

Scottish Independence Referendum – View from Alyn Smith MEP

✘ Alyn Smith is SNP MEP. One of six Scottish MEPs he commutes regularly between Edinburgh and Brussels.

We asked him for his views on independence, and he was only too happy to oblige.

“You’ve got a decision to make – a big one. In less than a year’s time you’ll be asked to decide what you want. Do you want to stay part of the UK with all that’s likely to happen there or do you want to renew Scotland, take the power to build a better nation, and be independent? That’s the question the referendum is asking.

“Opponents of independence have already admitted that Scotland will be a successful independent nation. We’ll be a normal sized country in the European family, with full rights in the European Union. In Brussels or Strasbourg week after week I see colleagues from Ireland, Denmark, Malta, Sweden and other countries standing up for their own interests and with a voice at the top table in Europe. These are countries the same size and smaller than Scotland confident enough to represent themselves. We’re not there yet; we’re still locked out in the corridor being represented by a Tory government we didn’t vote for.

“The bit of democracy we control ourselves in Scotland does some great things. We protect our NHS from the privatisation agenda that Westminster is running; we keep to the principle of free education; we ensure universally free prescriptions so illness isn’t taxed; we support small businesses with reduced rates; Scots look after each other. We’ve been able to do a lot in the areas where we’re already independent.

“We’re still missing parts of our democracy, though, some of it is still at Westminster and we’re hampered by the strange split in responsibility between Holyrood and Westminster. We need to be able to do wonderful things in all areas of public life.

“Independence will give us that. It will let us run our economy for Scotland’s benefit and what matters to the people who live here. Even without oil our national output is on a par with the rest of the UK – oil is a bonus we can use to invest for the future.

“We’d be wealthier independent but a nation is not a balance sheet. Independence is about taking responsibility, joining the world and taking the decisions we, the people who live here, believe to be best for Scotland.

“We have policies imposed on us just now that we simply do not want. From the poll tax and mass privatisation of the 1980s to the bedroom tax and nuclear weapons of today, we’re being forced to swallow things we find obnoxious. Waiting through Thatcher and Major for Blair and Brown really didn’t work for Scotland. We can choose a different path.

“That’s what this referendum is about. Not flags and not anthems but who decides what’s best for our country. It’s between bringing our government home or leaving society in the hands of a government 400 miles away physically and a million miles away politically.

“When you make your decision next year remember it’s about making all the decisions that follow. It’s about taking responsibility for our own future.”

The Edinburgh Reporter also met up with Alyn Smith at the SNP Conference 2013 when he agreed to offer some more views on film

If you would like to contact Alyn with regards to a constituency query, the easiest way to email Alyn's office direct:- alyn.smith@europarl.europa.eu

Alyn receives hundreds of emails everyday. He deals with email in the same way as regular post and your email will be processed within 20 working days from when you send it.

You can also contact Alyn's office in Edinburgh by calling 0131 525 8926 and leaving a voicemail.