

An Independent Scotland

by Mark Iddon



On 18th September 2014, Scottish residents will get to vote on whether to have an independent Scotland or retain the union with England that was established 300 years ago. The referendum was put forward by the Scottish National Party (SNP) as part of its election manifesto when it won a majority of seats in the 2011. The sentiments of the campaign appeal to many in Scotland who feel that the government in Westminster does not give sufficient regard for Scotland and takes for granted the resources of Scotland.

Considering the stakes in this referendum, it is quite surprising that the Prime Minister, David Cameron, has not taken a bigger role in defending the union but has left this to Alistair Darling who is far from the most charismatic MP in the British Parliament. He has taken part in 2 televised debates with Alex Salmond and made a convincing performance in the first one where he was suitably armed with facts and statistics to reveal some weakness in the Yes campaign, but was less convincing in round 2 which saw Alex Salmond making the positive impression stating that the time was right for an independent Scotland.

The main thrust of the campaign for Scottish Independence seems to be so that Scottish people decide on the issues that affect them, which is something I can grasp with my strong belief in autonomy and self determination. The manifesto says that issues such as income tax, health and welfare will be brought back into Scottish hands and notes the strengths of the Scottish economy in terms of producers of food and drink, tourism, it's energy resources (wind farms etc) and the North Sea oil reserves. The manifesto says, uninspiringly, that they would freeze council tax, protect the NHS and increase the police force for a fairer and more prosperous Scotland.

The limited independence of the campaign is somewhat surprising - as they want to retain the monarchy and Queen Elizabeth as the unelected head of state along with the currency. They also want to maintain membership of the European Union which means that the unelected bureaucrats of Brussels will still have considerable influence and overrule initiatives of their elected representatives.

The 'No' campaign uses the slogan 'better together' to retain the union, which appears to lack any positive initiative in making a case for a united Britain, and falls back on the fear and uncertainty of going it alone. Whereas the 'Yes' campaign has made a big issue of Scottish Identity, in contrast to British identity which, after years of promoting multiculturalism and the diversity of the social make up England, seems to lack the concept of Universal values.

The 'Yes' campaigners have stated that they would like the ability to choose and decide their own policies, but what good is choice when there are no progressive or inspiring alternatives to choose from? The move for an independent Scotland is quite opportunistic and appears to be looking for recognition of its identity rather than having any grand ideas about how it would bring about any real alternative to what it already has. After the cold war consensus, and with a lack

of alternatives in politics, the only contest of ideas has been in different managerial styles within politics. The move towards an independent Scotland is a further divide in the population, when what we really need is a more robust debate about how we organise society to defend freedom, autonomy and build a more dynamic productive economy that can bring wealth for all.

While I am not a supporter of the Con Dem government, the monarchy, British foreign policy or its racist immigration controls, a vote for an independent Scotland is not a vote for liberty, progress or universal values, and is not a constructive move for those of us who want a better future either North or South of the border.