



# CLANNASAOR

## PLANNING FOR AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND

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Dear John.

Latha mhath mo charaid.

It has come to my attention that you are asking the membership of the SNP to tell you what is wrong with the party and the past election campaign. The main problem is where to start. May I first be permitted to introduce myself. I am a 59 year old Accountant (Sole practitioner) resident in Cairnbulg in Aberdeenshire. I am a passionately committed Nationalist and have been since I was old enough to remember. A son of the croft who was forced to move from the land to make a future for myself and did so by joining the RAF Regiment, getting an education, climbing the greasy pole to gain a commission and on leaving to settle down with my family to create a decent and fulfilling lifestyle.

I make no pretence that I am anything other than the much despised (by the SNP) Hairy kneed fundamentalist wing of the movement. It is my mission in life to see Scotland become fully Independent as a Nation State and to break the colonial shackles of London which have held us in thrall since 1707. I am an unashamed Republican who believes unquestioningly in true Democracy (I am a great admirer of the Swiss system) for all the people of Scotland in whom rests all power. Also I am politically aware and active, for many years I supported the SNP both Financially, and in activist support, (if I had 50p for every door I've chapped on canvassing support for the SNP, then I would be a rich man today!) I was never a member of the party only a willing supporter. We parted company in 1989 on a major point of principle when the party adopted the suicidal policy (for Scotland) of 'Independence in Europe.'

For many cogent reasons I have been opposed to the EEC/EU/Europa ideal (since 1965 in fact, when I discovered who the true architects were.) and actually voted against joining the EEC. As an Accountant I see every day the deleterious effects on our Farmers, Fishermen and small businesses. I know how the EU functions and in my opinion Scotland would be subsumed into being an insignificant appendage useful only for its assets which will be stripped from us.

Lastly and I trust that you will not throw this letter in the bin, I am a member of 'Siol-nan-Gaidheal' an organisation unjustly demonised by the SNP and unilaterally proscribed in a totally undemocratic manner. Having established my credentials let us move on. Do not expect bouquets, I am not pulling my punches, to me the blunt spoken truth is to be preferred to polite political double speak.

However in the cause of Independence and trusting that you are at least prepared to listen, I shall now give my analysis of where the party has gone wrong and the steps whereby Scotland can gain it's independence. Now to start with let me share my impressions of the May 1<sup>st</sup> election. (A fully detailed 10 page report is available if you wish to have one.) It should be noted that these impressions are from the NE of Scotland and in particular the Banff and Buchan Constituency. I did canvass support for several Independent candidates in the local elections and the Fishing Party as well as giving my first vote to the SNP. (The vote was for Independence alone of your policies not your party's stance on Europe.) The door to door canvassing along with the smaller village hustings allowed me to take the political pulse and conduct a few polls on attitudes to Independence and the EU.

Naturally the subject uppermost on peoples minds was the great damage the EU has done to our Fishing and small farming (including crofting) sectors along with their support industries and the retailing/service businesses that depend on them. Of those who expressed an intention to vote, the overwhelming majority were solidly anti EU and pro independence outside the EU. In the fishing communities the anti EU sentiment was running very high, 83% were anti EU, 14% did not know, only 3% were actually in favour of the EU. I was staggered when I got to the Rural mainly agricultural areas. 92% were against, 4% Did not know and 4% were for the EU. Everyone expressed deep concerns about the economic downturns in Fishing and farming (especially the CAP and the latest 'Sheep traceability scheme) over the past 8 years which has accelerated steeply over the past two years. Farm incomes are down by 55% causing the collapse of three major agricultural supply firms (Now four with NE Farmers Ltd.) and a number of smaller concerns.

The gross incomes of the Fishermen are also down by 57%. Three major fish processors have gone to the wall and another dozen are struggling on short time. Five years ago my practice processed 34 pay-slips per week for one processing firm, last week the number was 8. I can confirm these percentages by reference to my Farming and Fishing Clients annual accounts. I do the tax returns for a great many share fishermen (Crewmen Self-employed) and their average income in 1999 was £30,000pa and in 2002 was £13,000pa.

There appears to be a yawning gulf between the Central belt and the rest of Scotland in their perceptions. Most of the Local people in Aberdeenshire believe that Holyrood exists purely for the exclusive benefit of the central belt and that the rest of Scotland is being squeezed out of vitally needed infrastructure funding in order to keep the central belt happy. Certainly the performance and budgeting of Holyrood so far reinforces that view. Many people told me that they were not going to vote: 'Fit's the use, it disnae matter who ye put in, they politicians will dae as they please.' 'Why vote? They dinnae listen tae us! Ah voted agin repealing section 28 but they went ahead and repealed it!' 'All the pairties want us intae Europe an ah'm nae voting SNP because they'll take it ah'm all for Europe an ah'm nae!' 'I want tae be Independent, but, they SNP seem tae be mair keen on bashing Labour and being in Europe than Independence sae why should ah put them in.

One of my Taxi Clients Hector told me that he normally voted for the SNP 1,2,3 but this time he was not voting because the SNP have become a New labour clone and somewhere along the line, the independence message has got lost. Finally one of the most damning of all: 'Ah used tae be a member o the SNP but the SNP of today has departed from its principles, it would sicken me tae vote for them. So ah'm nae voting ava!' It should be noted that there were far too many instances of similar comments vis a vis the SNP.

Why did I support the Independents? The Aberdeenshire Council elections have brought forward some good Independent non party political people who in general have been sickened because the SNP and Lib-Dems played party politics at the expense of the voters and fiddled while the county burned. The Independents ranged from a Doctor, Business people, Farmers, a Fisherman, right down to a retired Fish worker. Ten of them (of whom three were considered for Fishing party list MSP's.) formed an alliance to put forward a united front and pooled resources for administration and also to publish literature and advertising. They have been working towards this end for nearly two years now as they believe and I have always held this view, that party politics have no place in local Government.

In general they did well getting half their number elected by big majorities. In Buchan North East, beating one SNP Councillor by 597 to 338. (Her record was abysmal and she had voiced ambitions to be an SNP MEP (€170,000PA including expenses beckoning no doubt) and she had faithfully followed the party line, often in many cases, to the great detriment of her constituents. The self same constituents took umbrage at her neglect and promptly booted her OUT! One thoughtless remark of hers was 'The EU knows what's best for fishing' did not win her any friends and it's a damn good job she did not say it near the harbour side.

In three of the Fraserburgh wards they gave the sitting SNP candidates conniptions by taking second place and slashing the huge SNP majorities by up to 60%. One ward was won by the Independent against the high profile Carol MacDonald first time SNP Candidate, (one of the famous 'Cod Crusaders') In every case it was the SNP stance on Independence in Europe which cost the party support.

In Banff the independent came second to the SNP and if it were not for the presence of another independent who stood on the retention of hospital services in Banff there could well have been an upset. In the Lonmay and St Fergus ward the Independent trounced the SNP by 1031 to 452. All in all, it was a good night for them. One Fraserburgh SNP Councillor in the run up to the elections repeatedly called them 'Useless Tory w\*\*\*\*\*s in public, very unwise! (That did not win him any friends.) strange seeing how five of the independents were former members or supporters of the SNP and none of them had any connection with the Toraidh Party.

The Toraidh's, I mention these because they are an object lesson to the SNP. The standard of the local council candidates was middling, with them standing more in hope than expectation. Stewart Whyte the Prospective Toraidh MSP was impressive. He is a local man, a teacher with an extensive knowledge of farming and business who was well prepared with facts and figures for the hustings debates. He was energetic and articulate and it is a great pity that a man like him should be so Anti EU and yet support Union with the UK albeit in a luke-warm manner. He actually gave me some excellent briefings on the EU policies(?) On Farming and Fishing from Struan Stevenson the Toraidh MEP for this area including transcripts of speeches made in the European Parliament. It gives me much grief to have to admit that he (Struan Stevenson) has been more effective in fighting for our Farmers and Fishermen than the combined efforts of the three SNP MEP's.

Now how did the SNP come across? Unhappily this was a truly lack lustre campaign Where was the fire in the belly? Where was the burning passion for our Nation's Independence? Noticeable by it's absence. In the Banff and Buchan Constituency they were behaving as if they had already won. Very similar to the behaviour of Neil Kinnock celebrating his supposed win before the general election when the Toraidh's under John Major got re-elected.

It was noticeable that your activist support was meagre. Many activists were so demoralised by their treatment by the party bosses, that they did not bother turning out at all making the campaign somewhat low-key. I know many of them and quite frankly I do not blame them for not responding to poor leadership. I must fault the candidates for their insulting words about other candidates. The SNP message was far too low key to bring out the voters. A Clear and loud clarion call for Independence was needed and this the SNP failed to deliver. Are you all afraid of frightening the voters? Faint heart ne'er won fair lady! Telling the voters that they, the SNP would deliver better health services, more schoolteachers, smaller class sizes etc, etc, ad nauseam was a huge turn off, when the people wanted to hear a single and loud message, INDEPENDENCE! INDEPENDENCE! INDEPENDENCE!

I personally found the constant knocking of the unionist parties, especially Labour to be off putting. The voters were not fooled by this slagging of the other parties and it was overdone. The impression gained was that the SNP were running scared of Labour and the Conservatives. A really expert sales manager Client of mine once told me 'Never, Never knock the opposition! If you do, you have lost the sale.'

I did fall out with one of the SNP candidates or maybe a party worker who told one gathering that the Fishermen's party was an 'Irrelevance.' 'What can one MSP do that a great number of SNP MSP's cannot?' I then riposted: 'In 1967 a certain Winnie Ewing won Govan, She was a single SNP MP and look what happened in the next few years. The anti EU Fishing party will fight for our Fishing and Farming Industries far better than the EU grovelling SNP will ever do!' Foot-stamping ovation followed. Very disheartened SNP apparatchik sat glowering at me. Tough cheddar!

I was determined to get a straight answer from the SNP candidates on the subject of the EU. Did I get one? NO! You Mr Swinney had ducked the issue in my Sunday Post question to you and your wee clones were just as tight lipped. This did not go well with the farming and Fishing electors in the audience who gave them a really hard time. They trotted out the old propaganda message about having a seat at the top table and being able to influence European affairs directly. Red rag to the Bull! I asked them what the post 2005 European parliament would look like, How many members will Scotland have? Their ignorance was mind blowing. 'The same as now' was the answer at one meeting, 'That would be eight then?' I replied. 'Yes,' said the SNP Candidate, 'WRONG!' I came right back at him with the correct figure 'SIX! Six out of 732 seats, what kind of influence is that? Scotland is too small to stop the totally corrupts and inefficient EU steamrolling us whenever it likes. If the EU Kommissars want to rape our resources they can just outvote us in Parliament. Remember there is no longer a veto! It is qualified majority voting now.'

At one meeting I went for the Jugular after a very dim-witted prospective SNP Local Council candidate (he actually got elected!) Told everyone that we could not afford to survive outside the EU. This was in response to a question from the audience. I chose to put the opposing case: (You will probably recognise the position I have often made on the SnG forum, if you ever read it that is.) 'My first Suggestion is to get out of Europe at once! When the EU transforms itself into the Federation of Europa, then the centralised Federal Government in Brussels will set standard European tax rates which incidentally are some 35% higher than we enjoy at present and all Scottish taxes will be sent to the Central Taxation office in Brussels. This taxation and monetary policy is not appropriate to an outwards looking trading nation like Scotland.

There will be a 'Regional Salary' (not my words - European Commission president Romano Prodi's) to cover each regions essential expenditures. Any Scottish surplus would be used for the benefit of the EU as a whole under the terms of 'Aquis Communautaire.' We would then be worse off as the cost of the Brussels Bureaucracy is much higher than the present UK Governments Bureaucracy. Are any of you aware how much it costs the ordinary man in the street, for the dubious privilege of Britain being in the EU? At present rates in 2003 if Scotland were to be outside the EU completely like Switzerland is, then each Scottish family of FOUR (Two Adults, Two Children - One Wage earner) would be better off in spending power by £23.87p per week! That equates to £1,241.24p for the entire year. With the present UK Tax and NIC rates that means our average family breadwinner has to earn £1,880.67 to pay for the increased costs of being in the EU. For someone on the average of £12,500 per annum that represent 15% of his earnings before Tax.

This is far too high a price to pay.' This did provoke some discussion from the floor and some very pointed questions to the other candidates. I was challenged on my figures but as I had done my research on prices ruling in over 26 countries (NZ being the cheapest by far) and had the figures to prove it, the challenge became a damp squib and fizzled out.

Finally, the SNP has shown itself to have some major problems and flaws. We must start at the top with you Mr. Swinney. Your style and method of leadership lacks fire and true leadership qualities are lacking. Believe me I know something about leadership, I learned mine in a hard school where one's mistakes came back to base in body-bags. You are now reaping the bitter harvest of running a clone of a New Labour style 'Control Freak' party machine, staffed by trusted cronies.

It should be noted that all the opinion polls showed that the general public do not trust or support you and that they thought Jack McConnell of lumpen Labour to be the more trustworthy and charismatic leader. You Mr. Swinney quite often came in third place. You will have to make drastic changes and the best service that you could do for the Party and the Country would be to resign the leadership for the sake of making the party more electable.

The policy of 'Independence in Europe' is the albatross around the SNP neck. EU policies on the CFP and CAP have cost the SNP much valuable support up here in NE Scotland and the Highlands. I think the SNP will have to change their policy on Europe and it will have to be put to the Scottish people in a referendum just like independence and the monarchy. I think the SNP should go all out for Independence and once the majority of Scots have shown their support making Independence a reality then they MUST organise referenda on all the major issues such as the EU, the monarchy, the constitution, NATO membership, etc. and then resign and disband.

The SNP have a serious communications problem as well. I read the turgid prose of the Acrobat 5.0 file which was sent out to all your members. I was given a copy by a member who needed help in understanding all the political jargon, gobbledegook and politico-babble contained therein. Frankly this looked like something put together by a second year politics student at university and was virtually incomprehensible to the layman. This use of language does not connect with the man and woman in the street. The SNP need to use the sort of language used in the Daily Rectum (Record) or the Scottish Scum (Sun) I remember being told by an ex Mirror journalist that he only used a vocabulary of 140 to 180 words in order that the reader would understand. Not every Scot reads the 'North British Person' (Scotsman) or the 'Weegie Times' (Glasgow Herald). Do you get my point about the use of language now?

The SNP also have a credibility gap when it comes to the quality of many of their advisors and researchers. You Mr Swinney should take a leaf out of Blair's and Bush's books and take heed to Macchiavelli's proven dictum: "Do not surround yourself with fools and flatterers."

Mr Swinney, what about your spin doctor the infamous Gordon Archer (who incidentally is a man deeply hated and despised by most SNP activists and known as 'Fat Arse') also holding down the post of your 'BUSINESS ADVISOR' despite concealing his past as a failed businessman with two bankrupt companies to his credit. Companies house reveals that he held directorships in two companies that failed due to the extravagant lifestyle of the main Director. Accounts and Liquidators tell a sorry tale. Is it any wonder that Professionals like myself cannot take the SNP seriously on economic and business matters? Yet you Mr Swinney have promoted him to be chief spin doctor and adviser on business matters. Gordon Archer is the very selfsame man who was a failed labour Councillor in Glasgow and a close aide of Mohammad Sarwar MP. So close that he was best man at the wedding of Sarwar's son. That same man is a proven liar as was proved when in the witness box, he testified against Sarwar. He was caught out lying on oath, over a question of a loan for £5,000 he had requested from Sarwar. That alone should have debarred him from working for the SNP!

The SNP must now institute a root and branch reform of the party starting at the very top and give a greater say to the grass roots activists who are the real backbone and power of the SNP. The control freakery MUST STOP! The party must allow debate on all policies and issues like Europe and furthermore they must bring back into the fold all the people who belong to the persecuted and derided Fundamentalist wing of the SNP. Here is where the true leaders will come from, not Manicured, photogenic, tailor's dummy type respectable party apparatchiks. We need leaders with fire in their bellies who can inspire the man and woman in the street in a way that you are not capable of doing. In most Nationalist circles your nickname is 'Swotty Walter.' You and the sycophants that surround you are as much to blame for the failures of the party as yourself. You are repeating the mistakes of past leaders with the cult of personality, this must stop! The SNP will slide further into obscurity unless radical changes are quickly made. There must be a change of leadership and direction.

Many people currently harbour the view that a leadership challenge is desirable. From where though? Certainly not in the ranks of the careerist politicians of the SNP are there any with the right leadership qualities. In my view it would be highly desirable that Margo MacDonald be invited back into the party with a leadership election to follow. I would further recommend that the party changes its name. To many Scots the SNP = Failure. Changing the name of the party to say Scottish Independence (SI) notice the word party is a turn-off because most Scots are disillusioned with particracy (A grossly inferior form of Democracy.) Start putting Independence to the fore of any and every campaign. One last thing: The SNP have got to weed out Careerists, Con artists and dead wood. A good start would be to boot out Gordon Archer, he cannot be trusted. As for yourself Mr Swinney, To quote Churchill speaking in the House of Commons in May 1940 to Neville Chamberlin: "You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go!"

Saoir Alba! Niall Aslen. (U'Aislainn)

