

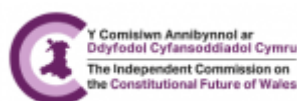
# Submission to the independent commission on the constitutional future of Wales

Friday 26 August 2022, by [Anti\\*Capitalist Resistance](#) (Date first published: 3 August 2022).

**“Without independence governments in Cymru will be unable to enact many laws that will improve the lives of ordinary working people because Westminster will almost certainly reject them if they are inimical to the political views of the governing party while laws developed in Westminster will be imposed on Cymru - as happens today despite devolution.”**

## ***Introduction:***

The model of devolution in Britain is a complex one. Cymru/ Wales has had a separate legislative chamber since 1999 at the same time as the Scottish Parliament was reintroduced. (The question of Ireland is a separate one we don't deal with here.) While the two new chambers were introduced at the same time and the Westminster (UK-wide) parliament had reserved matters from both, the Scottish parliament had wider powers than the Welsh assembly (called Sennedd/Parliament since 2020). This was largely in response to the fact that the movement for independence or at least greater devolution in Scotland was much stronger than in Cymru/ Wales. This situation has shifted in the last decade or so in that the movement for independence in Wales has mushroomed faster than that in Scotland so that while the Scottish movement remains stronger, the gap is much smaller than it was in 1999.



There has been a difference in the political trajectories in Cymru/Wales and Scotland. since 1999 the assembly/Sennedd has been Labour led - since 2021 in co-operation with Plaid Cymru. In Scotland the voting system was crafted supposedly to exclude the possibility of the Scottish national party getting a majority and a coalition of Scottish Labour and the Scottish Liberal Democrats kept them out until 2007 but since then the SNP have had a sizeable majority.

While the Scottish Labour Party leadership has been resolutely hostile to independence the party in Cymru/Wales - while not in favour of independence, preferring a federal solution - is not openly hostile. Recently Mark Drakeford, Labour First Minister in Cymru, publicly supported the right of Scotland to hold a referendum on independence without permission from Westminster. And there is an organisation of supporters of independence (Labour for an Independent Wales - L4IW) within the Labour Party in Cymru, some of whom have stood as Labour candidates. A situation not tolerated in Scottish Labour.

This article was drafted by members of Anti\*Capitalist Resistance and agreed by its Steering

Committee.

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The Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales has been established by the Welsh Government. [1] The commission has 2 broad objectives.

The first is to consider and develop options for fundamental reform of the constitutional structures of the United Kingdom, in which Wales remains an integral part. The second is to consider and develop all progressive principal options to strengthen Welsh democracy and deliver improvements for the people of Wales. [2] This is a submission from Anti\*Capitalist Resistance (ACR), supported by Socialist Resistance and Ecosocialist.scot. It has been slightly amended from the original with footnotes for issues that may not be well known outside Cymru.

We are three ecosocialist organizations who work together around a common view on constitutional organization and political issues within the British state. Where possible we work with organisations like Labour for an Independent Wales, Melin Drafod, Undod, Welsh Underground Network and YesCymru. [3]

Our analysis of the national question in Cymru draws heavily on the work of the late Ceri Evans, published in *Whispers of a Forgotten Nation - The Writings of Dr D. Ceri Evans*.

#### • **What matters to you about the way Wales is run?**

We believe, as ecosocialists, that Cymru (indeed all countries and states) should be run in the interests of the many not the few. Priority must be given to the needs of ordinary working people and not to the ability of capitalists to make a profit. We strongly support the right of the people of Cymru to independence but agree with the view expressed by the great Irish Socialist James Connolly:

‘If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organization of the Socialist Republic your efforts will be in vain. England will still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in the country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs’.

However, while we strongly support the creation of an independent Welsh Socialist Republic, we recognise this is not on the immediate agenda and is only possible when the people of Cymru decide they no longer want to live under the domination of the British state and capitalism. However we don’t believe nothing can be done in the meantime to benefit the lives of the people of Cymru. This means taking measures to eliminate poverty and inequality; end the gig economy of zero hours contracts in favour of permanent socially useful and environmentally beneficial jobs; end all measures which, either by omission or commission, disable people with physical and/or mental health impairments from playing a full role in society. Above all we need to ensure there is still a planet for us to inhabit.

We welcome the decision by the current Welsh government to declare Cymru ‘a nation of safety’ and its active support of refugees. We are very much in agreement with the belief expressed in the Constitution of YesCymru that:

‘YesCymru believes in an inclusive citizenship, which embraces the fact that all those who choose to

make Wales their home – regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation – are full citizens of Wales’.

Such a view rejects ‘blood and soil’ concepts of nationalism – which ultimately discriminate against those deemed to be outside ‘the nation’ in favour of equal rights for all those who choose to live in Cymru.

The views of the Welsh government and Plaid Cymru [4] are in stark contrast to the Nationality and Borders Act of the Westminster government and their plans to deport people fleeing terror to Rwanda. We hope that the government of Cymru will refuse to cooperate in this appalling policy and that Cardiff airport (owned by the Welsh government) will not allow deportation flights to Rwanda.

We also welcome the decision of the Welsh government to take environmental concerns seriously though we would question the aim of ‘Net Zero’ since it allows capitalism to continue to pollute the planet, produce vast amounts of totally unnecessary and useless goods which use up more and more of the planet’s resources and do nothing to reduce global warming. In fact, we have already seen several examples of capitalist enterprises based in England buying up farms in Cymru and planting trees to ‘offset’ their carbon emissions. This not only takes land out of food production – at a time when the availability of food is under threat globally – but often the trees planted are inadequate for the tasks of soaking up carbon.

In any case trees are only adequate for soaking up carbon in the long term. In Cymru far more emissions savings could come from reducing sheep and cattle farming and the chicken industry as well as preventing pollution of rivers by run off from chicken farms, as is happening today along the Wye Valley. Of course, this would be a difficult political challenge, persuading farmers to convert to arable farming and convincing people that we need to reduce consumption of meat and dairy. But if we are to continue to live on planet earth it is a challenge that can no longer be ignored.

We support a moratorium on new road building (except for access to new socially responsible housing developments with triple glazing, high levels of insulation and solar panels – like in Germany) and welcome proposals to introduce electric buses in a number of towns and cities throughout Cymru though much still needs to be done to increase the provision of public transport in many rural areas. [5] Attention needs to be given to developing transport links on a north-south axis which would benefit the people of Cymru and allow them to travel more easily within their country rather than the predominant east-west axis which largely serves the interests of exporters from England. However, we totally reject the idea of a North-South motorway put forward by Tory MS Janet Finch-Saunders as environmentally damaging. We need fewer private cars and more public vehicles on the road and especially on rail.

Something like 11% of the UK’s rail network is in Cymru yet receives only 3% of the funding. Cymru is paying toward HS2 since it is supposed to be a project benefitting England and Wales yet not a single foot of track comes into our country. The nearest stations will be Birmingham and, if it ever gets that far north, Crewe. Plans to create rail links between Swansea and Bangor via Carmarthen and Aberystwyth are welcome though whether or not the finance will be available to develop them is by no means certain – especially since the Westminster government determines what monies Cymru receives.

We also welcome the planned introduction of a default 20 miles per hour speed limit in built up areas with the aim of getting more people to walk or cycle. – This will have beneficial effects on health and consequently less demand on the NHS; it will also increase road safety, especially for children and people with limited mobility, and reduce the effects of pollution on our planet.

However, we believe such a measure could be implemented with considerably less opposition if local citizens were involved in the decision-making process rather than allowing those opposed to the measure to be able to portray it as something imposed upon them, an attack on their democratic rights by a government in Cardiff that wishes to impose its ideas (and rule) on 'ordinary' people.

Free public transport has been introduced for limited periods in a number of places. We very much support this but would like to see it extended permanently, particularly now when so many working people are being hit by wage cuts, loss of jobs and inflation. The creation of a national transport network using electric vehicles would not only help to significantly reduce carbon emissions but would also provide well paid jobs (both for those building and those operating the vehicles). It would also make it easier for people with physical or mental impairments to interact with others. The current lack of public transport in many areas means particularly means that those with impairments who do not have access to a car are disabled from participating in many of the activities of daily living. The Welsh government needs to do far more to ensure that all transport is accessible.

The ability of the Welsh government to develop a coherent strategy to combat global warming is severely limited by the ability of Westminster to reject environmental schemes in Cymru (as with the Abertawe/Swansea tidal scheme) or insist on environmentally damaging projects such as the Aberpergwm coal mine near Glynneath. [6]The control of much of the coast by the Crown Estate (see below) means that any revenue from offshore windfarms and tidal energy will go to the Crown and the UK government and not to the government of Cymru. There is a clear need for a huge expansion of Ynni Cymru and other community energy projects which could allow Cymru to meet all its energy demands entirely from renewables by 2035. But only if Cymru is able to control its own policies and finances.

We welcome the belated decision by the Welsh government in their agreement with Plaid Cymru to provide free school meals to all pupils in state schools in Cymru. However, the current roll out is far too slow and needs to be speeded up. This has been made even more urgent by the cost-of-living crisis which is unlikely to disappear soon. Parents are being forced to reduce expenditure on food meaning that children are likely to be eating unhealthy, overprocessed food, possibly containing unnecessary additives.

The GIG/ NHS in Cymru is in desperate need of cash and skilled staff. There are serious problems in the ambulance service and Accident and Emergency units. District Nursing Services are overstretched, in some areas only able to deliver palliative care. GIG/NHS staff have not had chance yet to recover from the Covid pandemic and are constantly overworked. Much of what GIG/NHS offers is good, and staff makes every effort to meet patients' needs; free prescriptions in Cymru (as in Scotland but unlike England) are welcome, particularly at a time of rising costs of living. And it is generally agreed that on the whole the Welsh government handled the Coronavirus pandemic better than the Westminster government. Unfortunately, the current pay offer, in reality a pay cut, to NHS staff is unlikely to solve the problem.

Land ownership is a major issue in Cymru, which relates also to both farming and housing. Land is relatively cheap in Cymru compared to the rest of the UK which means that it is bought up by multi-national firms or investment funds who then use it to 'offset' their carbon emissions or, given the difficulties faced by small scale farmers, their land is bought and consolidated into large scale farms. The creation of Unnos - Land and Housing Wales, answerable to the Welsh government and accountable to the Senedd is a welcome step forward. But greater strides can be taken if Unnos and Ynys Cymru are run as cooperatives along the lines of Suma Wholefoods Cooperative and the previous Tower colliery cooperative with democratically elected and active participation from trade unions, local resident groups and consumers rather than the top-down public ownership models of Cardiff airport and Dwr Cymru. [7]

In addition, there is the issue of Crown Property, brought to attention by the recent Banners on Beaches protests organised by YesCymru. The Crown Estate 'owns' 65% of shoreline and riverbeds, more than 50,000 acres of land and the first 12 nautical miles of seabed from the shore. In Scotland control of Crown Estates is devolved to the Scottish Parliament and last year contributed £700 million into the Scottish government's purse. In Cymru, by contrast all revenues are divided between the Crown and the UK government with the Welsh Government receiving nothing. In fact, instead of benefitting from Crown Estate property people in Wales have had to pay the Crown Estate for work that only benefits the Crown. [8] The East Rhyl Coastal Defence Scheme for example, built on Crown Estate land received no financial contribution from the Crown Estates but was paid for by Denbighshire County Council and the Welsh Government.

The Crown Estates exist independently of the actual monarch, belonging to 'The Crown' rather than Elizabeth II or her successors. Nevertheless, there is also the question of the role of the monarchy in Cymru in the future. Recent disclosures reveal that Elizabeth Windsor, as a private individual, enjoys immunity from more than 160 laws that apply to the rest of us. These laws guarantee immunity to her private property portfolio and grant her unique protections as the owner of large, landed estates. They also exempt her from laws ranging from animal welfare to workers' rights, health and safety and pensions as well as the Equality Act 2010. While these exemptions relate to the Queen as a private individual it is inconceivable that they are not granted because of her positions as head of state. And they will be extended to her successor. [9]

We therefore support the proposed re-introduction of a bill to devolve the Crown Estates in Cymru and agree with Liz Saville-Roberts, Plaid Cymru leader at Westminster, when she urged all Labour MPs to support the bill.

Housing is also a major issue in many parts of Cymru. Cymru is not alone in that; Cornwall, the Lake District, parts of Yorkshire and Northumberland and areas of Scotland all have problems with second home or holiday lets, as in a slightly different way, do some of the wealthiest areas of London. Whitby in North Yorkshire recently held a referendum on limiting the purchase of new houses to those intending to use the housing as their sole residence.

However, in Cymru there is an important issue that is largely lacking elsewhere (except Gaelic speaking parts of Scotland) language. Whole villages throughout Cymru have seen the population change from predominantly Cymraeg speaking to English speaking, while in some areas the majority of houses are now either second homes or holiday lets as young people from the area can't afford the prices relatively wealthy outsiders are willing to pay. As a result young people move away, village shops have to close as the village is frequently deserted for much of the year when the second home owners are in their other residence(s), schools close for lack of pupils, public transport becomes even less frequent and the whole culture of the place becomes Anglified, with even longstanding names of houses changed because their original 'Welsh' name was 'too difficult'.

Bizarrely the Daily Telegraph, while encouraging its readers not to holiday in Cymru (or Cornwall) because place names are 'too difficult' is nevertheless still encouraging them to buy second homes in Cymru. However while the Daily Telegraph, continues to run articles encouraging people to buy a second home in Wales, poverty forces local people out of areas of Cymru and unequal distribution of wealth allows rich people to buy up property at a price way beyond the ability of local people to pay and while we live in a society in which wealth is more and more concentrated in fewer and fewer hands then nothing short of taking land into public ownership will even begin to solve the problems associated with housing in Cymru.

We support the measures adopted by the Labour government and Plaid Cymru, as well as some local authorities, to attempt to reduce the impact of second homes by allowing councils to massively

increase Council Tax rates for second homes or holiday lets. We also support the granting to local authorities of powers to raise local tourist levies, such as are common throughout much of western Europe at least. However, these measures alone can only have a limited effect and will probably mean that rather than rich people from outside Cymru being able to buy up property only seriously rich people will be able to do so. The Whitby referendum perhaps offers a more fruitful approach.

We believe it would be more effective for the government of Cymru to prioritise a programme of council house building as well as providing funds to councils to buy back former council houses when they come on the market. Wrexham/Wreccsam council, for example has already started to do this on a small scale. With backing from the Senedd this could be done on a scale that would help to increase the number of council houses available for families.

The current government in Westminster has introduced some of the most restrictive and punitive legislation that in practice seriously limits the ability of people to protest. It also effectively criminalises the Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities denying them the right to continue to live in traditional ways. The right to demonstrate has also been severely curtailed and increased powers given to the Police to control protests. We are opposed to these and other oppressive, sometimes racist pieces of legislation and would hope that in an independent Cymru all restriction on the right of protest, including the right to strike would be abolished.

**• What do you think the priorities for the commission should be?**

The Commission should seek to discover what the people of Cymru want its current and future arrangements to be. It should explore all avenues and possibilities; for example, in the event of Irish reunification and/or Scottish Independence would either of those developments affect how people would view the future governance of Cymru.

**• Thinking about how Wales is governed, by the Welsh Government and the UK government, what are the strengths of the current system, what aspects do you most value and wish to protect? Can you provide examples?**

We support the devolution of powers to Y Senedd Cymru as this allows decisions to be taken closer to home. We support the expansion of Y Senedd to 96 members as this will allow it to more effectively carry out the hugely expanded workload – particularly because the number of MPs from Cymru at Westminster is being reduced by 20 percent. Devolution allowed Mark Drakeford (and Nicola Sturgeon) to deal with the Covid pandemic more effectively than Boris Johnson. Their TV presentations were generally far more coherent than those of the UK government and, unlike the Westminster government, both the Welsh and Scottish governments used a signer so that people with a hearing impairment were not disabled from understanding what was being said.

Elections in Cymru are more democratic than for the Westminster Parliament where the First Past The Post (FPTP) system allows parties to win large majorities in the House of Commons despite having amassed only a minority of votes. At the moment, in the case of Cymru (and Scotland), this effectively means they are governed by a party that did not win majority support in either country. The continued existence of the Welsh Office, answerable to Westminster rather than the Senedd, reinforces this.

While there may be some issues as to how proportional the electoral system for the Senedd is it certainly produces a more proportional result than FPTP and ensures a balance between male and female MSs. In Cymru elections (apart from for the Westminster Parliament) people can vote at age 16. This is also true in Scotland but not in England.



**• Are there any problems with the current system, and if so, how could they be addressed? Again, please provide examples.**

The ability of Westminster to interfere within devolved matters (and the underlying concept of unitary parliamentary sovereignty) is a dangerous precedent that must be abolished in all forms. The Internal Markets Act, for example, allows the Westminster government to override decisions of the Welsh government. Though even before this Act Westminster could still control important decisions. For example, the refusal by the UK government to support the proposed Swansea barrage that could have provided environmentally clean energy to houses in Abertawe/Swansea. Westminster ministers have tried on several occasions (so far without success) to force the Welsh government to abandon its cancellation of the M4 relief road. Transport links in Cymru essentially run east-west rather than north-south. In other words, they are primarily concerned with transporting goods from England rather than allowing people in Cymru to move freely from one part of the country to another.

Most recently the Westminster government has announced its intention to repeal the Trade Union Wales Act 2017 a law passed by the Senedd which prohibits the use of agency staff to break strikes in Cymru. This is both an attack on trade union rights and on the right of the Senedd to make policy for Cymru. Now, in contravention of its own promises at COP26, it is insisting on opening the Aberpergwm coal mine.

It has also taken money unilaterally from the Welsh (and Scottish) government to finance military aid to Ukraine. While we are not opposed to providing the weapons Ukraine requires if it is to be able to defend itself against the Russian invasion this should not be done at the expense of services in Cymru (or the rest of the British state for that matter). Given the enormous profits the arms manufacturers are making they should be subject to a windfall tax to ensure Ukraine is able to defend itself AND there are no cuts to an already inadequate budget in Cymru.

Large areas of policy are reserved to Westminster, without which it is virtually impossible for a government in Cymru to function effectively. Westminster still controls monetary and fiscal policy, and the Barnett formula ensures Cymru does not get its fair share of finances, Trade policy, welfare policies, defence, foreign policy, the judiciary and others are all reserved for Westminster, even though the latter is devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Although the Labour government has declared Cymru a 'nation of sanctuary' it is unable to do this effectively because everything has to go through the UK Home Office which, in the case of refugees from Ukraine we have seen, has been slow, inefficient and lacking in care. And these are refugees the Westminster government claims to support.

This is not totally surprising since the UK government insisted on housing refugees at the disused army camp at Penally, despite most people who knew the area, knew the facilities (or rather lack of them) at Penally warning against this decision. The views of the Police and Crime Commissioner were totally ignored.

Moreover, the current government in Westminster has shown considerable hostility to even the current extremely limited devolution to Cymru. They have instructed all local and national governments that the Union flag must at all times take precedence over the Ddraig Coch or Saltire [10]. They have attempted to impose unionist values on the people of Cymru, whether by insisting that schools all sing a frankly dreadful dirge celebrating the 'virtues' of 'Britishness' or trying to coerce schools in Cymru to distribute copies of a pamphlet extolling the 'virtues' of monarchy.

Westminster has used the post-Brexit period to further step up its assault on devolution. The 'Shared Prosperity Fund', unlike the EU funding it replaces, completely by-passes the devolved governments.

It can, and has been, used by the Westminster government to reward Tory seats. The Westminster government wishes to impose freeports in Cymru despite there being no discussion on the matter. Similarly, it wants to impose nuclear power stations in Ynys Mon/Anglesey without any discussion about the merits, or otherwise, of nuclear power.

The electoral system is a major problem. Cymru has been subject to Tory governments in Westminster despite the Tories never having a majority in Cymru. The anti-democratic First Past the Post system must be changed; most modern functioning democracies have much more rigorous democratic processes than those that currently exist within the UK, or what is being proposed by the Welsh government. Single Transferable Vote system needs to be introduced immediately for ALL elections – Westminster, Y Senedd, local councils etc – with the voting age reduced to 16 and all those who live in Cymru, wherever they were born, able to vote.

**• Thinking about the UK government, the Welsh Government and Welsh local government (your local council), what do you think about the balance of power and responsibility between these three types of government - is it about right or should it change and if so, how? For example, who should have more power, or less?**

The balance should be as local as possible, but also correspond to the appropriate level of strategic vision. The UK government in its current and likely future form is not interested in Cymru beyond its ability to uphold the union, and power needs to be devolved to the Welsh Government in areas that could have real benefit to the lives of the peoples of Wales; devolution of Justice and of Welfare are two notable examples within the current constitutional framework. Welsh Government must encourage local authorities to use the powers given to them to serve their constituents, not elected officials.

However the pre-modern, essentially undemocratic (if not actually anti-democratic) nature of the UK state (including the House of Lords, the monarchy, the FPTP electoral system, the control of the media by a tiny number of very wealthy individuals, the very narrow 'catchment' area for judges, senior civil servants etc) makes it largely irrelevant whether or not Westminster, Cardiff or local councils are responsible for particular things as virtually all power will remain in Westminster's hands. This is reinforced by the lack of a written constitution, the constant undermining of what rights people have by a government intent on removing large numbers of our rights and the often ignored 'Crown Powers', especially in centralizing decision making with a consequent lack of transparency and accountability.

There is nothing to stop UK government's attempting to weaken or even overturn the powers devolved to the Senedd. The current Tory government in Westminster has shown considerable enthusiasm for rolling back devolution. But there has been little enthusiasm from the British Labour Party for greater devolution: in fact, the Welsh Labour government has largely been ignored by the current leadership of the British Labour Party. It would be a step forward, in our view, if the Welsh Labour Party were to refound itself as a party separate from the British Labour Party

We do not believe it is acceptable for the ability of the Senedd to make lasting policy decisions to be dependent on the whim of whatever party happens to be in government in Westminster. If there is to be any meaningful change in the balance of power between the UK government, the Welsh government and local government the ability of the UK government to overrule or override the Senedd has to be taken out of the equation. This should be enshrined in a Constitution for Cymru.

The current Constitutional setup and the reliance on the UK government to provide the funds necessary also makes it more difficult to hold members of the Senedd and especially Welsh government to account. Certainly, it has been claimed that the Welsh government could have done



more to oppose the Aberpergwm mine. And the Welsh Labour government has not criticised the below inflation pay rises (in reality pay cuts) for NHS and education staff for which they have responsibility. We can understand their reluctance to pay more than the UK government has decided since the pay 'increases' have to be paid for within existing budgets – meaning a reduction in services. However, we do expect a Labour government to support workers in their struggle against pay cuts.

We would add another tier to the decision-making process – local decision-making bodies. While some councils in England have taken a few steps in this direction (Preston and Salford in particular) our preferred model would be Porto Alegre in Brazil where all citizens could make proposals and vote on how the council's budget should be spent. This 'from the bottom up' form of democracy is, for us, the most important level – far more important than decisions being made for us. It is absolutely essential for those with physical or mental health impairments to be able to determine their own needs and ensure the resources to meet them are available so they can play a full role in their communities. It is about ordinary working people taking decisions for themselves without which, in our view, there can be no Socialism.

**As a distinct country and political unit, how should Wales be governed in the future?**

**Should we:**

- broadly keep the current arrangements where Wales is governed as part of the UK and the Westminster Parliament delegates some responsibilities to the Senedd and Welsh Government, with those responsibilities adjusted as in Q5 OR**
- move towards Wales having, more autonomy to decide for itself within a more federal UK, with most matters decided by the Senedd and Welsh Government, and the Westminster Parliament decides UK-wide issues on behalf of Wales (and other parts of the UK) OR**
- move towards Wales having full control to govern itself and be independent from the UK OR**
- pursue any other governance model you would like to suggest**
- alongside any of these options, should more responsibilities be given to local councils bringing decision making closer to people across Wales and if so, please provide examples**

In our view the nature of the UK state means that if Cymru is to become a modern democratic state that can only be done by separation from the UK, that is to become an independent state. In fact, it is debatable whether Cymru as it currently exists, is in fact a country. Most unionist politicians certainly don't see Cymru as more than a part of the UK, a region. At the height of the Covid pandemic Boris Johnson famously called on TV news stations to stop talking about the 4 nations, insisting there was only a single 'British' nation. The people of Cymru are undoubtedly a nation though the Dragon may have acquired a few more since Wynford Vaughan-Thomas and Alf Williams claimed in 1985 it had 2 tongues. [\[11\]](#) Afghans, Syrians, Poles and now Ukrainians have all added their culture to the Welsh nation.

The current UK state is not a free and voluntary union. Cymru never voted for union with England: it was imposed on it via military conquest and legislation under Henry VIII. The 6 counties forming Northern Ireland also never voted for union: they were a creation of the British state against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people of Ireland. Scotland may have voted for union in 1707 but in rather difficult circumstances. In any case in a genuinely democratic union each of the constituent nations has the right to secede they don't have to go begging Westminster for the 'right' to hold a referendum on independence. In a genuinely democratic union they automatically have that right.

However, we don't believe a federal solution would answer the needs of the people of Cymru, not least because it would always be at the mercy of the government in Westminster. The anti-

democratic FPTP and the sovereignty of Parliament rather than the people mean that a government in Westminster could pass laws revoking parts or even all of the federal arrangements. A federal structure would almost certainly be dominated by England since it is highly unlikely that any party which draws its support primarily from England would be willing to accept a federal structure in which Scotland, Wales and the 6 Counties (if Irish reunification has not yet taken place) would have equal status with England. And even if that did happen as noted above a government could use its Parliamentary majority (achieved via the anti-democratic FPTP system) to change the arrangements or scrap them altogether.

That does not mean an independent socialist republic in Cymru would refuse to enter into alliances with workers in other parts of the former UK. The idea that workers in Cymru will not unite with workers on the other side of Offa's Dyke is frankly ludicrous. If workers can unite in common international unions across the longest land border in the world, the border between Canada and the United States, then there will be no problem uniting workers in England and Cymru.

Nor does it mean we can't make a start on improving democracy and governance in Cymru, even under the current limited settlement. Campaigns around Free School Meals, transport provision (or the lack of it), defending asylum seekers, stopping the constant growth of second homes, defending Cymraeg, opposing nuclear power stations, fighting for clean renewable energy are all part and parcel of the struggle for an independent socialist republic in Cymru.

And students from an independent Cymru would be eligible to (re)join the Erasmus exchange scheme, from which they are currently excluded by virtue of being part of the United Kingdom which has withdrawn from the scheme. The Taith scheme launched by the Welsh government has many strong points, but it isn't really able to compete with the Erasmus programme.

**• Overall, what is most important to you about the way in which Wales should be governed in the future? Is there anything else you want to tell us?**

The only way in which Cymru can be sufficiently free to develop its social, economic and cultural potential within an international context of its own making is by establishing an independent socialist republic. Anything short of that will mean Cymru will be at the mercy of governments in Westminster who will almost certainly be uninterested in, if not downright hostile to, the needs and wishes of the people of Cymru. The people of Cymru will not be able to choose whether or not to enter into international alliances and will be bound by treaties entered into by governments they never voted for, governments probably elected on the basis of the anti-democratic First Past the Post system.

Without independence governments in Cymru will be unable to enact many laws that will improve the lives of ordinary working people because Westminster will almost certainly reject them if they are inimical to the political views of the governing party while laws developed in Westminster will be imposed on Cymru - as happens today despite devolution.

There are many issues that will need to be given much further thought if Cymru is to be independent. It will require financial sovereignty (i.e., a central bank) and political sovereignty; economic sustainability; how legacy arrangements with the UK (or England if the 6 counties have reunited with the rest of Ireland and Scotland is independent) are arranged to avoid further exploitation.

How can the work already begun around climate change and the environment be expanded to allow Cymru to achieve zero carbon in the shortest possible time?

There are many more questions, many of them raised in the submission from Undod Chwith Cymru/Left Unity Wales. We hope that since the Commission has not ruled out independence then it will launch a full enquiry into these and other issues that go beyond the purely constitutional.

## **Anti\*Capitalist Resistance**

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### **P.S.**

- Anticapitalist Resistance. 03 Aug 2022:

<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/our-submission-to-the-independent-commission-on-the-constitutional-future-of-wales/>

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### **Footnotes**

[1] The establishment of an independent Commission to consider the Constitutional Future of Wales was a commitment in the Welsh Government's Programme for Government. The co-chairs of the Commission are Dr Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury and born in Abertawe/Swansea and Laura McAllister, Professor of Public Policy and the Governance of Wales at Cardiff University. She is a former captain of Wales Women's football team, with 24 caps.

Other members of the Commission include Leanne Wood, former leader of Plaid Cymru; Shavannah Taj the first Black General Secretary of the Wales Trades Union Congress; Albert Owen, Labour MP for Ynys Mon/Anglesey from 2001 to 2019 and Kirsty Williams, former leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats and Minister for Education in the previous Welsh Government – the only Lib Dem in a Labour government short of an absolute majority. The Commission has 7 female members and 4 male.

[2] The Commission, at least in its English text, refers throughout to Wales and Welsh. We have generally used the Cymraeg/Welsh terms Cymru and Cymraeg except where the original uses the English term. Since many inhabitants of Cymru consider themselves to be the descendants of the original inhabitants of Britain the English terms, deriving from a German word meaning 'foreigner,' are often considered to be derogatory.

[3] Labour for an Independent Wales involves activists inside the Welsh Labour Party; Melin Drafod is a 'think tank' involving members from some of the other organisations mentioned; Undod involves people from both socialist and anarchist traditions; Welsh Underground Network consider themselves explicitly Marxist; YesCymru is the main organisation promoting independence for Cymru and recently held a march for independence in Wrecsam/Wrexham, with a further march planned for Cardiff in October 2022. All these organisations work together to a greater or lesser extent. They also work with the Peoples' Assembly Wales, as do ACR comrades in Cymru.

[4] Plaid Cymru/The Party of Wales is the main nationalist Parliamentary party in Cymru. In November 2021 it entered into an agreement with the Welsh Labour government, though not a formal coalition, to work together to achieve a wide range of reforms.

[5] In the last few days GIG Cymru/NHS Wales has announced the introduction of a number of

hybrid ambulances, with plans to make the entire fleet electric.

[6] The extent to which the Labour government resisted this is disputed but it seems likely they could have done more. See <https://www.voice.wales/the-emails-that-show-how-welsh-ministers-allowed-100-million-tonnes-of-carbon-emissions/>

[7] Dwr Cymru is Welsh Water. On the possible development of Ynni Cymru and Unnos as cooperatives see the letter from Len Arthur, Secretary of Peoples' Assembly Wales to Sian Gwenllian, the designated Plaid Cymru lead for the cooperation agreement with the Welsh Labour government. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1b4bDGTr2Ux-ATHCxt3L8vFZXLyNeDxbEUPH2NMtGi4/mobilebasic>.

[8] <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/wales-wont-receive-43bn-windfall-24409905>.

[9] [https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jul/14/queen-immunity-british-laws-private-property?utm\\_term=62d0fed7b97c4ef22f28c3837fa551fe&utm\\_campaign=FirstEdition&utm\\_source=esp&utm\\_medium=Email&CMP=firstedition\\_email](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jul/14/queen-immunity-british-laws-private-property?utm_term=62d0fed7b97c4ef22f28c3837fa551fe&utm_campaign=FirstEdition&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=firstedition_email).

[10] Ddraig Coch is the red dragon flag of Cymru.

[11] The Dragon Has Two Tongues is available on the website of Welsh Underground Network.