

Independent MSP for Lothians Margo MacDonald dies



Margo MacDonald was a force to be reckoned with. As an independent MSP she was very effective in the debating chamber, and well able to tell the Presiding Officer and MSPs across all parties that they were behaving badly and that Holyrood deserved better. She was well-respected across all parties, not just because she had been there since the beginning, but because she was good at her job.

Recently she had been campaigning for the introduction of the Assisted Suicide Bill which she introduced to Holyrood for the second time in November last year and which is currently at Stage 1 in its parliamentary progress. A former member of the SNP party she was behind the idea of independence, though she had been officially ousted from the SNP some time ago. One of the reasons for backing the Assisted Suicide Bill was that she herself had been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in the late 1990s, and she became pretty skilful at using her motorised scooter around the corridors of Holyrood.

The MSP spoke to The Edinburgh Reporter shortly before being returned to Holyrood in May 2011. As the only Independent MSP at Holyrood at the time she felt that The Scottish Parliament would have benefitted from more MSPs who did not have to tow the party line. We felt honoured that she also [wrote an article for us](#) about what she wanted for Edinburgh – in her usual forthright tone!

She was proud to live in Edinburgh with her husband Jim Sillars who is a former politician. She told The Edinburgh Reporter:-“I have lived in Edinburgh for over 30 years and I love it. You couldn't get me out of here with a knife and

fork. I am genuinely proud that I live here and represent the people here.”

Councillor Andrew Burns, Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council, has paid tribute to the MSP.

He said:- “I’m sure I speak for everyone at the Council when I say that Edinburgh and indeed Scotland have today lost one of our finest public servants following this very sad news. Margo MacDonald was a principled and committed politician who worked tirelessly to champion the Capital’s interests at a national level.

“She was truly one of a kind, both passionate and courageous. She will be very much missed and our thoughts and deepest sympathies are with her family and friends.”

MacDonald had a brief stint as an MP, only lasting there for 112 days where she said she learned the difference about power policies and politics.

The world of politics will be all the poorer with the loss of Margo MacDonald.

Scottish Green MSPs paid tribute :-

Patrick Harvie, Green MSP for Glasgow, said:

“I have felt deeply privileged to work with Margo MacDonald on many issues in my time as an MSP, particularly in recent years through forming the Green/Independent Group and working together on the Assisted Suicide Bill. I’ve always enjoyed the wit and sparkle she brought to debates in the Chamber, but she could also offer a formidable challenge when it was needed, and showed long term dedication to the causes she chose to work for.

“Margo won’t now see the culmination of two debates she was deeply involved in; the referendum on Scotland’s independence, and the Assisted Suicide Bill which she introduced last year.

But as both these debates continue, I am certain that campaigners on all sides will recognise Margo MacDonald's contribution to Scottish public life, her vibrancy and her passion. I know I'll miss her every time I walk into the Chamber."

Alison Johnstone, Green MSP for Lothian, said:-"Margo MacDonald was a one-off. Compassionate and brave, she was a role model for new and experienced politicians alike.

"Her no-nonsense approach was massively popular with the people in Lothian she represented so well. Regardless of party affiliations Margo's star quality was indisputable. She will be much missed."

Bruce Beveridge, President of the Law Society of Scotland, has today paid tribute to Margo MacDonald.

He said: " Margo MacDonald has been a formidable figure in Scottish politics for over 40 years. She was hugely influential and committed to the causes she passionately believed in such as Scottish independence and assisted suicide legislation and she will sadly now not see the outcome of these two debates.

"She was a vibrant and important figure in Scottish public life and a staunch supporter of the Scottish legal profession, shown by being a judge for many years for the Scottish Legal Awards. She will be very sadly missed and her loss will be keenly felt across the political spectrum.

"We extend our thoughts and sympathies to her family, friends and political colleagues."

Margo MacDonald MSP is survived by her husband Jim Sillars and her two daughters Petra and Zoe.