

RIC AGM, 4-Apr-2015, Allan Armstrong, Edinburgh

About 50 delegates and individuals from local RIC groups in Aberdeen, Angus & Mearns, Ayrshire, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow East, Glasgow South and Stirling, and one of the affiliated groups, the Republican Communist Network, attended the organisation's first AGM on Saturday, April 4th. Local groups could send 4 delegates and affiliated organisations 2 delegates.

The main item on the agenda was the proposed new constitution. The proposed constitution confirmed RIC's status as a movement, open to people from any party or none, who agreed with RIC's 5 Principles:-

We stand for a Scotland that is:

- a) For a social alternative to austerity and privatisation
- b) Green and environmentally sustainable
- c) A modern republic for real democracy
- d) Committed to equality and opposition to discrimination on grounds of gender, race, disability, sexuality or age
- e) Internationalist and opposed to war, NATO and Trident

A Working Group, put together at two earlier RIC National Forums, drew up the proposed constitution. Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh RIC groups had submitted papers to this Working Group. After discussion and debate at the February National Forum in Edinburgh an agreed set of proposals was drawn up to be put before the AGM.

Myshele Haywood, from Aberdeen RIC, the Working Group convenor, took the delegates through the constitutional proposals. This was followed by discussion and consideration of some further amendments from Dundee RIC. The constitution, with the Dundee amendments, was overwhelmingly agreed. The common purpose, developed through joint work throughout the referendum campaign and beyond, meant that agreement was reached far more quickly than the organisers expected.

This meant there was time before the break for Steve Freeman of the Republican Socialist Alliance to speak to the AGM. Steve had attended the previous two RIC national conferences in Glasgow, addressing the 'internationalism from below' session at the 2013 conference, along with Bernadette McAliskey (Ireland) and Mary MacGregor (Scotland). Steve outlined the reasons he was standing as a republican socialist candidate in Bermondsey and Old Southwark in the May General election. In contrast to other candidates, he would be standing as an English internationalist, who appreciated that the Scottish referendum campaign represented the beginning of a democratic revolution, which challenged not only corrupt Westminster, but the whole unionist basis of the UK.

Steve's contribution was very well received. It also provided Steve with the opportunity to display the English republican flag. It shows the colours green of the first radical English republicans - the Levellers; purple of the women suffragists; and red of the international working class.

The last part of the AGM was given over to the setting up of RIC national Coordination Teams, covering Facilitation & Events, Finance & Fundraising, Secretarial, Promotion & Media and Safer Spaces. In addition the following Working Groups were agreed - Social Justice, Sustainability, Democracy, Equality, Internationalism, Creative, Land Reform and Anti-Fracking. In addition to

those who signed up for these groups on the day, appeals would also go out to the local RIC group and affiliated organisations for further volunteers.

Altogether, a very worthwhile afternoon and a big step forward for RIC in putting forward its own Scottish internationalist vision of self-determination, as part of the global movement for social justice and democracy.