

# SNP presents draft constitution for independent Scotland

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On June 16, the Scottish National Party (SNP) published a draft proposal for a constitution in the event of a “Yes” vote for independence in the referendum on September 18.

A series of hollow pledges are included that commit the authors to nothing, while seeking to provide credibility to the claim that a Scottish state would be more progressive than the current constitutional set-up in Britain.

An independent Scotland would, the draft declares, implement the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and commit the state authorities to combating global warming and environmental degradation. Regarding foreign policy, the draft states, “In conducting its international relations and in determining its foreign policy, Scotland will... observe, and promote respect for, international law.”

Every member of the European Union (EU) has formally signed the ECHR, but this has done nothing to prevent the establishment of a vast surveillance apparatus across the continent that infringes on many of the core rights the agreement supposedly guarantees. The rights to freedom of expression and freedom of thought and opinion are of little consequence in light of the revelations of US whistle-blower Edward Snowden. The SNP has confirmed plans to establish its own intelligence agency that will work closely with its British counterpart, MI5.

Nor has the formal acknowledgement of the ECHR done anything to stop EU members across the continent imposing some of the most brutal austerity measures since the Second World War, driving millions into poverty and making even the right to life a daily struggle for many. Across the continent, moreover, immigrants, refugees and minorities such as Roma are systematically scapegoated and persecuted.

Scottish separatism offers no alternative to such conditions. The SNP’s policies of slashing corporation tax to attract inward investment and seeking EU membership will necessitate budget cuts on a similar scale to those imposed throughout Europe.

One of the key goals of the draft constitution is the subordination of a future independent state to the legal and political framework of the EU, with all of the cost-cutting and social attacks this will entail. The document declares that Scottish law will not be valid if it conflicts with EU law.

The commitment to base foreign policy on international law is equally worthless. The United States and its allies in NATO, an organisation which the SNP has stated it will join, have cited international law on countless occasions to launch aggressive wars against a number of states, including Serbia, Libya and Iraq. The fact that the SNP would be opening its ports and airports to nuclear-armed allies in seeking NATO membership further exposes the dishonesty of its claims to be removing nuclear weapons from Scotland by demanding the closure of the Trident base on the River Clyde.

The draft also commits Edinburgh to maintain the Queen as its head of state, making a mockery of the assertion in the document’s opening line that “In Scotland, ‘the people’ are sovereign.”

In an independent Scotland, the monarchy would retain its extensive powers in the legislative process, including the ability to refuse to sign legislation, as well as its numerous privileges in social and political life. But this is only the most telling refutation of such claims. References to the sovereignty of “the people” carry no meaning in a society divided into classes with wholly antagonistic interests.

In the face of the deepest crisis of capitalism since the

1930s, there is no basis for a new state based on the profit system to offer anything to the working class. A Scottish state would be a capitalist state, committed to imposing austerity at home on behalf of the banks and corporations and participating in all the military adventures and colonial-style manoeuvres that NATO and the EU wish to undertake.

It is to conceal the fundamental division of society along class lines that SNP Deputy Leader Nicola Sturgeon stated that the constitution would provide the opportunity to develop “national values—to be determined in a post-independence convention.” She went to say that the constitution would embody “the values of the nation” and guarantee “a relationship of respect and trust between the institutions of the nation and its people.”

The SNP government has been indispensable in the imposition of the austerity measures adopted by successive governments in London to pay for the bailout of the banks in 2008.

Some of the worst levels of social inequality in the UK exist in Scotland. The recently published UK rich list revealed that the top 1,000 individuals possessed total wealth equivalent to a third of national economic output. Scotland saw a faster increase in the wealth controlled by the super-rich than the average rate across Britain.

Meanwhile, a report in the *Scotsman* earlier this month revealed that food bank use has risen sharply. The Trussell Trust, one of the largest food bank providers, saw a five-fold increase in usage across Scotland in the past twelve months and has handed out 639,000 meals.

A *Guardian* investigation illustrated that the dominance of international finance capital is already considerable, with only one third of the financial sector, 20 percent of whiskey and salmon production, and virtually no North Sea Oil controlled by companies based in Scotland.

The SNP seeks to conceal this reality with its invocation of a false historical narrative that casts Scotland as an oppressed nation like the former colonies of the imperialist powers, rather than an integral part of one of the most powerful imperialist states. According to the document, “self-determination developed during the 20th century and has been codified in the fundamental and universal documents of

the international system.” It continues: “The referendum, and becoming an independent country, would be an act of self-determination by the people of Scotland.”

It would be nothing of the kind. The SNP is pursuing a right-wing programme to establish Scotland as a cheap-labour platform for inward investment. The only self-determination on offer is that for a privileged wealthy and upper-middle class elite that will be freed to establish direct relations with global finance capital and the major capitalist institutions like the EU.

It is the task of groups like the Greens and the pseudo-left Scottish Socialist Party, both of which are fully integrated into the official “Yes Scotland” campaign, to cover over such social realities and give the SNP’s fraudulent claims some much needed credibility. In opposition to any appeal to the working class based on workers’ independent interests, they insist that a stronger basis exists for national unity between Scottish workers and the ruling class in Scotland than between working people throughout Britain and internationally.

In a comment published in the *Daily Record*, Green Party leader Patrick Harvey hailed the publication of the draft constitution. Harvey wrote, “The proposals mean that everyone will have the opportunity to shape Scotland’s future.”

Working people should have no illusions in such bogus democratic rhetoric. The conditions of poverty and social misery and an undemocratic political system dedicated to the wealthy elite are not only a reality for working people in Scotland, but confront the working class throughout Britain and internationally.

Contrary to the nationalists’ claims, workers in Scotland are not oppressed because of their nationality, but because of their class position in capitalist society. The only way to combat this is through a turn to an internationalist and socialist programme and the active rejection of all attempts to divide working people along national lines.



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