



by Gordon Craigie

**Don't look back  
in anger...**

***let's get ready  
to boogie!***

**N**OW THAT we've passed the winter solstice, and enjoyed whatever form of mid-winter celebration, religious or otherwise, that was possible in this "unusual" year, it feels like the right time to reflect on 2020 and, more importantly, look forward to 2021. But should we look back in fear or anger, or look forward in hope and expectation?

Fear? We all know what we're dealing with now during this pandemic, and we should all know that our personal responsibilities – to ourselves, our loved ones and our fellow citizens – are to continue to follow the **FACTS** guidance:

- Wear **F**ace-coverings
- **A**void crowded spaces
- **C**lean our hands regularly, especially after touching external surfaces
- Maintain a **T**wo-metre distance from people outside our household or bubble
- **S**elf isolate and book a test if we experience Covid symptoms

By each of us following these simple rules we can reduce the levels of fear for ourselves and everyone else, and help to minimise the spread of this horrible disease. And science is coming to the rescue – as it usually does – right now, with a range of vaccines arriving to help prevent future outbreaks.

Anger? We may well be angry at the incompetence of the establishment charlatans in Westminster who didn't foresee the dangers in spite of the growing evidence back in February, who didn't act quickly or decisively enough to eradicate the spread in the way that countries like New Zealand did, who didn't implement a straightforward financial scheme to replace lost incomes and who shamefully, criminally, awarded lucrative contracts to their equally establishment and totally unqualified charlatan chums for a range of vital goods and services... but anger can be a destructive emotion if we don't channel it in a positive way.

Hope? We've used the "Hope over Fear" mantra in the Yes movement for some time now, and the whole point of that message is to encourage us to replace that negativity and crippling anxiety associated with fear with the positivity and optimism that naturally accompanies hope. Our hope for 2021 and beyond is for our government, our Scottish Government, to continue to protect us as best they can under the current circumstances while paving the way for the better future that we all know is possible as an independent nation, where our elected officials work for and with us, the people, instead of for and with their entitled cronies who are getting even more obscenely rich at the expense of us, the people.

Expectation? Well, we've all been expecting and anticipating, some less patiently than others, the announcement of our second attempt at regaining our independence and, as of St Andrew's Day, we now have it. The First Minister unequivocally stated, in relation to the upcoming election in May:



The vaccination programme will be rolled out in 2021

*And in that election, I will seek your authority – no one else's – for a legal independence referendum to be held in the early part of the new Parliament.*

So, our justifiable expectation is that our second chance will arrive in the not-too-distant future, and we must be ready to seize that chance this time around.

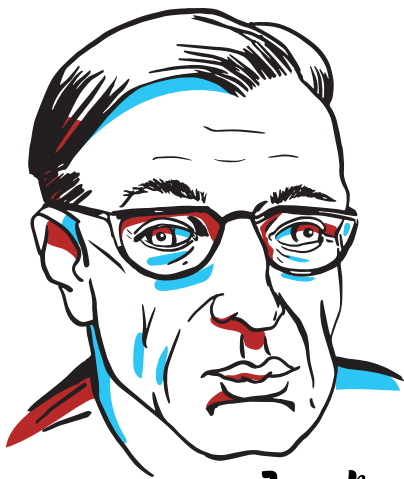
Spending too much time lamenting the tragedies of the past year will not benefit our mood. Of course, we will continue to mourn those we have lost, and feel that anger even more intensely as many of those lives could've been saved had the chumocracy acted differently, responsibly. New Zealand – with a similar-size population to Scotland remember – has, at the time of writing this, only suffered 25 Covid-related deaths to Scotland's more than 6,000. Just let that difference sink in... Could an independent Scotland have matched that achievement? Why not? We'll never know for sure, but all the signs are that the Scottish Government would've moved faster and harder, with restrictions on movement into and out of the country similar to those implemented by New Zealand, had we been independent. Yes, our government has handled the pandemic better, and kept us safer, than Westminster, but surely we can aspire to matching the best, and being the best we can be, rather than simply being better than the worst? We cannot change the past, but freeing ourselves of fear and channelling our anger positively can help us to move into the new year with hope and expectation aplenty.

A digression... Some years back I attended a weekend seminar in Glasgow – a "personal development" programme run by a motivational speaker, Jack Black. The weekend was a follow-up or refresher to a course my wife's employer had insisted she attend earlier in the year. I was actually an interloper, as one of her colleagues didn't want to go so, for one weekend only, I assumed the persona of "Robin"! Anyway, my main takeaway from the weekend was the genuine power of positivity and positive thinking. Not in any airy-fairy way – one of the speaker's claims was that if you visualised a free parking space intensely enough as you drive into Glasgow city centre then one would magically appear just as you arrived (really?) – but more about the power of

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Nicola Sturgeon – Hope over Fear



Jean Paul Sartre  
- football fan and  
philosopher

Jean Paul  
Sartre

choice over how we frame situations in our own mind. One of his, more useful, examples was the Scottish tradition of answering “no bad” when asked how we were, and how framing this with the negative, “bad”, immediately brought the mood down. As it turns out, he’s right! Changing that response to “good” or “brilliant” or “excellent” lifts both your own mood and that of your enquirer. When I put that into practice at work, the week after the course, it was amazing how many colleagues were taken aback by this unexpectedly positive retort but, more importantly, it did lift my mood and theirs too, and I’ve been doing it ever since! Here endeth the lesson...

The point of that digression was to introduce the idea of positive thinking to complement our “Hope over Fear” mantra as we head into 2021. The end, or at least the beginning of the end, of the pandemic is in sight and the arrival of Scotland’s vaccination programme should be viewed extremely positively. Setting aside, partially at least, our anger at the whole Brexit clusterbourach we can begin to look forward with positivity to the independence referendum that our First Minister has promised should we return her to her position at the May elections. Yet already we have some doom-mongers among us claiming that she hasn’t, and won’t, move fast enough to achieve our independence as quickly as possible. Well, we all have a choice – we can choose to believe that negative viewpoint and simmer with anger all the way up to and beyond the elections or we can choose to believe that we are on our way to achieving our goal and think positively about getting there. This isn’t a call to “wheeshht for indy”, but it is a call to stop dragging ourselves and others down at a crucial part of the game. When your football team is playing do the players perform better



Scotland didn't vote to leave the EU, and wants to regain its place in the world



when their supporters cheer and encourage or when they boo and insult?

Sticking with the football analogy, the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once wisely observed, “In football everything is complicated by the presence of the opposite team.” Our “Team Scotland” manager, the First Minister, has laid out her strategy and tactics to her players, the MSPs and MPs, and they are now playing the game, in real time, aiming for the ultimate goal of independence. The opposition team don’t have any real tactics or strategy, and no star players, but they’re very adept at bribing the referee and bending the rules to their advantage. Should our team manager declare loudly and clearly what her alternative approaches are? Or should she introduce them to the game when the uninformed opposition least expect? When the Scotland Men’s National Team play England in next year’s Euro finals, should Steve Clarke tell Gareth Southgate what our players will do should we still be level after 70 minutes? I think we all know the answer!

As an interesting aside, another French philosopher, Albert Camus, said, “All that I know most surely about morality and obligations, I owe to football.” No surprise then tae learn that fitba wisnae part o the Eton curriculum when the Clown Prince and his Bullingdon chums were there then! No, they were too busy playing the “Eton Wall Game”, which consists of very few rules, where bullies have a distinct advantage, and where the useless buffoons only manage to score roughly one goal every ten years!

This football analogy doesn’t only apply to the “team and tactics” arguments outlined above, but also to the supporters. Many want to actively “play in the game” and they will be the ones out campaigning, canvassing, marching or writing persuasive (hopefully!) articles in publications such as *iScot*. But many, many more are content to cheer from the stands, and only actively participate when it comes to their turn to put a cross in a ballot paper box. Those people aren’t “wheeshhting for indy” either, they’re simply supporting the cause in the manner that best suits their situation and personality. Think about it – we may have had a magnificent crowd of 150,000+ marching through Glasgow in the rain last year, but our electorate numbers more than 4 million... There are many more of us out there quietly supporting Team Yes and ready to cheer them on.

Our hopes and expectations should be positive and high. Successive polls during 2020 have shown an increasing majority of the Scottish electorate in favour of restoring our independence. Now that Johnson has satisfied his big-money hedge-fund sponsors by crashing the UK – and Scotland, against our democratically expressed will – out

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of the European Union there is no longer any obligation on the remaining 27 members to “back” their UK counterparts in opposing Scottish independence. Already we hear encouraging noises from an increasing number of member states about Scotland’s return, and positive interest worldwide too. And Johnson’s claim that he has secured a “good deal” with the EU on trade has removed once and for all any doubt over a future trading relationship between Scotland in the EU and the rUK! Let’s see the Bullingdon Buffoon wriggle out of that one...

If I return to the football analogy for one last time, our team played a blinder in 2014, against all the odds, and narrowly lost out to a last-minute goal, the so-called “Vow”. That goal was against the rules – “purdah” explicitly prevents new political or policy promises being made during the pre-election period – and would undoubtedly now be cancelled by VAR, the video assistant referee! Yet since then, while our team has matured and grown stronger, and our support has increased in number, our opponents have only grown older and more arrogant with their arguments weakened by the passage of time.

In 2014 Project Fear told us we could only stay in the EU by voting “No” and they promised us the most powerful devolved government in the world, begging us to “lead not leave” the UK. Yet the morning after the night before, a smug David Cameron charmingly reminded us rebellious Scots that what was now important was “English votes for English laws (EVEL)”. Brexit has since been pushed through despite our express opposition, and the Unionist parties combined to water down every positive proposal presented to the Smith Commission that was charged with delivering those promised increased powers to Holyrood. More recently we’ve heard De Pfeffel’s pronouncement that devolution had been a “disaster” for Scotland, (quickly followed by the “clarification” that it would be a success if only we would vote Tory!), and we’ve even seen the re-emergence of Gordie Broom with his latest rehash of federalism – when will this tube gie it a chuck? Are they worried? Yes, they are. Why are they all arguing and plotting so vehemently against a referendum that they claim won’t happen anyway? We all know why... because the people of Scotland won’t be fooled again, and they know it too. Everything they threw at us in 2014 has been exposed as lies or fiction or both, and they’ve thrown away any chance they had of persuading foreign leaders to support them with their threats and bullying.

So let’s stay positive, keep on keeping the heid and look forward with hope and expectation to what 2021 holds for us – it’s coming yet for a’ that. In a few short months we will, hopefully, be seeing the back of this Covid pandemic and emerging into the light of spring and summer with renewed energy for what lies ahead. We’ll remember those who’ve been lost, but we can finally set aside any lingering fears and channel our anger in a positive direction. The dream is ours for the taking, the game is there to be won, and we need the entire team – management, players and supporters – all pulling in the same direction. Yes sir, just like our men’s national team, we **will** boogie in 2021!



The Scotland Men's National Team will play in Euro 2020... in 2021!



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Yes sir, we will boogie!

