

# Revolutionary Platform News

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Newsletter of the Revolutionary Platforms of the Scottish Socialist Party, Solidarity, Respect and the Democratic Socialist Alliance

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*Editor's welcome:* My name is Steve Wallis. I moved from Manchester to Glasgow in April because Glasgow is the most important city politically due to the strength of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP). I have joined the new party called "Solidarity: Scotland's Socialist Movement" as well, despite disagreeing with its formation, to influence it in a positive direction. I am retaining my membership of Respect and the Democratic Socialist Alliance in Manchester.

This edition of the newsletter is entirely written by me; contact me to submit articles for further editions. I strongly recommend checking out the websites and contributing to the discussion forums mentioned on them. Print this and earlier newsletters (including black-and-white versions for photocopying) via [www.revolutionaryplatform.net](http://www.revolutionaryplatform.net).

## Why the Scottish Socialist Party has split



In November 2004, the SSP's Executive Committee (EC) voted unanimously for Tommy Sheridan to resign as convenor when it discussed allegations in the News of the World (NoW). He sued the NoW for £200,000 in a five-week defamation trial this summer. According to 11 witnesses who spoke in that trial and 4 other SSP leaders who were not called, out of 19 who attended the EC meeting, he admitted to attending a swingers' club called Cupids in Manchester on two occasions but said that the NoW would not be able to prove it. The jury decided, by 7 votes to 4, in favour of Sheridan. The NoW are appealing against the verdict and it seems certain that they will win the appeal – especially due to the fact that it will be heard by 3 judges rather than another jury. However, the appeal will not take place for about a year, and the 2007 Scottish parliamentary elections will have been held by then.

For SSP members like myself, a major consideration in which side we believe is how much respect we have for the witnesses who were called during the trial – and I know and respect SSP members opposed to Sheridan much more (in general) than those who supported him. Additionally there was such a weight of evidence against him, revealed in a huge amount of media coverage during and after the trial, that few people who have followed it truly believe that Sheridan was telling the truth. In fact, there is such a contrast between the reputation that Sheridan has built up for all the good things he has done, especially in the 18 million-strong mass non-payment campaign that defeated the poll tax and brought down Margaret Thatcher, and the reputation of the NoW and its owner Rupert Murdoch for mud-slinging and union-busting, that the attitude of most working class people is probably that Sheridan was guilty but they are glad that he won the trial.

Conspiratorial infiltrating organisations have been and still are at work within the SSP and every other significant political organisation. They can take either side of the class struggle – big business or the working class. When socialists discovered that MI5 was infiltrating working class organisations, they naturally set up conspiratorial organisations of their own. Capitalists therefore set up even more secretive conspiratorial organisations to infiltrate the infiltrators as well as open organisations in society. Since capitalism has been going on for so long, there is now a massively complex web of infiltrating organisations. There are also a lot of individuals who consciously take the side of one of the two key classes and try to cooperate with people on the same side and compete with those on the other. People can of course switch sides over time – otherwise revolutions would never happen!

Some of this conspiring was revealed before, during and after the trial. Sheridan argued in court that a "cabal" was manoeuvring against him, as his explanation for the 11 EC witnesses giving evidence against him. However, it is clear that they told the truth, which was necessary to avoid going to jail for perjury or contempt of court. Eventually, two open factions, the anti-Sheridan United Left and the pro-Sheridan SSP Majority, were formed.

At an SSP rally on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, current convenor Colin Fox said that he asked a woman who wanted to join the party despite its difficulties after the trial whether she was paid by the state. This was a clever way of pointing out the most important factor behind the crisis – infiltration. I realised that Colin was on the side of big business during the 2005 general election campaign due to him repeatedly refusing to answer questions directly, on the issue of immigration on Newsnight Scotland and on various issues during an ITV programme where a studio audience asked him questions – but his mention of infiltration is a strong indication that he is now on the side of the working class. Former Labour MSP John McAllion is planning to challenge Colin for leadership of the SSP, presumably backed by the United Left. It is very important that the SSP's convenor is a revolutionary like Colin rather than a reformist like John.

Tommy Sheridan, together with the Socialist Worker and CWI platforms of the SSP, has launched a rival party called Solidarity: Scotland's Socialist Movement, splitting the left that had united in a single party. The Socialist Workers Party/platform (SWP) dominates Solidarity and will try to run it in a similar manner to how it runs Respect in England and Wales, as a broader party which encourages Muslims to join irrespective of whether they are socialists. The CWI want the word "socialist" in the name of the party, and are annoyed that the party will usually be referred to merely as "Solidarity". They argue in the September issue of *International Socialist* that it should be renamed, perhaps as the Socialist Solidarity Movement. However, the SWP's dominance and the publicity Solidarity will have received under its current name (as well as the fact that the CWI's suggested name is extremely unwieldy) will ensure that their attempt to rename it at the November conference fails.

Another tension within Solidarity will be the issue of independence, which Sheridan supports but the SWP and CWI oppose. CWI Scotland's leader Philip Stott claimed in the same issue of their paper that the SSP argues that independence would solve capitalism's problems. This is a complete lie – the SSP realises that socialism is not on the verge of coming to power and that a capitalist independent Scotland would be a step towards a socialist Scotland and socialist world.

The SWP were an extremely negative force within the SSP. They had been able to mobilise around a third of the delegates at SSP conferences around terrible positions such as support for the entire Iraqi "resistance" (including those carrying out suicide bombings and beheadings which help the West's strategy of divide-and-rule). However, they had grown in strength by the time of the conference earlier this year (due to the SSP's internal difficulties) and they won some of the votes. Their departure from the SSP is a very useful by-product of the launch of Solidarity.

An indication of the extreme control infiltrators on the side of big business have over the SWP in Scotland, with members encouraged to follow orders from above rather than thinking for themselves, is that their 120-strong meeting to discuss Sheridan's call for a new party decided unanimously to leave the SSP. In England, the SWP have significant layers of genuine activists in their ranks, and this will be the case in Scotland too after the launch of Solidarity. Their role was so bad in the SSP that few genuine activists stayed in their platform.

The SSP has got through its crisis and had an uplifting rally in Glasgow on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September attended by 350-400 people. There are eight months before the Scottish parliamentary elections, which should enable us to grow in strength so that we can do at least as well as in 2003 when the party won six seats.

## **Scrap positive discrimination within the SSP**

Tommy Sheridan has claimed that the SSP is "gender-obsessed" because of its 50:50 rule, supposedly to ensure gender balance within the party. Such positive discrimination is counter-productive – the resentment it causes probably increases the amount of sexism in the party, which is certainly not severe enough to require such undemocratic measures.

The 50:50 rule makes it easier for such infiltrators to wreck the party, since it is easy for women to get delegated to conferences or National Council if they are in a mainly male branch.

Ridiculously, the 50:50 rule may even make it less likely for gender balance to be achieved amongst the SSP's representatives in the Scottish parliament. The person most likely to win a seat is the one at the top of the Glasgow list. If there was a fair vote, Rosie Kane who was elected from second on the list behind Tommy Sheridan in 2003 would almost certainly come top, but it has already been decided that a man should top the Glasgow list.

I will be submitting a resolution for the SSP's October conference to scrap the 50:50 rule and re-hold the elections for the lists in the six regions that have already voted (which has to be done anyway due to the split).

## **Revolutionaries should unite within a single platform**

I have set up, initially in cyberspace, Revolutionary Platforms of the SSP, Solidarity, Respect and the Democratic Socialist Alliance (a small but important organisation in England I helped form out of the old Socialist Alliance Democracy Platform). In my opinion, these are the nuclei of new organisations capable of uniting genuine revolutionary socialists with different views and from different traditions within broad socialist parties.

The SSP and Solidarity have various platforms, mainly Marxist ones, with small disagreements and based on historically distinct organisations – apart from the SSP United Left which ignores the issue of whether members are revolutionaries. Nick McKerrill proposed a "Marxist platform" in Frontline magazine ([www.redflag.org.uk](http://www.redflag.org.uk)), but with Marxist ideas being re-evaluated, the distinction should be whether you are a revolutionary and therefore advocate sudden change or whether you are a reformist and advocate gradual change through a series of reforms, which is somehow supposed to lead to a socialist society despite the fact that reforms granted during a boom are taken back during a slump.