

## **EDINBURGH JAMES CONNOLLY RALLY, 7.6.14**

**On June 7<sup>th</sup>, Andy Ashe spoke on behalf of Edinburgh RIC at the annual James Connolly memorial rally organised by the James Connolly Society and held in the Cowgate.**

The Radical independence campaign is coalition of different groups and campaigns who are in favour of independence but do not support the vision set out by the SNP government in the white paper. This includes greens, socialists, anti-cuts campaigners, feminist and LGBT activists and republicans.

I don't need to tell people here, but radical independence make it clear that the UK state has failed. A state where there is a million dependent on food banks, while the Sunday Times rich list have doubled their wealth since 2008. A state where the political establishment are united in shameless scapegoating of immigrants, with racist harassment of ethnic minority communities and detention of asylum seekers including children. A state that is wedded to the NATO imperial alliance glorifies war and has deep, nasty nostalgia for empire. This state has failed working class people within and beyond its borders and we believe that with the powers of independence, we could change that.

War abroad and austerity at home is not the best we can hope for and we keep the memory of Connolly alive in fighting for the only real alternative: a break-up of the UK state and the fight for a socialist republic.

I know you have all heard it before but it bears repeating, our campaign for independence is not synonymous with that of the SNP.

We don't want the Queen as head of state, we don't want to be part of NATO, we refuse to blame immigrants for the economic crisis, and oppose homophobes like Brian Souter and above all we do not want a replacement of the low wage, low tax "business friendly" nightmare economy that engulfs the UK.

At radical independence we are united around the need for a better society and are agreed that a yes vote is a step forward in doing that. Even though we are a diverse group, the republican arguments are strong in our movement. Recently Radical independence Edinburgh voted to support the call for an All Ireland referendum and will push for Radical independence to take the same position nationally.

We don't think Scottish independence is going to solve anything in and of itself but the break of the UK state must be taken as a positive step for republicans, in Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England, and as a unique opportunity in strengthening working class power in politics in Scotland.

As I have said we oppose the SNP's vision of an independent Scotland but we also oppose the SNP's idea of how we will change society. We go out and campaign and canvass in working class areas of Edinburgh, we hold fortnightly meetings, leafleting sessions, speaker events and work to convince others in trade unions, anti-cuts and community groups that voting yes means a step forward. We believe that change comes about from movements of ordinary people, fighting for a better future, not leaving it up to governments or politicians.

This campaign is about putting working class interests at the centre of politics and engaging working class communities in the discussion about the future of Scotland. When we go out canvassing people- no matter what they are talking about; unemployment or trident, childcare or the NHS- the discussion always has one similarity- politics and politicians have failed, they are untrustworthy, corrupt and disinterested in the lives of working class people so there is no point in voting.

They are right. This is absolutely true.

But as republicans and as socialists we have a responsibility to go out and convince people that change is possible, that through a militant democracy organised from the ground up we can take control over our own lives and circumstances. That the power lies in organising with other working class people, and voting yes is just one part of this struggle to live in a society that works for us all.

I will finish with a quote from a great republican socialist Bernadette McAliskey. She spoke at the Radical Independence conference in Glasgow in November, and spoke about the lessons we should learn from the Irish republic. She said:

“When the cry for freedom was labour must wait. It’s 2014 and the labouring classes are still waiting for a republic fit for working people to live in”

Let’s take that lesson and build a Scottish republic that is fit for working people to live in.

Thank you.