

CAMPAIGN CONSULTANT'S REPORT JUNE 2014

What I am about to say may cost Animal Concern some of our supporters. I'm going to talk politics and ask our Scottish supporters to consider voting Yes in the independence referendum on 18th September. I must tell you that your Board of Directors are not unanimously behind me on this but they have agreed that I should put my case to you.

You may know from previous mailings that I have little time for Alex Salmond and his Ministers. On animal and environmental issues they are, at best, poorly educated and very badly advised. At worst they are a bloody liability and could cause the demise of several species of iconic animals in Scotland and the loss of important land and marine habitats.

However the referendum is not about the SNP or party politics. It is about whether or not Scotland should be run from London or Edinburgh. We deal with a maximum of 129 MSPs in Scotland but we have to lobby 650 MPs at Westminster. We also have a form (not the best form) of proportional representation in Scotland which has made it possible for independent and single issue candidates to be elected to the Parliament. We could, especially if like-minded organisations co-ordinate their lobbying, have a big influence on future Scottish Governments.

If Scots vote for independence I reckon Alex Salmond, like Winston Churchill after the Second World War, would be lucky to last another full term in Government. The Labour Party would be forced to establish a proper Scottish Labour Party instead of supplying New Labour in London with ballast at Westminster. The Lib Dems and Conservatives would also have to form Scottish Parties.

When I started with the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society one of our Directors was a Conservative Councillor in Glasgow and several other Tory politicians have impressed me with their genuine concern for animals.

Another thing that would come with independence would be Scottish control of vivisection laboratories north of the border. These are currently controlled, amid much secrecy, by the Home Office in London. Control from Edinburgh, under a new law we would try to help shape, could make these labs far more open and accountable.

Other issues I am sure we could tackle successfully in an independent Scotland governed by a coalition with a number of Green and Lib Dem MSPs, include sentient slaughter of animals, puppy farming, animal circuses, snares and the persecution of raptors (and anything else which just might eat a pheasant or grouse chick).

Once we are rid of the SNP stranglehold we might even be able to stop the Norwegian fish farming industry using Scotland to launder Chinese money while destroying our marine wildlife and environment in the process.

So I ask those of you who have a vote on 18th September not to think about party politics but to think about the much wider picture and the old phrase "small is beautiful". The electorate in a democratic, independent Scotland would have far more influence than they have in a Great Britain centred on London and the Home Counties.

John F. Robins,
Secretary to Animal Concern, June 2014