



As oil prices continue to fall and mismanagement of the resource by consecutive Westminster Governments makes the issue of dropping prices a major issue for the UK, we look at what could have been done and what the UK Government and their major opposition Party are doing and saying about it now, not a lot that seems worthwhile it seems.

From the Crusaders to today's Moslem extremists religion is used as an excuse to attack what goes against specific beliefs, giving free reign (in their minds) to murder innocents and those who dare to speak out against those beliefs. The recent terror attacks in France are such an attack, however, the end result is not sympathy with the attackers but the opposite, sympathy and recognition of the attacked. Western Governments use these attacks to make further investment in to military might in a vain effort to show the world that they are a superpower and have the means to defend that implied power. Further to increase spending on military and weapons of mass destruction our Government have introduced new powers allowing them to spy on all we do, is this an intrusion on our right to freedom of speech and opinion?

OUR LOSS OF FREEDOM. The atrocities in France have disgusted all civilised people around the world and left many others wondering who will be next. The trouble with terrorism is that it distorts any legitimate cause that the terrorists have. The Moslem extremists responsible for the massacre in Paris think they were punishing the magazine creators for insulting their religion but all they ended up doing was making the little known magazine the most famous publication in the world. They have now exacerbated their grievance as now many more people will want to read Charlie Hebdo who otherwise would not. I didn't even know it existed. Like all extremists, they need a cause célèbre to use as an excuse for their hate. Religion has been used as an excuse for atrocities by extremists throughout millennia, something that will never change. The Crusaders used religion as their excuse to invade and justify atrocities in the Holy Land but in reality avarice to obtain land and gold was their real motivation. The Spaniards slaughtered the ancient kingdoms in the New World for the same reason with little thought for Christian values. The Israelis continue to commit atrocities on the people of Palestine killing thousands of men women and children in their lust for their land. Yet again religion is at the heart of the Zionist mantra. The Old Testament's book of Joshua tells us how God instructed Joshua to kill every man woman and child in the lands he conquered including their beasts in Jericho, and thus extinguish their race from the Jewish people's promised land. (Joshua 6-21 & 7-24) That is the basis of why the Zionists of today treat the Moslems in Palestine the way they do, because they think they have a divine right to do so.

When the Moslem terrorists crashed the planes into the twin towers, and exploded bombs in the London underground they used their religion once again as their rallying call. They shout, 'Allah Akbar,' (God is Great) as they murder defenceless people in his name. Like the Charlie Hebdo murderers, those people are not real Moslems, just like the terrorist of different religions are not real exponents and believers of their religion. They all use a distorted version of it to suit their twisted ideology in order to kill. Cowardly murderers with a lust for killing defenceless people will always need an excuse to legitimise their actions, and religion will always be an easy exculpation. We in Scotland are not immune from religious hatred and intolerance and the Orange Order is a glaring manifestation of that. During the referendum they paraded their hate on the streets of Edinburgh and after the result their members were in the vanguard of the Nazi saluting thugs in Glasgow's George Square. They turned their hatred against peaceful YES supporters and gay people in a brutal display of triumphalism, and showed us all what it meant to be controlled by the British state.

On the other side we have Scots whose affiliation is to Irish republicanism, and who hold their fealty to Ireland, not to Scotland the land of their birth. That has always mystified me especially as the atrocities committed by the IRA in their campaign for the unification of Ireland diminished the legitimacy of their cause in the eyes of the rest of the world. During my working life I have met zealots from both sides of the religious divide and found them to be exactly the same kind of person. Intolerant and ignorant people, whose minds are closed to rational argument and remain obdurate to the ethos of Christianity. Although the majority of Scots have always had a more tolerant attitude towards those of a different race we must never succumb to those who would use the excuse of terrorism and religious intolerance to alienate those peaceful Moslems, Jews, Protestants and Catholics in our community. Knee jerk reactions to terrorism and religious intolerance are a dangerous threat to our peaceful and homogeneous society as they create resentment and fear in people's hearts. Never forget, an eye for an eye, eventually leaves everyone blind.

My views on religion are based on my own life's journey. I had an English Catholic mother and a Scottish Protestant father, and grew up with family on both sides of the religious and topographical divide. As a result, when I was a boy I never understood religious bigotry and intolerance, and only when my pal went to a different school from me was I made aware. That is a custom that I strongly believe remains the seed corn of the old religious bigotry in Scotland and should be abolished. Children don't care what religion you are; religious hatred and intolerance is something you have to be taught.

The Tory Leader Cameron likes to expound his Christian beliefs at every opportunity, and yet authorises policies that goes against the very heart and soul of Christianity. He and his Party would rather our poor people and their children starve, than spend less on military hardware and nuclear weapons that would kill millions, such is their lack of humanity. Now Cameron wants to reduce our freedoms using the Islamic terrorism threat as an excuse, but like Blair before him, his personal religious beliefs will never stop him from rushing to war if the Americans demand it. When Blair took us to war in Iraq, he was either deceived by George Bush's Lego models of WMD or was complicit in their avaricious desire for plunder like the Crusaders of old. It should be obvious to everyone with half a brain that the Americans were only interested in the appropriation of Iraq's oil, rather than deposing Saddam Hussein, but slippery and duplicitous, Blair would never admit to that. The actions of the Western leaders, and their unbridled support for Israel in our name, has exacerbated the threat of Islamic terrorism worldwide and put a target above all our heads.

If the English Tories win the election and once again become the overlords of Scotland we can all be sure they will use their new snooping powers for political advantage. As the Tories represent the ruling elite in this land you should expect nothing less from them; the referendum proved that. The battle against religious terrorism will be used to hinder the campaign for political change to the British establishment, because the Tories will always do whatever it takes to protect the system that keeps them rich and in power. The legitimacy of the referendum result will forever be in doubt in my mind because of it. Consequently, I believe they will use their new powers to thwart the fight for Scotland's independence any way they can, and Labour will be all for it. Of that, I have no doubt.

Freedom engineered, controlled and monitored by the Tory Party is not a pleasant prospect for the people of this country. Once you lose your freedom to protest or withdraw your labour, your life is no longer your own, it belongs to the state. We, the people of Scotland are in danger of being dragged into a very dark place if we don't support the SNP in May and thus provide a Westminster wedge to stop the Tory jackboot trampling over the freedoms we hold dear. Voting for Labour is not the answer as they will change nothing for Scotland that does not have an advantage for the Labour Party. What happens in England will always be more important for them. Freedoms lost are not easily regained so everyone should think very carefully when they vote in May. All Scots will have to live with the aftermath if Scotland does not have a strong voice in Westminster.

Oil has been a much debated and discussed topic in Scotland over the last two years, however the glee which has emanated from many politicians in the main Westminster parties has been startling, and also most likely alarming for those whose livelihoods depend on this industry. The truth is that the price of oil fluctuates. This is exactly why the McCrone report of 1975 recommended an Oil fund should be set-up at the start of the Scottish oil boom in the North Sea. There are only two oil producing countries in the world who don't have such a fund; Scotland and Iraq. The consecutive Labour and Tory Westminster governments since then colluded in covering up the contents of this report; which was marked as secret and hidden for three decades. The creation of such an oil fund would have given a cushion to fall back on during lower price periods. Norway also discovered North Sea oil around the same time as Scotland, and having a similar population, gives a good indication of how such a well-managed fund can soften the blow and better protect the industry in leaner times; they have a sovereign fund estimated to exceed more than half a trillion pounds in the next five years. Instead of any such cushion Scotland is faced with its share of the £1.5 trillion debt run up by the often rather fiscally irresponsible Westminster governments of both the red and blue varieties.

However, back in Holyrood, instead of using First Minister's Questions as an opportunity to discuss job security for workers in light of the 'most serious jobs situation Scotland has faced in living memory', Kezia Dugdale instead focuses her questioning on pushing the idea that full fiscal autonomy is flawed because the falling oil prices pose a threat to revenue. So to run that past you again, the reason why the industry is vulnerable is due to Westminster mismanagement, and the solution (according to Labour) is more Westminster mismanagement. The Guardian reports how this clearly hasn't been thought out by the opposition, stating that:

"The gross mismanagement of Scotland's North Sea oil bounty by successive UK governments has left this country more vulnerable in the face of collapsing oil prices than it otherwise ought to have been. If there was ever an argument for gaining Holyrood control over North Sea oil revenues then this was it."

The new leader of the Labour Party in Scotland, Jim Murphy, was quick to inform (via every mainstream media outlet who would have him) that he visited Aberdeen at the end of last month, so it was therefore surprising that last week his Holyrood spokeswoman (Kezia) had to request for him information on the measures the oil industry were calling on Westminster to deliver to soften the blow. The First Minister obliged by reiterating the UK government had been asked to reverse the 12% supplementary charge hike (now at 32%), in addition to general investment allowance and exploration tax credit. Although it is pertinent to point out that BP remain positive despite price issues, which they have dealt with before, and their website notes they have: *'been present in the North Sea for many decades .. we intend this to continue for many decades to come'*. However it could be argued the swiftness or lack thereof in terms of Westminster response may give an indication of whether or not the 'Better Together' mismanagement is set to continue.

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