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10 QUESTIONS ON **SOCIALISM** AND THE INDY REFERENDUM

Thursday 18th September is referendum day. Discussions are taking place in workplaces, colleges, schools and communities all across the country. The run-up to September will be dominated by debate on how to vote and what might an independent Scotland mean for jobs and living standards. Would independence see an end and even a reversal of the savage cuts that we've seen over the last few years? Would working class people be better or worse off under independence? As a contribution to this debate, below, we explain by way of a question and answer format Socialist Party Scotland's case for an end to cuts and an independent socialist Scotland.

❶ Why is Socialist Party Scotland supporting a Yes vote in the referendum?

We are calling for a Yes vote because growing numbers of working class people are looking towards independence as an escape route from the poverty, cuts and falling incomes that face the majority of us under the Con-Dem's. Since 1999 and the founding of the Scottish parliament we've stood for a parliament with full powers over the economy, tax, the minimum wage, benefits, pensions and defence etc.

❷ What about those who aren't convinced that independence under the SNP's plan is the way forward?

We agree with this opinion. Our support for a Yes vote is critical support – given the limitations of what is on offer from the Scottish government. In other words we are calling for a Yes vote while also explaining that the SNP's model for independence would not change the lives of the majority of working class people in Scotland. Real change for millions would require far-reaching socialist policies. Labour also support cuts and the failed policies of capitalism, and offer no way forward.

❸ But isn't the SNP promising a better, more prosperous Scotland after independence?

An independent Scotland under the SNP would certainly be more prosperous for big business. Under Salmond and co's plans, the multi-national corporations would see their taxes cut. The SNP leadership are opposed to public ownership of the oil industry. They don't even support the renationalisation of the profit hungry energy companies. They believe that capitalism – an economic system that is in its deepest crisis since the 1930's - would be the bedrock on which a better Scotland would be built. This is ruled out in our view. Only through decisive socialist measures – democratic public ownership of the banks, oil and the major sectors of the economy – can we rebuild the a society in the interests of the working class as a whole.

❹ What about the Nordic states. Aren't they an example of a fairer capitalism that Scotland could follow?

The Nordic model refers to the situation that emerged in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland after 1945 during a period of economic boom. It was

based on a high quality welfare state, low levels of poverty - but with high taxes levied on the working class. Today, such a model is being undermined - in the case of Sweden in a brutal way. The end of the post-war boom from the late 1970's on, which was reinforced by the world economic crisis in 2007/08, has led to an unravelling of the Nordic model, with privatisation and deep social cuts being implemented. There is no possibility, on the basis of capitalism, of an independent Scotland delivering decent living standards and an end to austerity cuts.

❺ But wouldn't anything be better than living under a brutal Tory government that we didn't vote for?

We agree that the powers of independence could be used to transform the lives of millions if they were wielded in the interests of the majority. However, it's clear from the SNP's white paper that they will not go down this road. Under Alex Salmond's plan Scotland would form part of a currency union, with the Bank of England adjusting the straitjacket of what a Scottish government could spend on jobs and public services. The SNP want to join the big business dominated Euro-

pean Union that is being used as a battering ram to attack trade union rights and inflict savage austerity on the working class across the continent. The elite monarchy would remain as head of state. Under the SNP's proposals it's not so much how things would change, its how much they would stay the same.

⑥ Won't raising criticisms of the SNP just weaken the Yes campaign?

If anything, the SNP's emphasis on continuing with a pro big business agenda and refusing to pledge to end all cuts under independence is undermining support for a Yes vote. This is reinforced further by the experience of trade unionists and communities who face cuts by the SNP-led Scottish government and at a council level where they are in power.

To win a Yes vote means convincing the majority of the working class that there would be major economic and social change under independence. This is not what the SNP are putting forward. The only answer to the smears of "Project Fear" and the so-called Better Together campaign is for a fundamental break from the onslaught of austerity supported by all the main parties.

If the SNP leadership came out in favour of a 24-hour general strike of trade unions against the Con-Dem government, for public ownership of the economy and refused to carry out the cuts this would undoubtedly increase support for independence.

⑦ So what kind of independence does Socialist Party Scotland want to see ?

We are campaigning for an independent socialist Scotland. We stand for:

tax increases on the rich and big business

raising the minimum wage to £10 an hour

a reversal of all the cuts that have been carried through by the Con-Dem coalition.

For the powers of independence to be used to carry through a widespread programme of public ownership and democratic control of the major sectors of the economy to lay the basis for a democratically run socialist society.

the tearing up of the anti-union legislation that was designed to undermine the ability of workers to defend their interests.

To fight for these types of policies we need to build a new mass workers party. The trade unions should break from the Labour party and help to launch a new party for the majority.

⑧ Is it possible to build socialism in just one country ?

No. Capitalism is an international system of exploitation. It's the rule of an elite who own and control the means of production – the factories, the workplaces etc – and who employ workers to make profit for big business, not for social need. That's why we are campaigning for an independent socialist

Scotland to form part of a democratic confederation with a socialist England, Wales and Ireland as a step to a socialist Europe and beyond.

⑨ Isn't there a danger that supporting a Yes vote can divide the working class?

The best way to insure this does not happen is for the trade unions to lead their own campaign for the referendum that emphasises the need for pro working class policies and opposition to all cuts. In other words a campaign that unites the interests of the vast majority of working class people – regardless of how they are voting in the referendum. Socialist Party Scotland stands for the unity of all workers across the trade union movement in Scotland and Britain. We are campaigning for the trade unions to build coordinated mass strike action - a 24-hour general strike - to fight austerity. And for the trade unions to initiate the building of a new mass working class party to fight for socialism.

⑩ I agree with what you've said. How do I get involved?

Contact us via email, phone, Facebook or Twitter. We have campaigning branches in areas across Scotland. Socialist Party Scotland members play a leading role in trade unions including the PCS, Unison, the CWU and Unite as well as the anti Bedroom Tax and Youth Fight For Jobs campaigns. Why not join us?

● Nationalise under democratic workers' control the oil and gas industry, the renewable energy sector, the banks and the major sectors of the Scottish economy. This would release billions to invest in a massive programme of job creation, reverse the cuts and rebuild our public services. ● Tax the rich and big business. Increase the minimum wage and end the attacks on welfare ● Abolish all anti-trade union laws ● Reverse the cuts. For a Scottish government representing working people, the unemployed and the poor that refuses to make cuts to pay for the crisis ● For a socialist plan of production in an independent socialist Scotland as part of a voluntary confederation with England, Wales and Ireland as a step to a socialist Europe

**Text JOIN and your name & postcode to 07761 818206
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