

## LONDON SAYS YES RALLY, 6.9.14



Sometimes a day is a long time in politics. On the morning of Saturday 6 September, as delegates were preparing for the TUC conference in Liverpool, thousands of other activists were descending on London for final leg of the People's March for the NHS. Meanwhile a group of London-based socialists organised by the magazine Red Pepper were catching the 9.43am 'Yes Train' from Kings Cross to Edinburgh, to spend a weekend of solidarity activism supporting the Radical Independence Campaign's work to maximise the Yes vote.

At the same time the well-known social media commentator Mark McGowan, aka The Artist Taxi Driver, arrived at Heathrow airport to pick up, [and interview](#), Bernadette McAliskey. After the interview he took her to join activists from Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England at South Bank University for the London Says Yes rally.

The rally, which was initiated by Left Unity members, involved representatives from many organisations on the left that support a Yes vote in the Scottish independence referendum, including Occupy London, the Sons of Malcolm (black internationalist activists) and Agreement of the People as well as various smaller left wing groups. There were messages of support from Leanne Wood, leader of Plaid Cymru, as well as the Green Party and Adam Ramsay of OpenDemocracy.

The atmosphere at the event reflected the growing enthusiasm and excitement that is finally filtering down from Scotland and beginning to impact on a largely demoralised, fractious and fragmented left in England – the feeling expressed by Paul Mason of Channel 4 News that [“Something incredible is happening in Scotland”](#).



Allan Armstrong from the Radical Independence Campaign spoke of the [Declaration of Calton Hill](#) in 2004, which laid the basis of the flowering of the mass democratic movement involving a new layer of working class activists that we see today: activists who view a Yes victory as the first step towards creating a new state that acts in their interests and not the interests of the rich. Allan spoke of the experience of the Radical Independence Campaign “[Mass Canvass](#)” approach, which showed that the most impoverished and politically disenfranchised sections of the working class were coming out in favour of Yes.

Steve Freeman, of the Republican Socialist Alliance and Southwark Left Unity, reminded us of the comments David Cameron made in February, when Cameron urged people outside Scotland to “get on the phone” to urge the Scots to stay. Steve said: “Scotland is staying on the same island as the rest of us. But the Scottish people have the chance to take more powers into their own hands. However, Cameron is right on one thing. The future of Scotland is not simply a Scottish question. It is a class question and therefore not restricted by the Scottish border or who actually votes.

“Cameron proves his own contention. He will not be able to vote, yet his future is on the line. If this referendum is lost he will have to face the music at home and abroad.”

Bernadette McAliskey’s inspiring contribution spoke of the history of British imperialism and the crimes committed by the British state in every continent on the globe. She described the Queen as a “receiver of stolen goods”, and spoke of the importance of empowering a new generation of youth to take the future into their own hands (see <http://links.org.au/node/4039>).

Speaking on behalf of Left Unity’s Scottish Republic Yes Tendency, Mark France spoke of the new 16 and 17 year old Generation Yes activists like [Saffron Dickson](#), who have been inspired by figures like Bernadette to take up the struggle for a Scottish socialist republic.

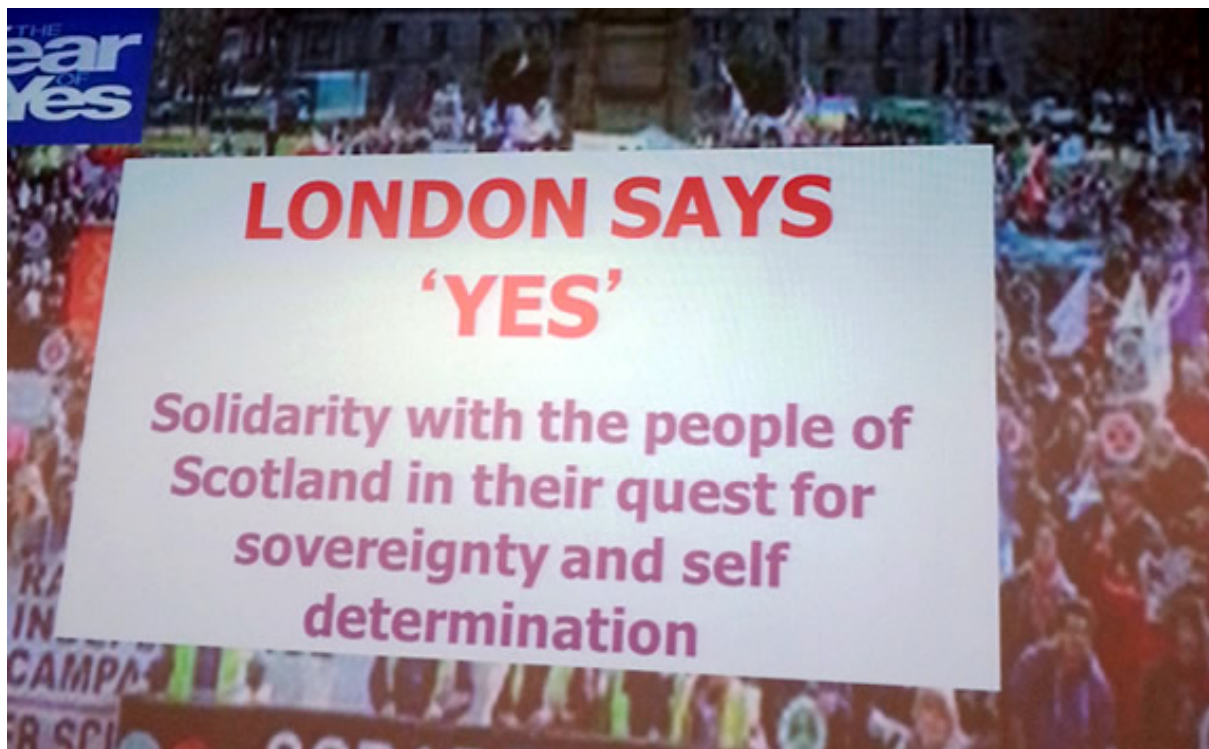
As the rally was coming to a close, some people in the audience were getting text messages from friends and comrades in Scotland. Rumours were spreading like wildfire that a new opinion poll was about to be announced that put the Yes campaign in the lead!

After months of unrelenting media coverage which painted the Yes campaign as some sort of minority, narrow-minded “blood-and-soil nationalist” campaign, and the constant threats and bully tactics of the Unionists, finally something had happened to prove that the tide had turned – finally, the reality on the ground experienced by the Radical Independence campaigners had found a reflection in the opinion polls. Sisters and brothers held up their

Yes posters high and roared “YES!” as the rally came to an end. They vowed to do whatever they could to get the message across, especially to those socialists in England who still seem to misunderstand the dynamics of the Scottish independence referendum.

As thousands of NHS campaigners drifted away from Trafalgar Square, some demoralised by the way a genuine grassroots movement to defend the NHS had been cynically captured to launch Labour’s 2015 election campaign, not so far away at South Bank University, filled with hope and renewed enthusiasm, the Yes supporters drafted and signed a “Love Letter to Scotland”. Saturday 6 of September was a long day... *it was the day the tide turned and, with the help and solidarity of Left Unity members in England in the last week of the campaign, that tide can become unstoppable.*

**Mark France**



also see:- *A Message to the People of Scotland* from the London Artist Taxi Driver at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsxJyV35xps>

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**Allan Armstrong did not have enough time to give the last section of his talk (he thought he had 15 minutes not 10 minutes – his fault not the organisers!) His last section would have been based on the notes that Allan and Pat Smith of the Edinburgh RIC had prepared for Anna Cabre the Edinburgh RIC delegate to a weekend of solidarity action in Catalunya (along with Liam O’Hare of Glasgow RIC).**

## **Why we have the Radical Independence Campaign**

1. The official ‘Yes’ campaign is run centrally by the SNP. After September 18th it will be closed down, and the SNP government will return to the Holyrood mandate it received in 2011 under the existing Westminster rules. They will select certain politicians and other figures, e.g. Conservative, Lib-Dem and Labour Scottish unionists, and business, senior trade union and religious leaders to conduct negotiations with the UK state and to draft a new constitution behind our backs.

RIC sees a ‘Yes’ vote on September 18<sup>th</sup> as an exercise in the sovereignty of the Scottish people. We will build a popular movement for a new constitution, drawing in those people who have already been involved activity, those abandoned by the official ‘Yes’ campaign, and those new people energised by the prospect of real change. We intend to take this campaign to the housing schemes, small towns and villages throughout Scotland.

2. The official ‘Yes’ campaign is limited in the wider appeals it can make. It is trying to keep people and bodies like Sir Brian Souter, the City of London and NATO onside.

In contrast, RIC has campaigned amongst those fighting the ‘bedroom tax’, against cuts in services, whether imposed by the SNP or Labour, those claiming benefits and subjected to attacks by ATOS. We also work with Scottish CND in its campaign against Trident and NATO. Scottish CND supports independence.

3. The official ‘Yes’ campaign is Scottish nationalist. RIC is Scottish internationalist. The official ‘Yes’ campaign is pro-monarchist. RIC is republican.

From the start we have located our campaign within the contest of the European wide fightback against austerity. We had speakers from Greece and France at our founding conference. We supported Greek migrant called protest against Papandreou in Edinburgh. We have located our campaign within the international fight against imperialism. . We have supported Scottish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign in its actions against the barbaric Israeli state in Gaza. We have located our campaign in the wider struggle for self-determination within the UK and EU. We have had speakers from Wales, Ireland and England, as well as providing speakers in return. We have had speakers from Catalunya and Eusakdi, and sent speakers to Catalunya.

4. The official ‘Yes’ campaign is controlled from the top, only drawing in supporters as footsoldiers for a ‘Yes’ vote.

RIC strives to be democratic organisation, involving its supporters in discussion, debate, decision making and action. Our strength lies in our local branches. We still need to develop a more democratic national organisation. Active participatory involvement is needed if we want a new Scotland in a new world.