

Opinion – Ian Murray MP on Salmond, the SNP and the EU

✘ The last couple of days have demonstrated something fundamental with the question of separation – the SNP can't answer the fundamental questions about Scotland's future.

Ripping up the most successful social and political union in the world cannot be justified if the First Minister cannot be trusted and the SNP cannot answer basic questions.

I have been told time and time again by various elected members of the SNP that Scotland would remain in the EU at separation, and that would mean that there would be no obligation to take the Euro and all the other conditions of accession. But how would they know this if they have no legal advice?

Let's, for this purpose, give the First Minister the benefit of the doubt in the sense of the Ministerial code, but there are a number of things that do not add up even if we are generous to him:

1. If the First Minister was abiding by the Ministerial Code why did he tell Andrew Neil from the BBC that he had sought advice from his legal officers? This, in itself, breaches the very code he is now hiding behind.
2. Why spend thousands of pounds of tax payers money in Court to prevent The Scottish Government from having to say whether any advice actually existed when it didn't, even after the Information Commissioner said it should be released? They could have just said nothing existed.
3. How can the Ministerial Code even come into play if nothing has been asked for?
4. Why make wild assertions about a separate Scotland's relationship with the EU if they didn't know? This is a

similar situation with the Scottish Government claiming a seat on the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee if they kept the pound – but they haven't asked. Removing nuclear weapons from Scotland before joining NATO – but they haven't asked. Setting up a new national broadcaster via a licence fee but keeping all of the best BBC programming – but they haven't asked.

The evidence and Treaties of the EU are clear. The remaining United Kingdom will be in the EU as currently stands, and Scotland will have to apply to become a member. That application will be determined alongside the obligations of membership, which is written in the Treaties, that Scotland will have to take the Euro and will have to abide by the Schengen principles. Countries that are currently going through this accession process are having to abide by these conditions.

That leaves 2 scenarios – a “separate” Scotland in the Euro with fiscal and social perimeters dictated by Berlin and Paris or a “separate” Scotland not in the EU so a foreign country to the rest of the UK and Europe with visas required to visit Newcastle. It just doesn't make sense.

SNP MSP Jamie Hepburn said on national television that I had said that a separate Scotland would be in the EU – another blatant deception from the SNP. What I actually said was that I would think the EU would not block Scotland from being in the EU. This was in direct response to a question about a future separate Scotland applying for membership. Mr Hepburn has yet to apologise.

The First Minister, the SNP and Jamie Hepburn MSP have been disingenuous with the Scottish people on this issue, and it doesn't bode well for the kind of campaign towards the 2014 referendum. The Scottish people deserve full disclosure of all the information to enable them to decide Scotland's future. This episode shows that the Scottish Government

cannot be trusted as they'll make it up if they don't like the answers.

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