

RIC EDINBURGH REPORT, 17.9.16

This report was for the National Forum, 17.9.16

1. General

We now have a 107 card carrying members.

2. Since the RIC National AGM

We have restarted regular RIC-Edinburgh meetings on a monthly basis. So far we have held two of these.

i) 27.7.16 - The situation after the Brexit Vote

The situation after the Brexit Vote was discussed after Neil Davidson gave an analysis of the Brexit results and what they meant. This was followed by discussion in groups.

We need to consider what we did well in the last IndyRef but also look at the weaknesses. What would we do differently?

Most groups talked about the need for **Political Education, both ideas and skills, for ourselves and for everyone.**

We need to refresh the vision of what indy means now.

We need to be active too and make a start now.

It is important we engage with people, stop guessing and start asking people what they want and need now. What can we do to make a difference.

We need to start changing what needs to be changed now.

Migrants and refugees

Defend rights of people living here and arriving here.

Other suggestions wer:- Livestreaming meeting so they are there as a resource.

The need to reach out to people, Leave and remain, Yes and No.

We agreed that **RIC Edinburgh will have monthly meetings**

Suggested themes for meetings

Currency, Basic income, Disability rights, Health, Environment, Agriculture, Human rights, Land reform.

Below are the **Action Points and Working Groups from the RIC AGM. The Working Groups** are open to all so please send your details to the address below if you would like to help with any of them.

We will have an **organising meeting on Tuesday 16 August at 6.00pm in the Cafe at the National Library of Scotland, George 1V Bridge to plan for our next RIC Edinburgh meeting**. The organising meeting is open to everyone so please come along if you can!

ii) 31.8.16 - Migrants and Asylum Seekers

There were 31 people in attendance.

Pinar Aksu from the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees spoke of her experiences visiting Lesbos (Greece) and the camps in the Calais/Dunkirk area, where there are about 10,000 refugees, including 800 unattended children.

Despite the racist claims of 'massive numbers', countries outside the EU were bearing the main brunt of the refugee crisis. Turkey, for example, now had 2.5million refugees. The UK had only offered to take 20,00 Syrian refugees by 2020. So far only 1800 have settled, including a 1000 in Scotland. 26 Scottish local authorities have accepted refugees.

In line with Cameron's 'Big Society' thinking, which was about withdrawing state support for welfare, a new 'Sponsor a Refugee' initiative had emerged, which was like sponsor an unwanted pet.

The Syrian refugee crisis had also moved the focus away from the inhuman treatment of people at Dungeness. There is still no time limit on detention.

Phil Chilton from Migrant Worker Rights in Australia outlined the horrific treatment of asylum seekers and migrant workers in Australia. Their meetings always started with a recognition that they were being held on land stolen from the original Aborigine population.

The Howard government had first ramped up the attacks on refugees who arrive by boat. Now the Turnbull government refuses all refugees who have arrived in this manner. Those that make it near the Australian coast are detained in Christmas Island (Indian Ocean), Nauru (Pacific Ocean) or Manus Island (Papua and New Guinea). These centres are run by private companies - Broad Spectrum and Wilson Security, and their running is deemed to be a private matter covered by business confidentiality. Conditions are appalling, leading to several attempted suicides. Refugees are offered money to return. The big pay-outs to Nauru and Papua & New Guinea the security companies and the amounts offered to returnees highlights that cost is not even the main factor, but overt racism. Islamophobia plays a major part in stigmatising refugees.

Phil also outline the work of (Trade) Unionists for Refugees.

Nuria from Oficina Precaria (OC) said she represented a 'Tory nightmare'. She is a socialist, feminist, single mother and a migrant! OC was set up to provide practical help to all migrants, provide mutual aid, advocacy (including legal backing) and empowerment.

Since 2004, the Residents Test has been used to impose completely arbitrary rulings, with threats of deportation if people don't accept the unacceptable, e.g. working unpaid hours. The new 2016 Immigration Act will have the effect of turning UK subjects, especially landlords, into agents of the state policing migrants. Byron Burgers has already collaborated with the

state in deporting workers. the Migrant Solidarity Network had organised a protest on 5th August.

OC has been involved in the Justice for Carers campaign. It also has a Roadshow which goes around the country with a power point presentation about Migrant Rights.

OC workers with the Edinburgh Campaign Against Poverty which meets at the Autonomous Centre. Mike Vallance gave a brief outline of this work.

Stan Reeves from The Welcoming (TW) outlined the origins of this campaign in the Pauli Friere bases idea of Dialogue. TW was initiated by the Adult Learning Project. One of their earliest initiatives had been a forum on the issue of land, which brought together Scottish campaigners and refugees from other countries where people had lost access to the land. A further fillip to TW was the decision to send refugees originally housed in Glasgow to Edinburgh.

TW is involved in the teaching English. It has also been involved in cultural exchange including a music project in Calais. TW uses Freire methods designed to provide empowerment through education in all its work.

The meeting then broke up into 4 groups to discuss the issues raised. After reporting back it was agreed to:-

- i) Back the demo on the 17th September, 15-17.00 at the Scottish Parliament. The RIC-Edinburgh banner will be there. Further info will be circulated.
- ii) To send representatives to the next Migrant Solidarity Network meeting on Friday, September 9th, at 18.00 in the Autonomous Centre.
- iii) Investigate how to put pressure on the Scottish government over Dungavel, the unattended children at Calais, and the effect of the 2016 Immigration Act.

3. Activities

a) June 24th - We joined the 500 strong Migrant Solidarity Network march on June 24th, the date the Brexit vote was announced.

July 30th - RIC members joined the United Colours of Leith march and to protest and take action against the neo-Nazi National Action, which had been putting up anti-migrant stickers and planned a demo in Leith.

(see <https://athousandflowers.net/2016/07/30/photos-sdl-drowned-out-as-leith-marches-against-racism/>)

August 5th - MSN organised the protest at Byron Burgers against their collaboration with the state to deport non-legal migrant worker. RIC members attended.

We participate in the Migrant Solidarity Network.

b) July 16th - We joined the Anti-Trident protest organised by the Edinburgh Anti-War Coalition at the bottom of the Mound. Again about 500 people participated.

We participate in the Edinburgh Anti-War Coalition, and have agreed to elect representatives to Scrap Trident at our next meeting.

c) We have sent Allan, then Pat, to the Working Group meetings for the RIC National Special Conference on October 1st.

d) We will be at the 'Solidarity with Refugees' event (to coincide with the one in London backed by Amnesty Scotland, Re:Act - Refugee Action Scotland, Refugee Survival Trust, East Lothian Welcomes Refugees and other Scottish organisations will stand in solidarity with the UK's leading refugee and human rights charities and faith leaders by hosting our own Scottish event on Saturday 17th September, 14.00-17.00 outside the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood.

e) We will be at the Craigmillar 'Yes' March and Rally, Saturday, September 24th. Assemble 12.30 at Craigmillar Library to the Jewel Miners Club, addressed by Robin McAlpine, Lee-Ann Menzies, Lesley Riddoch and Jim Sillars.

f) Our next RIC-Edinburgh meeting is on Wednesday, September 28th, in the Augustine United Church, 19.00 - 21.00. Ben Wray from Common Weal will introduce a discussion on the Universal Basic Income.

Allan Armstrong, 9.9.16