

# Your Party Scotland adopts separatism

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Last month, a Your Party Scotland founding conference attracted just 200 people and significantly deepened Your Party's political debacle.

From the first, Your Party has been bogged down in vicious factional fighting between Jeremy Corbyn's "The Many" faction and Zarah Sultana's "Grassroots Left", incorporating much of the British pseudo left.

Both factions put forward social reformism under capitalism.

Corbyn and his supporters, led by longtime Labour Party and trade union apparatchiks, advocate the mildest collection of social improvements. They conceive of the party as an instrument to pressure the Labour Party, which Corbyn never wanted to leave.

Sultana offered a more left-sounding agenda, with occasional mentions of "workers' control of the economy" and more trenchant criticisms of the Labour government's social and war policies.

Thus riven, Your Party's membership has fallen to 41,000 members, of whom 2,500 were delegated to attend the founding conference, and 25,000 voted in the party's leadership elections.

Neither Corbyn's nor Sultana's vision of social concessions and opposition to imperialist war under capitalism are remotely viable. Both are completely at odds with the trajectory of British and world capitalism, in which the globally integrated world economy is organised by competing cliques of the capitalist oligarchy based on the most brutal exploitation of the working class. All the social reforms of previous eras are being rapidly destroyed, along with democratic rights, fuelling an eruption of militarism and war.

## Your Party Scotland conference votes for separatism

Developments in Scotland have deepened the factional fissures. Your Party in Scotland is dominated by the nationalist pseudo left, with the Socialist Party Scotland (SPS), the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the Scottish Socialist Youth (SSY) and a clutch of former Greens all supporting Sultana's Grassroots Left faction. All see Your Party as a vehicle in which to revive their campaign tail ending the Scottish National Party's (SNP) drive for a second Scottish independence referendum. In a 2014 vote, Scottish secession from the UK was rejected by 55 to 45 percent.

In line with this, the Dundee conference voted by a substantial majority to set up an "autonomous nation" Your Party Scotland (YPS). This was presented by Philip Stott of the SPS as an opportunity to walk away from "the collective mistakes, the bureaucratic and top-down measures which have dominated the first seven or eight months of the existence of Your Party..."

He then argued for a Scottish version of the English and Welsh party's reformist agenda, criticising Your Party purely regarding its restrictive organisation structures provided "an opportunity to fully engage in an independent discussion on how we relate to the Holyrood elections, how we relate to the national question..."

The main debate at the founding conference, ignoring all else, was on Scottish independence.

Owen Maitland of Scottish Socialist Youth, and a political officer for Unite the Union, wanted to re-unite the political forces that campaigned alongside the SNP for a "Yes" vote in the 2014 independence poll.

"The Scottish independence movement represented one of the biggest instances of mass-scale working class engagement with a political movement since the days of the miners' strike and the poll tax," he claimed. "We have to face reality, there is no British road to socialism, there is no route to a better society within the confines of an archaic, crumbling imperial power waging a perpetual class war on behalf of the super rich."

Agreeing with Maitland, the conference voted in favour of a political statement which declared:

"Your Party Scotland recognises the ongoing and evolving nature of the Scottish constitutional debate, and the variety of deeply held views held by our members and the wider Scottish public. We support and will defend the right to self-determination, including the right of the Scottish Parliament to call a second referendum on independence.

"Your Party Scotland believes that an independent Scotland is the best route to improve the lives of people in Scotland and achieve socialism."

YPS voted to stand candidates in the Scottish elections on this basis.

## Lessons of the SEP's 2014 campaign for a "No" vote

Fundamental points must be made on this unequivocal embrace of nationalism and separatism by YPS.

Firstly, there is no national question in Scotland. As the Socialist Equality Party noted in its 2014 statement "Vote "no" in the Scottish referendum—Fight for a socialist Britain":

Scotland is not an oppressed nation, but part of an imperialist state. Its ruling elite has committed countless crimes and shared in the brutal exploitation of millions the world over. Waving the Saltire [Scottish flag] in people's faces is meant to conceal the basic fact that workers in Scotland are not oppressed because of their nationality, but because of their class position within capitalist society. This is just as reactionary as the waving of the Union Flag by their opponents.

The Act of Union in 1707 provided the framework for the development of capitalism and a vast growth in the productive forces. This in turn formed the basis for the emergence of the first industrial working class in the world. Since then, working people in England, Scotland and Wales have fought side by side in epic struggles, including the great revolutionary Chartist movement for democracy and equality, the general strike of 1926, the mass strike movement that brought down a Tory government in 1974 and the

year-long miners' strike of 1984-85.

Secondly, social reformism under capitalism is bankrupt everywhere in the world. The prospects of a meaningful and sustained increase in living standards being secured by carving out a new and tiny capitalist state from the UK are non-existent.

Scottish separatism, and the various left garbs in which it is cloaked, serve definite class interests opposed to those of the working class on both sides of the border.

The SNP remains the dominant capitalist party in Scotland, seeking ever greater autonomy from Westminster on behalf of Scottish capital. While seeking to maintain stable relations with British imperialism, on which its trade depends, it sees separatism as a means of establishing more direct connections with the European Union and both European and US transnational corporations. The goal is to establish a cheap labour, low-tax investment platform focused on the European market, emulating the policies pioneered by the bourgeoisie in the Republic of Ireland.

This is the perspective which is enthusiastically backed by the declining membership of the pseudo-left tendencies, dominated by aspiring middle class layers in the trade union apparatus, academia, local government and cultural institutions, seeking to benefit from the bounty and status they think would accrue to them within any new state arrangements.

Their cynical talk of "anti-imperialism" and progressive social reform depends upon their concealing the experiences of other European separatist movements.

In areas such as Catalonia and Flanders, these are aimed at stopping the flow of tax revenues from these relatively rich regions to poorer parts of the country through social spending, allowing a reduction of the tax burden to the benefit of the regional capitalists and the upper middle class. Separatism also gives these elites the freedom to undercut international competitors with corporate tax breaks and slashed protections, accelerating a brutal and fratricidal race to the bottom in terms of the living standards of the working class.

### **The SNP beneficiaries of the pseudo-left rejection of socialism**

Thirdly, Maitland's claims about the working class character of the 2014 separatist movement are bogus. Following decades of betrayals and defeats at the hands of the trade union and Labour Party apparatus, sections of workers and young people in Scotland certainly became caught up with the "Yes" movement. But they fell in behind a movement dominated by the capitalist SNP and its myriad pseudo-left apologists who echoed the lie that sustained social improvements would follow independence.

While the SNP busied itself with persuading big business and the major imperialist powers that its perspective of a new capitalist state headquartered in Edinburgh would serve their interests, the pseudo left campaigned in working-class areas presenting the same divisive agenda as a step towards socialism.

Although the referendum vote was lost, the main beneficiaries were the SNP who, despite already having years of austerity policies under their belt after the 2008 financial crisis, secured their electoral dominance. Since then, it has almost wholly supplanted the Labour Party in national elections and expelled Labour from many of the local authorities it ran for decades, only to continue and intensify the policies of endless spending squeezes that made Labour so despised.

Maitland's demagogic comments about there being "no British road to socialism" utilises fake internationalist rhetoric to proclaim a Scottish

road to socialism. But bitter experience has demonstrated repeatedly that the break-up of existing capitalist states is a path to social reaction, not progress. In countries such as Spain, Italy and Belgium, pro-capitalist secessionist movements have promoted regional identity in preference to class unity to devastating effect.

### **The dismemberment of Yugoslavia**

In 2014 the SEP noted:

As was proved in Yugoslavia and now again in Ukraine, the promotion of nationalism is a recipe for disaster. If the fake-left get their way and Scotland indeed becomes a model for others, the map of Europe could resemble that of the Middle Ages.

And what will be the result of encouraging separatism in India, Africa, Asia, even in North America? Far from weakening imperialism as they claim, history has proven again and again that all such divisions are exploited by the major powers to secure their class interests.

The SEP insisted that the task facing the working class was not the building of smaller and less viable nation states but forging a unified movement for the overthrow of the British capitalist state, and the entire nation state system, through socialist revolution.

Maitland's comments, typical of the Scottish pseudo left, express a political hostility, rooted in definite social interests, towards the prospect of an emergent movement in the working class seeking to overcome national and regional divisions through a unified struggle in defence of jobs, living standards, and democratic rights, and in opposition to imperialist militarism and the capitalist system that gives rise to it.

The YPS conference was followed by a swift breakdown in relations between YPS and the now Corbyn-dominated Your Party HQ in London. YPS elected former Green, Niall Christie, as the Scottish delegate to the Your Party Central Executive Committee (CEC). Christie complained on social media that the Corbyn-led CEC had ignored requests from Scotland for assistance in preparing to stand candidates in the May 7 elections in Scotland.

No doubt Corbyn's faction considered it useful to their relations with Labour and their internal factions to sabotage their "comrades'" election campaign north of the border. The dispute makes it more likely that, sooner rather than later, Your Party Scotland will split from the organisation in England, hastening the collapse of both.

### **The SEP's call for class unity**

The SEP noted in 2014, immediately after the referendum result, "Our intervention centred on combating the lies and distortions of the pseudo-left groups. Explaining that the potential breakup of the UK was rooted in the deepening crisis of world capitalism and the outmoded division of the planet into antagonistic nation states, we urged the adoption by the working class of a new socialist and internationalist program and leadership."

In the 12 years since the SEP's principled campaign, the crisis of world capitalism has intensified. Multiple wars for the redivision of the world

have already begun, fascism is re-emerging and every single democratic and social right won by working people and the oppressed masses worldwide is under threat.

A new mass socialist party of the working class is urgently needed. But Your Party is not that party. Its accelerating collapse testifies to the outmoded character of its program and perspective, based on national reformism and the maintenance of the capitalist system.

Under today's conditions of globally integrated production, with a massive expansion of the working class globally, only a party which seeks to resolve the contradiction between world economy and the nation state system by directing every social and democratic struggle of working people towards the struggle for world socialism can find a way forward.

As the SEP stated in our 22 October 2025 Open Letter to Your Party supporters:

Yes, a mass socialist party of the working class is needed urgently. Such a party must be international, linking British workers with their class brother and sisters worldwide; it must be based on the political independence of the working class from the capitalist class and its servants in the labour and trade union bureaucracy; and it must encourage the growth of rank-and-file organisations in every workplace and neighbourhood to mobilise the working class to expropriate the wealth of the oligarchy, break the resistance of the state, and place economic and political power in the hands of the working class, the overwhelming majority of the population.

Such a party will only develop in a determined fight to develop socialist political consciousness in the working class against the reformist, pro-capitalist politics of Corbyn, Sultana and their backers in the pseudo-left. A party capable of defeating imperialism requires a leadership grounded in the lessons of history, based on the century-long struggle of the Trotskyist movement for the strategy of world socialist revolution. That party is the Socialist Equality Party, the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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