

END of the Line?
The Scottish National Party.
The Financial deficit crisis worsens.

Last year I commented on the accounts for the Year ending 31st December 2002 with these words: "***Then really pull all shades of Nationalism together towards one single goal. Sort out the finances quickly. Well led and motivated patriots will soon provide the party with fighting funds. It can be done and it will be done!***"

Sadly I have an even sorer set of accounts on the desk before me. The finances have not been sorted out quickly or even slowly, in fact they have not been sorted out at all. The morale and membership figures of the party are now at an all time low and like last year I have again been requested by deeply concerned patriots both inside and outside the party to analyse the figures.

The analysis of these accounts is done more in sorrow than anger, its like seeing an aged but once active relative struck down by some potentially fatal condition that leaves them confused, incoherent, incontinent and lost. I have many friends amongst the SNP activist base, they are people whom I admire for their devotion to the cause of Independence and as I have inquired further, I find the responsibility does not lie with them as much as it lies fairly and squarely in the hands of the collective leadership of the party's NEC.

I have put these accounts into the same format as last years figures which most readers found to be more relevant and understandable than the format favoured by Party HQ. It is fair to say that some of the points that I made about the accounts last year on the Clannasaor and Siol-nan-Gaidheal reports have been taken on board. At least thats something gained.

The accounts consist of an Income and Expenditure statement on the first page and then the Balance sheet follows on the second page. You will notice that beside some of the income and expenditure items there are references to notes. These follow on the succeeding pages and give a comprehensive breakdown along with comments.

We start with the Income side and all the various sources are listed along with the amounts for each source. For easy statistical analysis you will note that there is a Percentage expressed as a proportion of Gross income. You will notice one item printed in red which is the UK Government 'Policy Development Grant.' After the Income section, you will note that the expenditure section follows on naturally.

Each main expense heading is listed along with the relevant amount and where it is deemed advisable, a note number for easy reference. Finally after the sub divisions of Finance charges and Depreciation you will notice a Red box containing the Nett Operational deficit for the year which is the more accurate method of measurement.

Next comes the Balance Sheet Which lists Fixed and Current assets and the relevant amounts. This is followed by the section on Liabilities. Now follow the figures which show the liquidity or otherwise of the Party. This is worked out by using the formula of: Sum of, Fixed Assets Plus Current assets minus current liabilities which gives the figure for Nett Current Assets / (Liabilities). In colloquial terms this means, being either in the 'Black' or in the 'Red.'

'Long term liabilities' which are due and payable after one year; follow next and this figure is added to the Nett Current Assets /(Liabilities) figure to give the 'Nett Assets / (Liabilities). The final section is to show the financial structure of the accounts and the total must agree with the Nett Assets / (Liabilities) figure.

Thank you for being so patient with these explanations; now read on:

The Scottish National Party
107 MacDonald Road
EDINBURGH
SCOTLAND

Statement of Accounts for Year 1st January 2003 to the 31st December 2003
Extracted from the Statement of Accounts lodged with the Electoral Commission

Gross Income for Year as detailed below			Per Cent
Donations Note 1.	£	228,333.00	25.14%
Membership Dues and Subscriptions Note 2..	£	126,147.00	13.89%
Fundraising Activities Note 3.	£	159,437.00	17.56%
Commercial Activities Note 4.	£	17,340.00	1.91%
Legacies Note 5.	£	99,504.00	10.96%
Conferences Note 6.	£	91,296.00	10.05%
Investment Income (Note. 7)	£	20,631.00	2.27%
Notional Income (Note 8 .)	£	10,145.00	1.12%
Other Income (Note 9.)	£	31,733.00	3.49%
Gross Income before UK Government Grant		£ 784,566.00	86.39%
UK Gov't Policy Development Grant (Note 10.)	£	123,634.00	13.61%
GROSS INCOME Inc. GOVERNMENT GRANT.		£ 908,200.00	100.00%
E X P E N D I T U R E			
Cost of Fundraising (Note 3.)	£	8,254.00	0.91%
Cost of Trading Activities (Note 4.)	£	7,260.00	0.80%
Campaign Expenditure (Note 11.)	£	520,965.00	57.36%
Staff Costs, Social Security and Pensions(Note 12.)	£	402,669.00	44.34%
HQ Running Costs (Note 13.)	£	133,639.00	14.71%
Notional Expenditure (Note 8.)	£	10,145.00	1.12%
Conferences (Note 6.)	£	120,995.00	13.32%
Other Expenditures (Note 9.)	£	110,810.00	12.20%
		£ 1,314,737.00	
DEFICIT before Finance charges		£ (406,537.00)	-44.76%
Bank Loan Interest.	£	36,216.00	3.99%
Other Loan Interest.	£	1,717.00	0.19%
Finance Leases.	£	6,982.00	0.77%
		£ 44,915.00	4.95%
DEFICIT BEFORE DEPRECIATION CHARGES		£ (451,452.00)	-49.71%
Depreciation	£	34,438.00	3.79%
Total Depreciation Charges for Year.		£ 34,438.00	3.79%
NETT DEFICIT CARRIED FORWARD FOR YEAR		£ (485,890.00)	-53.50%
NETT OPERATIONAL DEFICIT FOR YEAR (LESS POLICY GRANT)		£609,524.00)	

The Scottish National Party

BALANCE SHEET as at the 31st December 2003

FIXED CAPITAL ASSETS	Original Purchase Cost	Aggregate Depreciation To Date	Nett Book Value
Tangible Assets	£62,580.00	Nil	£ 62,580.00
	£ 62,580.00	Nil	£ 62,580.00
Current Assets			
Stock at Year end Valuation		£ 8,314.00	
Debtors and prepayments.		£ 15,101.00	
Investments		£ 173.00	
Cash in Hand		£ 654.00	
		£ 24,242.00	
Current Liabilities			
Bank Loan and Overdraft	£ 481,169.00		
Loans from SNP Branches	£ 69,137.00		
Other Loans	£ 282,460.00		
Trade Creditors	£ 92,239.00		
Taxation and Social Security	£ 8,336.00		
Obligations under Finance leases	£ 28,330.00		
Accruals	£ 10,692.00		
	£ 972,362.00		
		£ 972,362.00	
NETT Current Assets / Liabilities			£ (948,120.00)
Nett Assets / (Liabilities)			£ (885,540.00)
(LESS) Long Term Liability			
Bank Loan		£ 12,271.00	
Obligations under Finance leases		£ 8,593.00	
			£ 20,864.00
Nett Assets (Liabilities) :			£ (906,404.00)
Represented by :			
	Capital Account		TOTALS
Opening DEFICIT	£ (420,514.00)		£ (420,514.00)
Add Funds Introduced during year.			£ 0.00
Sub Total	£ (420,514.00)		£ (420,514.00)
ADD Nett (DEFICIT) for year	£ (485,890.00)		£ (485,890.00)
Subtotal	£ (906,404.00)		£ (906,404.00)
			£ 0.00
DEFICIT FOR 2003 CARRIED FORWARD.			£ (906,404.00)

**Note 1.
Donations.**

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Donations	£ 228,333.00	Nil	£ 228,333.00

This figure represents an increase of 39% over the previous years donations of £163,744.00p Of the total donations of £200 or more received from permissible donors - £157,794.00p was received. It should be noted that Donations account for 25.14% of all monies received by the party.

**Note 2.
Membership Dues and Subscriptions.**

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Membership Dues and Subscriptions.	£ 126,147.00	Nil	£ 126,147.00

Membership Dues and Subscriptions account for 13.89% of all income and this basically should cover all the running costs of the Party machine. However when the HQ running costs of £133,639 and Staff costs of £402,669 - (total £536,308) are set against them, a shortfall is revealed of £410,160. Membership subscriptions only meet 23.53% of the Party HQ and staff costs. It is a fact that the party has been haemorrhaging members at an ever increasing rate. In 2002 the membership stood at 16,122 and I read in the press that the present membership stands at 8,209. Far too low to sustain the party.

**Note 3.
Fundraising Activities.**

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Fundraising Activities.	£ 159,431.00	£ 8,254.00	£ 151,183.00

On the face of it, this appears to be highly cost effective, with a small outlay generating a significant surplus. However there is a hidden cost factor which cannot be quantified and that is the unpaid hard work, dedication and organisation of the party activists within their branches up and down Scotland. To them belongs the credit and I suspect a sizeable proportion of the funds raised comes from their pockets or household budgets. In total the sum raised represents 17.56% of all income.

**Note 4.
Commercial Activities.**

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Commercial Activities.	£ 17,340.00	£ 7,260.00	£ 10,080.00

The exact nature of these activities are not specified in the accounts. However the profit margin is generous with a mark up of 172% and these activities appear on the face of it to be well managed.

**Note 5.
Legacies.**

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Legacies.	£ 99,504.00	Nil	£ 99,504.00

This sum represents nearly 11% of the annual income in 2003 and it is a real sign that the cause of Independence is dear to the hearts of many, so much so that they are prepared to leave often sizeable chunks of their estate in the hope that these funds will be used to further the cause.

**Note 6.
Conferences.**

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Conferences.	£ 91,296.00	£ 120,995.00	£ (29,699.00)

The Conferences made a net loss of £29,699 (It cost 33% more to stage than it took in income) This is puzzling as normally commercial interests generate a great deal of income for the party from the trade stands etc. It is possible that space remained unsold else the rates charged for stances were too low to cover all the costs of the venue.

**Note 7.
Investment Income.**

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Investment Income.	£ 20,631.00	Nil	£ 20,631.00

This item refers mainly to Rental income for Management Accommodation and services amounting to some £20,615. I assume this to mean Rents charged for accommodation office space and services to party MSP's and/or their research staff(s). The exact number is not stated but I would be very surprised if it were less than 10. If so, the accommodation charges being levied are extremely cheap by Edinburgh commercial standards. (Average £31 per square foot per annum.) This would indicate that there is a strong case for charging more realistic rentals for office space and services. There was also the sum of £16 of Interest received during the year.

**Note 8.
Notional Income.**

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Notional Income.	£ 10,145.00	£ 10,145.00	Nil

This figure represents the value in kind of a call centre which is manned by volunteers using laptop computers. The costs of running this are defrayed against the Notional income which has to be shown in the accounts and given a value to comply with the law. Both items balance and cancel each other out.

**Note 9.
Other Income.**

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Other Income.	£31,733 .00	£ 110,810.00	£ (79,077.00)

The Other Income is broken down as follows:

Field Support Income:	£16,342.00p
Loans to the party. (Adjustment)	£5,112.00p
Events.	£8,090.00p
Miscellaneous.	£2,189.00p

The Other Expenditures come to a total of £110,810,00p and it should be noted that there is no breakdown of this very substantial figure which represents 12.2% of all Income raised. This is completely unacceptable. If I were to submit such an item in the accounts of one of my Clients, then I would be certain to receive a letter from the Inspector of taxes demanding a complete breakdown and analysis of this expense.

Last year I wrote, commenting on this heading in the 2002 accounts: 'This is a very large sum and I am aware that in previous years, this heading was used to include the then Party leader Alex Salmond's Helicopter hires, his wife's taxi fares, and Hotel bills. For all I know it may cover the costs of the booze from Haddows for the Friday night parties which occur quite regularly, or gold imitation flocked wallpaper Derry Irvine style for the offices? Do the hard-working activists and party loyalists realise that some of the funds they raise at their functions are frittered away like this? If I were an SNP member, then I would be asking some hard and searching questions at Conference about this expense heading.

This comment still holds good and I see no reason why the party should not give a complete and frank explanation of this heading. Surely they have nothing to hide... or have they?

**Note 10.
Policy Development Grant.**

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Policy Development Grant.	£ 123,634.00	£Not Known	£ 123,634.00

I have described the Policy development Grant in detail in the article 'At the Crossroads.' It would be pointless to reiterate pages of facts here, when the original article is readily available on the Clannasaor and Siol-nan-Gaidheal websites. In my view there are strings attached to this grant which is designed round the need to exercise control by the UK Government over the activities of the SNP. This grant is in reality a highly dangerous and undemocratic device to neuter the SNP. To explain this conundrum: Expenditures of the grant monies are tightly controlled and a strict accounting regime is in place to justify party expenditures. Any policy that would be harmful to the interests of the unity of the UK, the UK itself and/or the EU will not be supported.

A Policy such as working for Independence is disallowed as this would be furthering the breakup of the Union. Can you imagine the UK Government agreeing to a party policy that says in effect, 'We want to leave the UK and become a Nation State again.' No Chance! Any Policy which calls for the reform of the UK Government machinery (EU is included) is likewise debarred.

WHY DID THE SNP accept this money? That is the 64,000 dollar question. I believe the SNP Party NEC have become so strapped for cash that they abandoned their principles and joined in the rush for a share. This is akin to the state financing Political parties and only political parties that conform to its view of the world. The Scottish National Party is flat broke, it's insolvent as shown by the accounts. However in past times, It was not always so. The party managed to balance the books until 1982 when it had a deficit of £25,183. Since then the deficit has slowly increased from year to year until at December 2002 the deficit stood at £420,514. And now at 31st December 2003 it has grown to £906,404.

This begs the question: Why are party funds so low? The party is highly dependent on its loyal hardworking membership both as individuals and branches along with their many friends who support the many fundraising activities. This however is the crux of the matter, membership is far to low a level to sustain the present activities of the party.

Note 11. Campaign Expenditure.

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Campaign Expenditure.	Nil	£ 520,965.00	£ (520,965.00)

This figure represents the sums paid out to finance the 2003 Scottish Parliament elections on May 1st. According to the Electoral Commission returns the party declared that it had spent £478,957.00 which leaves an overspend discrepancy of £42,008. The Scottish Parliament campaign expenditures are declared as follows:

A. Party Political Broadcasts	£62,287.00p
B. Advertising	£140,927.00p
C. Unsolicited Material to Electors	£107,707.00p
D. Manifesto/Party Political Documents	£72,923.00p
E. Market Research/Canvassing	£1,258.00p
F. Media	£3,723.00p
G. Transport	£15,657.00p
H. Rallies and Other Events	£59,670.00p
I. Overheads and General Administration	£7,247.00p

Declared to Electoral Commission :

£ 478,957.00

Discrepancy per the Accounts: £42,008.00P

Total Campaign Expenditure per Accounts :

£ 520,965.00

It is quite possible that the funds shown in this discrepancy were disbursed in pursuit of Bye and local council elections. However as this information is not readily available it has to be shown as unaccounted for. I forebear from commenting on the various expenditures as this is a field of which I have no experience. However the information has been provided in order that those who do know about such things can make up their own minds as to whether or not these campaign expenditures represent value for money.

I do think that these bald headings should have been broken down even further if only for management information purposes. There is no way of checking to ensure that all these expenditures are justified or accounted for properly. In particular there should be an explanation of the Discrepancy of £42,000.00p revealed in the campaign expenses return. What was it for? Was it authorised? It was not declared to the Electoral Commission.

Note 12.
Staff Costs, Social Security and Pensions.

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Staff Costs, Social Sec & Pensions.	£Nil	£ 402,669.00	£ (402,669.00)

Staff costs consist of:

Wages and Salaries: £341,656.00p

Social Security costs: £31,785.00p

Other Pension Costs: £29,228.00p

Total Staff Costs per Accounts :

£ 402,669.00

There are 17 Full and part time members of Staff at Headquarters and considering their duties and remit are not too many for the tasks they carry out. There is mention of 22 members of staff in the accounts. However the extra five posts are accounted for by Employee turnover during the year.

Note 13.
HQ Running Costs.

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
H.Q. Running Costs.	Nil	£ 133,639.00	£ (133,639.00)

By comparison with a commercial concern, these running costs are on the high side by some 44% with a firm of comparable size. However those in a better position to give an assessment should comment on this aspect as a political party is not a Commercial business.

Note 14.
Interest Payments.

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Interest Payments.	Nil	£ 44,915.00	£ (44,915.00)

The Interest payments represent three headings:

Bank Loan Interest £36,216.00p

Other Loan Interest. £1,717.00p

Finance Leases. £6,982.00p

Total Interest Payments per Accounts :

£ 44,915.00

The major expense appears to be the bank overdraft which is recorded in the accounts as being £481,169.00p at the 31st December 2003. This overdraft is supported by securities and Guarantees as listed below.

Guarantee - Mr J. Mather £190,000.00p

Guarantee - Mr A. J. Tulloch. £50,000.00p

Trustees Edinburgh SNP Branch Shares HBOS £160,000.00p

(22,921 Shares valued at 31/12/2003)

Trustees Edinburgh SNP Branch Shares RBOS £129,700.00p

(8,000 Shares valued at 31/12/2003)

Total value of Guarantees and Securities :

£ 529,700.00

In addition there is the interest accruing to a long term loan shown in the accounts to be £12,271 and Equipment finance leases.

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Note 15.
Depreciation.

Description	Income	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
Depreciation.	Nil	£ 34,438.00	£ (34,438.00)

Depreciation is levied on Improvements to the Leasehold property and Office equipment such as Computer equipment, Fixtures, furnishings and other equipment. There is a sum of £62,580 in the balance sheet denoting the value of the tangible assets the depreciation is based on.

Note 16.
Current Liabilities. (Balance Sheet.)

The liabilities are broken down under seven distinct headings in order of size:

Bank Overdraft.	£481,169.00p
Other Loans.	£282,460.00p
Trade Creditors.	£92,238.00p
Loans from Accounting units.	£69,137.00p
Obligations under finance leases.	£28,330.00p
Accruals.	£10,692.00p
Taxation & Social security.	£8,336.00p

Current Liabilities :	£ 972,362.00
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As you can see the bank overdraft is the largest item which is discussed more fully in note 14. Above. Next come 'other loans' which must represent monies loaned to the party by members to help the cause prosper. I have personal knowledge of two such lenders who themselves are old and in fairly straitened circumstances yet cheerfully allow the party use of their funds. Funds which might otherwise have made their lives more comfortable.

Next comes the figure for trade creditors and this is high considering the levels of expenditure. It is possible that this figure represents a cash flow problem resulting in the creditors being paid well in arrears. If so, this is a most unsatisfactory state of affairs especially for a party that wishes to appear 'Business friendly' **?

Loans from Accounting Units (Branches and CA's) account for the next item. These are probably long term loans and there is no immediate pressure to repay them. The Obligations under finance leases apply to rent, services, equipment leases and the like over the next 12 months. The Accruals are calculated assessments of Bills yet to be charged like power and telephones and I suspect the Auditors fees. Finally the Taxation and Social security which represents the PAYE and NIC contributions to be remitted to the Collector of taxes.

ANALYSIS OF THE PARTY FINANCES.

The first question that is asked is 'What has gone wrong? There is no simple answer but a number of interlocking problems which have led to this major problem. First of all let us look at membership:

The Membership Figures.

Let us take a look at the membership figures in more detail: In 1968, SNP membership stood at 120,000 fully paid up members and the number of branches were 472. In terms of paid membership, the SNP had become the largest political party in Scotland, Ten years later in 1978 that number had fallen to 28,000 and approx. 450 branches.

In 2002 the membership had fallen to 16,000 and 255 branches. Now the figure as I learn if from the press is 8,209 spread over 299 Branches, CA's, sub-branches and affiliated associations. This is a drop of 11 from the previous years total of 310. As there are 8,209 members in the party it becomes painfully obvious that this number is clearly not enough to pull the party back into the black.

The SNP needs more Members, preferably younger, high earning members who can support the cause financially. The fact is, that the membership is aging and does not have the earning power to make such a gift. Unhappily there are branches that are withering on the vine, slowly dying for want of new blood and enthusiasm. Due to poor leadership allowing party morale to collapse, there has been dissent and dis-satisfaction with the leadership. Internal Party discipline has not helped either in the recent cases of members and branches being expelled for questioning party policy or the leader. The decline in membership is indicative of a deeper, more fundamental malaise which reveals itself in:

The Financial Crisis.

To put not too fine a point on it, the SNP is Broke! Annual deficit piles upon annual deficits to the point where it stands at **£906,404.00p.**[NINE HUNDRED and SIX Thousand, Four hundred and Four Pounds.] . **What has gone wrong?**

In my view this points to lack of a proper business plan with tight financial controls to keep within the constraints of a limited budget. It is apparent that these problems are the result of profligate spending and lack of controls in previous years under the leadership of Salmond and Russell. There has been a lack of fiduciary care and recklessness in the handling of the party's finances which has allowed this deficit to snowball out of control.

The Party leaders (The NEC who have collective responsibility) must LEAD in this with a firm grip on the purse-strings at ALL LEVELS FROM THE BOTTOM RIGHT UP TO THE TOP! The Party is clearly living beyond its means and in business terms is technically insolvent. Any firm trading whilst 'knowingly Insolvent' would have had its Directors charged with several criminal offences and barred from holding any directorship. If the SNP were a Company then it would have been declared bankrupt long before now. Any Company reporting such losses and financial mismanagement would be facing a very hostile shareholder meeting and the directors (those responsible) would be clutching P45's in their hands as they get booted out.

We may see this happen at Conference in September as far as I am aware the membership at large do not know the true facts. It is likely that the party leadership have been trying to cover up a 'Black hole' in the accounts. They owe a duty of care to those who have loaned the party monies and especially those who have put up guarantees and securities to aid the party. If the party is wound up then they lose everything and the individuals who have perhaps loaned their life savings for the cause will be left with little or nothing.

They're spending far more than they earn. Remember Charles Dicken's Mr Micawber? **"Annual income twenty shillings, Annual expenditure nineteen shillings and sixpence, result Happiness. Annual income twenty shillings, Annual expenditure twenty shillings and sixpence, result MISERY!"** This is a message to the NEC and the new leader whoever He or She is. The NEC created this mess. Remember where the buck stops? **When stuck in a deep hole...STOP DIGGING! Before things get even worse!**

First define the problem?

The problems are plain to be seen: Gross incompetence or at the very least, mismanagement. A culture of cronyism, cliques, Bad leadership (or ignorance?) A Control Freak Leader (John Swinney) and his cabal who have turned the SNP into a centralist clone of New Labour. Harsh Stalinist discipline that will not tolerate the slightest dissent. A party which has lost the confidence of the members ,the Business and the financial communities.

The SNP have severely fragmented and isolated large sections of the nationalist movement with a culture of cronyism that drives talented rivals out into the wilderness. The formation of small 'Independence' parties bears eloquent testimony to this waste of effort and talent. Hundreds of thousands of people believe the SNP is out of touch with their aspirations and instead of being 'Inclusive' the party has become exclusive, narrow and sectarian.

A Party leadership that is economical with the truth and has a policy of secretiveness in all it does, keeping the ordinary membership in the dark. The abysmally low party morale has revealed itself in falling numbers and bickering members. Plenty of problems there. Yet the party have also painted themselves into a corner with two of their main policies. Suicidal policies such as:

'Independence in Europe' which is a real turn off to many Scottish voters, preventing them from voting for Independence. After all they can say with logic on their side, '**why vote to exchange one political master in London for another one in Brussels?**' As one of my Clients said to me yesterday, 'Why change the cell doors?' The Voters can see for themselves the vast damage that was done to Scotland's Steel and Coal Industries. Fishing is under dire threat of collapse, Agriculture, especially crofting and small hill farming interests are being wantonly destroyed and a host of other Scottish Industries are also under threat from unhelpful EU regulations and directives.

Also the Unionists are to be given two bites of the cherry by holding a referendum after the SNP win a majority of seats. It is this policy alone that has disheartened so many patriots and gives the impression that the SNP is not really serious about Independence.

The solution? What can be done?

First ask the membership, They know what is wrong, their morale is at an all time low. In the past 20 years the party has lost more than 110,000 members why? A Leadership that does not listen nor cares about them as they pursue their political careers. People like Campbell martin who try to tell the leadership that there is a problem are savaged and cast into the outer darkness. Martin is not alone, there have been many whistleblowers down through the years who have had the same unfair treatment. The party has stuck its collective heads in the sand in the hope the problems will resolve themselves, but they haven't. In place of facing realities, Instead the party attempts to sell useless policies which strike no chords with the ordinary voters who want to hear one thing. **A CLEAR CLARION CALL FOR INDEPENDENCE!**

The people of Scotland want and deserve a clear vision. Many of them desire Independence yet cannot bring themselves to support the SNP due to the fogginess of the current party's position. Why has no one in the Party listened to their concerns? However there is a hint for those who are prepared to listen. When the SNP was a mass movement in the days before it became a respectable political party, the party had support right across the board.

The movement crossed over all class barriers, definitions such as left or right and policies which caused division were eschewed. The movement was successful and actually raised a petition with over 2 million signatures in the years of the National Covenant Campaign during 1949 to 1951. The Covenant ultimately failed through political naivety but it was a clarion call none-the-less.

I know a great many ordinary ex SNP members and activists and their present disillusionment with the SNP is heartbreaking. Many will no longer vote at all so great is their disgust at this once great party. The party will have to engage with all shades of Nationalism and unite them. Also the Party **MUST** get rid of **ALL** the dead wood at the very top, the ones responsible for the mess the party finds itself in. Make a clean sweep and start afresh with a new team and fresh impetus.

The party really needs a charismatic leader who can rally both wings of the party and unite them. Any new leader must lead from the front by personal example and not by ordering the members what to do as happens at present. Be honest with the members, be truthful, can the party leadership bring themselves to admit that they got it wrong? Scrap these new centralist reforms of the party structure. They are designed to place the power in the hands of the political elite and not the members.

The party has been badly damaged by centralisation, so the first task is to Rebuild the party structure. Listen to what the grass roots have to say and **ACT** on it. There are many of us outside the party who can no longer support it having been cast out into the outer darkness ourselves because we do not agree with the pet policy of the moment or our faces not fit in with the new party image.

The party has to reconnect with us and draw us all back into the fold. If necessary shoot a few of the sacred cows like 'Independence in Europe' and the referendum on Independence. Let the people of Scotland decide their future after Independence has been gained. Not have the decision made for them by the party's elite. We can all debate metaphysics until the cows come home and discuss how many angels can stand on the head of a pin if we wish, but; without Independence it's a waste of energy and breath.

So the first thing to do is forget political labels, 'left' or 'right' and meaningless terms such as 'fundamentalist' or 'gradualist'. Next get the small splinter groups and the other party's who favour Independence to unite under the Independence banner by hosting the Independence convention which the last SNP leader attempted to quash through sheer disinterest. Resurrect the National Covenant to mobilise the whole of Scotland towards Independence. Holyrood has been very successful in taking the momentum out of the movement, that has to be regained.

The Party must start giving real leadership to ordinary Scots, lead them to Independence, not waffle on about it! Stop taking the Government 'Policy development Grant' bribe that castrates the messenger and the message. Stand up for Independence alone without which all else is cosmetic frippery. Then really pull all shades of Nationalism together towards one single goal.

To do this, it is necessary to sort out the finances quickly. Membership has to be increased to ensure adequate funding. With a new National Covenant movement the party numbers will inevitably increase and the SNP should be aiming to recruit at least 60,000 new members in addition to those joining the National Covenant.

With numbers will come financial security and the means to properly organise the Independence campaign. Each member giving what they can afford in line with their incomes. This would be flexible, the pensioner paying less than the salaried worker. Let us examine the situation if the party should recruit 30,000 new members over the next 12 months.

This little table shows what is possible:

10,000 members paying a minimum of £10 per annum.	£100,000.00p
10,000 members paying a minimum of £25 per annum.	£250,000.00p
10,000 Members paying a minimum of £60 per annum.	£600,000.00p
Total (Payable monthly by direct debit or otherwise)	£950,000.00p

That is the deficit wiped out within a year and each year thereafter a fighting fund can be built up. Well led and motivated patriots will soon provide the party with fighting funds. It can be done and it will be done! Will the SNP reconnect with the fragmented remains of the nationalist movement and unite it? Only time will tell.

Niall U'Aislainn. 8th August 2004.