

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article696>



Scotland

SSP conference

- IV Online magazine - 2001 - IV329 - March 2001 -

Publication date: Saturday 10 March 2001

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

The second conference of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) took place in Glasgow on February 10-11, 2000 attended by around 250 people. Its main focus was to launch the party's ambitious General Election plans. The conference agreed that the target should be to stand in each of Scotland's 72 seats in the next Westminster elections - to give every Scottish voter the opportunity to vote socialist.

The conference gave a real sense of the breadth of positions within the party on the Scottish national question, ranging from supporters of independence to federalists. The leadership and most members of the party have positions somewhere between these two. It was also healthy to see that in practice the existence of organized platforms within the party allows it to attract broader forces and to conduct serious political debates without this at all cutting across its effective operation on the ground either in campaigns or elections.

Conference went on to debate the programme on which the party will stand - which will be delivered to every voter in the country in the form of a 4 page newspaper. The programme was in general non-contentious - it is a serious document, which is very well thought through and extremely accessible.

The conference took place in the context of two major developments on the far left in Scotland. The majority of the leadership of the SSP are supporters of the "International Socialist Movement" and were formerly supporters of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI). There had been long standing disagreements between most of the Scottish people and the CWI leadership in London which had finally culminated in a break by the Scottish majority. The resulting tension was evident during the conference, particularly in the session that discussed the question of tendency rights within the SSP.

The other main context for the conference was the discussions which have been taking place between the SSP and the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP - largest far left organisation in Britain). The SWP had increasingly recognized that there was little political logic in it remaining outside the SSP while playing a pivotal role in the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales. At the conference itself it was clear that there was some suspicion from the base of the SSP as to the extent to which the SWP has broken from its sectarian past. However, experience of the Socialist Alliance in England and Wales demonstrates that the SWP are becoming more prepared to put the need to build common projects above their own narrower interests and the party's entry into the SSP was agreed.

The Scottish Socialist Party faces many challenges in the months and years ahead. There can be little doubt that the party will continue to grow and strengthen through its activities in defence of working people's rights and through its election campaign.