

Rewriting Democracy: Scotland's Movement Towards Independence with a National Yes Registry

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Many people thought (and hoped) that Scotland voting No in its Independence Referendum last year had laid that idea to rest. Far from it. Campaigning for the referendum had created a vibrant and politically engaged conversation, one that is still going on – and growing. People started talking about the next referendum and they had no doubt it would happen. It became known as IndyRef 2 and the only question was not ‘if’ but ‘when’.

Despite the UK government's insistence that it didn't want the United Kingdom to break apart, the nasty insults and bullying of Scotland by their [Better Together](#) campaign simply carried on into the UK's general election campaign. It was clear that the Conservative Party's desire for total control was actually driving Scotland away. Or perhaps they really wanted rid of a pesky little country that they were losing control of.

Either way, the result was predictable. Although David Cameron 'won' the election, he had indeed lost Scotland. Fed up and angry with the insults, the Scots signed up to Scottish National Party in droves then voted for them. Out of 59 seats, the SNP now holds 56, with the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties each hanging on to one miserable seat. The Independence issue definitely had not gone away. Nor had the conversation on websites like Bella Caledonia.

Bella had been recognised on all sides as one of the best independence political blog sites in the UK and they [wanted to go further](#). Scotland needed a truly independent media that gave space to writers whose articles generated in-depth conversations in their Comment space. In May they launched a funding appeal and raised enough money to keep them going up to and including the Scottish Parliament election next year.

They wanted to create a Forum where all aspects of and all views on Scottish independence could be shared; where people could discuss what independence entailed and how it could best be implemented. As their editor Mike Small wrote:

Can we make a difference? Not on our own. That's why we've already convened a coordination meeting of all the alternative media in Scotland. Collaboration and coordination is key. Attack blogs are useful – but we want to create something different, something for the next phase of the movement. Something that explores ideas and creates a critical space for thinking and dynamism.

We've been doing this for free for eight years and now we need to create a stronger platform to go forward.

This was to be a conversation by the people. They set up the [IndyRef2 Research Project](#).

And out of that project grew [the National Yes Registry](#)

As Jason Baird [writes](#) :

Our proposals are simple: to create a concrete marker from which to begin the much needed practical discussions on how to drive our movement forward. Please be aware, the choice now is to build and grow what remains of our magnificent grass-roots movement, or to slowly continue its dissipation, retreating and concentrating further on our already dominant (albeit incredibly important) sphere of social media. In the latter process we will inevitably cede further political control over our lives and communities to others.

There is not too much that we can say here that is not already in our trailer:

All we would like to stress is that the majority of the National YES Registry's role (and as a forum), will be in the arena of practical projects, sharing of resources, campaigning ideas and allowing the grass-roots to speak volubly for themselves on certain issues that they may find of utmost importance, (but that party politics tend not to want to get heard, or would prefer the ability to simply speak on our (the grass-roots) behalf).

Jason mentions the bias often found in the mainstream media such as theBBC, where people's views are misrepresented or misquoted to support the status quo, not to mention the often arrogant assumption among the mass media that they speak for 'the people'. He adds:

We will not even try to give other examples of these important and obvious divergences, as it's simply not possible to know what 'over-all voice' will emerge from the result of each individual activist group getting its own voice. I am absolutely confident however that it would be more representative and aggressively pro-Indy than our 'officially' appointed YES Scotland HQ leadership were, by the end of the last Scottish Independence campaign.

The basic idea is simple: to already have a grass-root network and organisation working, funding and speaking for itself by the time the nextIndependencereferendum comes along; to be in a position where we can expand it rapidly and hit the ground running whenever Indyref2 is called.

We now have the technology to create leadership through group discussion and forum votes, without the need for individual (charismatic) 'leadership', as has become the norm in the field of party politics. The most important thing, in our view, is collective ownership. This will ensure that the 'movement' stays a movement and can't be dominated or controlled by any one group, 'leadership' faction or even a political party once our campaigning effectiveness becomes apparent.

Our credo: We propose that the National YES Registry follow as closely as possible the vibrant, open and inclusive blueprint that made the grass-root YES referendum campaign such a joy to belong to! Therefore, just as long as they feel their primary goals (be they political, social or cultural) are best served by the creation of an Independent Scotland, then all individuals, members of all and any political party, organisation or pressure group are more than welcome to join and participate in project.

Because so many voices are taking part in this whole movement and conversation it is fairly

certain that when (not if) Scotland becomes independent it will not be governed by the SNP but by a coalition of parties headed possibly by the SNP. But for the pragmatic Scots, when it comes to standing up to Westminster, the SNP will do very well.

Considering that they are aiming to bring together all of the many disparate groups that campaigned for independence, the [short film](#) which the NYR have produced is both inspiring and stunning for the simple practicality of how it will work. As a model for genuine on-the-ground democracy in today's world it's hard to beat.

A lot of non-Scottish people are already supporting the NYR. It has become quite clear to many living in the UK (and beyond) that what they really want is independence from the centralised controlling power of Westminster – and the 'finance sector', and global corporations, and (witness the Greeks) the IMF, ECB and the EC.

People in countries all over the world want their own voice and their own power. The IndyRef2 Project and the National Yes Register are offering a format for the way ahead; an entry into a political conversation not governed the political elite or party agendas. Why not join in?

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