

Jim Sillars at the Jewel Miners' Club



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An audience of over 150 people attended the 'Trade Unionists for Scottish Independence' public meeting at the Jewel Miners' Club on Thursday night.

The speakers were Annie McCrae [EIS], veteran Nationalist Jim Sillars, and in the chair was Derek Durkin [TUFSI].

Annie McCrae, a teacher, opened the debate with the shock revelation that she would like to see private schools abolished in Scotland. She strenuously complained about the 1% public sector pay rise, which is set for the next two years, and talked about fuel pricing and the gas companies 'strangulation' of the poorer sectors of Scottish society.

The loudest applause of the night, however, was for Jim Sillars, the 76-year-old Nationalist veteran, who seemed to be licking his wounds after being barred from Edinburgh University's independence debate on Wednesday night, regarding comments he had made about Liberal peer Lord Rennard on last month's Question Time.

Mr Sillars began his speech with a softer tone. His happiest times, he says, are spent with his ten grandchildren, telling them about the importance of education, while his wife, SNP stalwart Margo McDonald, is 'making the tea'.

Mr Sillars, at present, is travelling the length and breadth of Scotland trying to enthuse the working class to vote for independence. Central to his speech was the question of the North Sea oilfields. He wants to adopt the Singaporean method,

where wages and the standard of living are high as a result of their oil billions.

Mr Sillars' enthusiasm has not dampened. The end of his speech entertained ideas of changing the Saltire, removing the pound, keeping poetry and storytelling alive, and legally 'doing away' with the Royal Family.

The debate concluded with the question of which way the audience was going to vote at the referendum. One person chose to vote against independence, with twenty-five undecided, the remainder want the Yes vote.

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