

Steeling Ourselves For The Future. I recently took my wife and two teenagers to Summer Lee. This, for those unacquainted with steel making, is the very excellent Falkirk museum of steelmaking. It has been cleverly designed to show the history of metal bashing from the middle ages to the present day.

Having finally navigated through the unlikely back roads of Falkirk and negotiated the light industrial units, we finally located this little treasure of a museum sandwiched between a modern housing estate and a plumbers merchants depot.



The grounds of the car park looked interesting from the very start of our visit and are littered with steam cranes, trams and huge steam hammers. The huge riveted boilers and other equipment from Victorian Scotland give you the impression of having fallen through time, and emerged at an instant of frozen industrial history. The big metal machines looking as if they have just been shut down while the workers have their tea.

But as you very quickly realise, this impression is just that - an impression. There's no giant steam-hammers or massive coke furnaces anymore. Steel making in Scotland is dead.

Despite the working tram (which sadly I discovered was actually a German tram!) Being terrific fun to rattle along in, the overwhelming feeling I got was one of sad remembrance. Not of Victorian hardship, but of the hard work and large scale heavy industries which once drove the British Empire out into the wild west and the mysterious east. Locomotives and ships all built by big tough men and women, from home made steel, powered by home dug Coal. A truly Scottish industry at every level.

But then, after a great pot of tea and home baked scones in their very cheap cafe, I remembered the events of the 1980s and the deliberate destruction of most of these incredible industries by one Margaret Thatcher. Within a decade, Scotland lost all its mines, most of its steelworks, all its shipyards bar two and all its locomotive builders.

In the space of a generation - MY generation, tens of thousands of lifelong jobs and skills disappeared forever. To create "post industrial Britain" the wet dream of the Tories, and because of which, we are such a bankrupt, debt ridden mess today.

And now, the loathsome Tory toffs of London finally euthanised the last tiny remnants of our industrial capacity, in order that Britain can buy only Chinese steel. The capitulation of the British Empire to the Chinese Government was made complete last week, when Cameron sold a large piece of British nuclear electricity generation industry to China.

Scotland will now have only memories of independent steelmaking to think on as we sink deeper into debt under the blind stewardship of Tory dogma and moral-free economic pawn-shopping.

Next Issue: 18 November, 2015

In **1707 the Act of Union** decreed that each nation should have the same advantages and drawbacks. Unfortunately when it comes to our emergency services, Scotland is placed at an unequal and unfair disadvantage.

Whilst services are exempt in England and Wales, here in Scotland our financially strained police have to cough up VAT of £23 Million annually to Westminster and our fire service are lumbered with a £10 Million annual bill.

Value added tax constraints have left Police Scotland with an £11 Million shortfall this year. South of the border the UK services are able to reclaim VAT but due to rules being changed by Westminster Scotland's police and fire services are unable to do the same.

Previous Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said the decision would mean the police and fire services in Scotland would be the only ones in the UK unable to recover VAT. This provides a direct link with local taxation, which we consider meets the Treasury's policy on VAT recovery. He said: *"This decision by the Treasury is unacceptable, unjustifiable and manifestly unfair. This charge on Scottish public sector reform is not levied on similar reforms in the rest of the UK. The UK government had changed the rules on VAT for Academy schools - which are entirely funded by central government. It also ignores the fact that the new Police Authority will continue to be able to receive funding from Scottish local authorities to pay the costs of agreed local priorities. This provides a direct link with local taxation, which we consider meets the Treasury's policy on VAT recovery."*

Westminster decided that police reform was a good enough excuse to disadvantage Scotland stating, *"The Treasury insists that the Scottish government knew all along that their model for service reform would lead to the loss of VAT exemption."*

Cabinet Secretary for Justice designate, Michael Matheson, told MSPs he intended to *"pursue this issue with vigour"* as part of discussions with the Treasury. *"The present situation is completely unacceptable and I'll certainly be pursuing the matter further with the UK Treasury to try and get a change of policy in this area."*

The chief constable of Police Scotland said *"I am not a tax expert by any shape of the imagination but I do find it bewildering that we seem to be the only police service in the United Kingdom that is charged VAT. None of the 43 forces in England and Wales pay it. I just don't understand the logic of it and I frankly don't think the Scottish public would understand it either really. It hasn't been explained to me in a way I can understand."*

Yet again, as was the position with poll tax, we find ourselves saddled with a tax on Scotland illegally levied on us without the rest of the UK obliged to pay the same. If we wish police and fire services, we have to pay more from them.

Fair play for Scotland does not appear to be on Westminster's agenda.



TRIDENT.... WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?...well its good if you want to commit

mass-murderer and trigger the apocalypse. Let's look at some figures, the original cost for replacing /updating Trident was £100B but that has now risen to £167 Billion, jeez how many houses would that build, how many jobs could be created? Small businesses could be formed and supported but NO, the poor may be starving, they may be living in substandard properties or on the street, but instead of helping them Westminster wastes money **to RENT** weapons of mass destruction from America. Weapons that no British Pm can use without explicit permission of the President of America.



We have all the right credentials for the U S OF A to invade us, we have oil, we have WOMD, we have a one party state (so Westminster would have us believe) so any day now be prepared for the shock and awe of an American military coup in Scotland, especially when we are Independent.

On a more serious note here's what Stuart Hosie (SNP deputy leader) had to say on the issue: *"How can Tory MPs expect to be able to look their constituents in the eye when on the one hand they are taking thousands of pounds from hard-working low income families who rely on tax credits (approx £1300) and with the other they plan to pour money into brand new weapons of mass destruction?"*

The most ridiculous part of this is the fact that even though Scotland has only one Tory MP we are dancing the Mundell tune as he seems to be getting great pleasure forcing Westminster's laws onto Scotland.

Cameron seems to be putting all his eggs in one basket, he's shut down the majority of military bases within Scotland (I always wondered if he shut them down just in case Scotland voted Yes) 10,000 jobs have gone within that sector but it's ok to pump money into Trident as its is going to be Britain's main deterrent. Bollox, Cameron hates the Scots and he wants us to suffer, this has already been seen by the draconian taxes he is inflicting upon us and if that's not enough he's determined to make us a huge target for any future wars, where as no nukes seem to be stationed within England (correct me if I'm wrong).

The reason for this says the MOD is that **"the risk to the 300,000 lives in and around the South of England is too great"**, but it's ok to park them next to Scotland's largest city and **risk 3,000,000 Scots?**

Then we move onto Faslane, 20 minutes before each submarine docks at Faslane the electricity is cut. In a bid to save £77.5m over the next five years, the Babcock, which is contracted by the Ministry of Defence to run the Faslane site, are proposing an extension to the 20 minutes without electricity for up to a maximum of three hours. This has raised genuine grave concern amongst employees at Faslane about how budget cuts will affect safety within the base, there we go again, Cameron targeting Scotland by imposing the need to make savings at the most dangerous place in Britain. Do we have a big patch on our backs saying please kick us?

Up until the Labour Scotland Branch Conference the only Parties opposed to Trident in Scotland were the SNP, Greens, SSP, Solidarity and now Rise, see the common dominator? They are all parties that want an Independent Scotland. But at the Branch conference 70% of Party and Union members voted against Trident renewal.

Following the conference vote the Unions are demanding that any form of Nuclear disarmament must go hand in hand with job diversification Pat Rafferty, who's Unite Union represents Faslane workers, said *"Britain should take lead in nuclear non-proliferation. The argument for non-renewal must go "hand in hand" with a jobs diversification plan and the billions saved from Trident could help workers and be used against a "crisis" in industry and the public sector."*

GMB Scotland, another Union representative of the shipyard and defence workers, made clear its support for renewal of Trident. Gary Smith from the Union told the conference *the "glaring omission from the debate was what alternative jobs would be for those working at the base. This debate is a nonsense and frankly an utter indulgence. the GMB was standing against "Alice in Wonderland politics"*.

One of the biggest liars in Scottish Politics and supporter of Trident MSP Jackie Baillie, who covers the base in her Dumbarton constituency, said: *"Faslane is the biggest single-site employer in Scotland. More than a quarter of West Dumbartonshire's full-time workforce are employed there in good quality, well-paid jobs."* In a typical Baillie attack on the SNP, who want to remove Trident submarines from Scotland, described this stance as *"nimbyism (not in my back yard) on a national scale and the worst kind of gesture politics"*.

On Tuesday 3rd November the SNP adopted a motion proposed by Labour Scotland Branch that said scrapping Trident's replacement system had to be tied to a fully-funded programme to find new jobs for redundant defence workers. Holyrood voted for the motion for a Defence Diversification Agency 96 for and 17 against, as expected Baillie voted against along with all present Lib Dems and Tories.

Well done Scotland Branch.....Not quite. Although a very welcome stance it makes very little difference as defence is reserved to Westminster, in effect giving Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland little to no say on the matter of Trident defence systems because no matter what we want we will always be over-ruled by the larger number of English MPs at Westminster.

We also have the internal issues within the Labour Party itself. Whilst Kezia Dugdale voted for the unilateral motion she believes in multilateral option. Her boss Jeremy Corbyn is 100% anti Trident but the UK Party, the ones who make the Policies for the Labour Party are supporters of Trident and will vote to renew. Even Scotland's only Labour MP Ian Murray who supports disarmament will follow the Party Whip and either vote for renewal or do the new Labour favourite and abstain in the upcoming Westminster vote on Trident renewal.

So we now have Scotland opposing Trident renewal but have no say in whether it will be renewed or not, will have to pay our share of renewal costs of £15b and running costs of £250m per year. Surely if Westminster want them they can remove from Scotland and pay for them without taking any deductions from the Scottish Block grant.