E-conference charts new beginning for Radical Indy

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by Jack Ferguson

(Photo by Connor Beaton; RIC contingent on Scottish Independence demonstration, Glasgow January 2020)

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High on the agenda was a discussion about targeted non violent direct action and civil disobedience, demanding Scotland's right to self determination. This drew on Scotland's rich history of direct action, and involved veterans of the anti-nuclear and climate movements sharing their expertise.

Among those addressing the conference were Brenda Eadie of the NHS Workers for Fair Pay campaign, Extinction Rebellion activist Annie Lane and Janet Fenton, Scottish representative to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

A strong theme running throughout the event was the need for

internationalism, and for Scotland to play a more positive role in the world than it has historically. Opening the conference, Katie Gallogly Swan, global trade and environmental policy expert, said:

“One of the outcomes of Scottish independence would be a new position for Scotland in global politics. As it stands, global governance is not advancing the rights and interests of the majority of the world– whether working class communities in Scotland or the citizens of the Global South.

‘Institutions built on rigged rules’

“The economic institutions are built on rigged rules, which prioritise profit-making for big firms, while leaving workers and poor people everywhere to grapple with increasing precarity, austerity, and shredded social safety nets—socialism for the rich, and exploitation for everyone else. We can’t let an independent foreign policy mean ingratiating ourselves with powerful countries and entering the race-to-the-bottom on worker’s rights and taxation.

“We can’t jump on the bandwagon of using the massive industrial transformation the world needs to tackle climate change to just be a means to reassert global dominance of economies like our own—it hasn’t served the majority of people here, and it won’t in the future.”

Continuing the international theme, Welsh and Irish comrades joined a session on co-operating across these islands to break the British state. Following this, a discussion on global solidarity was opened by Raed Debiy, a political activist in the West Bank, Aratz Estonba of the Basque internationalist organisation Askapena, Sarah Glynn from Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan, and Paul Figueroa of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, who said ahead of the day:

“This weekend as I share with Scottish comrades about Puerto Rico’s struggle for independence from the United States, Joe

Biden will also be meeting with Queen Elizabeth. There is no better time than now for us to come together and reaffirm that the struggles of Scotland and Puerto Rico are connected as we look to forge radical paths towards independence that will defend our national interests, our environment and resources, grow our working class, and unite us with the rest of the world."

As well as discussion and ideas, the conference had a strong focus on organising.

Throughout the day, participants were invited to use online tools to give their answers to a series of questions about how the campaign should go forward. Training sessions aimed to equip those attending with knowledge about organising locally and communicating a message through social and traditional media.

This process will now continue through RIC's local groups, where members will be actively seeking to engage with their communities and everyone across the pro-indy left.

RIC currently has active local groups in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee as well as Angus and Mearns.

Earlier this year, it was prematurely announced by some former members that RIC had dissolved as a national body, following a controversial meeting convened over Zoom. However, RIC's local groups were not part of this process, and have taken the decision to relaunch the national campaign together.

Hope in RIC's revival

Those involved in organising the conference come from a wide range of backgrounds, including climate activists, peace campaigners, SNP, socialists, Greens and republicans. They include new activists and those who have been part of RIC since its foundation in 2012. Feedback from the event emphasised again and again that RIC's revival had given them

hope again, and that many have been waiting for the signal to begin campaigning again.

Since 2014, the independence movement has splintered around a number of key fractures, often contributing to an atmosphere that can become insular and unwelcoming to wider society. This is in a context where the SNP continues to fail to articulate a clear vision for the post-neoliberal era, and of rampantly growing social conservatism within sections of the indy movement.

The need for unity among the left that standsfor a radical vision of independence, and against all forms of discrimination and inequality, has never been greater.

As a key part of the historic 2014 movement, RIC today can play a key role. Following the Scottish Parliament elections, there is once again clearly a democratic mandate to hold an independence referendum.

Yet Boris Johnson and the Tories look set to continue to defy the will of the people, ignoring polls in the last year showing a narrow pro-indy majority. Grassroots pressure must now be ratcheted up if we are to have any hope of escaping the impasse of democracy denied.

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Scottish Socialist Voice

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