



**The Conservatives gave us their first budget for 18 years** and I don't think too many of us were surprised at the results, I did not notice any fat cats rushing to the banks to clean out their accounts, in fact they are all sitting at home having a good chuckle at the 13 million low paid workers who are going to take the biggest hit from this budget..

Child credit limited to 2 children, would this be a blatant attempt to cut down on the breeding of poverty struck families, is it the case that if your poor you don't deserve children because you can't afford a nanny to look after them.

Don't forget the promise of a £9 per hour living wage by 2020 .....that's 5 years time and by the time that 5 years has passed , prices have risen and we will be no better off than before, it looks good on paper but when you really look into what's being offered it amounts to a big fat minus for everyone..

Some benefits getting frozen, I'm sure prices will go down so we shouldn't worry about that (I'm being sarcastic) let's keep the money rolling in for the rich though. But we shouldn't really complain we get to live under a Government we did not want and get told to do whatever we don't want to do, that's what you get for being Scottish and Nationalist.

***The backdoor attack on the low paid and the poor;*** From April 2016 the minimum wage rises to **£7.20**. At the same time the income threshold to claim Working Tax Credits (WTC) goes down from **£6,240** to just **£3,850**, to claim WTC you must work a minimum of 16hrs per week.

***£7.20 x 16hrs x 52 weeks = £5990.40***, to claim WTC you need to earn **£3,850 or less**, meaning from April 2016 no one will be able to claim Working Tax Credits = **Effective abolition of WTC by the back door.**

In her maiden speech on Tuesday 14 July Mhairi Black, SNP MP for Paisley and Renfrewshire South, highlighted the outright hypocrisy of the budget proposals on Housing Benefit. As an MP she gets her Housing Costs paid for her London accommodation, however, Mhairi is only 20 year old. Mhairi said "*The government pays for me to live in London whilst I serve my constituents, my home here is subsidised.*" She continued, "*The Chancellor in his budget speech said it is unfair for those earning £40k in London to expect their rents paid by other working people, but it is ok to pay for the tax payers to pay for a MP!*". She went on to say "*The chancellor is abolishing Housing Benefit for everyone under 21, so we have the ridiculous situation where it's ok for the chancellor to pay for me, not only the youngest MP, but being the only 20yr old in the UK getting Housing paid by the Tax Payer*".

As a further insult to the low paid and the poor, the only real losers from this draconian budget, Osborne has decided to pump hundreds of thousands of pounds into a hardship fund for ex MPs and their families. Coming on top of the £12 billion of cuts to the welfare fund whilst pumping £215,000 per year into an already bloated fund. One Westminster insider said "*It's just typical of the MPs - looking after themselves with a huge fund while ordinary workers, cleaners and catering staff in Parliament struggle to make ends meet. They don't get the benefit of a safety net like this.*"

So do we recommend this budget to the house, no we recommend George puts his budget box where the sun don't shine.

**What we deserve, We certainly deserve better.** But we are not going to get better. We were never going to get better. There were ample warnings of what the consequences of a No vote would be. But The Herald is representative of those who chose to ignore all those warnings. A No vote was always the triumph of hope over experience.

But perhaps we should not be too hard on the unionists in Scotland who urged us to vote No. After all, these were generally people who had never questioned the union. They had never looked critically at the British state. They were not in a position to foresee how the British establishment would respond to a No vote because they had never even given it a thought. For others, it was all too easy to foresee what would happen. Commentators are portraying Cameron's EVEL plans as political bungling. While this is certainly accurate, it misses the fact that this bungling is born of extraordinary arrogance and an associated disdain for inconvenient democratic principles, as well as casual contempt for Scotland.

Scotland was always going to be punished for having the temerity to challenge the ruling elites of the British state. A No vote was always a vote to empower those whose dearest wish was to put Scotland back in its box. A Tory majority UK Government merely exacerbated a situation which would have been the same regardless of which British party was in power. The British establishment regards Scotland as a problem and Scotland's people as, at best a nuisance and even a threat. Simple logic tells you that the British establishment is not going to concede to those it has defeated the very things being fought over. It simply is not in the interests of the British state to strengthen those it views as "enemies". On the contrary, The British state's interests are best served by weakening that "enemy". Unionists were content to blithely ignore this simple logic. They naively put their faith in an idealised beneficent British state that simply doesn't exist. Scotland is now paying the price for that folly. But the unionists have learned nothing. They blame Cameron and the Tories for something which is actually in the very nature of the political union they fought to preserve.

That political union has to end in order that we can start building a better form of association between Scotland and England. No amount of constitutional tinkering is going to alter the fundamental flaws and deficiencies in this archaic, dysfunctional union. It's time for those who campaigned for a No vote to acknowledge that they got it wrong. The rest of us should welcome those who have belatedly come to realise that the union is untenable and work with them to secure independence. That is the better we deserve.

**Peter A Bell**

On Monday 13 July the SNP announced that they are to vote on the move to repeal the Fox Hunting ban in England. The SNP have always tried to play fair at Westminster by abstaining on purely English matters, as long as there was no knock on to Scotland either immediately or in the long term. However, following thousands of emails from people all over the UK asking the SNP to vote against the motion, they will vote and hopefully help defeat this motion by the Tories, good news for animal lovers not just in Scotland but by people all over these islands.

Obviously we have outcry from many, Ian Martin (Telegraph) is one who is not happy, in a Twitter confrontation with Stuart Campbell (Wings over Scotland) said "*by what conceivable logic does the hunting ban in England have anything at all to do with Scotland or Scottish MPs?*"

This is an issue that will enrage the Tories and no doubt make them more determined to force their plans for English Votes for English Laws (EVEL) through even faster. However, like Stuart Campbell stated at the end of his article on Wings over Scotland; "*A permanent and complete solution to the "West Lothian Question" was offered last September, but the UK parties fought tooth and nail and used every dirty trick in the book to persuade Scotland to continue sending MPs to London. They succeeded, and they must now live with the consequences of getting what they wished for.*"

In other words, had the 3 unionist parties and their cohorts in the press and TV news-media not fought such a dirty and dishonest campaign during the independence referendum last September, the West Lothian Question and EVEL would be irrelevant.

On Tuesday 14 July, the Tories announced that the vote on the repeal of the fox hunting ban has been cancelled, cancelled until the Tories can get EVEL implemented. Thus, preventing the SNP voting on the motion making sure that they win and the Barbarism of Fox Hunting returns to England.

In yet another insult to Scotland, the SNP and the First Minister in particular, UKIPs Deputy leader Paul Nuttall says "*We Should Throw Sturgeon in Front of a Hunt Horse for Pankhurst Day*"

**The Stakes Have Never Been Higher - Humanity or Greed?** Why do we do what we do? Why are we spending more and more of our time and energy protesting, shouting, and crying out to be heard? More than most of us would ever have dreamt we could or would have ever done before.

These individual whispers of discontent have slowly and surely weaved their own journey from all corners of our beloved lands and islands and grown to become one single voice. Like a resounding gong it leaves an echo which is the conscience of our nation. It is distinctive and unmistakable to all. It is triumphant and blasts out to one and all that we are here and will be heard. It is deafening to the many and is now being heard by those who have unwittingly been deaf to the millions of voices screaming around them or those who appeared immune to the cries of the desperate or the voice of the reasoned.

Why we are doing this is simple. This one voice is shouting with many hearts to protest about the tears rolling from the queues of parents who can't feed themselves or who watch their children go hungry; to highlight the plight of the sick who are too ill to work, yet face losing their benefits and are thrown onto the scrapheap as they serve no purpose to the powerful; for the elderly who are served up their daily dose of fear for them to take alongside their other medication, yet who have the third worst pensions in the developed world. We do it to announce that we will no longer tolerate the injustices served upon the powerless, whilst those that have the power look after their own to the detriment of all others. ALL others.

We are angry because we will no longer tolerate being taken for granted; lied to; treated with contempt; misled; or regarded as anything less than equals amongst all men and women. We want to return to the people the ownership of our lands that we are born on and return our ashes to, from the modern day equivalent of the nobility. We want the poor to be able to live off their wages and the rich to pay their taxes.

We no longer want to sacrifice the lives or limbs of our loved ones in wars that we never agreed with and which only serve to extend the greed and power of the privileged. Only then to discard them when they are broken. We want social justice that doesn't come with a price tag or political spin; we seek to free our children and their children's children from the barbaric legacy of a fallen empire. We desire peace and to be free from nuclear weapons.

We demand 'true' democracy, not the cheap imitation sold on mass, off the production line, and which is so willingly served up by the press and media. For it comes without guarantee or right of return. We want freedom of speech without ridicule or persecution and a country where truth will always come before politics or agenda.

But to achieve all of this we must continue to support our fellow citizens who are scared, or who can only see or hear what is portrayed or presented to them by mainstream media. The people who cannot be persuaded, and there will be many, must be left to justify their actions to their own conscience. But with the others, every one of us is a champion, an advocate, an educator, and a signpost to where a better future lies, beyond the dark and angry clouds of fear and injustice.

Between now and the 2016 Holyrood Election, go and persuade one person who won't be voting SNP to lend them their 1st vote and SNP, SSP, Green or Solidarity for their 2nd. By doing this Scotland's voice will be undeniable.



**Raibeart MacPhàrlain**

**Next Issue: 29 July 2015**

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