



We were promised that we were a valuable part of the UK. All through the Independence Referendum leaders and subordinates alike from all 3 Unionist Parties kept insisting that Scotland was a valuable, much loved and wanted part of the UK, David Cameron even went as far as begging us not to leave. Oh how things have changed. With the rise in support for the SNP and the prospect of Scotland abandoning Labour, Lib Dems and our solitary Tory MP the mood of the Unionist three has changed, if it was ever any different in the first place that is.

David Cameron is possibly the **worst offender** as he knows that **under no circumstance will the SNP ever support a Tory Government** and if the polls are realised both Tory and Labour will require the support of at least one other Party. On the Andrew Marr Show (*Sun. 19 April*) Cameron said "*it's the first time in our history that a group of Nationalists from one part of our country would be involved in setting the direction of the Government of our country. I think that is a frightening prospect.*" He continued "*the SNP don't want to come to Westminster to contribute, they want to come to break up our country*". **He is wrong** on both counts, three times. First, In 1910, Herbert Asquith's Liberal government held onto power by forming political alliances with the **Irish Nationalist Party**. Secondly, why on earth would any Party regardless of their stance on Home Rule, Independence or the Union send MP's to Westminster not to contribute? Contributing to the Politics at Westminster is an **essential requirement** of any Party who wants to better the prospects of the people they serve and the SNP are no different. Third but not least, the SNP are not heading to Westminster to break up the UK, the SNP are heading to Westminster to ensure that for the first time in 307/8 years Scotland has a very "**strong voice**" and if possible an influence at Westminster. Independence or a second referendum has no place in the General Election and the SNP have **no intention** of breaking up the UK or having a second referendum via this General Election.

Ed Miliband on the other hand is much shrewder, he is **leaving all the bad mouthing and fabrication to his branch manager** in Scotland **Jim Murphy**. Ed is wiser than he sometimes appears, he knows **he will need the support** of at least one other Party if he is to get the keys to number 10. He also knows that the likelihood of the **SNP being that Party is very high**, therefore, like the SNP have always said, he too has ruled out a formal coalition stating "*Labour will not go into coalition government with the SNP. There will be no SNP ministers in any government I lead.*" He **never ruled out** the confidence and supply deal the SNP are offering. Cameron knows there won't be a coalition, Sturgeon, Miliband and everyone of us know there will be no coalition, but we all know that the SNP **will not put Cameron back into Downing Street** if they can help it. That means, if needs be, the SNP will, as offered, help Miliband become Prime Minister. Ed appears to have resigned himself to the fact there will be a large block of SNP MP's at Westminster and knows he will need their help. Labour Scotland Branch is **achieving nothing but hurt** for the UK Labour Party, hence Miliband's decision to throw them to the wolves and leave them to their own devices.

Nick Clegg fighting for his own political career has also joined in the anti-SNP cheerleading. He says "*The SNP are shouting from the sidelines and are determined to keep a minority Labour Government on life support, limping from vote to vote towards the break-up of the UK.*" He went on to say "*Do you really want a government on life support, with Alex Salmond deciding whether it succeeds or dies?*". Like Cameron **he is wrong** in all things he claims. In addition to the **debunked break-up objective**, the SNP are not there to ensure Ed Miliband gets into power or to help a limping Labour minority. I am sure that the SNP like many of their members and supporters would **rather see a complete overhaul** at Westminster with **Anti-Austerity Parties** taking the reins rather the same tired, tried and failed three. However, it is a foregone conclusion that voter loyalty and fear, on some part, means that we will have either a Labour or Tory Government so it only stands to reason that the SNP will support what it sees as the **lesser of two evils**, the Labour Party.

In addition to the three above we also have cabinet ministers and branch leaders to contend with, prospective MP's (*remember we have no MP's until Parliament is reformed*) from all three Unionist Parties are not fighting the election on policy, they are fighting it with lies, spin and fear and of course their main line of attack, the SNP. The Conservative, Libdems and Labour Scotland Branch are openly supporting each other in tactical voting options. **Labour's** George Simpson and **Conservative** Lachlan Rhodes joined Christine Jardine (Libdem) in Inverurie to confirm they will be voting for her on May 7 (www.christinejardine.org.uk) in a bid to prevent Alex Salmond from winning. They have actually named their campaign anyone but the SNP.

Let us not forget UKIP's Nigel Farage "*the Scottish tail will be wagging the English dog*". I guess that makes Wales and N. Ireland the legs, therefore, we must assume London to be the head. A head that hasn't been making the right choices not just for Scotland but for chunks of the UK for a long time now. Nigel, Scotland feels the dog has failed all of us and it's about time the tail, had its chance.

We also have the UK media, the newspapers who are by far the biggest culprits of all. They spread fear and loathing of the SNP daily in England's editions, whilst the same papers Scottish editions paint pictures of doom and gloom if Scotland dares vote SNP. The right wing media attacked the launch of the SNP election manifesto, **Iain Martin** (*Telegraph*) saying "*Correction: sorry, SNP rally not being held in Sheffield. It's actually being held in Nuremberg*". **Boris Johnson** (London Mayor): "*You wouldn't get Herod to run a baby farm, would you? It would not normally occur to you to interview a convicted jewel thief for the post of custodian of the Tower of London. You would not dream of asking a fox to look after the henhouse or a temperance campaigner to run a brewery or Attila the Hun to work as a doorkeeper for the Roman senate – and no one in their right mind would enter into a contract with a bunch of voracious weevils to protect the lovely old timbers in the tower of the local church. Would they?*" "*SNP in Government would be like putting King Herod in charge of a baby farm*" **Lord Bell**, former adviser to Margaret Thatcher "*I do imagine in my wildest dreams that a week before polling day everyone will realize that Nicola Sturgeon is ghastly and that they will have to vote conservative*" He continued, "*If elections are all about fear and greed, it makes fear a very serious issue.*" Programme host, Sky's Adam Bolton asks "*that's in England but in Scotland it might actually help the SNP*" Lord bell responds with "***who cares? say goodbye to Scotland***". I guess that as they have their pyrrhic victory the love bombing can stop and their true feeling can be shown, Scotland we need you but by God we don't really want you. You've had your referendum and you lost, now shut up and let us get on with it.

5 ways full fiscal autonomy can create jobs & grow Scotland's economy. Polls show a significant majority of Scots support DevoMax, meaning all powers transferring from Westminster except shared monetary policy, defence and foreign affairs. So taxation and spending, or full fiscal autonomy (FFA), is an intrinsic and indistinguishable keystone of DevoMax. Without FFA in the mix you don't have home rule, you have a constitutional fudge and the worst of both worlds with Westminster controlling the key economic levers and a Scottish Parliament with one hand tied behind its back.

More than half of No voters would have preferred DevoMax.

Labour are feverishly promoting the £7.6bn black hole **scare-story to put people off FFA** but it's a myth; firstly because it assumes oil prices won't ever recover, and even a moderate increase to \$70/80 would wipe out any additional deficit. Secondly FFA will give the Scottish Government powers to balance income and expenditure. The UK has failed to do this and so the UK is running a deficit of £75billion and a debt of £1.5trillion. As black holes go, Westminster has what's known as a "super massive".

Labour's desperate attacks on FFA don't add up. The choice in this election is between cutting vital services (*Tory/Labour austerity*) or to borrow modestly in the short term to grow your economy creating jobs and reducing demand for welfare in the medium term (*SNP*). Westminster austerity will cut off crucial spending that fuels growth so **Labour's desperate attacks on FFA don't add up** economically. **FFA is the key to rapid economic growth and prosperity** for Scotland. Here are five key ways Scottish FFA can balance the books, cut the deficit, raise revenues and create jobs.

1) Refocusing the economy on SMEs. Small to medium sized enterprises create the majority of added value employment in Scotland. SMEs make up 99.3% of Scotland's businesses, employing 1.1million (*54.7% of all private sector employment*) and representing the biggest opportunity for economic growth. But despite **generating 36.7% of private sector turnover** in Scotland, SMEs are largely **ignored in PLC and London centric UK business policy**. FFA offers flexibility to target tax incentives to encourage growth in the SME sector through encouraging best practice exchange, increasing skills, confidence and ambition, innovation, internationalisation and competitiveness.

2) Targeted tax incentives. Business for Scotland made the case to the SNP policy team to replace the 3% Corporation Tax cut policy with targeted tax reliefs to encourage business behaviours that generate **faster job creation and economic growth**. As the champion of the SME sector in Scotland, we also argued for prompt payment measures for small businesses to be put into law, as announced by John Swinney this week. With both of these and several other innovative business focused policies now forming SNP policy, we can see the Scottish Government understands that **SMEs hold the keys** to rapid economic growth. **UK Government is refusing** to devolve corporation tax and so it is **only with FFA these vital job creating tax powers** can be deployed to Scotland's benefit.

3) Increasing Research and Development (R&D). FFA includes policies to increase overall revenues through targeted tax incentives matched to bespoke grant support for companies to increase investment in R&D. Scotland **lags 3% behind the UK** average in productivity but up to 40% behind Norway's, and significantly behind other comparable northern European economies. Scotland spends 1.25% of GDP on R&D, and **faster growing, more prosperous smaller nations** including Norway, Finland, and Denmark, **spend an average of 3.4%**. The innovation think-tank NESTA calculated that building towards an R&D spend of 3.4% of GDP over a five year period would **grow Scotland's economy by around £12bn** a year.

4) Abolishing Air Passenger Duty (APD). APD will reduce connectivity from Scotland's airports. APD, a tax on international travel, has **increased by 160%** since 2007 reflecting the level of tax that Heathrow and Gatwick can demand but it is **too high** for airports outside London and the South East. Scotland's leading airports jointly stated "*APD will over the long-term reduce traffic and connectivity from Scotland's airports, impacting on inward investment, trade and competitiveness. It also impacts on Scotland's inbound tourism industry. By 2016 it is estimated that £210m per annum less will be being spent in Scotland by inbound visitors because of APD*". The Calman Commission **recommendation to devolve APD was ignored**. APD devolution faces major opposition in Westminster so without a staged approach to FFA it is unlikely that this power will be devolved. A Ryanair report stated that halving APD would mean "*travellers to Scotland doubled over a 5-10 year period*" benefiting "**job creation in tourism**". The tourism sector is worth £4.3bn in direct expenditure from overnight visitors and provides employment to at least 185,900. Tens of thousands of new jobs would be created by **getting rid of APD and tourism revenue would increase**.

5) Reducing VAT on Tourism. 21 out of 28 EU nations have lowered VAT on tourism related activity. Unfortunately, as with APD, the rate of **VAT on tourism is set by London's needs and not Scotland's**. Ireland, where the rate is half of the UK's, provides strong evidence of economic benefit creating 23,324 direct jobs in the tourism industry since the VAT reduction in July 2011 and an additional 10,728 indirect jobs elsewhere due to a multiplier effect. That's 34,000 new jobs in a tourism sector roughly the same size as Scotland's. This move in terms of increased tourism spend and lower welfare spend, combined with higher national insurance and income tax revenues should be worth at least a billion a year to Scotland.

Without FFA you don't have home rule, you have a constitutional fudge. If Scotland had FFA we would have the power to do all of the above and grow our economy at unprecedented rates, thus demonstrating conclusively that Scotland would be better off as an independent partner to the other countries of these isles but worse off by remaining a devo-lite region without fiscal autonomy. Just the few policies highlighted above would make 5% growth attainable for Scotland and that is why Westminster is scared of full fiscal autonomy Scotland isn't.

Gordon MacIntyre-Kemp

With only 15 days to go until polling, fear, lies and deceit will be everywhere you turn. Please, when you read a newspaper or watch a TV programme or listen to a politician question what you see and hear. If you have the internet research the truth if you don't ask someone who can do it for you. For too long now Westminster have kept Scotland in the dark, don't let it continue any longer.

Access these articles at www.freedomofinformation.scot/bulletin/ or Request them by email; FOInews@virginmedia.com

The SNP launched its General Election manifesto in Edinburgh on Monday (20 April). It was a manifesto full of good news and positive progressive policies not just for Scotland but the rest of the UK too. The theme of the manifesto was the cruel and unnecessary austerity agenda being carried out by the Tories and Libdems, an agenda that Labour have signed up to and promise to see through, **has to stop**. You can watch it here; www.youtube.com/watch?t=78&v=_3I4_j5jKyY

Nicola Sturgeons Manifesto Launch Transcript; I am proud today to publish the SNP's manifesto for the General Election on May 7th. This is a manifesto to make Scotland stronger at Westminster. The pledge I make today to the Scottish people is this. If you vote SNP on May 7th, we will make your voice heard more loudly than it has ever been heard before at Westminster. We will stand up for Scotland's interests and always fight your corner. Our job is to serve you and we will do it at Westminster - just as we do in the Scottish Parliament - to the very best of our ability. That is my promise to Scotland.

But I also want to make a pledge today to people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Even though you can't vote SNP, your views do matter to me. And you have a right to know what to expect of my party if the votes of the Scottish people give us influence in a hung parliament. So my promise to you is this. If the SNP emerges from this election in a position of influence, we will exercise that influence responsibly and constructively. And we will exercise it in the interests of people, not just in Scotland, but across the UK. For as long as Scotland remains part of the Westminster system, we have a shared interest with you in making that system work better for all of us - for the many, not the few. We will not do any deals that would put the Tories into power - indeed, if there is an anti-Tory majority after May 7th, we will vote to stop a new Tory government even getting off the ground. But we will then seek to use our influence to make a Labour government bolder and better.

We will seek to make common cause and build alliances with others of like mind across the UK to deliver the progressive change that so many want to see. And we will bring to that task eight years experience of government - of successful, effective and stable government. It was, after all, as a minority government in Scotland that the SNP restored free education, abolished prescription charges and froze the council tax. We will use that experience in a minority led House of Commons to advance progressive policies that will benefit people in all parts of the UK. So to everyone who, like me, wants this election to herald the real and positive change that will make life better for ordinary people across these islands, I hold out a hand of friendship. The SNP - if we are given the chance - will be your allies in making that change. The manifesto we publish today sets out our priorities for progressive change. It is a manifesto, above all else, to end austerity. That will be our number one priority. It is time to end the needless pain of Tory cuts.

In the last five years, austerity has undermined our public services, lowered the living standards of working people, pushed more children into poverty and held back economic growth. It hasn't even succeeded on its own terms - over the last parliament, the Chancellor missed all of his own fiscal targets. When a policy is failing, it is time to change it. That is why we are putting forward a clear alternative to the further spending cuts proposed by the Tories and Labour. We want to see modest spending increases - the equivalent of increasing departmental spending by 0.5% above inflation - in each year of the next parliament. Under our proposal, the deficit and the national debt would still fall each year. But a slightly slower path to eliminating the deficit completely will allow at least £140 billion extra to be invested in infrastructure and support for business, in protecting our public services, and in policies that will help to lift people out of poverty.

We will also back fair proposals to raise extra revenue. It's right that those with the broadest shoulders pay a little bit more. That's why we will back the restoration of the 50p tax rate for the highest earners, a mansion tax and a bankers' bonus tax. And when money is so tight, we believe it to be all the more important that we use our voice and our votes to make sure that we don't squander scarce resources on new nuclear weapons. We will seek to build an alliance in the House of Commons against the renewal of Trident and we will vote for the £100 billion that would be saved to be invested instead in education, better childcare, and the NHS. Our plans - for modest spending increases, fair taxes and setting the right priorities for spending - will mean that we can invest in growing our economy and strengthening our society. It will mean that we can give the NHS the funding it needs. Over the past week, Labour has failed to commit to the money England's NHS needs. And while the Tories have given a commitment, they have no idea where the money is coming from. Increasing health spending while cutting overall spending by £30 billion, as the Tories plan to do, will mean even more savage cuts to social care, social security and local government - all of which will pile extra pressure on the NHS. Both Labour and Tories are selling the NHS short. Our plans mean that we - the SNP - can make this clear commitment to the NHS across the whole of the UK. We will vote for an increase in health spending across the UK of £24 billion by 2020/21 - £9.5 billion above inflation. That will deliver a total increase to the budget of NHS Scotland of £2 billion by 2020/21 - and it will ensure that our NHS enters the next decade fully equipped for the challenges it faces. I also give a commitment today that SNP MPs - in order to protect Scotland's budget - will vote against any further privatisation of the NHS in England and we will back any moves to restore it to a fully public service.

Our plans will also mean more investment in housing. There is a substantial shortfall of affordable homes for rent across the UK. The Scottish Government is on track to meet our commitment to 30,000 new affordable homes in the five years to 2016, but more needs to be done. We will push for a UK wide house building target of at least 100,000 new affordable homes a year and use the extra investment to expand house building here in Scotland. Building more homes not only meets a vital social need - it is also good for the construction industry, for jobs and for the economy as a whole. And to support faster economic growth, we will press for a cut in employers' National Insurance Contributions. We want to see the Employment Allowance increased from £2,000 to £6,000 over the next 4 years to help smaller firms take on and retain additional staff - and support them in paying the living wage.

It is measures like these that will help us grow the economy and create jobs. But we must also make sure that work pays. SNP MPs will vote to increase the minimum wage to £8.70 by 2020. We will support action to crack down on zero hours contracts. And we will press the UK government to follow the lead of the Scottish Government and become a living wage employer.

We will vote for measures to tackle the rising tide of poverty, including in-work poverty, that is a direct result of the policies of austerity. We will oppose the £3 billion cut in disability support that threatens to cut the incomes of one million disabled people by more than £1000 a year. We will support an increase in Carers' Allowance. We will vote to retain the triple lock on pensions and protect the winter fuel allowance. We will support increases in tax credits and child benefit at least in line with inflation, to avoid more children falling into poverty. And we will vote for the immediate abolition of the bedroom tax. Abolishing the bedroom tax would mean that the £35 million a year that the Scottish government spends to mitigate its impact would be available to spend on other priorities. We would spend that money on measures to tackle - and eventually eradicate - the food poverty that is such a scandal in our rich country.

All of the policies that SNP MPs will champion at Westminster are about building a stronger economy and a fairer society. That is also what drives our support for a more empowered Scottish Parliament. The SNP will always support independence - but this election is not about independence. It is about making Scotland stronger. So we will use the influence of SNP votes at Westminster to ensure that promises made during the referendum are delivered. We will demand that the proposals of the Smith Commission are delivered quickly and in full and we will oppose any effort to undermine devolution. We will seek agreement that the Scottish Parliament should move to full financial responsibility. And as part of a phased transition, we will prioritise early devolution of powers over employment policy, including the minimum wage, welfare, business taxes, national insurance and equality policy - the powers we need here in Scotland to create jobs, grow revenues and lift people out of poverty.

These are the priorities that we will carry into this election and beyond. Priorities to make life better for ordinary people, not just in Scotland, but across the UK. A real alternative to austerity, a higher minimum wage, protection for our NHS, action to boost growth in our economy and a determination to tackle the poverty that blights too many lives. This is a manifesto bursting with ideas and ambition. It is a manifesto, first and foremost, for Scotland. But it has real relevance - and can bring real benefits - to the whole of the UK.

A vote for this SNP manifesto on May 7th will make Scotland's voice heard at Westminster more strongly than it has ever been before. And a stronger voice for Scotland will mean a stronger voice for new, better and more progressive politics at Westminster - for everyone. My vow is to make Scotland stronger at Westminster. With your support, we can secure a better future for you, your family and Scotland.

A great manifesto, full of determination and fairness, a manifesto that if implemented throughout the UK can help end Westminster's austerity agenda, but it wasn't welcomed by everyone. Jim Murphy, Labour's Scotland branch manager, "*SNP have broken their promise on re-running referendum. White Paper said 'once in a generation' but manifesto doesn't rule it out*". No Jim it doesn't but **it doesn't include it** either, even reading between the lines you cannot see any mention or hint of a second referendum. This election is **not about referendums**, it's not about anything devolved to Holyrood, it's about giving Scotland a voice at Westminster, it's about making Scotland Stronger whilst helping our friends, family and neighbours all over the UK prosper along with us.

The Times headline on Tuesday "*How I'll blackmail England for £148b by the most dangerous woman in Britain*" and the Daily Mail's "*The SNP's Con-Trick Manifesto*" Quentin Letts writes in the mail "*We had been issued with a glossy brochure of a manifesto, entitled 'Stronger for Scotland'. Almost a slogan for a brand of lavatory paper*".

John Major, joins in the SNP bashing. In a stinging attack on democracy he said "*If Labour were to accept an offer of support from the SNP, it could put the country on course to a government held to ransom on a vote-by-vote basis. 'Labour would be in hock to a party that – slowly but surely – will push them ever further to the left. And who would pay the price for this? We all would. We would all pay for the SNP's ransom in our daily lives – through higher taxes, fewer jobs, and more and more debt'*". Funny that not one of them dares to mention that the SNP have run a successful Scottish Government and have managed to balance the books every year. Whilst providing Scots with better services, freezing council tax, negating the bedroom tax, not to mention free prescriptions and free elderly and child care without once raising taxes (*Scotland can raise or lower the basic rate of tax by 3p*).

The attacks above are only to be expected, we suffered them all through the referendum and we have said from issue 1 on, that lies, fear and smear will be the order of the day for all UK press (*the National and Sunday Herald excluded*) and the unionist Parties. What wasn't expected was the announcement by David Cameron to "launch an annual report on Scottish governments impact on UK". It will focus on policies such as business rates, tuition fees, health and tax. Cameron says that other parts of the country will be free to respond, such as taking compensatory action. If Scotland presses ahead with plans to cut air passenger duty (*see 5 ways full fiscal autonomy can create jobs & grow Scotland's economy*). In a move seen as an attempt to be the champion of English interests, Cameron says "*the review will set out 'what action is needed to make sure there is no detriment to the rest of the UK'*".

What does that mean? In layman terms it means that Westminster is not happy that on the limits of the Scottish Budget a devolved Government who may be sending 50+ MP's to Westminster cannot be seen to be doing a better job and will not be allowed to do so or Wales, N. Ireland and England can sue them. No more free prescriptions, no more free education, no more council tax freeze, no more negating the bedroom tax, and end to free elderly and child care, in effect an end to the devolved options of the Scottish Government.

The only way to prevent Westminster having a negative impact on Scotland Parliament and help bring Scotland and rest of UK out of the austerity is to send as many SNP MP's to the UK Parliament as feasibly possible. If we don't in 5 years we may not have a Scottish Parliament to speak of.