

Republicanism in the United Kingdom

Republicanism, in the United Kingdom, is the movement which seeks to remove the British monarchy and replace it with a republic that has a non-hereditary head of state. The method by which the head of state should be chosen is not agreed upon, with some favouring an elected president, some an appointed head of state with little power, and others supporting the idea of leaving the political system as it is but without a monarch.

Within Great Britain republican sentiment has largely focused on the retention or abolition of the British monarch, rather than the dissolution of the British Union or independence for its constituent countries.

In Northern Ireland, the term "republican" is normally used in the sense of Irish republicanism. While also against monarchical forms of government, Irish republicans are against the presence of the British state in any form in Ireland and advocate creating a united, all-island state. While this may be confusing, unionists who support a republic also exist.

At present, none of the three major British political parties have an official policy of republicanism. However, there are individual MPs, usually from the Labour Party, who favour abolition of the monarchy. These include **Tony Benn**, who in 1991 introduced a Commonwealth of Britain Bill in Parliament; **Roy Hattersley**; **Leanne Wood** (a Plaid Cymru member of the National Assembly for Wales) ; **John Prescott** and **Norman Baker** (a Liberal Democrat MP).

There are republican members of the **Scottish National Party (SNP)** in Scotland and Plaid Cymru in Wales who advocate independence for those countries as republics. The SNP's official policy is that the British monarch would remain head of state of an independent Scotland, unless the people of Scotland decided otherwise.

The **Scottish Socialist Party** advocates Scottish republicanism, organising the republican rally at Calton Hill on the official opening of Holyrood by the Queen.

The **UN Human Rights Council** report stated Britain should have a referendum on the monarchy and the need for a written constitution with a bill of rights.

The largest lobby group in favour of republicanism in the United Kingdom is the **Republic** campaign group, founded in 1983. The group has benefited from recent negative publicity about the Royal Family, and Republic has reported a large rise in membership since the wedding of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles. In June 2006 the group handed in a petition of over 3,000 names to 10 Downing Street calling for a serious national debate about the future of the monarchy.

The Centre for Citizenship has a broader view of republicanism, which include a fully elected second chamber of parliament, abolition of the official honours system and disestablishment of the Church of England.