

WINNING YOUNG PEOPLE, 3.3.14

Fraser Young and Robbie Thomson,

Robbie said he had been involved in coordinating Edinburgh schools for East of Scotland RIC. It is hard to get organised in schools. It is important to distance ourselves from Better Together and Yes Scotland. RIC needs to bring in young speakers.

Fraser said that headteachers were afraid to allow meetings to go ahead for fear of complaints particularly from parents. If debates go ahead they are usually confined to internal school speakers. Eddie had organised a debate in Musselburgh Grammar. Voter registration is important for involving young people. There is a need for more RIC events. The new media is important. Twitter is already dominated by 'Yes' Scotland.

The meeting then was organised into pairs to discuss the issue. This was followed by a Report Back.

Aly, Robbie and Fraser had thought that issues that affect young people should be raised in the campaign such as low youth wages, poverty and lack of youth representation. The obstacles to getting into schools also needed to be addressed.

Allan and Pat, who are both ex-teachers, pointed out that there was a RIC-supporting candidate in the EIS Vice-Presidential campaign. The local EIS could be asked to back speakers going into schools. The schools were also supposed to be promoting 'citizenship'. This was an opportunity to put pressure on the local council, especially as it is run by an SNP/Labour coalition. If RIC could produce a national package of material for schools and colleges this would be useful when pushing for debates.

Aisha and Chris emphasised the importance of the anti-racist demonstration in Glasgow on March 22nd. Aisha said that she had been invited into Holyrood High by a history teacher to speak after she had visited Auschwitz. Many young people were very suspicious of the mainstream parties. They would probably come to the forthcoming demonstration against the Tory Conference in Edinburgh.

Eddie and Willy said that all the campaigns had to be united together. The issues of democracy and citizenship needed to be raised in schools. Willie also said that those adults at the RIC conference needed to talk to their children.

Amie and Ian said head teachers would use the excuse that Better Together would not provide speakers to prevent debate. Better Together did not want democratic discussion. It was important to cover both schools and colleges. Amie thought that a gig would be a good idea to attract young people.

Jerome from The Netherlands and Marisa from Greece mentioned the international dimension. Marisa emphasised the importance of the fight against Golden Dawn. Jerome pointed out how the SSP had been leafleting in support of immigrants to counter the racist poison of UKIP and the Tories. The SNP's *White Paper* was more tolerant.

Irene and Kirsty talked about their own children. At her work Irene organised social events, especially traditional music, for the elderly, with young musicians. It was possible to raise the

issue of independence at such events. Kirsty added that she was not aware that Better Together existed in Leith.

Judy and Bob thought it was important that RIC conducted some research to find out why there were still so many young people prepared to vote 'No'.

David and Sophia asked how do we ensure that young people are on the electoral register.

Andy and Alice said that formal meetings are scary for young people. There is a need to get across what independence would mean for young people. Young people needed to take a lead. Alice added that too often young people were told what to think, not how to think. RIC needed to be more 'cool' with people speaking at young people's level. She also said it was important to talk to young people at work as well as in the schools and colleges.

Robbie replied by saying there was still a problem with a 'Yes' vote being seen as a vote for the SNP. The 'No' vote has three official backing parties – Tories, Lib-Dems and Labour. Furthermore, the SNP are the only force given any attention in the media. Young people often think that the SNP are making false promises. Others just don't care because of their alienation from the political process.

This Report Back was followed by a general Discussion.

Kirsten emphasised how the 'No' campaign resort to quick soundbites which, even when quite obviously exaggerated or untrue, still had an impact. Not everybody follows Facebook or Twitter.

Alice said that getting a 'Yes' vote was not enough. RIC needed to advance its own radical agenda.

Willy said it was not necessarily the age of the speaker that was important, but what they said. He had spoken recently at a college meeting of 300, and was well received. Tony Benn was able to speak to old and young people. It was important to make sure that young people were more involved, but both younger and older people have an interest in changing the world.

Andy pointed out how well young speakers like Cat Boyd and Saffron Dickson were received at the RIC conference. They had influence because they were young.

Kirsten said she was very impressed by the number of young people at the RIC conference.

Chris said that presentation is important. However, it was radical politics that had the widest appeal. Young people were involved in the occupation of Labour's Millbank HQ during the 2011 student protests and the riots of the same year. He said that Edinburgh College lecturers were prepared to allow 'Yes' speakers to address them.

Amie said there is an Edinburgh University 'Yes' campaign. However, there needed to be wider forums specifically for young people.

Kirsten suggested that where there was no 'No' speaker prepared to debate, a 'Yes' speaker could take on that role. This was in the best tradition of university debating.

Robert agreed about the need to radicalise the campaign, but the problem was how to get accepted in the first place.

Pat said that young people are as diverse as older people. She knew a young person who had attended RIC conference who had been impressed by Saffron. She now felt a lot more confident in arguing her case.

Alice said that there was a Third Sector 'Yes' campaign. This involved youth workers so it would be a good idea to approach them.

Willy said that community workers in North Edinburgh had already been involved in promoting debate. There have been discussions in Broughton and Craigroyston schools.

Allan emphasised that one aspect of our radical politics was an emphasis on democracy and citizenship. The council and school authorities should be challenged over the bureaucratic stifling of debate and their continued acceptance of young people being subjects not citizens. He also wondered if a present day equivalent of 'Rock Against Racism' could not be organised, given the many musicians who support independence.

Amie asked how do young people currently organise within RIC.

Fraser said that Liam McLaughlin is the Scottish RIC organiser and there was a national blog.

Judy emphasised the need to have a meeting of young RIC member and contacts.

Simon said that young people are the most important constituency, since it is their future. Therefore it was important to get into every school in the city. Older people can offer guidance. Due to poor education in the schools, there is little knowledge of inspirational figures like John Muir. Young people don't know about plays like *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*.

Decisions taken

- 1. Fraser and Robbie to organise a RIC meeting specifically for young people.**
- 2. Edinburgh branch to contact Edinburgh College to take part in a debate.**
- 3. Edinburgh branch to produce a leaflet for the demo at the Tory Party conference.**

Edinburgh branch to suggest at the next RIC National Forum (March 29th) that the organisation produce a national package, which can be used in schools and colleges