



In Thursdays election Scotland's voters have several choices, from the Draconian rich oriented Tories and their Labour bed buddies, the ineffectual Tory empowering Lib Dems, the Independence supporting Greens, Solidarity, RISE, the racist UKIP and of course the SNP. From an Independence driven perspective SNP, Greens, RISE and Solidarity are the parties of interest and our spearheads in the fight to end this union of unequals. So much so that over the past 6 or so months debate, sometimes intense debate, has sprung up about getting as much Pro-Indy representation as possible into Holyrood to nullify the stupefying effects of the unionist 3 (4 including UKIP).

The idea is that the SNP have a majority sown up in the constituency therefore, a vote for the SNP on the list is a wasted vote, in effect a vote for either of the Red or Blue bed buddies. However, this is a dangerous ploy for Independence supporters. In 2011 the SNP needed the list to get them over the finishing line, although the polls are indicating that the SNP could sow up a majority before the list vote is calculated, we know polls are often wrong just look at last years GE.

Anyway, the Greens, RISE and Solidarity are viable options as at their core they have the values imbedded in them that the majority of Independence supporters aspire to.

RISE: Scotland's Left Alliance is a new Party in Scottish politics. Born from the referendum it brings together an alliance of socialists, campaigners, trade unionists, community activists, cultural figures and academics to promote Respect, Independence, Socialism and Environmentalism. RISE was founded on August 29th 2015. Policies include; independence, public ownership, ending the monarchy and membership of NATO.

Solidarity; Scotland's Socialist Movement is a pro-independence socialist party fighting for a fairer society for all. An anti-austerity party who say "we need defiance and not compliance when it comes to implementing Tory cuts". Against the punishment of the poor for the mistakes of the rich. Austerity is an ideological attack on the poor and vulnerable in our society and while big businesses are raking in profits, people are going to foodbanks to survive. They say no more attacks on the poor. Policies include; £10 living wage, No Trident, Public Ownership of utilities, no more Zero Hours contracts.

Greens; Believe that Scotland can be fairer, greener and healthier. That the Scottish Parliament can be so much bolder in meeting the ambitions of the people of Scotland. Green MSPs will work constructively with others who share their aims. Holyrood and Scotland needs diverse politics and progressive champions to hold the biggest parties to account. Policies include; Full rent control, Land reform and a Permanent ban of fracking.

Independence supporters do have a choice of parties its not all about the SNP. If the SNP for whatever your reason is not a party you would vote for but Labour, Tory and Lib Dems are far from an option have a closer look at the above three. However, Solidarity and RISE only have candidates standing on the Regional List (2nd ballot paper).

This newsletter will in no way tell you how to vote, that is entirely your choice. We do however, hope that your votes will go to Independence parties, whether that be both votes SNP or a combination of SNP + Green/Solidarity/Rise or Green + Solidarity/Rise/SNP from the this writers perspective he believes to keep the dream alive an SNP majority is essential, therefore, I advocate #bothvotesSNP.

TACTICAL VOTING IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS – DOES IT WORK? This seems to be the question that is the topic of conversation for some SNP supporters; independence supporters; Greens; and certainly those who are promoting the left of centre fringe parties like Solidarity and Rise.

The fact of the matter is that the political system that was chosen for the Scottish Parliament elections was designed with the **sole purpose of making it very difficult for the SNP to win** an overall majority. A consequence of the utilisation of this form of Proportional Representation (Additional Member System) is that in order to be able to predict whether your second vote will make any difference, you have to be able to accurately predict the share of the vote that the party you want to give you're second vote to, will get across the whole region that the seat sits in – not just the constituency seat you reside in. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that this is extremely difficult to do. Thereby meaning that rather than trying to predict the result, it is much better to play safe and give both votes to the party you support. However, this is the lay mans explanation, so don't just take my word for it.

There have been advocates of tactical voting like Adam Ramsay on social media who have described tactical voting as a "viable option" and he describes those that say otherwise as "*living in fantasy land*", however, there have been several blogs which have shown tactical voting to be too unpredictable. On 22.06.15 the blog by James Kelly called 'Scot goes Pop' (<http://tinyurl.com/budzzejf>) skilfully debunked the arguments for tactical voting. Kelly describes how the North East of Scotland regional list in the 2011 Scottish elections is a "**real world**" example of how **tactical voting doesn't work**. He goes on to describe how some SNP supporters voted tactically for the Greens, wrongly assuming that the SNP had no chance of winning a regional list seat in the region. As it turned out, the SNP won all of the constituency seats in the region and one regional seat due to their share of the vote across the whole region. So all of those supporters who voted Green or anything else to try and keep the Liberals out **wasted their second vote**. More worryingly, this tactical approach to second votes could easily have backfired if 2,000 SNP supporters on the first vote had done the same with their second vote. This small number would have been enough to **see the SNP list seat go to the Tories**. I think we'll all agree this would have been a disaster.

Even Wings over Scotland on 23.08.15 (<http://wingsoverscotland.com/ams-for-lazy-people/>) produced an excellent article which describes our electoral system as being one which is designed to make **tactical voting pointless**, because the slightest of changes to the share of the constituency votes and outcome can impact on the list seats allocated with "**unforeseen consequences**."

So the choice is yours. You're second vote is a shot in the dark or play safe and vote for who you believe in most. Hopefully both votes SNP!

We are nearing the end of the campaign, and I'm sure, it will be a release for some especially for Labour Scotland Branch (LSB) leader Kezia Dugdale. Her election campaign has been a story of total incompetence and flip flopping, going from one u-turn or failed scare story, to the next.

Strangely up until I wrote this the media had let Kezia off with every blunder, u turn and incompetent display she made. The media letting any bungling leader off should seem very strange, but we are now so accustomed to our media papering over LSB incompetence's that now few of us now even notice. Ian Gray was an incompetent LSB leader, but Kezia makes him look like a world leader, the media were not slow in exposing him for what he was, an over promoted council leader – but that was when Labour in Scotland were relatively secure.

Kezia spent weeks, selling us her 1p tax increase and rebate policy. I lost track of the times, I debated with SLB supporters, them defending the rebate policy me saying it won't work/happen. Only for them to have the rug pulled out from under them, by their own leader. The day after she defended her policy in the first SE 2016 live TV debate, the rebate was gone. I know 24 hours is a long time in politics but a massive u turn on your flagship tax plans in a day, in the middle of possibly the most important Scottish Election ever, is the kind of thing the media should be all over. But our media said "*no we can't have that, Kezia and SLB must be protected*", so they buried it under falsified SNPbad headlines saying nothing about Miss Dugdale, the silence on this issue was deafening.

Next we had the flip flopping on her views about Independence. One night, she was proud to stand with the Tories and would do it again going as far as saying she would refuse the democratic will of the electorate if ever they wanted a 2nd Independence Referendum. Next thing, she would "consider a Yes vote", if there is a brexit vote in the upcoming EU exit referendum. Next day she was sounding like Ian Paisley proudly screaming "**Never**"!

These were rapidly followed by the unravelling of the much heralded and unachievable policy - Everyone will get an appointment with a GP in 48 hours. In reality it meant, you will speak, to someone at the surgery, within 48 hours. Only for it to be a guarantee in the SLB manifesto when released last week.

Kezia's constant mantra has been ending austerity, the austerity that Labour in part created and has helped the Tories implement by either voting for or abstaining on Osborne's draconian proposals. SLB does not seem too grasp what austerity means to the average Joe. Austerity is not Labours ill managed councils, making cuts, cuts made because of the servicing, SLB incurred PFI debts or adding an extra tax burden on the working poor. It's the day to day, money in our pockets and money in the economy. I am all for a more progressive tax policy and hope this will come. But there is nothing progressive about taxing the working poor more without power over the minimum wage. Kezias policy will entrench austerity on the working poor. Who should not suffer from Labours austerity max plan. She and others said the broad shoulders of the Union, would protect us and we would face higher tax, if we voted Yes now her great idea is the working poor should pay a union tax. The broad shoulders have turned droopy.

On Thursday we will give our verdict and I'm sure that even with the media defending her Kezia will be found out. I can't help but thinking it will be a relief for Kezia, to be out of the leadership job. As she must know she has been a disaster.

Alan Petrie

So the manifestos are out ... the vote is almost upon us ... what exactly are our friendly neighbourhood Tories saying to try to persuade us Scots to give them a chance ... any chance ... no matter where or how.

While they may be promising some good stuff, we all know that they can promise the earth because they are never going to have to deliver. There is very little likelihood of the Conservative Party holding power in the upcoming Scottish Parliamentary elections. And they seem to have accepted that fact as true themselves, as they are trying to garner votes to be an effective opposition.

Let's take a look at just a few of the pledges:

1. Improving Employment Support for Disabled People: they say that they are going to increase support for those trying to find work. But in the meantime they vilify anyone needing such support and try to turn the general public against them.
2. Transferring Control of Disability Benefits to Health and Social Care Partnerships: Yes because just what the system needs is yet another "new approach". All the other ones tried have been such roaring successes. Instead of wasting money on setting up new systems and now departments, why not just spend that money on providing ACTUAL support.
3. Improving Support for pupils with special needs: yet the experience of many people at the moment is the polar opposite. Cuts in funding means that support is down if not gone in many local schools. So in fact the "increased funding" will at best equate to a return to the original cover.

Any improvement in these areas would of course be welcome. But let's face it – the Tory record for delivering for the benefit of the people is hardly glowing!

Remember, if, we know it's a big if, Ruth Davidson ever led her party to the top table in Scotland we would see an end to; free prescriptions, free education and a return of the bedroom tax to name a few. Ruth will follow party policy taking her instructions from Tory HQ in London and Scotland would be on its knees. Negating all the hard work the SNP have put into protecting us as best they can from Cameron and Osborne's attacks on the poorest and most vulnerable, the working class and industry.

No matter how much they try to hide it, they are still a party of "not them because..." They have yet to put forward a positive case to vote for them, rather continuing the tried and trusted method of "don't vote for them because..."

Fortunately Scotland don't vote Tory (not in big numbers anyhow) so we won't be subjected to a double whammy of Tory Controlled Scotland and Tory Westminster. Ruth knows this too and like Kezia Dugdale she can promise the electorate the moon because she knows it won't happen, they do know however, that their Politicking could hurt the SNP and that is their *raison d'être*.

A new book alleges that Mr Cameron told the Deputy Prime Minister Mr Clegg at the time of the Independence referendum that he did not care if Scotland voted yes. Though the public voice was very different. We don't want you to go... Given the way things have gone since the NO vote I don't think we need to think too hard to see which were the true feelings.