



Will the bullying from Westminster ever stop? Continually forcing their control on Scotland, with millionaire public schoolboys telling us we can't have a second Indyref because they don't want one. It's not up to them, it's up to us: The Scottish People.

The United Nations Charter states: *The Nation in which the first Nation is seeking Independence from is not allowed under international law to interfere in that democratic process*, which means Westminster should not have interfered in last September's Indyref and Cameron cannot stop Indyref2, unless he chooses to break international law.

On Wednesday 5 August Celtic travelled to Azerbaijan for the second leg of their Champions League qualifier against Quarabag. The Celtic fans were greeted with a Quarabag banner saying "You are Slave of England". After becoming the first country to ever reject its Independence, is this how the rest of the world looks at Scotland now?



Kezia Dugdale just can't help having a go at the SNP. After Scotland's school kids **proved her wrong** by achieving the highest pass levels ever Kezia tweeted *Congratulations to everyone that passed their exams today, just a pity the SNP made it so hard for you.*

Labour Scotland branch leadership candidate Ken Macintosh says Scotland should not be given more powers over Welfare, Taxes and Spending because of its history as a relatively reactionary country. Macintosh, MSP for Eastwood, warned more powers could be abused if reactionary Government was to be elected. In a *Commonspace* interview, he said assuming policy from Holyrood would be more progressive than policy coming from Westminster, was "dangerous". He said "It's based on the assumption that if we devolve powers over anything, welfare, tax and spending that we will automatically take more progressive decisions. Now, that's a dangerous assumption to make," he said. Scotland, he added, "might get a reactionary government in 20 years time".

Following on from Kezia Dugdale's warning that the left wing leadership candidate Jeremy Corbyn would leave Labour carping on the sidelines, it seems that Labour Scotland branch, along with at least half of Labour UK, are happy for the power to remain in the hands of right wing policy makers in Westminster, no matter how badly that hurts Scotland and her people. What does it matter what type of Government Scotland has as long as the powers are here where they can be made for the benefit of the people of Scotland?

In contrast, Nicola Sturgeon just tweeted her congratulations to the kids and left it at that.

Scotlands only Chinese SNP Councillor has quit the Party. On Saturday August 8 the Scotsman published the article claiming that Yen Hongmei Jin quit amid claims of racism. Yen says she was forced to resign after the party's top brass failed to protect her against "discrimination" from local party members. She claims to have received a vulgar and rude email back in February after she tried to arrange a Burn Night Fundraiser.

Emma Harper and Henry McClelland, Convener and Vice Convener of Dumfries CA, released the following response to the media: *In response to last week's press coverage, the Executive of the SNP Dumfriesshire Constituency Association, which represents the five local SNP branches and over a thousand local members, writes to clarify some points. We were never made aware of a "racially abusive email" that is alleged to have been sent by an un-named individual to Councillor Yen Hongmei Jin in February 2015. We still have not seen it and only know what Cllr Jin has given to the press.*

The CA deplors racism. If the CA received evidence of racism by a member, the CA would report it to the Party's National Secretary, in accordance with Party rules. Councillor Jin did not bring this to the attention of the CA, in spite of attending two meetings since she said she received this email. Nor did she alert her colleagues in the SNP council group. However after she received this alleged email in February she had a letter published in the May edition of SNP Magazine Independence praising the party's approach to equality and announcing her intention to seek a seat in parliament.

We are saddened that Cllr Jin chose to take this matter to the press only after she failed to pass the candidate assessment for potential parliamentarians. The assessment process for Holyrood is conducted nationally and the local party has no role in it. We know however that it is tough, in order that the best candidates progress to the next stage. Many hard-working activists, including SNP councillors, fail to get through the process. Those who fail are given feedback and often go on to pass candidate assessment at a later date. Many who do pass are from ethnic minorities and become successful parliamentarians such as Humza Yousaf MSP and Tasmina Ahmed Sheik MP.

When Cllr Jin failed the assessment she resigned from the SNP and attacked the party in the media. Three weeks later, Cllr Jin has again approached the media, this time accusing SNP colleagues of bullying and racism without evidence. If she received a racist email from one un-named individual we condemn that unequivocally. But one rogue individual does not represent the party locally or nationally.

The CA is concerned that last week's press coverage reflects unfairly on our hard-working, committed local membership, which is made up of people from many nationalities and backgrounds. Many of our activists have spent their whole lives fighting racism and will continue to do so. There should be no place in Scotland for racism.

A second letter was sent to the Standard after their publication of the same article by Yowan Byghan, Convener, Dumfries East Branch: *Sir, Councillor Yen Hongmei Jin's vague and unsubstantiated accusations against the local and national SNP of bullying and racism, which you printed on the front page of last Friday's Standard, are false, malicious and grossly insulting. The reality of Ms Jin's position is that she recently failed to advance as far as she wanted to in the party's rigorous, open and scrupulously fair candidate selection procedures, and the more astute among your readers will detect a distinct whiff of sour grapes arising from the accusations. I have fought against racism all my life, and, as Convener of the Dumfries East Branch of the SNP, I can assure you that our branch, our constituency and our party are unanimously opposed to racism in any shape or form. Bullying and racism are extremely serious, indeed potentially criminal, charges. Rather than vaguely 'calling for a police investigation', Ms Jin should either take the matter to the police herself and provide substantive evidence for her claim, or withdraw it and apologise for her unwarranted smear of the SNP.*

The Independence Referendum had another important mark to make in history apart from the obvious one. It was the first time that young people in Scotland aged 16 – 18 years old had been allowed to take part in the democratic process. And take part they most certainly did! Schools held debates, mock referenda were held, hustings were arranged – all to engage with a new generation of Scottish voters.

Many people said that this should not have been allowed – what do these young folks know about life and about politics? Well I ask you: what do many older people know about these subjects? Young people learn about Modern Studies at school; they talk to one another about their lives as they stand; they engage on social media. I personally know many young people who could give some politicians a run for their money in a sensible debate!

In recognition of the fact that these same young people have a vested interest in the running of their country, they are now allowed to vote in all Scottish elections, both Holyrood and council. BUT in order to do so they must make sure that they are registered to vote.

There is a current campaign reminding them that they should do so at the earliest opportunity, but remember that it is now down to the individual to register. It is no longer a household registration form for everyone who is eligible. There are letters coming round showing who in the household is currently on the Electoral Register, and this gives the opportunity to complete the details of any newly eligible people. **HOWEVER, PLEASE NOTE:** this is only telling the Electoral Registration Officer who is of the correct age to vote – it is **NOT** a registration process.

If you complete the form online and give the details and email address of anyone who is now eligible but does not currently appear, they will receive an email providing a link to register for your actual vote. If you return the form by mail, there is supposed to be a form posted out to you.

However, why leave it to chance? If you or any family members are aged between 15 and 17 then **PLEASE** take the time to log on to the page and fill in your details. This current Westminster government has shown by its policies its total disdain, verging on contempt, for young people, so make sure that your voice is heard at every opportunity. Get online and complete it today – it takes about 5mins. Or call your local council for details of how to register by post. Just make sure that your name appears on that list. You know it makes sense!

www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

When exactly is the BEST time for Scotland to vote YES to independence? This question was prompted by my realisation that the Indyref of last September was carried out at a time of huge global uncertainty. Banking crises had ruined huge institutions worldwide. Governments were bankrupted. Others were crippled by astronomical debts, the like of which were unimaginable just a decade ago. Yet, somehow or other, the SNP decided to ask us if independence would be a good idea or not. Alex Salmond was obliged, through the party's own huge successes in elections, to deliver a referendum on Scottish independence. To me, the timing seemed all wrong and I made gloomy predictions of certain failure, due to the struggle faced by ordinary people just to survive this austere period. I believed Scots would be too worried and risk averse to vote to separate from the UK.

However, when we reached 51% in the polls, just 3 days before that vote, I was excited and raring to get to the polling station to vote yes. I got there and voted. I hoped and prayed that we were on the verge of making history. We all know what happened next.

So when is a good time to ask Scots to get back their independence? What events (or lack of events) would stir the hearts of a majority to make the great step forward? Obviously, we don't lack courage or determination. Remember that more than half of Scotland had never considered the huge benefits of being a small, very wealthy nation. Most had just muddled along through the cuts and the job losses. Moaning and unhappy, most never considered a better future. We just blindly accepted our miserable existence as a distant part of the UK.

Let's look at some of the new opportunities ahead for Independent Scotland. For a start, we could stop fracking onshore and invest in marine renewables, for which we have shipyards and skilled workers. Oil prices (volatile as they are) are slowly rising as global demand starts rising again. Gas prices are likely to see a slight rise too, and the oil and gas sector announced the first increases in production for over two years.

European countries are still mired in debts and austerity is crippling their economies. Greece being the worst example of European heavy-handed banking. Everyone knows Greece cannot possibly pay its debts: The European Central Bank will need to write off billions. With world economic climate still very sluggish and uncertain, a nation which can make big trade surpluses and has a small population like we do, has a major advantage over bigger, more debt-burdened economies like the UK. That means Scotland needs other export markets which are expanding, or very stable and cash rich. That's why China, Russia and Cuba are possible partners. Hence, the First Minister's trade visit to China. Japan is also needing the kind of renewable tidal stream technology we are developing.

England's leftwing Politicians are still reorganising and Corbyn, in particular, may eventually see how left wing Scottish voters would prefer Independence and that Labour should embrace the independence movement. If these things are now swinging in the direction of peaceful separation and continued good relations with the English left, and we can keep open our shared borders, then, next summer could be the time to ask Scots again. The conditions Politically are beginning to converge. Economically, Scotland is very well placed to lead on renewable energy technology. Scotland has huge energy wealth, an enviable food and drink industry and thriving tourism, to name but a few of her plentiful resources.

Could next May be our time? The pieces are slowly coming together. That magnetism of optimism and hope has now spread to England. We are now approaching the best time to launch a new Scotland.

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