

rs21 Scotland

RS21 Scotland statement on the Alba Party

13th April 2021

Socialists have been rightly disturbed by the formation last month of a new pro-independence party, Alba. Its leader, Alex Salmond, was accused of multiple sexual offences whilst in the SNP and in its short existence, Alba has given a platform to anti-trans, anti-traveller and homophobic voices. Yesterday's publication of Alba's misnamed "Equalities" statement now enshrines some of those sentiments as party policy.

This shows in no uncertain terms that it is an organisation that is prepared to create a hostile environment for trans and LGBT people more generally and to attract support from those who hold such views. Despite its declaration "We're all equal in ALBA", it is clear that some are more equal than others.

The wording of their policy reiterates positions around "safe spaces for women" and against self-ID for trans people that are staples of anti-trans positions, dressed up in the language of protecting women's rights.

We recognise, however, that the formation of Alba has not sprung from nowhere. It is the product of a stunted post-2014 independence movement and growing discontent with the increasingly neoliberal, managerial turn of the SNP leadership. The SNP has also silently tolerated the same backward views now overtly on display in Alba. It is not credible that Alex Salmond's disgraceful behaviour towards women was unknown to all within the SNP until complaints were made public. What's more, in office, the SNP has implemented cuts to budgets that have resulted in services that women and trans people rely on being slashed. The Scottish government's funding formula has resulted in cuts of up to 10% for Scottish Women's Aid at a time of increased demand, with some women waiting up to six months to access a service that in some cases will literally be life-saving.¹ Trans people are waiting up to two years to gain an appointment at gender clinics in Scotland. Likewise, SNP MSPs failed to vote through in 2019 the amendment to the Gender Recognition Act that would allow trans people to self-ID.

No successful independence movement can be built if it is prepared to alienate and play off oppressed groups against each other. A better, independent Scotland must mean a better Scotland for all those suffering oppression. Alba is a dead end for all those who consider themselves socialists and those who oppose transphobia and misogyny.

Experience has shown that none of the main pro-independence parliamentary parties are capable of delivering an independent Scotland that puts the needs of working class people first. We believe,

therefore, it is time to rebuild the existing extra-parliamentary independence movement. This movement must include a clear and principled commitment to equality for trans, LGBTQ people and women. It must bring together not only the hundreds of thousands of people who have turned out in support of independence, but also include the thousands of school children who struck against climate change, those who joined the Black Lives Matter protests and, more recently, demonstrations against gender-based violence and police powers. We need to build an independence movement that looks like the future Scotland we want to live in.

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<https://tfn.scot/news/womens-aid-funding-plea?fbclid=IwAR3MFwfnUoRAB0GQhgx7q3jn9c9qPUPJVlOMf2aQj5nyw1bUku-EqISdsTU>