

THE 'BEDROOM TAX' - NO APRIL FOOL JOKE

This is the text of the Edinburgh RIC leaflet given out in the city on April 1st, 2013.

On Monday, April Fools Day, the 'Bedroom Tax' kicks in. In Scotland, tens of thousands face immediate anxiety about their future, ever-spiralling debts and possible eviction from their homes.

Not surprisingly, the Tories and the Lib-Dems are adopting a low profile. They are leaving it to the SNP and Labour, at Holyrood and on the Local Councils, to implement this iniquitous measure, just like they did over the poll tax.

Labour in Scotland is desperately trying to place the blame on the SNP. However Miliband refuses to promise that a possible future Labour government at Westminster would abolish the 'Bedroom Tax'. His first priority is to pay off the bankers who brought about the present economic crisis.

The SNP government has promised us the 'Bedroom Tax' will be abolished if we vote for independence next year. SNP controlled councils have told us they won't evict council tenants who fall into arrears.

Welcome though these concessions are, they won't help the majority of council house tenants in Scotland. Edinburgh's Labour/SNP local government coalition has not said it will refuse to evict. Furthermore, most of those affected by the 'Bedroom Tax' in Scotland are not council but housing association tenants.

Even where the threat of evictions is removed, the debts remain and will continue to mount. Sheriff officers will still be threatening those who cannot pay. The SNP's 'Independence-Lite' proposals could not happen until 2016, at the earliest. So tens of thousands will have been affected long before then. Furthermore, the SNP has said that their 'independent' Scotland would still be subject to the City, who would continue to pile on the pressure to pay off their debts.

The Radical Independence Campaign gives its support to those local campaigns, which are organizing now to provide solidarity and backing for those facing threatening demands, and possible evictions, whether from councils or housing associations.

However, we must look beyond this. The sale of council houses has made many thousands dependent on exploitative private landlords. These landlords are the people who get massive subsidies from the state, not the tenants. We need a rent freeze and guaranteed minimum standards of accommodation. However, we also need decent social housing provided on the basis of need. This is why the RIC is fighting for a democratic Scottish republic, which answers, not to the bankers, in the City and Edinburgh, but to the Scottish people.