27, which will meet from the 6-18 November 2022**, unfolds against a backdrop of growing climate chaos and ecological degradation. As this latest COP approaches, economic recession, increased poverty and war run alongside the multiple interlinked and inseparable crises of climate,

environment, extinction and zoonotic diseases. We now face a global economic recession likely to be deeper even than that of 2008.

**The economic spiral into recession will make addressing environmental crisis even more difficult**, as states and corporations rush to increase fossil fuel production to offset the deepening energy crisis. They will try to make working people pay with their living standards and their lives, for the crisis of their rotten system. Resources which should be directed at adaptation and amelioration of the climate crisis will be diverted to war and fossil fuel production including dangerous Fracking and Underground Coal Gasification (UCG).

**We face increasingly destructive wars**, most notably in Ukraine which is destabilising world food supplies, and which has the potential for the use of nuclear weapons. War causes huge physical and social damage to people and societies and the military industrial processes produce 6% of all greenhouse gasses. The impact of wars in Ukraine, Yemen, Palestine and other places in terms of human and environmental cost, and on food production and energy costs, will continue to exacerbate the crises facing the environment and the global economy. Russia's invasion of Ukraine must not be the pretext for a rush to fossil fuels, new coal and gas and the resumption of fracking. Quite the opposite- it should be a spur to shift more rapidly towards renewables.

**As Ecosocialists, we say another world is possible**. A massive social and political transformation is needed, requiring the mobilisation of the mass of working people, women and men, across the globe. Only the end of capitalism's relentless pursuit of private profit, endless waste, and rapacious drive for growth, can provide the basis for a solution not only to climate change, environmental degradation, and mass extinction, but to global poverty, hunger, and hyper exploitation.

**The COP 27 conference will take place in an isolated, heavily policed tourist resort**, with only one major road in and out, and hotels charging rates that will likely push the entire COP beyond the means of many grassroots organisations, especially those from poorer countries in the Global South. The Egyptian government say there will be room for opposition, but what they mean, is that activists will be offered fake protests opportunities where state-affiliated NGOs demonstrate around the convention giving the impression of an independent local civil society. No real Egyptian or other opposition will be allowed near Sharm El-Sheikh. We send solidarity to Egypt's climate campaigners, women's organisations, Trade Unionists and workers fighting for democracy.

**2022 has seen floods in Pakistan**, directly affecting thirty-three million people, Australia and elsewhere. We have seen wildfires, extreme heat, ice melt, drought, and extreme weather events on many continents, yet governments pursue still more fossil fuel production. 2022's summer of disasters broke records worldwide. In 2021, global sea level set a new record high and is projected to continue to rise. The United Nations reports that research shows that women and children are up to fourteen times more likely than men to die during climate disasters.

**The big issues of climate change will be debated in Egypt** but whatever is agreed, capitalism left to itself can at best mitigate, not end them. Environmental destruction is woven into the very fabric of the system itself. However, much big business resists, we will have to force it to act on a global scale. Ultimately, only the ending of capitalism itself and its replacement by democratic Ecosocialist planned production for need and not private profit can guarantee the necessary action.

Genuine climate solutions cannot be based on the very market system that created the problem. Only the organised working class, and the rural oppressed of the global south -women and

men have the power to end capitalism, because their labour produces all wealth and they have no great fortune to lose if the system changes, no vested interests in inequality, exploitation, and private profit.

**Sustainability and global justice**

The long-term global crisis and the immediate effects of catastrophic events impact more severely on women, children, elders, LGBTQIA+, disabled people and the people of First Nations. An eco-socialist strategy puts social justice and liberation struggles of the oppressed at its core.

Migration is, and will increasingly be, driven by climate change and conflicts and resource wars resulting from it. Accommodating and supporting free movement of people must be a core policy and necessary part of planning for the future.

**Action now to halt climate change!**

**We demand:**

• All new fossil fuels must stay in the ground – no new gas, coal, or oil! No to Fracking and UCG!

• A rapid move to renewable energy for transport, infrastructure, industry, agriculture, and homes.

• A massive global programme of public works investing in green jobs, and replacing employment in unsustainable industries.

• The retrofitting of homes and public buildings with insulation and other energy saving measures to reduce fuel use and to address fuel poverty.

• A globally funded just transition for the global south to develop the necessary sustainable technologies and infrastructure.

• A major cut in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 70% by 2030, from a 1990 baseline. This must be comprehensive – including all military, aviation, and shipping emissions – and include mechanisms for transparent accounting, measurement, and popular oversight.

• The end of emissions trading schemes.

• No to 'offsetting' of carbon emissions- we need a real zero not net-zero.

**We call for**:

• Immediate cancellation of the international debt of the global south.

• A rapid shift from massive factory farms and large-scale monoculture agribusiness towards eco-friendly farming methods and investment in green agricultural technology to reduce synthetic fertiliser and pesticide use in agriculture and replace these with organic methods and support for small farmers.

• A massive reduction in meat and dairy production and consumption, with a view to its phasing out, through education and provision and promotion of high- quality, affordable plant-based alternatives.

• The promotion of agricultural systems based on the right to food and food sovereignty, human rights, and with local control over natural resources, seeds, land, water, forests, knowledge, and technology to end food and nutrition insecurity in the global south.

• The end of deforestation in the tropical and boreal forests by reduction of demand for imported food, timber, and biofuels.

• A massive increase in protected areas for biodiversity conservation.

• End fuel poverty through retrofitting energy existing homes and buildings with energy efficient sustainable technologies.

**We demand a just transition**:

• Re-skilling of workers in environmentally damaging industries with well-paid alternative jobs in the new economy.

• Full and democratic involvement of workers to harness the energy and creativity of the working people to design and implement new sustainable technologies and decommission old unsustainable ones.

• Resources for popular education and involvement in implementing and enhancing a just transition, with environmental education embedded at all levels within the curriculum.

• Urgent development of sustainable, affordable, and high-quality public transport with a comprehensive integrated plan which meets peoples' needs and reduces the requirement for private car use.

• A planned eco-socialist economy which eliminates waste, duplication and environmentally harmful practices, reduction in the working week and a corresponding increase in leisure time.

• Work practices reorganised with the emphasis on fair flexibility and working closer to home, using a free and fast broadband infrastructure.

• An end to ecologically and socially destructive extractivism, especially in the territories of Indigenous peoples and First Nations .

• Respect for the economic, cultural, political and land rights of Indigenous peoples and First Nations.

As eco-socialists we put forward a vision of a just and

sustainable world and fight with every ounce of our energy for every change, however small, which makes such a world possible. We will organise and assist wherever worker's and community organisations internationally, raising demands on governments and challenging corporations.

**If you would like to support the statement or contact Ecosocialist Alliance please email eco-socialist-action@protonmail.com**

Ecosocialist Alliance, October 2022

**Groups**

Left Unity, UK

Anti-Capitalist Resistance, UK

Green Left, UK

Global Ecosocialist Network, International

RISE, Ireland

Parti de Gauche Marseille Nord, France

Socialist Project, Canada

Breakthrough Party, UK

People Before Profit, Ireland

Climate and Capitalism, International

XR Camden, UK

Anti-Fracking Nanas, UK

West Cumbria Friends of the Earth, UK

Save Euston Trees, UK

Ecosocialist Alliance UK Facebook Group, UK

**Individuals**

Beatrix Campbell, OBE, Writer, UK

George Monbiot, Environmental Writer & Activist, UK

Julia Steinberger, Professor of Ecological Economics, Lausanne University, Switzerland

Victor Wallis, author of Red Green Revolution, USA

Professor Krista Cowman ,Historian, UK

Marina Prentoulis, Associate Professor in Politics & Media, UEA; author of Left Populism in Europe, UK

Romayne Phoenix, Ecosocialist Campaigner, UK

Dr Jay Ginn, (retired academic researcher, UK

Alistair Sinclair Green Eco-Socialist Councillor, Lancaster City Council, UK

Clara Paillard, Unite the Union & Tipping Point UK, UK

Felicity Dowling, Left Unity Principal Speaker, UK

Derek Wall, Former GPEW Principal Speaker; Political Economy Lecturer, Goldsmiths; Author of Climate Strike,UK

Rob Marsden, Red Green Labour editorial board- personal capacity, UK

Jo Alberti, veteran left activist, UK

Doug Thorpe, Left Unity National Secretary, UK

Kevin Frea, Deputy Leader, Lancaster City Council, UK

Dee Searle, One Vote for the Planet activist, UK

Jim Hollinshead, Left Unity, UCU, UK

Ed Bober, UK

Patrick Fitzgerald, Artist, Vizcaya, Spain

Allan Todd, Climate & Anti-Fascist Activist; member of Left Unity’s NC, UK

Gordon Peters, Ecosocialist activist, UK

Tim Dawes, Former Chair Green Party of England and Wales; Rtrd. Senior Local Govt. Officer/Consultant, UK

Joe Human. climate activist, UK

Fiona Prior, Climate activist, grandmother, UK

Peter Murry, Ecosocialist activist, UK

Lucy Moy-Thomas, Climate Emergency Camden, UK

Tina Rothery, Climate Campaigner, UK

Dr. Richard Nicholson, Haywards Heath Town Councillor, UK

Sally Lansbury, Labour Party Cllr., Allerdale Borough Council, UK

Deanna Austin-Crowe, Health Worker, UK

Chris Bluemel, Musician & Activist, UK

Lucy Early, Ecosocialist Alliance member, UK

Joseph Healy, International Officer of Left Unity & UNITE Regional Officer, UK

Al Barnes, Paramedic & XR Activist, UK

Steve Masters, Climate activist and Green party councillor, UK

Alice Brown, One Vote for the Planet, UK

Jane Walby, Global Justice Now, Camden Fairtrade Network, Debt

Justice, UK

Dorothea Hackman, Save Euston Trees, UK

Penelope Read, Eco-Warrior, Actor & Musician, UK

Samantha Barnes, Solicitor, UK

Charlotte Christensen, Mum & Anarchist, UK

Article originally published by Anti*Capitalist Resistance: https://anticapitalistresistance.org/cop27-still-fiddling-while-the-world-burns/

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# Socialists contest Glasgow Council By-election

The Scottish Socialist Party is standing George MacDougall in a Glasgow Council by-election, *writes Mike Picken*.

The by-election in the Linn Ward, on the south east edge of Glasgow, takes place on Thursday 17 November and is caused by the death of a Labour councillor, Malcolm Cunning,  a former leader of the Labour group reelected only in May.

At the heart of the Linn ward is the vast Castlemilk area – a remote housing scheme/estate established in the post-war period.  At a well attended SSP election meeting on 8 November in the heart of Castlemilk, socialist candidate George MacDougall explained that poverty is a massive challenge in Castlemilk, particularly due to its remoteness and lack of infrastructure with few shops or cultural facilities, no rail

station and a poor and expensive bus service. Housing standards are varied but some older tenements are afflicted with inadequate insulation and damp. George has lived in the area and explained that it had a strong community ethos with a previous local group, Castlemilk Against Austerity, campaigning for improvements and standing independent candidates in the elections with some success. During its successful early period twenty years ago the SSP won around 13% of the vote in Castlemilk.

The SSP campaign is focussing on the need to unite working class communities against the Tory UK government and point out the inadequacy of the response of parties in the Scottish Parliament – SNP, Labour and Green. SSP Industrial Organiser, Richie Venton, told the public meeting that the SSP demands were to "End Fuel Poverty" by cutting energy bills and calling for the nationalisation of the entire energy system. Venton explained that the SSP demanded a 'Socialist Green New Deal' that involved challenging the Tory government at Westminster and demanding the Scottish Parliament and Scottish councils campaign for a massive insulation programme with retrofitting of working class homes, combined with a move to clean green energy, an end to fossil fuel extraction and free public transport to end reliance on private cars and reduce pollution. While these demands are massively popular across Scotland, none of the parties in the Scottish Parliament are prepared to confront the Tory government at Westminster to get them implemented.

The SSP also called for massive solidarity with those workers currently struggling against the Tory wage cuts and cost-of-living crisis. A highlight of the public meeting was a speech by Gordon Martin, the RMT union Scottish Organiser. The RMT has been leading the battle across Britain to defend wages through strike action on the railways. Martin explained that although the strike action had been temporarily suspended following recent developments by the Rail Delivery Group

employers, the RMT was still committed to a further ballot for strike action in the event of no reasonable inflation-matching offer on pay and conditions coming forward.  Also addressing the meeting was Melanie Gale, an NHS nurse and workplace representative of the GMB union.  She spoke about the struggle in the health service for decent pay and welcomed the likelihood of industrial action by the RCN and other unions (two small health unions in Scotland had already voted for strike action, while the RCN Scotland confirmed on 9 November they had also voted for strikes).  Melanie demanded the SNP/Green government in Holyrood put their money where their mouth was and come forward with a pay offer that matches inflation.

The by-election takes place under the transferable vote system used in Scottish councils, so there is no question of the SSP 'splitting' the left or pro independence vote.  There are nine candidates in the by-election, including not just the five parties at Holyrood (Labour, SNP, Green, LibDem and Tory) but also the Alba Party, a largely reactionary splinter from the SNP, and the ultra conservative UKIP and Freedom Alliance parties.

This by-election marks a welcome return by the SSP to contesting elections and providing a voice for working class politics of solidarity,  socialism and environmentalism.  While it is unlikely to make a major breakthrough in terms of numbers of votes at this stage, as the SSP has not stood in an election in the area for 12 years, the SSP campaign focusses on key class issues of the day.  To help the SSP election campaign use this form to contact them.




Gordon Martin, RMT Scotland organiser addresses SSP election meeting in Castlemilk, 8 November