

# When is enough really enough?



by Gordon Craigie

## IS IT DÉJÀ VU or Groundhog Day?

For *independistas* like me, surely one of the most wearisome aspects of our continuing fight to restore Scotland's independence is the absolute keich spouted by people who have no right to impose their opinion, never mind their will, on Scotland or the people of Scotland. From Tory clowns like de Pfeffel and the rest of his Lord Snooty chums we've come to expect, and accept, that their sense of entitlement will never change. But when previously seemingly sensible politicians like Jess Phillips start with the likes of, "I cannot see a circumstance where I would think that it would be better for Scotland to leave the United Kingdom" as part of her campaign to be the leader of the Labour party, just about the only polite response I can muster is, "Aye, right – what's it got to do with you?"

Thankfully, and completely unexpectedly, one of her opponents, Clive Lewis, came up with something diametrically opposed when he said, "In the words of the 1989 Scottish Constitutional Convention, supported by Labour MPs, I believe in the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs". It is not for me, as an English MP for an English constituency, to dictate to Scotland what that form of government should be, and there should be no question of Labour opposing a second independence referendum if there is a mandate to hold one." Surely no democrat, of whatever nationality or political persuasion, could dispute that view?

On Westminster's return in January, SNP MP Angus Brendan MacNeil summed things up succinctly when responding to a Labour MP who was waxing lyrical about Scotland's future relationship with the UK, "We can't have any more non-Scottish MPs patronising the Scottish people – the mandate must be respected. We must have a referendum and the Scottish people must decide, not non-Scottish MPs who think this is better for Scotland, the next thing's better for Scotland – Scotland needs to decide." Which brings me back to the whole déjà vu thing. As the celeb

love-bombing of Scotland gathered pace in the lead up to the 2014 referendum I felt compelled to pen the following piece which, sadly, is all too relevant today...

## What's it got to do with them?

Is it just me, or is anyone else a bit annoyed by the fact that a few English 'celebs' have gone public on their great desire to "save the union"? What's it got to do with them? Of course, in a democratic society everyone is entitled to an opinion and in a free society they are perfectly entitled to air that opinion. But, I repeat, what's it got to do with them?

This particular argument, that people living in other parts of the UK should have a 'say' in the Scottish Independence debate, has been gathering momentum but I feel some significant questions are overlooked in the general reporting of such opinions. So, again I add, what's it got to do with them?

Do they live in Scotland? In the main the answer to that is overwhelmingly "no" so I would contend that it has absolutely nothing to do with them. I'll come back to the reasons why later. If they do live in Scotland then they have the same opportunity as the rest of us to cast their vote on 18 September, but there is nothing about their 'celebrity' status that affords their opinions any more credibility than yours or mine.

I have some sympathy with Scots who live outwith Scotland, as I would certainly want to vote if I was one of them, but the rules of engagement



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were set early on and, like it or lump it, do appear to be fair under democratic international norms. Even in layman terms, where would you stop? Birthplace? Parentage? Schooling? Previous length of residence? Or if we go further down the generational line do we not reduce the most important vote in Scottish history to the level of international football qualification?

So, to other residents of the UK, I really do believe the "what's it got to do with you?" question is valid.

If you have relatives in Scotland then they are currently, on average, around (let's not be pedantic here, just accept the rationale) 500-ish miles away. In the event of a Yes vote on September 18 they will still be the same distance away.

If you currently keep in touch by phone, email, letter or however, nothing will change. If you travel by plane, train or automobile to visit them, nothing will change. Wait, I hear the Project Fear response... passports, border controls, currency, time zone...

Let's look at each of these 'fears' realistically:

If there are border controls and the necessity to show passports then that will only be because the UK government deems it to be necessary as that is not the position of the Scottish government. You can influence that. And, incidentally, you already have to show your passports if you fly here, at your local airport, so that definitely doesn't change. By the way, you happily show your passports to visit France, Germany, Italy...

If you have to change money when visiting Scotland then that will only be because the UK government has gerrymandered that situation as, again, that is not the position of the Scottish government ("at the time of writing, in 2014). And yes, you can influence that. Even if it does transpire that we adopt a different currency then I would reckon it's a safe bet that our businesses would adapt, as the Swiss do to their EU neighbours, and accept both currencies anyway. Again, by the way, you happily change your money to visit France, Germany, Italy...

Wait, I hear the Project Fear response... passports, border controls, currency, time zone...



Jess Phillips



Clive Lewis



Angus MacNeil MP

*It has taken over 300 years for us to arrive at a situation where our sovereignty is genuinely back in our own hands*

*I'm sure you can see the pattern here but... if you have to change your watch when travelling to Scotland then it will be because the UK government has decreed it necessary as it is not the position of the Scottish government. Yet again, you can influence that. Finally, by the way, you happily change your watches to visit France, Germany, Italy...*

*My underlying point in asking "what's it got to do with you?" to the rest of the UK is that it makes no difference whatsoever to residents of England, Northern Ireland or Wales whether Scotland is independent or not. Other than, perhaps, to reawaken their own sense of democratic purpose... You can influence that.*

*Scotland is a country, bullied and bribed into a union the ordinary people did not vote for or agree to and it has taken over 300 years for us to arrive at a situation where our sovereignty is genuinely back in our own hands. I don't believe much of what the Better Together campaigners say about remaining in the UK because we now know, as absolute fact, that Westminster politicians have consistently lied to us about Scotland's wealth, oil reserves and just about everything else over a number of years. Yes, I did say 'fact' - check the documents and statements released under the 30-year rule in relation to oil reserves in the 70s and 80s, Thatcher's social engineering in the 30s and 90s, and Blair... well, do I really have to continue?*

*Must we wait another 30 years for the absolute proof that the current crop of Westminster politicians are lying or are we mature enough to realise, finally, that leopards do not, cannot, change their spots? Enough is enough and now is absolutely definitely Scotland's time to reclaim its nationhood and work with all of its European partners, as well as the remainder of the UK, as an equal and as a model of modern democracy in action.*

*While I'm getting all of this off my chest, here's a parting thought to my fellow Scots who do have a vote. If you truly believe in the union, for whatever reason, vote 'No' and be proud that you have that democratic right. If you are still unsure, please do all you can to find whatever argument will help you decide. But, whatever you do, please under no circumstances vote 'No' because you're not sure or meekly believe the status quo is the easy option. Vote either way, but please find out all that you*



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*can about the key issues and make a positive, informed choice. Finally, if you fall into the truly ridiculous "I cannot stand Salmond" camp - get over yourself! You are not voting for a person or a personality but for Scotland's future. In the first parliamentary election in an independent Scotland you can vote for whichever party most represents your beliefs, and just think what a proud and fulfilling moment that will be.*

*By the way, in case you hadn't guessed, I'll always be voting YES!*

*As a writer I suppose I should be happy that something I came up with is still relevant getting on for 6 years later - Brexit and increasingly right-wing UK governments haven't really changed the fundamentals that much, just focussed them - but as an independentist... like I said earlier, I'm just heartily sick of hearing the same old stuff from people who have no skin in the game. So, while Clive Lewis's statement is a breath of fresh air in a sense, at the time of writing this, it seems far more likely that a Phillips or a Starmer or a Long Bailey will be the next Labour leader and that just means a reorgulation of the same old 'better together' trope - or should that be tripe???? If we're doubly unfortunate then the insufferable Ian Murray may even become deputy leader - judging by his cringeworthy Westminster responses we can only expect him to continue drip-feeding the 'too wee, too poor, too stupid' mince into the new leader's lugs! And as for federalism... well, they've been promising that, along with the abolition of the House of Lords, for over a hundred years and, despite being in a position several times to make good on those promises, they never have. Those are red herrings and sops offered up to keep us in our box, and they always will be!*

*So, back to the original question, what has it got to do with them? Absolutely nothing, and we should all just do*

*continue being the change we want to see in our everyday lives - living as if we had already regained our independent nation status while working away to do everything that we can, individually and collectively, to achieve international recognition of that fact. We may have our disagreements over tactics, strategies and timelines, but let's all keep our eyes on the prize, keep the heid and keep on believing in ourselves. 2020 brings momentous anniversaries of both the Declaration of Arbroath and also the 1820 Radical Rising - what better way to top it all off with whatever is needed to restore Scotland to full nationhood once again and start to build the kind of inclusive, outward-looking, egalitarian society that we all aspire to live in and to leave for our children and grandchildren to nurture.*

*Why do I support independence? I'm Scottish! That's it really. I'm Scottish, and I want my country to be normal and make its own decisions like every other normal country. The question should be reframed to opponents of independence, demanding them to justify our remaining members of a 'union' that ignores our votes and priorities and treats us as a colony. Enough, most definitely, is enough, and I'll STILL always be voting YES - Alba gu bràth!*

*We can only expect him to continue drip-feeding the 'too wee, too poor, too stupid' mince into the new leader's lugs!*