

Scottish Independence Referendum – the chat from both sides



A Yes vote in next month's referendum is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to restore 'real democracy' in Scotland, Yes Scotland Advisory Board chairman Dennis Canavan has said.

Instead of running the risk of being controlled by more governments we reject at the polls, independence means Scotland will always get the governments we vote for.

And it will relieve Scotland of the deep-seated 'elitism' that remains a hallmark of the Westminster system.

Mr Canavan was speaking at a meeting in Elgin organised by Yes Moray on the same day that a new report examining the backgrounds of more than 4,000 business, political, media and public sector leaders showed that the UK remained 'deeply elitist'.

The analysis by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission found that small elites, educated at private schools and Oxbridge, still dominate top roles, adding key institutions do not represent the public they serve.

Commission chairman Alan Milburn said they had to open their doors to a broader range of talent. He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme the report serves as a 'wake-up call' to schools, universities and government.

But Mr Canavan said the best way to create a fairer, more socially just Scotland was with a Yes vote on September 18. He was speaking as Prime Minister David Cameron, who was educated

at Eton and Oxford, paid a flying visit to Scotland to address a CBI dinner in Glasgow.

Mr Canavan said a recently published comparison showed that the proportion of privately educated parliamentarians at Westminster was more than double the corresponding figure for the Scottish Parliament.

Mr Canavan said: 'No wonder the UK is the fourth most unequal society in the developed world. One of the great benefits of a Yes vote on September 18 is that we will make good the democratic deficit that too often has subjected the people of Scotland to Westminster governments that we have overwhelmingly rejected as a nation.

'And never again will we be ruled by Downing Street cabinets stuffed with Tory toffs, as we have now, who are responsible for such obscenities as the Bedroom Tax and the maintenance of a huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, less than 30 miles from our largest city.'

'With the full powers of independence we can create a fairer country in which all the people benefit from our enormous wealth and resources. It is not something that will happen overnight, but if we vote Yes we will begin that exciting and inspiring journey.'

Experts have spoken out against Alex Salmond's reckless threat to default on Scottish debt if he doesn't get his way on currency in a separate Scotland.

The SNP leader has said that he would walk away from our obligations if he didn't get his way on creating a Eurozone style currency union if we vote to leave the UK.

Today both Michael Saunders of Citi and Sam Hill of RBC capital, said that if the First Minister carried out his

threat it would cost more to borrow in a separate Scotland. This would increase costs for families in Scotland.

The comments from the two economists follows on from those of Professor Ronnie MacDonald who warned that a debt default would mean huge spending cuts to our schools and hospitals.

Stirling Labour MP Anne McGuire said:

“Alex Salmond’s threat to walk away from our obligations is irresponsible, dangerous, and reckless for every man, woman and child in Scotland.

“It would send a signal to the international money markets that Scotland does not pay its debts.

“We know what happens when you don’t pay your debts. You get a bad credit rating and everything costs more.

“That is the reality of these threats – Scotland would need to be financed by the pay day lenders of the international money markets. Spending on our schools, hospitals and pensions would have to be slashed.

“We don’t have to take this risk. We can keep the pound, safeguard our pensions and protect public spending by saying No Thanks to Alex Salmond’s dangerous threats on 18 September.

We can have the best of both worlds for Scotland – a strong Scottish Parliament backed up by the strength, security and stability of the UK. “

Angela Constance MSP, who is the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women’s Employment, joined youth activists at a college Freshers Day today with a warning that only a Yes vote will guarantee the powers required to create and keep the jobs we need in Scotland.

‘The vote in three weeks’ time comes down to a choice between

two very different futures for young people in Scotland.’ said Ms Constance.

‘Scotland is one of the top 20 wealthiest countries in the world, but today too much of the benefit of that wealth is lost to Scotland,’ she said during her visit to New College Lanarkshire in Coatbridge.

‘With a Yes, we have the opportunity to make sure that Scotland’s vast wealth is put to work to deliver more jobs for young people in Scotland.

‘What we need is full economic powers so we can prioritise the jobs and future of young people here in Scotland.’

Generation Yes campaigners urged fellow students to pay close heed to how starkly First Minister Alex Salmond exposed Alistair Darling on the jobs issue during this week’s TV debate.

And Ms Constance added: ‘Westminster hasn’t delivered a single economic policy that gives Scotland a competitive edge over London. As a result, too much of our young talent is forced to leave Scotland.

‘As things are, almost 70,000 people leave Scotland every year – more than half of them aged 16-34. A No does nothing to change that.

‘We now know that a No vote won’t deliver a single new job creating power for Scotland and that’s not good enough for our young people. It’s a crucial piece of new information that has emerged this week, and is something both young people and their parents will have noticed.

‘With a Yes, by contrast, we can secure the powers we need to deliver a brighter future for more young people, closer to home. I know that there is so much more we can achieve for young people. And that is a powerful legacy from a Yes vote.’

Nikki Turner, a first year social work student at the college, said: 'Students leaving Scotland when they graduate is a clear failing of the Westminster system and something we can address.

'If we're better together why are young people forced to look outwith Scotland to find opportunities? With Yes we can keep families together and create more jobs here in Scotland.

'Scotland barely ever figures on Westminster's radar, and far too many young people have to go to London or further afield to find decent opportunities.

'The No campaign doesn't offer any hope of changing that – as we saw from Alistair Darling's failure to name any job-creating powers that Scotland would get without independence.'

Yes Scotland Chief Executive Blair Jenkins underlined: 'A Yes vote three weeks today secures forever the financial control we need to guarantee our policy choices – giving us the tools to create high-quality jobs for graduates here in Scotland, prioritise our publicly-funded NHS and make Scotland's wealth work for a fairer society.

'If you want the tools to boost inward investment and exports, independence is the only way.

'If you want to energise new areas in our economy, with a revolution in childcare, or guarantee innovative lending to start-ups and small businesses, independence is the way to get us all working to our full potential.'

More than one hundred business leaders wanted to sign a letter saying No Thanks to separation but felt pressured to stay silent because they feared a nationalist backlash.

Yesterday over 120 business leaders, employing over 50,000 people in Scotland, signed a letter stating that the business

case for separation had not been made, and that they would vote to stay in the United Kingdom on 18 September.

Today the Telegraph reports comments from two of the business leaders who helped gather signatures for the letter.

Gavin Hewitt, the former Chairman of the Scottish Whisky Association, and Amanda Harvie, former chief executive of Scottish Financial Enterprise, both said that some businesses were still afraid to speak out.

They said that many of the business leaders he approached agreed with their position to stay in the UK, but feared that SNP would block planning permission applications in their local authorities and withhold public procurement contracts and grants in government as a result.

Earlier this year, Channel 4's Dispatches reported that nineteen firms said they were aware of threats of "retribution for opposing separation.

It was reported that the intimidation is alleged to have come from the offices of Scottish Government Ministers including Alex Salmond himself.

It has also been previously reported that the Scottish Government tried to suppress a report from Scottish Financial Enterprise which was critical of separation.

Better Together has called for an open debate, where everyone is able to express their view without fear of consequence or retribution.

Shadow Business Minister Ian Murray said:

"With postal ballots being filled out across the country and polling day itself a matter of days away it is deeply troubling that people still feel they cannot air their view of what is best for Scotland for fear of the wrath of Alex Salmond.

“We are about to make the biggest decision of our lifetime. There will be no going back and yet still, people feel they cannot speak out against Alex Salmond’s unanswered questions.

“The fact is, leaving the UK would hurt Scottish jobs. Our businesses today can sell to a domestic market of 63 million rather than just 5 million. One in 5 Scottish jobs with companies headquartered elsewhere in the UK. Scotland working together with the rest of the UK, as part of the UK, creates jobs.

“The majority of people believe that if we say No Thanks future is brighter and more secure in the United Kingdom. We can have the best of both worlds – a strong Scottish Parliament, with more powers guaranteed, backed up by the strength security and stability of the United Kingdom. Intimidation will not stop them saying No Thanks on 18 September.”

The Edinburgh Reporter produces a selection of remarks and comments and pointers to articles about the Scottish Independence Referendum whenever we can.

People living in Scotland are invited to vote in the referendum on independence from the United Kingdom on 18 September 2014. The referendum question is “Should Scotland be an independent country?”

Whether you intend voting Yes or No to that question, your views, and those of others, have a place here. We invite comments and we also invite you to write about what you think by using our Submit your Story feature [here](#).