

RIC NATIONAL FORUM REPORT, 29.4.18

This was held in Dundee

Present:-Allan, , Pat, (Edinburgh), Angus (Angus & Mearns)

Apologies:- Doug (Aberdeen) Stuart (Dundee)

A) REPORT OF NATIONAL SPRING CONFERENCE

**RIC-Edinburgh hosted the RIC National Spring Conference,
Methodist Church, Nicolson Square, 10.3.18 , 11.00-1700**

Session 1: 11.30-12.30

The effect of Brexit on Scottish independence

Chair - James Foley (Dumfries RIC)

Maggie Chapman (Scottish Greens) & Neil Davidson (RS21)

Lunch : 12.30-13.15

Session 2: 13.15- 14.15

What now after the Scottish Independence Convention meeting

Chair - Myshela Heywood (Aberdeen RIC)

Lesley Riddoch, Jonathon Shafi (RIC)

Session 3: 14.15-15.30

The effect of Corbynism on Scottish politics

Chair - Stuart Fairweather (Dundee RIC)

Cat Boyd (RIC), Rory Scorthorne (Labour Party), Tommy Sheppard (SNP)

Session 4: 15.30-16.30

International connections Catalunya and Ireland

Chair - Frances Curran (Glasgow RIC)

George Kerevan (SNP), Gerry Carroll (People before Profit MLA)

Winding Up: 16.30-17.00

(all speakers in personal capacity)

Over a 120 people attended

The event had been covered by IndyLive and an article in bella caledonia:-

<http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/15/ric-spring-conference/>

It was agreed to support the Hands Off Our Parliament, Hands off Holyrood demonstration on March 10th.

2. AREA REPORTS

a) Aberdeen

Aberdeen Independence Movement (AIM) has been set up, split off from the “Yes 2” group up here. Supposed aim of AIM is to be more “professional” in their campaigning. There has been some controversy in the new group, with one of the North East Greens co-convenors (Guy Ingerson) leaving his position as co-chair of AIM. Time will tell what happens there. Not many RIC activists involved in internal organising of either AIM or Aberdeen Yes2. Jonathan Shafi spoke at the AIM conference for RIC.

There have been a series of protests against the bombing of Syria with RIC and CND activists at Ross Thompson’s office and in the centre of town. (Ross is our charming local Tory MP) RIC activists have also taken part in protests against bombing Syria and in response to the land day massacre in Gaza.

Work is in progress to create a “social centre” in the Aberdeen Trades Union Council (ATUC) offices, the idea being to provide a hub for activists in a range of campaigns. (RIC, SPSC, CND, Grampian Hunt Sabs etc) Still at an informal stage, but we have access to an office there now and are using the space for storage.

RIC Aberdeen have an article in the ATUC’s annual report again, and there are many events planned in this 150th anniversary year of ATUC. The May Day march on 5th looks like being particularly big this year.

RIC activists will be running a series of lectures/workshops entitled “Economics for Trade Union and Community Activists” starting on the 9th of May. All welcome if you’re up this way, see the attached flyer.

RIC continues as a vehicle for communication and coordination across campaigns across the North East and we will be coordinating an event at Mr Trump’s Golf course at Balmedie on Friday the 13th of July, whether or not the tangerine POTUS comes north. All welcome to join us and if anyone needs help with accommodation and/or transport let us know and we'll sort something out.

b) Angus & Mearns

Folk who went on to be founder members of RIC Angus & Mearns were at the very first Radical Independence Conference in Glasgow in November 2012, and our "local" group was formed shortly after that. The name of our group reflects that most folk involved lived in north Angus, but with some across the county boundary into the Mearns. Members scattered over a wide area, without any big city or central focus point. Making decentralisation a virtue of necessity, we have had meetings in half-a-dozen different towns and villages, and we have

had demonstrations in different places too. Although, Forfar being the County town of Angus, that's where we've had demonstrations against Angus Council.

Our first meeting of 2018 was held in Edzell, but we decided the next would be in the new "Blether In" yes shop due to open in Brechin.

Members of our group have been involved in various solidarity with Catalonia actions, for example Sandy Mathers organised a demonstration at the Spanish Consulate in Aberdeen, and Dave Coull got a motion of solidarity unanimously adopted by his union branch which turned out to be a model for other unions and indeed for the STUC.

We decided to hold, over the course of the six months or so of longer-daylight in 2018, a "Summer campaign" of street activities in Montrose, Arbroath, Brechin, Forfar, Kirriemuir, and Laurencekirk. The first of these was held in Montrose in late March, and it wasn't at all summery! In fact it was bloody freezing and wet and miserable. Nevertheless, the important thing is, we distributed some of our new leaflets, we displayed our banner, and we made our presence known. Our second street activity, in April, was in Arbroath. Weather much better. As well as a stall and leafleting, Kathy Perlo had made a poster proclaiming that the UK bombing of Syria is "Not in our name". Our next street activity is in Forfar on Saturday 26th May. We now have a megaphone, and any of us who feels like saying something during these street events is encouraged to use it. If we manage to get anybody to actually stop and listen to what we're saying, great. But, even if we don't, this is still worth doing. Because we can publish what we said. With a bit of creative presentation in a press release (maybe even a wee bit of shock/horror!) we could maybe make a story out of our presence in xxxxxxx for the press.

We had planned to take part in a protest against the Spring conference of the Scottish Tories in Aberdeen, but the Tories spoiled that by cancelling their conference due to "bad weather". Wimps.

At our February meeting, the guy from "Blether - In" said something about building a wall to keep the English out. This is NOT what the Radical Independence Campaign is about. Despite being on "his" territory, we made that very clear. We subsequently received an apology from the "Blether In" who have totally disassociated themselves from his remark.

In general discussion about our campaign, Keri said she has been actively campaigning for independence (of a distinctly radical and internationalist kind) since February 2005, although, as a citizen of the USA, who has been resident in Scotland since 1999, she doesn't get a vote.

Andy Duncan said the SNP government should have stopped dithering and called a new referendum before now. Of course, we want a lot more than just independence, but independence would mean we would IMMEDIATELY be rid of the House of Lords. This would be a crushing blow to the British ruling class. Andy said it was crazy that such a weak Tory government was getting away with so little opposition. He said the last time there was such a weak government in London, Oliver Cromwell and his pals chopped the King's head off.

The Scottish Republican Socialist Movement holds an annual march and rally in Arbroath to commemorate the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath on the 6th of April 1320. This year's rally was on Sunday the 8th of April. Sandy Mathers was delegated to

speak at that rally on behalf of RIC Angus & Mearns. Sandy reported that there were more folk at that rally than in previous years, and his talk was well received.

It was decided our April meeting should be our Annual General Meeting. Everybody who could be interested was duly notified well in advance. As we do have a bank account nowadays, it's important to have an AGM and everything done properly.

From a report of our meeting of 24th July 2017: *"Dave was formally elected as Secretary. It does help if we know somebody is supposed to get something done, but, other than that, we're not too rigid about roles. We can, for example, all of us, take the initiative in writing letters to the press, putting things in our own words while speaking 'on behalf of' Radical Independence Angus, as long as we know what we're saying is likely to be broadly endorsed by our fellow group members".*

From Dave's "Secretary's Report" to our 2018 AGM: "I've had letters in the Arbroath Herald, in the Montrose Review, in the Forfar Dispatch, in the Courier, also in the National, as well as writing about Radical Independence Angus & Mearns in other forums. In the last couple of months, I've had four contributions about Radical Independence Angus & Mearns on the 'Brechin Community' Facebook page. This has really annoyed some Tories, including a former Provost of Angus, who have tried to argue this was 'political propoganda' and shouldn't be allowed. It was pointed out that Radical Independence Angus is non-party-political, whereas the folk objecting are in fact Tories. It eventually dawned on them that the more they object, the more this boosts Radical Independence Angus.

I've written loads of stuff about Radical Independence Angus & Mearns on our own Facebook page, and on the RIC Internal Members FB page, and on the Scottish Left Forum, and on the UNITE the union page, and in various other places.

I have of course done reports of our meetings and circulated them by e-mail. Mind you, being half-deaf, it's quite possible I've missed some stuff out."

At our AGM it was decided that, while Dave should continue as Secretary, Angus Coull should take over as Minutes Secretary, taking the notes of meetings, on account of Dave being half-deaf.

It was decided Sandy Mathers should continue as our Treasurer.

The next RIC delegate forum in Dundee - Dave suggested we put forward that RIC should demand a new referendum on independence without any delay. Sandy said he thought that was already RIC's position. Dave said no, it isn't. Dave had put this forward at previous national meetings, without success. Although the case and the mandate for a new referendum on independence is well established, and the risks involved in delay seem greater than the risks of pushing ahead, at present, it appears to be the position of RIC, as a whole, that, while we will, of course, play an active part in any new referendum campaign (when one is called) we don't appear to be actively DEMANDING that a new referendum be called.

Angus Coull was delegated to attend the meeting in Dundee, and to argue the case, at that National Forum, that we should make a public demand for a new referendum, without delay.

In line with our generally agreed view that we're in favour of everybody being equal, and we don't need a Chairman, we decided at our AGM that we would rotate the chairing of meetings amongst different members. Our next meeting, at the Blether-In in FORFAR (not Brechin) on 21st May, will be chaired by Jean Clark.

Several of our members will be attending the Independence march and rally in Glasgow on Saturday 5th of May - with our great big Radical Independence Angus & Mearns banner on display.

We discussed the latest nonsensical "federalism" noises from Richard Leonard etc, these were unanimously dismissed as ill-thought-out and unworkable, but they are a sign that British Nationalists and supporters of centralisation are very worried about the prospect of a new referendum on independence.

The possibility that Donald Trump might actually venture to show his face for two minutes in the land of some of his ancestors was discussed, and the fact Balmoral appears to be being genuinely considered shows just how far the ruling class will go to avoid him meeting any ordinary citizens. We will play our part in publicly rejecting everything the fraud stands for.

Our next street activity will be at the Mercat Cross, Forfar.

c) Edinburgh

We now have 123 members

RIC- Edinburgh Assemblies

i) 24.1.18 - Contesting the Edinburgh City Council Cuts

8 people attended

Speaker - Duncan Smith - Chairperson City of Edinburgh Unison

Apologies - Susan Rae

Facilitator - Pete Cannell

Following the discussion it was agreed to circulate RIC-Edinburgh supporters with notice of the Edinburgh TUC meeting on 3.2.18

ii) 28.2.18 - Rail Nationalisation (postponed to May due to snow)

iii) 28.3.18 - Climate Change

Facilitator - Steve McMurray

Speakers - Sarah Beattie-Smith, World Wildlife Fund, Caroline Rance, Friends of the Earth

iv) **24.4.18 - No Problem Here - Understanding Racism in Scotland**

Facilitator - Samena Dean

Speakers - Neil Davidson, Maureen McBride, Allan Armstrong (contributors to the book *No Problem Here*)

This can be seen on You Tube at:-

https://youtu.be/_mC4qE9Dx1Y

The full version of Allan's contribution, which was edited for the book, can be read on line at Section C - *Britishness, the UK State, Unionism, Scotland and the 'National Outsider'* at:-

<http://republicancommunist.org/blog/2016/03/02/britishness-the-uk-state-unionism-scotland-and-the-national-outsider/>

RIC Edinburgh Organising Meetings

29.1.18

12.2.18 (special conference organising meeting)

5.3.18

2.4.18

28.4.18 (preparatory organising meeting for National Forum) - draft motion agreed

Other events supported by RIC-Edinburgh

i) bella caledonia 10th anniversary event, Counting House, Edinburgh, 24.1.18

Performers - Kathryn Joseph, Siobhan Wilson

ii) Workshop- Edinburgh Council Budget, 3.2.18, 10.00 - 13.00

The City Council is expected to be making a further £50m of cuts in the coming year which will result in loss of services and loss of jobs.

Speakers- Alison Murphy, Secretary, Edinburgh EIS, Brian Robertson, Secretary, UNITE, City of Edinburgh Council Branch, Des Loughney, Secretary, UNITE, Edinburgh Not For Profit Branch

iii) Anti-fascist Protest, Bute House, 4.2.18, 13.30

See report at:-

<https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/12292/scottish-defence-league-seems-have-been-facilitated-police-says-scottish-green-co>

iv) Art, Catalonia & the Spanish Civil War, looking at Picasso, Miro and the poster art of the Civil War, 5.2.18, 19.00, Augustine Church

Illustrated talk by Chris Bambery (author of *People's History of Scotland*) with George Kerevan (ex-SNP MP)

v) Book launch - *No Problem Here - Understanding Racism in Scotland* Blackwells, 15.3.18, 18.30

Speakers - Neil Davidson, Minna Liinpaa, Nasar Meer

vi) Hands Off Our Parliament, Hands off Holyrood demonstration. 23.3.18

About 1800 people had attended, many from outside Edinburgh. Despite its size there was no press coverage.

vii) Demonstration in support of Catalan education minister, Clara Ponsati, Edinburgh Sheriff Court, 28.3.18

Despite the low-key publicity this had been well attended. On this occasion there were plenty of journalists.

<http://radicalindyedinburgh.blogspot.co.uk/2018/04/defending-clara-ponsati.html>

It was agreed that RIC-Edinburgh should donate £100 to the legal funds to finance Clara Ponsati's legal defence

viii) Demonstration in support of Clara Ponsati, Edinburgh Sheriff Court, 12.4.18

I Song *In Defence of Our Professor*, by RIC supporter, Gerry Mulvenna

3. ORGANISATION OF RIC AGM - SATURDAY 30th JUNE, GLASGOW

It was agreed that the following two motions should be circulated to RIC branches and members for discussion at the AGM. Amendments and other motions should be asked for. These should be sent to Allan Armstrong

i) Motion from Angus in bold with preamble

Meetings of Radical Independence Angus have repeatedly agreed the need to be more forthright in demanding a new referendum on independence without delay. Although our

group is committed to this, at present, it appears to be the position of RIC, as a whole, that, while we will, of course, play an active part in any new referendum campaign (if and when one is called) we don't appear to be actually demanding a new referendum. So :

"The case and the mandate for a new referendum on independence is well established, and the risks involved in delay are greater than the risks of pushing ahead vigorously. We demand the Scottish Parliament act. Either an MSP from the Green Party or from the SNP could put to the Scottish Parliament a proposal for a new referendum on independence to be held within a specified time (such as six months) of their proposal. The Scottish Parliament should back such a proposal. Our demand is addressed to the Scottish Parliament, NOT to Westminster. We don't recognise Theresa May or any other Member of Westminster has a right to say 'Now is not the time'."

ii) Motion from Edinburgh

In view of the deteriorating political situation since the Brexit vote, highlighted by:-

- a) The government's growing centralisation of power in the UK state, which threatens the existing Devolution arrangements, and hard border partition in Ireland**
- b) The growing state attacks on migrants (with no long term guarantees for existing EU residents), and on non-white British subjects (i.e. a return to old-style British racism shown in the Windrush Affair), and the refusal to take in Syrian refugees (despite being directly involved in the war there) and in view of the positive example given by the Catalan people in voting for a Catalan Republic in defiance of the Spanish state, and the British government and Labour opposition's silence in the face of Spanish state repression**

RIC urges its supporters to:

- a) re-establish local RIC groups**
- b) develop the proposals discussed at the RIC Spring National Conference on 10.3.18**
- c) participate in the local autonomous, non-party Yes campaign groups (brought together, along with bella caledonia and Commonsplace, by the Scottish Independence Convention at the Building Bridges conference on 4.11.17)**
- d) support the activities of the Scottish Catalan Solidarity Campaign**
- e) support others opposing reaction and pushing for greater democratic rights, e.g. in Ireland, Wales, Euskadi**
- f) continue to provide support for workers in struggle and for democratically run campaigns organised to fight exploitation and oppression**
- g) back cultural initiatives which promote a Scottish internationalist outlook**

Within the broad autonomous Yes campaign, RIC will:-

- a) continue to uphold its Five Principles**
- b) highlight the obstacles in the path of a UK state sanctioned IndyRef2 due to the reactionary unionist nature of the current government (Conservative/DUP alliance) and the encouragement it takes from the Spanish government clampdown**

- c) **emphasise that any new independence campaign under the current or future Tory governments will have to be in defiance of the UK state**
- d) **call on Corbyn and Labour to recognise the right of Holyrood (given its already established mandate) to hold an independence referendum**
- e) **highlight the impossibility of a federal constitutional settlement under the UK's Crown Powers**
- e) **support the right of the Scottish people to determine its future relationship with other bodies, and with reference to the EU to be given a choice between**
 - i) **membership of the EU**
 - ii) **membership of European Free Trade Association**
 - iii) **membership of neither of these**
- f) **uphold the principle of a civic Scottish nation against all attempts to redefine Scottishness on the basis of racial or ethnic criteria, including attempts to restrict any franchise on this basis**

It was agreed that Allan should contact Jonathon to try and arrange a venue for the RIC AGM in Glasgow (The Adelaide Conference Centre or the CCA were suggested). As soon as this was done an online Conference Organising Committee should be set -up/

Allan Armstrong, 30.04.18