

Britain: Daily Record follows the Scotsman in misrepresenting Socialist Equality Party

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4 May 2007

Readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* will remember that on April 18, the *Scotsman* newspaper falsely identified the Socialist Equality Party as the Scottish Equality Party and claimed that our candidates in the West of Scotland were campaigning for a “genuinely socialist Scotland.” Correcting this error involved correspondence between SEP (Britain) National Secretary Chris Marsden and the newspaper objecting to the misnaming and the attribution of a fictitious quote, both of which implied support for Scottish nationalism.

Imagine the surprise of those campaigning in Glasgow when, on May 2, they read an election round-up by the *Daily Record* that again described the SEP as the Scottish Equality Party and repeated the same false quotation claiming that the party stood for a “genuinely socialist Scotland.”

Marsden immediately contacted the *Record*’s news desk. Speaking to assistant news editor Derek Masterton, he insisted on a correction being posted the next day—the edition that would appear on the day of the poll.

Masterton’s response was curt. While stating that he would look into the error, he insisted that the newspaper was not legally obliged to correct the mistake and suggested that a letter be sent to the paper’s managing editor Derek Stuart-Brown. Such a course of action would ensure no correction was made until well after polling day.

In order to clarify the SEP’s rights, the Press Complaints Commission was contacted. On the strength of its advice, Marsden sent an email to Stuart-Brown, once again insisting on an immediate clarification.

In it he pointed out that “both factual errors are inexcusable, given that we have circulated press

releases announcing our campaign and our names and we are listed correctly on all official election sites and other campaign materials.”

“In seeking to account for your reporter’s error, only one plausible explanation can be offered. The reporter clearly based the article on a reading of an April 18 round-up in the *Scotsman* newspaper, written by Louise Gray, ‘the good, the bad and the faintly ridiculous’...

“Given that this is the only place where our party has been so wrongly identified and [a] fabricated quote attributed to it, which is identical to that published in your own article, one must assume that your unnamed reporter lifted it directly from the *Scotsman*.

“His or her bad journalistic practice is only highlighted by the fact that the *Scotsman* was forced to publish an official retraction in its April 19 edition. We expect no less from your publication.”

Marsden drew attention to his earlier conversation with Masterton and continued, “I have since consulted with the Press Complaints Commission, who advised that since the *Scotsman* printed a correction this amounted to an admission of error. And if the *Daily Record* fails to do the same, then the PCC is prepared to investigate any complaint by us against your publication. I might add that from the standpoint of journalistic and editorial integrity you are in any case obliged to make such a correction in your next edition.”

In a telephone conversation Stuart-Brown agreed that a correction would be published and Marsden accepted a request that he write a brief paragraph explaining the party’s real standpoint.

After drawing attention to the *Record*’s mistakes, Marsden continued, “The Socialist Equality Party is, in fact, an internationalist party, opposed to all forms of nationalism, racism and chauvinism, including Scottish separatism. We seek the unity of workers throughout

the UK, Europe and internationally in the struggle against war and the profit system that gives rise to it. Our policies are summed up in our manifesto as: No to militarism and war, Defend democratic rights, For social equality, Workers of the world unite.”

The correction appeared on May 3 on page six with the last two sentences cut.

Journalistic incompetence played a significant role in the *Record*’s error. To emphasise this, it should be noted that beneath the correction on the SEP was another in relation to the Scottish Greens. This read “in yesterday’s manifesto guide, we suggested the Greens wanted ‘no more public spending through Social Enterprises.’ This should have read, ‘more spending through Social Enterprises’.”

The Greens have every right to be angry. However, their treatment by the media bears no similarity to that accorded to the SEP. The two mentions of the SEP in election round-ups are rarities.

During the four-week campaign for the elections, the SEP’s regional lists in both Scotland and Wales have met with a virtual media blackout.

Even where smaller parties have been given some coverage, the SEP has been excluded. BBC Scotland, for example, ran a series of webcast interviews with many of the parties standing regional slates. These included interviews with The Publican Party, Scottish Voice, Scotland against Crooked Lawyers, the Had Enough Party and the Adam Lyal’s Witchery Tour Party. Despite being approached early on in the campaign, however, the BBC declined to interview a representative from the SEP, claiming that all available slots were full.

In addition, an article on the BBC news web site falsely designated the SEP as the Equality Party. Despite repeated requests, this error has never been rectified.

Clearly when the SEP cannot be excluded because it would impact on others, then the media resorts to different methods of censorship—changing the party’s name and falsifying its policies.



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