



Welcome to Issue II. The quest for knowledge in post referendum Scotland remains high amongst Scots, much to the dismay of the Unionist Party's. The Scottish people have not meekly accepted the referendum result and gone back into the shadows of political apathy and indolence as they had hoped for, especially by the Labour establishment in Scotland. Our website is another vehicle for knowledge and opinion by ordinary Scots regarding the issues affecting our people and country. This issue looks at the biggest topic of the moment which is the Smith Commission's report and how it compares to what was promised by Gordon Brown's pre-referendum vow. It is patently obvious that a Federal system it clearly isn't as Brown led many Scots to believe.

It is a well known fact that the Labour Party hate the SNP with a passion and would rather have the Taliban run Scotland than an SNP Government. The latest tirade against them from Kezia Dugdale the rabid loudmouth of their Party proves they are incapable of rational and coherent argument regarding the SNP.

When UKIP argues against something you know you are onto a winner for the public good. The fact that their Scottish chairman Misty Thackeray has made a Nazi jibe against The National newspaper because of its pro independence stance is such a case. UKIP are of course the Waffen SS of the Tory Party full of racist vitriol and extremists. They are the biggest danger to political freedom in our country today. All Scots no matter what political persuasion should welcome the creation of The National as a new voice for Scotland.

Correcting a Lie. On 17 November Labour Scotland Deputy Leader candidate Kezia Dugdale demanded Nichola Sturgeon and the SNP tackle 3 issues; 1. *"Take on the big six energy firms, forcing them to freeze bills and rein in eye-watering profits earned on the backs of working people."* 2. *"Bring back the 50p tax rate for top earners, so those with the broadest shoulders carry their fair share."* 3. *"Tax [bankers'] bonuses and use the cash to create jobs for young people."*

In the derogatory daily record column Dugdale highlighted the three pre-election Labour promises that she believes the SNP should also initiate. There is only one issue with her demands all three policies are reserved to Westminster and the Scottish Government have no power/control over them in any shape or form.

Dugdales column header, *"Queen Nicola Sturgeon must put people before her party"* was enough to stir up SNP members but further comments, *"I haven't seen a coronation quite like it since, well, the coronation."* an event Miss Dugdale wasn't even around to see, being born 28yrs after the Coronation. She also compared Nichola Sturgeon to Margaret Thatcher stating, *"But we've had strong female leaders before. Margaret Thatcher broke new ground – but destroyed so many communities."*

This article goes to show that what the Daily Record are saying and promoting should not be trusted. However, greater concern should be shown about anything that Labour are saying as they have no morals when it comes to telling outright blatant lies, anything seems to go when attacking the SNP or Scotland is on the agenda.

All this from a Labour politician who is widely regarded as the brightest of all young labour minds, if this is true we are in serious trouble.

Scotland has a new newspaper. Throughout the referendum campaign 37 main stream newspapers were in circulation in Scotland and only one "the Sunday Herald" supported Scotland's bid for independence, in a Nation of over 5 million people this is somewhat unbalanced, the National seeks to address this balance by supporting Scotland's continued fight for Independence. The first editions page 3 editorial states that *"does not mean we are to be a mouthpiece for the SNP and the Government it leads"* it goes on to say that *"we will be critical when appropriate and complimentary when merited"*.

The first 5 days of the run culminated in the reporting of the Smith Commissions recommendations. Whilst main stream media and unionist politicians claimed the "VOW" has been delivered, the National revealed the truth behind the recommendations, the only newspaper in the UK to do so. In a very detailed edition the paper covered 12 pages on the Smith Commission.

The 5 day run was a trial period, the paper had to show the owners (Newsquest) that it could be successful. The first edition sold out all 60,000 copies, print was increased to 100,00 but some technical issue prevented sales at certain supermarkets. There has been a slight dip but sales have remained high, as a result the trial has proved successful. The National will now be a permanent feature on our newsstands.

Visit the webpage at;

www.thenational.scot or you can subscribe for the digital version of the National at; <http://tinyurl.com/plr228h>

Deal or no deal? The contents of the Smith Commission ‘box’

The rushed and vague nature of the extra powers ‘Vow’ed by the Westminster parties in the closing days of the referendum campaign reduced the seriousness of this issue to something resembling a TV game show. Voters could be forgiven for expecting Noel Edmonds to turn up at the booth asking: ‘Do you want independence for Scotland; or do you want what is in the box?’

Of course it is pertinent to note that many NO voters would have voted this way with or without additional powers, however without such an ballot option (David Cameron prevented) it can’t be ascertained how many swayed. Polls by Lord Ashcroft suggest that for 25% of NO voters the most important factor was extra powers for Scottish Parliament; therefore there may have been more than half a million Scottish residents (difference between NO winning & YES losing) keen to find out what powers were set for transfer. And just as Scotland sipped a wee dram in toast to patron saint St. Andrew, the potential contents of this ‘box’ were revealed; leaving many with the disappointed feeling generally experienced when our national tippie is excessively watered down.

These ‘substantial extra powers’ had been discussed by almost every representative of the Better Together campaign given any opportunity for airtime. Jackie Bird posed the question to Alistair Darling *“now it seems you are offering effectively the voters the chance to vote yes, or for DevoMax”*; to which he responded in a typically political manner, without really answering the question, but instead stating that the powers on offer were *“the sort of power that actually most federal governments in Western Europe simply don’t have”*. Furthermore, some of the strongest words came from former Prime Minister Gordon Brown who was broadcast on the BBC telling voters *“these proposals are radical .. they move us closer, or as close to federalism as you can .. they are the equivalent of what Keir Hardie was asking for when he called for Home Rule for Scotland”*. So whether intentionally or not, the impression given to the electorate was one of ‘Devo-max’, ‘Home-Rule’ and ‘Federalism’. All notions which Keir Hardie would indeed have been proud of.

These notions themselves can be outlined as: *‘central government transfers the maximum amount of authority to a regional government’* (Devo Max); *‘self-determination’* (Federalism); *‘part of a country governs itself independently of the central government’* (Home Rule).

However the reality of what has been offered does leave a lot to be desired. Because where the watering down is concerned it would seem that everyone and their Grannie had input. Some of the non-political objectors included: Bristol Airport, complained about the proposed devolution of Air Passenger Duty tax (over-ruled); Weir Group, objected to devolution of Corporation Tax (upheld); and Channel 4 who expressed concerns related to devolved broadcasting (upheld). Of the political objections, the offerings and concessions depended upon the agenda of the party in question: with the Tory / LibDem coalition (particularly Iain Duncan Smith) calling for the welfare element to be clawed back so that 85% remained at Westminster for fear of further delays to his already overdue Universal Credit scheme; whilst Labour objected to anything thought to negatively impact on the rights of their Scottish MPs voting on English matters in parliament, meaning that Taxation devolution was scaled back to around 30% only.

The reaction in the media to these recommendations has been mixed at best. At one end of the spectrum the Daily Record proudly boasts *‘Vow Delivered’*, in an article which has been the subject of a complaint raised in response to factually inaccurate reporting, since this report contains mere recommendations, and at this stage nothing has actually yet been devolved. At the other end of the spectrum Scotland’s newest newspaper The National outlines its thoughts under the heading *‘It’s not enough’*. Even more worryingly though are those who warn of the traps laid out by the transfer of those carefully selected powers, as Iain Macwhirter writes: *‘What the Smith Commission has produced isn’t remotely devolution max or federalism. It is an exercise in control-freak minimalism that will serve to lock Scotland in economic decline. The proposals to hand income tax to Scotland, but not the full range of taxes like national insurance, wealth taxes, oil and gas revenues, and so on, is a transparent fiscal trap’*. Indeed setting up the current Scottish government to fail would most likely benefit the Westminster main three parties, which brings to mind the previous comments of Labour life peer Lord Foulkes who said *“SNP are on a dangerous tack .. what they are doing it trying to build up a situation in Scotland where the services are manifestly better than south of the border in a number of areas .. [not a bad thing] no, but they are doing it deliberately”*. As a Scottish voter, it is difficult to listen to what is being proposed, knowing full well the rationale behind, without feeling like a mere pawn in the political game. Why are the proposed powers not centred around what is best for Scotland as a country, instead of what is bad for the political parties seeking to ‘represent’ us at Westminster? And although the SNP and Scottish Green Party participated in the negotiations, and are always receptive to positive new powers, they have also both expressed concerns that what is proposed doesn’t allow them to tackle some of the most important issues facing the country today, nor do they seem to reflect the level of powers which were ‘Vow’ed to the electorate before the 18th. These are concerns which have been echoed by other organisations such as the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) who were *‘underwhelmed by the package as a whole which does not meet our aspirations’*, and Business for Scotland noted that *‘it falls well short of the vow made by the leaders of .. main Westminster parties’*.

What **IS** clear is that we are nowhere near federalism; however with road signs proposed to become a devolved matter, look out for the sign telling us just how far away we actually are.

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