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## UK must remain together

By Neil Johnston, News Editor (2012/13)

Thursday 2 February 2012

The debate on Scottish independence has recently re-ignited, highlighting numerous burning issues that need to be addressed. While the SNP effectively began their campaign after last May's landslide victory, the unionist parties have been slow to react until now.

The Scottish Government published their proposed referendum question last week and even the day it was published highlights the elements of Scottish culture the SNP are keen to take advantage of. Released on Burns Day, a celebration of Scotland's national poet, the loaded question of "Do you agree that Scotland should be an independent country?" is hardly what Unionists had in mind.

Furthermore, Alex Salmond, Scottish First Minister, has outlined his intentions for a second question on the ballot paper over 'devo-max', another ambiguous SNP concept. Branded as separation by stealth this option would give Scotland far more powers but significant details about this proposal remain absent.

Additionally, the nationalists plan to allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote in the referendum. There are reasonable arguments for extending the franchise but this proposal is purely for political advantage, as support for independence is generally higher among younger Scots, as Alex Salmond knows.

Furthermore, there are questions as to why the referendum cannot be held in 2012. The reason is simply that this year doesn't conveniently coincide with the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, as well as the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, and the Ryder Cup coming to Scotland. This is an important decision that should be decided on real arguments not spur of the moment patriotism.

While the SNP do have a mandate for holding a referendum, there are still serious questions over the legality of the SNP's plans. David Cameron should be commended for stepping into the debate and making it clear Westminster has a say in the referendum. The Unionist camp needs some political heavyweights to overcome the charismatic Salmond.

Unionists should be weary of the threat posed by the SNP, who proved their capabilities last May. Support for independence has been growing, but if Salmond and the SNP are adequately challenged the UK will survive this historic test.



### 3 comments

Gaffaweb

2 Feb '12 at 3:19 pm

Why should Scotland remain in the union?

I've read lots of articles that essentially mount to scare stories, claiming that Scotland would be economically unviable as an independent country, or that border check points would need to be

established, some even claiming that Scotland would be set back hundreds of years, alot of the arguments for Scotland to remain in the union seem to me to be based on nothing but an unrealistic notion of patriotism and harking back to the good old days. I've yet to read anything written from a unionist perspective that tells Scotland exactly why it should remain in the union, it's all very negative and patronising so far towards the Scots and their country.

If the Scots want to seperate from us and build themselves the kind of society that they want, then they should be able to do it, with no interference from England, Wales or Northern Ireland, it's their decision and theirs alone, if in 2014 the majority vote yes then that's it, it's done, and i don't think it's a bad thing (I'm sure we can all still be friends), power to them for having a party that makes such a positive case for why the union no longer works for Scotland, if only we had a party like that down here.

 Report

Champagne

2 Feb '12 at 3:42 pm

The UK needs Scotland more than Scotland needs the Union.

I've yet to see a single argument that adequately counters that. Whilst this remains the case, the SNP'll have good reason to be smug.

 Report

Brian Innes-Will

2 Feb '12 at 10:17 pm

In the last 80 years, the only UK government elected which was not the choice of English voters, was the Labour administration of 1950, and it only survived for 18 months. Indeed in the vast majority of elections that took place during this period, the Scottish vote was irrelevant in terms of which party formed the government. In summary, England was governed by a party supported by a majority of its voters in 78.5 out of 80 years.

Scotland on the other hand, was governed by a party that did not enjoy the support of Scottish Voters in 32 out of 80 years. (Source: House of Commons Research Paper 0461. 28th July 2004

Currently the Conservatives have a single MP from Scotland.

This persistent democratic deficit will loom larger as the next UK GE approaches.

 Report

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