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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for June 21st, 2013

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Electric Scotland News

I'm afraid we have issues this week with our Electric Scotland Community. On balance it looks to be a Facebook issue as Steve tells me they made a change which affected our interface. However in trying to disable Facebook it didn't fix the problem.

I am a bit pissed off with the situation as last time this happened I told Steve that he must have a plan in place so we could quickly restore the system should anything happen and he clearly hasn't done that.

I have placed an update file on the site at <http://www.electricscotland.com/update.html> which I'm updating as new information comes in. Once the situation is resolved I'll simply keep that file and replace the text with something like "No issues at this time" and that way you'll always be able to refer to that if an issue comes up in the future.

I might just add that despite the problems I was able to get in today and post a message.

I've been asked to give my take on the Scottish referendum as I'm told the Scots Diaspora is getting somewhat confused over the issues. I'm thus going to give you my take on this below but should point out that these are my personal views. I can also say that the more I dig into this the harder it is for me to make a decision as to whether to vote YES or NO and of course I should point out that I don't have a vote as I'm no longer resident in Scotland. So here is my take on the issues...

Scottish Independence

In many ways the debate over whether Scotland should vote YES or NO is getting harder and we still have several hundred days to go before the vote. I'd like to explain my issues and see where it takes us.

Now I won't say I'm an expert or anything but I have taken the time to try to educate myself on most of the issues and have spent some days at reading a lot of material some of which is quite technical.

To me if we vote YES for an independent Scotland that means we are going to get an SNP government as our first government of an independent Scotland. I am aware that this is not definite but I do believe it is by far the most likely scenario.

That means in part that if I vote YES then that is the government we will get and thus I need to consider what an SNP government would do if elected.

It's obvious that they want Scotland to be a member of the EU and tie us to Sterling. They've said that loudly enough and often enough that there can be no other interpretation. These two decisions alone would in my opinion harm an independent Scotland and further would not give us true independence and if anything would put us in a worse position that we are currently.

Now with all the reading I have done being a member of the EU is the very worst decision that they could make as we simply swap Westminster for Brussels but where we represent 10% of the UK population we will only represent 1% of the EU population.

We currently spend some 800 million a year to be in the EU and only get a tiny fraction of that comes back in so called grants. It's also not a democratic organisation so we can't vote them out if we don't like what they are doing.

In today's world we need to be represented on all the really major world organisations and yet through the EU we would only be represented by the EU and would not have an individual voice. The massive World Trade Organisation (WTO) is an example. As an independent country we would be at the 'top table' but within the EU we wouldn't as the EU commission would represent the views of the EU members which need not be in Scotland's best interests.

Then there is the case that the EU through mismanagement has destroyed some 100,000 jobs in our Fishing industry and with it some 2 billion in annual revenue.

Problem is that the EU now has authority on all Scottish waters right up to our beaches. That means they also have a say on our oil and gas. So if they can make such a mess of our Fishing industry what might they do to our offshore Energy industry?

It's been suggested that instead Scotland should not join the EU and instead be a member of EFTA and the EEA. That would cost Scotland some 200 million and thus we would save ourselves some 600 million annually and likely more in the years ahead. Being a member of EFTA and the EEA still gives us a direct voice in the EU and pretty well all the rights that EU membership provides us with today but at least we would be in total control of our own Scottish waters and have a voice in the major international organisations.

We would also be a full member of all of Europe instead of being in the EU which only represents half of Europe.

So to my mind being a member of the EU is a very bad move for Scotland and puts us in a worse position that we currently have from within the UK.

Then there is our currency. From everything I have read being in a Sterling currency union means we would be effectively controlled by the Bank of England and so we would not have free control of our own budget. And it is pretty obvious to me that we need our own currency if we wish to be a truly independent country.

In short, Governments which relinquish control of their currency leave themselves open to external interventions beyond the control of democratic institutions. Independence offers a unique opportunity to learn from these mistakes and to go back to where it all started to go wrong. The banking business will not reform itself from within.

The 2011 euro-crisis was compounded because it arose within a currency union. Several governments had issued debt in the form of bonds. Various banks, domestic and foreign, bought these securities, mainly but not exclusively, for euros. The 'indebted' States then spent the receipts on current account. These fractional reserve banks did not actually have real euros to lend – more accurately they extended credit, and for as long as the interest was paid the loan was regarded as sound. But borrowing more euros just to pay the interest on previous loans meant the debt was growing exponentially. This led to a loss of confidence and demand for repayment.

This then means that Scotland should have its own currency, stock exchange and central bank and should clearly not be in a Sterling currency union.

But Scotland could continue use of sterling without being in a currency union with rUK until Scotland issues its Scots merks. Ireland did this for several years after its independence.

Then there is the Pensions issue. It is now clear that the SNP have not given this any consideration at all and this seems to be a

major issue on how we transfer the pensions from the UK to Scotland. There are considerable issues to be overcome here.

A committee of MPs has been told that sorting out pensions in the event of Scottish independence would be like building an NHS.

There are about 6,300 defined benefits pension schemes in the UK. Of that number some 5,000 are in deficit to the tune of £230bn.

All of that said it is possible to sort all this out but to me it's just one more issue that the SNP had not considered and has had to react to.

Then should we go down the Independence route then surely the rUK are not going to give us an easy route. After all no matter what is right or wrong they don't want to be saddled with a lot of debt after the break up if they can possibly avoid it. That's just common sense. So I would anticipate that the negotiations will be very hard indeed and all will not be alright on the day as the SNP are portraying.

So right now I feel the SNP have got it badly wrong with their clear intention to have an independent Scotland as a member of the EU and tie ourselves to Sterling. To me that's not independence and instead actually puts us in a worse situation than being part of the UK. Plus to sort all the independence issues is bound to cost us a small fortune in legal fees, etc. as we'll need a large number of lawyers and civil servants to sort things out.

On the International stage we would be much better off being in EFTA and the EEA, re-invigorating our ties with the Commonwealth and looking to negotiate a free trade union with the USA.

So all of that says to me that we should vote NO in the referendum as it is clear that the SNP would destroy our country by joining the EU and going to a Sterling zone and their platitudes that all will be right on the day is simply not an acceptable answer.

So now the conundrum.

Should we vote YES might we still get a real independent country?

One aspect many people ignore with the SNP is that they are actually quite split on the economic way forward for the country. It was pointed out to me that prior to Thatcher getting into power Scotland had some 22 Conservative MP's in Westminster. Today we have 1. However the conservative view is still there but now within the SNP.

So this now assumes that while the SNP may well become the first government of an independent Scotland how long might they last? It is clear that with Labour and the Lib Dems voting to stay with the UK that they will have problems in any election we have which is why I can't see any alternatives to the SNP being our first government of an Independent Scotland.

This to me means we are then likely to have to create a whole new political system in Scotland but that will probably take many years.

I have absolutely no doubt that Scotland could be an outstanding independent country but it will only become that if we have the leaders that know how to govern us and represent us on the International stage.

To me this means that somehow we must get rid of the SNP as soon as Independence is won and the sooner the better. They do receive a lot of support right now on the Independence issue but if that is won then things will need to change otherwise Scotland will be worse of than we are right now.

And it is only fair to point out that Scotland exports more to the rUK than it does to the rest of the world combined. So how will that affect our economy?

And so there is the quandary in my opinion.

Do we vote YES and then hope we can get rid of the SNP whose policies would take Scotland down a road that would be worse than we have right now and not be true independence?

Should we vote NO as we feel the SNP will ruin the country through their bad judgment on issues like the EU and our currency?

I would say that in my opinion the SNP have done a good job at running our country on domestic issues but they seem to have very poor judgment on international issues which would cost the country dearly.

While the EU issue is not getting much press coverage in this campaign I believe the case is overwhelmingly in favour of ditching them and joining EFTA and the EEA instead. I think part of the case for not receiving much press coverage is simply that a decision on this won't be made until after the referendum issue is resolved.

When I read some of the papers that Dr James Wilkie and his friends had produced I was enthused over what an Independent Scotland could become. They had taken a completely fresh look at how countries are run and proposed a fresh look at almost every aspect of running a country. This showed what was possible if we went down their route. However the SNP are in many respects offering more of the same with no real vision for the country and certainly no fresh thinking.

So the gamble is vote YES for independence and hope we can sort things out after, or vote NO and don't take the risk that the SNP will destroy the country.

One thing I haven't discussed so far is the Scots Diaspora and that in part is because they don't have a vote. However there is great knowledge of international affairs and practical knowledge on business out there that could be drawn on by an independent Scotland that could help plug gaps in our domestic knowledge. Some thought should be given on how to draw on that knowledge for the benefit of Scotland.

Right now the problem is that the SNP don't seem to want to engage with the Scots Diaspora and that is a symptom of their lack of knowledge in international affairs.

Scotland as an independent country could be hugely successful but not if we stick to the same old way of doing things and to me that's the conundrum... the SNP show no signs of thinking out of the box and be willing to try new ways. So while independence would certainly offer great possibilities unless these are grasped we would likely be worse of.

And so this is not an easy decision and I can only ask that everyone with a vote will do their best to educate themselves on the issues. And it is not too late to try and persuade the SNP to change their outlook prior to the referendum.

So if you are confused just think how confusing this is to local Scots and especially if they've bothered to do any research on the matter. The problem is that a good proportion of Scots want Independence no matter what and have totally ignored the issues. Likewise a good proportion of Scots don't want anything to do with Independence but have also totally ignored the issues. That to my mind means no more than 20% of Scots are likely to make an informed decision.

Problem is then on how many Scots will bother to vote in the referendum and that's a whole other issue.

Electric Scotland has a section on "Scottish Independence and Scotland's Future" where you can read various papers on both sides of the argument at <http://www.electricscotland.com/independence>

Electric Canadian

Canada and its Provinces

Added the final volume, Documentary Notes and General Index, Volume 23 - Section XII.

You can get to this collection towards the foot of our Canadian History page at <http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/canada/index.htm>

An Illustration on how some Canadians view the First Nations
An article from the Nanaimo News.

It's as well to consider how some Canadians view the First Nations people of Canada and perhaps serves to show the issues that are causing concern to many Canadians.

See <http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/first/attitude.htm>

The Flag in the Wind

This weeks edition was compiled by Fraser Hudghton with a single large article on gender issues. I note there is no Synopsis in this issue.

You can read this issue at <http://www.scotsindependent.org>

Electric Scotland

The Scottish Historical Review

We have now started on Volume 8 and added this week the April 1911 issue. You can get to this at::

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/review/volume08.htm>

There are several interesting articles such as how St Andrews University was founded and an interesting article which would be of interest to Clan Donald folk.

You can read the previous issues at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/review/>

Songs Of Scotland, Prior To Burns

This book is by Robert Chambers who is famous for collecting old Scottish Songs.

Added this week are...

The Wren
Babity Bowster
Jenny's Babee

You can get to this book at the foot of the page at:

http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/chambers_robert.htm

The Annals of Scottish Natural History

Have now added Volume 14 1905 issue.

You can get to this at http://www.electricscotland.com/nature/natural_history.htm

Caledonia Monthly Magazine

Have added additional articles from this magazine...

Phillip Kennedy The Smuggler
John Tamson's Man

You can get to these at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/newspapers/caledonia>

Christina's Column

Got in her column for 20th June 2013 which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/mckelvie/130620.htm>

Her other columns can be read at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/mckelvie/index.htm>

Tasmina's column

Got in her column for 17th June 2013, Rising number of homophobic, Islamophobic and racist attacks being carried out in Scotland.

You can read this weeks issue at <http://www.electricscotland.com/lifestyle/tasmina/130617.htm>

The rest of her columns can be read at <http://www.electricscotland.com/lifestyle/tasmina>

Scottish Stories for Young Readers

Now made a start on the book "Scottish Stories from the Treasure Chest" in which the fifth story is about "Isabel Fraser" which can be read at:

http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/stories/isabel_fraser.htm

You can get to the other stories in this section at <http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/stories/>

Andrew Lang, writer and journalist.

We are starting a profile on him and some of his works.

Have added more stories from his book on "A Batch of Golfing Papers"...

The Home of Golf
By R.Barclay
A Visit to Gofftown
By A. C. Morrison
Always One Hole Down

By W. Dalrymple
A Song of Life and Golf
Poems and Dictionary of Golf by Andrew Lang

You can get to this page and the stories at <http://www.electricscotland.com/poetry/lang/>

Thomas Dykes
(1850, Dundonald, Ayrshire - 1916, London, England) Journalist and Author

This week we added to his book "All Round Sport with Fish, Fur and Feather"...

My First Foursome
With the Rod on Loch Lomond
A Day's Rook Shooting
A Black Doo and a Black Owner

You can read these at http://www.electricscotland.com/history/other/dykes_thomas.htm

History of West Calder
Compiled from various sources of information by a Native (1885)

Now up to chapter 18 of this book. In Chapter 13 we learn of early savings banks...

The following gives a peep into the political economy of the Parish, in respect of two somewhat primitive Savings' Banks that existed in Dr Muckersy's time. The first one evidently founded by himself in his private boarding school.

Regarding this private boarding school, I may mention a little incident that recently occurred, connecting the past with the present.

The Rev. R. W. Mackersy, presently of Craiglockhart parish church, Colinton, when a few years ago in Paris, acting as preacher pro tem in the Church of Scotland's Mission there, met with a gentleman well advanced in life, who, in his youth, had been a pupil at the school in the Manse of West Calder, of which he expressed the liveliest recollections, and the extreme pleasure it gave him to meet in a foreign land with a grandson of his old master—the name Muckersy having been modernised to Mackersy).

Parish Bank.

"From the year 1800 the minister of this Parish began a Private Bank for the young gentlemen educated in his family. The objects of it were, to prevent the subscribers from spending profusely and improperly the sums which they might receive from their friends; to give them some idea of the uses of economy; and particularly to enable them to give, with judgment and effect, to any charitable demand which might occur to them as necessary. The interest was added half-yearly to their respective sums, and the balances paid to their parents or guardians when they left the academy. The whole sums thus collected, paid away, and remaining, amount to upwards of £150. When they agreed to give clothes, or shoes, or coals to the poor, the person holding the largest stock had the privilege of saying how much per cent, of his capital he chose to give, and the other young subscribers were ready enough to give their sums in the same proportion. .

You can read this chapter at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/westcalder/chapter13.htm>

You can read the other chapters at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/westcalder/index.htm>

Hound and Horn in Jedforrest
Being some experiences of a Scottish M.F.H. by T. Scott Anderson

Thought I'd take a wee break from doing places in Scotland so this book will show you how Fox Hunting was carried out in the old days.

You can read this book at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/hound/>

Scotticisms

'Scotticisms' are words and sentences that are more likely to be used by Scots in spoken rather than in their written language that now tends to be dominated by the Queen's English! Here we list some examples.

You can learn some of these phrases at <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/literat/scotticisms.htm>

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree

Got in the July 2013 Section 1 issue which you can read at <http://www.electricscotland.com/bnft>

Dr Peter Marshall

The creator of the Kirkin' Of The Tartan.

Thought you might find this of interest and you can read about him at:

http://www.electricscotland.com/tartans/marshall_peter.htm

And finally...

Fair Exchange

All eyes were on the radiant bride as her father escorted her down the aisle. They reached the altar and the waiting groom; the bride kissed her father and placed something in his hand. The guests in the front pews responded with ripples of laughter. Even the minister smiled broadly. As her father gave her away in marriage, the bride gave him back his credit card.

Timely

Seamus climbs to the top of Mt. Sinai to get close enough to talk to God. Looking up, he asks the Lord... 'God, what does a million years mean to you?' The Lord replies, 'A minute.' Seamus asks, 'And what does a million pounds mean to you?' The Lord replies, 'A penny.' Smith asks, 'Can I have a penny?' The Lord replies, 'In a minute.'

And that's it for now and hope you all have a great weekend

Alastair