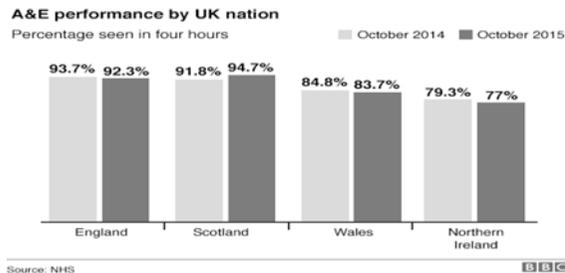




The NHS in crisis!! ... all is not what it seems from the headlines. In December, we had the Daily Record scream from the front page “CRISIS AS NHS CANCELS 3000 OPS”. No mention in the headline that this was 3000 out of a planned 179,527 – around 1.5% of the planned elective surgeries at that time.

No mention in the headline of WHY they were actually cancelled. In actual fact, most of these operations were not cancelled but postponed (often for as little as 24hours) or cancelled or postponed at the patients request. No mention in the headline that this was over a 6month period of time.

Labour like to point to the failings and scream CRISIS, but in 2005, when Labour was last the overseer of Scottish healthcare, the number of operations cancelled was almost 3 times as high as this headline figure – and that out of a smaller number of planned operations in the first place.



Labour, Tory, Lib Dems and our beloved media love to attack the SNP about its record in the NHS, of course like 99.9% of the information that is being fed to us is a distortion of the truth. When the SNP took office only 85% of inpatients were seen within 18 weeks, and many more were left on hidden waiting lists. Since the SNP introduced a 12 week limit on waiting times, 97.2% of inpatients are seen within this limit.

Delay is a worry, but most folks having non-emergency surgery can understand that sometimes, with the best will in the world things go awry. The surgeon may be ill, there could be an emergency, no amount of planning can take account of things like this. Despite all these things conspiring against the NHS, NHS Scotland has achieved over that same 6 month period 98.5% of the planned operations, not bad for a system allegedly in crisis.

Whilst running the NHS down over cancelled operations, the media jumped at the chance to decry an SNP MP (breast cancer surgeon) for performing operations to help cover for staff who were ill or on holiday. Stepping in (*over parliamentary recesses she was not taking time off from her constituency duties*), she saved operations being cancelled. To remain a Dr/Surgeon requires she keeps up to date with what is happening in her field, or her licence will be revoked. All those years spent training and developing her skills and the costs involved will have been wasted and lost to the NHS. I am sure that anyone seen by this lady was more than delighted she stepped up, and were relieved to be treated as soon as possible.

Still we don't want any of these facts to get in the way of some good old-fashioned SNP bashing. Seems that they cannae get it right for doing wrong!

A recent study carried out by NHS Kings Fund (<http://tinyurl.com/zv9kypd>) showed that NHS patient satisfaction was higher in Scotland than in England and Wales, but what is interesting is that satisfaction in Tory run NHS England (where there is an active drive to privatise) is significantly higher than Labour run NHS Wales.

Every loser wins - So after all the kerfuffle and commotion and comedy, a deal was done, of sorts. The un-squareable circle wasn't squared, but the day of facing up to it was punted down the line for five years, by which point everyone hopes that it'll be someone else's problem. (Which is certainly the case for David Cameron.)

But what else happened? It's perhaps important to note that the UK government tried everything in its power to rip Scotland off. In order to get the worthless crumbs of the Scotland Bill, it tried to make the Scottish Government pay first £7.5bn, then £3bn, before finally conceding that Holyrood could have the worthless crumbs for free.



So why did the Scottish Government sign up to it? Because the devolution of income tax is another degree of detachment between Scotland and the UK. The next time the question of independence comes up, the leap that voters will be being asked to take will be that bit smaller. “*Pooling and sharing*”, the No camp's big selling point in 2014, will to a very large extent no longer exist.

The trap designed by the Unionist parties with the Smith Commission has been largely defanged, at least until 2021 when all this will have to be gone through again. The Scottish Government's negotiating team had to fight tooth and nail for it, but most of the pitfalls have been nailed shut for now, and Holyrood has even had its meagre borrowing powers slightly extended (from £2.2bn in total to £3bn).

Both sides can claim victory. The Scottish Government has its small step towards independence, and the Unionist parties, while claiming to have kept their promise, have a stick with which to beat the SNP – Scottish Labour will spend the next five years demanding tax increases, the Tories tax cuts.

Neither will get what they want – we'll state now, with considerable confidence, that income tax rates in Scotland will stay the same as they are in the rest of the UK for the next five years (with a possible exception if the UK lowers the top rate). But the important thing is that they'll get to make the attacks.

The SNP's current crushingly-dominant position is probably strong enough to cope with that, particularly as the competing pulls put it firmly in the centre ground, where conventional wisdom has it that elections are won.

Meanwhile the Scottish Parliament will get to control road signs, which will also stay the same, except maybe for slightly more Gaelic. Air Passenger Duty may or may not finally be cut, to little effect either way.

Everyone has conceded ground, and everyone will say they've won. The voices of the Unionist side will be louder, because they control the media, but the sound and fury will signify nothing. Either the EU referendum will bring constitutional matters to a head very soon, or the 2021 reckoning that always seemed likely will duly arrive.

*Line "Every newspaper in Scotland will look like this tomorrow deleted and picture changed from original article, go to <http://winsoverscotland.com/ever-loser-wins/> for original image - February 23, 2016 by Rev. Stuart Campbell



"I will not sign up to a systematic cut to Scotland's budget - whether that cut is being applied today or by a pre-judged review in five years time."



Nicola Sturgeon
First Minister

#BothVotesSNP #SPI6

The deal we agreed yesterday with the UK Government is **a good one for Scotland.**

It means the new tax and welfare powers promised by Westminster will come to Holyrood, if the Scottish Parliament gives its approval.

And, crucially, it is a deal that lives up to the Smith Commission principle of "no detriment" – which means Scotland's budget won't be cut in the years ahead.

The agreement we reached yesterday, at the eleventh hour, only came after many months of hard bargaining with the Tory Treasury.

And make no mistake – it was the Treasury which blinked first in these negotiations.

When these talks began last June, the UK Government were proposing a package which would have seen a £7 billion cut in Scotland's budget over 10 years.

But the deal we have secured ensures Scotland's cash will not be cut by a single penny.

The Treasury – normally used to getting its own way when it plays hardball in cash talks with Whitehall departments – has had to accept it cannot mess with Scotland.

There will be no £7 billion cash grab – and that is down, in no small part, to the skill and perseverance of my deputy John Swinney in leading the Scottish Government's negotiating team.

The sticking point in any deal was the issue of how much Scotland's block grant should be adjusted to take account of the new tax powers.

Yesterday's deal involves a transitional arrangement that delivers the outcome of no detriment that the Smith Commission outlined for the first five years

After that five-year period, there will be a review, informed by an independent report. And, crucially, any change to the block grant adjustment method after that point would have to be agreed by both the Scottish and UK Governments.

We have secured the Smith Commission's principle of no detriment for the next five years – and we have ensured there can be no detriment forced on Scotland in the future.

The deal protects the Barnett Formula, and will allow the new powers in the Scotland Bill to be delivered, if approved by MSPs in the next few weeks.

And once we have those new powers, I am determined to use them as imaginatively as possible to make Scotland a better and fairer place for everyone who lives here. Nicola Sturgeon.

taken from http://www.snp.org/standing_up_for_scotland



Scotland's oil is the lynchpin of the independence movement, massive black hole in indy-Scotland because of low oil price, oil running out in the North Sea, all headlines and spin delivered almost daily to the Scottish Electorate, what's the truth? Oil has and always will be a bonus to the Scottish economy, the Yes movement said it, the SNP said it and independent economists are still saying it today, even as the price drops further.

Watching and listening to the unbridled joy by the Unionist media and Parties that greets each fresh tumble in oil prices or as BP announced (a few weeks ago) that it was to lay off hundreds of workers in its North Sea fields owing to the continued downturn in oil prices is aggravating and insulting. They don't care about the workers losing their jobs, they don't hide their delight at the opportunity to give the Nationalists a right good kicking.

Under a year ago, a report by the Fraser of Allander Institute, the country's premier economic think-tank, was expressing faith in the robust character of Scotland's economy. "The oil industry is very, very important and in many ways the jewel in the Scottish economy," said Brian Ashcroft, the institute's chief economist, "but the Scottish economy is much bigger than the oil industry and there are lots of areas that will benefit from lower oil prices." Do our media cover this, do they tell us that without oil Scotland's GDP is less than 1% lower than rUK? of course not, that would be tantamount to telling us that we can be successful as an independent nation.

Scotland is fortunate that we are one of only a few countries that possess oil wealth, which has, at various points over the last 40-odd years, gargantuan, merely massive or disappointingly plentiful, as it is currently. Oil price is volatile as history shows, you can no more accurately predict the price of a barrel of oil than foretell the Scottish weather.

Had the referendum not taken place much would have been made of the economic benefits of the oil crisis. Since the slump in the per barrel oil price a litre of petrol has reduced in price by around 27%. Leading to stimulation in other parts of our economy, increased consumer optimism, rises in profits, leading to more recruitment and higher wages. In the fight to see who can land the hardest punches on the SNP for its white paper oil receipt estimates (lower the UK estimates), all of this has been swept under the carpet.

As Kevin McKenna says in his Guardian article; "We can only wonder what Scotland would have looked like if successive Labour and Tory governments hadn't concealed the **1974 McCrone report**, which stated that North Sea oil receipts would have made an independent Scotland the second richest country in Europe. Instead, Margaret Thatcher used it to pay off a viable coal industry and now her acolytes ridicule us for being naïve about what remains".

Don't let the media fool you Scotland is a resource and people rich country and it will thrive on its own.