



The Referendum on Scotland's Future

Saturday 12th April

Queens Hotel, Dundee

“Women need to have their voices heard as part of the debate around Scotland's future. They are the cornerstone of communities – both socially and economically. The campaigns need to engage with women and listen to their concerns and emerging issues. This event has ensured that those attending are able to raise and seek answers to the issues which are important to them.”

Agnes Tolmie
Chair, SWC

www.scottishwomensconvention.org

Introduction

The SWC organised this event in recognition that women from different backgrounds throughout Scotland have significant questions and issues around the forthcoming referendum. Women want to know how this historic decision will impact on them, their families and communities as a whole.

This is the third in a series of conferences held by the SWC. Throughout the summer the organisation will visit Livingston, Aberdeen, Greenock, Inverness and Orkney to discuss the referendum with women in these areas. Specific events for young women will also be held in Inverness and Glasgow.

The events are chaired by Agnes Tolmie, Chair of the SWC. The organisation works with Yes Scotland and Better Together to source speakers and panel members.



Marsha Scott

Marsha is a feminist activist, researcher and bureaucrat who has done everything from emptying the bins in her local refuge to presenting on women's rights at the UN. Marsha moved to Scotland in 2000 to do a PHD at the University of Edinburgh. Her plan was to stay for 3 years, instead, she fell in love with the country and its people and now couldn't think of a better place to live. Like so many women, Marsha does at least as much unpaid work as paid work, including her role as Convener of Engender, Scotland's national feminist organisation, although she speaks today entirely from a personal perspective.

Marsha joined Women for Independence in January and is constantly inspired by the energy that women bring to making our world a kinder, more just, more peaceful place to live.

"I want to talk about my journey to Yes. I think this decision is a deeply personal one and as a good feminist brought up in the 60's I know to my core that the personal is the political. It is too important a decision to leave to the men who only want to talk about who's going to get the oil and who gets to score more points in the testosterone driven discussion about currency. I care about currency, and about oil, but I think this decision is about so many much more important things.

I moved to Scotland in 2000 to get a PhD at Edinburgh University and I fell in love. I fell in love with Scotland and with the people. With living in a country where the sisters welcomed me despite my funny accent.

I started volunteering and joined Engender. Through this I got involved with women's politics in the UK and sat on the Women's National Commission (WNC) Violence Against Women (VAW) Group. I also represented Scotland on the UK Joint Committee on Women and got the chance to go to the United Nations (UN) to talk about what women care about in Scotland.

However, whether I was in London at the WNC or the UN in Geneva, I felt as if I was in a bizarre universe where Scotland didn't exist. Every time I went to a meeting and spoke about what was happening in Scotland on rape and sexual assault, or on domestic abuse, most of the other people would talk about UK data and statistics which were really only about England and Wales. They did not recognise that the policies and structures are very different here in Scotland.

For example, a piece of work was carried out by some feminist researchers a few years ago called 'Map of Gaps', which looked at the postcode lottery of support and advocacy for those who have experienced VAW in the UK. All of the data gathered in the first draft was from institutions in education and criminal justice from England and Wales, with no information from Scotland. We were told it was too expensive for us to be included.



No matter how many times I explained that things are different here, information about the UK was always only about what was happening in England and Wales. This was doubly frustrating because the area in which I have the most expertise (gender and VAW), we were doing it better in Scotland.

We had the first gender based policy on VAW in Europe. People in Brussels knew that, but people in London didn't.

Many of those across the UK dealing with these issues on a day to day basis were not blind to Scotland because they had something against us, or because they thought that we couldn't do it better than them. It wasn't about personality, it was about structure. It was about the way politics happens, the way decisions are made and the way resources are distributed.

I would go to a WNC meeting in London, representing the whole of Scotland, and I had to fight to get them to pay my train fare. There might be one woman attending from Wales, hardly ever anyone from Northern Ireland and about 20 women from the London area.

When I suggested that wasn't the most equitable way of distributing resources and voices throughout the UK, I was classed as 'the whingeing jock'. This is something which sisters in Scottish politics have been accused of, and they have often said how tiring it is to have to keep saying 'things are different in Scotland'.

Through the referendum debate, I hear discussions starting about things I care about, like VAW, children, children's lives and people living in poverty. There has been a lot of talk about childcare. I'm trying to understand why we support 100% of the education and care needs of children aged 5-18, but those under 5 are somehow somebody else's to take care of. There has been some token investment in the 3-5 age group but it has always been a woman's responsibility to take care of the rest of it. Suddenly we seem to be talking about childcare in a different way and this is happening because for the first time, we are talking about structural changes and not bad politicians versus good politicians. We're talking about changes that allow us to create a Scotland that we want to live in and that reflects our values and judgment.

My vision is of a Scotland where 0% of children live in poverty. Where the pay gap has disappeared and women going into work in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) don't leave their field because of how toxic and un-family friendly it is. A Scotland where childcare is available for children aged 1-5 which is free, publicly provided, high quality and staffed by people who make a decent wage and are valued within their communities.

My vision is of a Scotland where we don't feed our national budget by selling arms to developing nations. The UK is the sixth biggest exporter of arms in the world. Not just large, nuclear arms, but the guns and bombs that are used to kill women and children all over the world. My vision is of Scotland where nuclear arms in our borders are a bad memory.

I want to talk about an economy for Scotland's people, which reflects women's paid and unpaid caring work. Where the national media don't control images and stories that tell what it means to be a boy and to be a girl. A Scotland which ends and regulates the toxic victim blaming reporting that embeds gender stereotyping in all of our lives. This underpins so much of the injustice that women and children experience in harassment and bullying. A Scotland where rape and sexual assault, female genital mutilation (FGM), gang violence and sectarianism are as high a priority as balancing the budget.

My vision is one where we are not the fourth most unequal country in the world. Where making our population and country equal is considered the place where we have to be soon, rather than a dream. This can all be possible in a democratic Scotland, where what we decide is set by our own talents and resources.

I have come to this debate with no party loyalties. It isn't about the Labour party, the SNP or the Tories and it's not about political point scoring for the parties.

This debate is about the type of Scotland that we choose to have. Do we think anyone else will make this Scotland for us? I can't imagine a future in which anyone else does. I can only hope we do it.

I finally decided that I would be voting Yes when I listened to a very eminent politician talk about what he thought were the reasons not to support independence. The picture was not a very pretty one. It got me thinking that by voting Yes the worst case scenario is that the boys continue to run things, and continue to worry about oil, score points and don't invest in things that will make Scotland a more equal country. Do we want to live in hope that we can change the status quo, or in fear that the status quo won't change?

I turned 60 this year. I have lived through the 1960's in the USA, I have demonstrated against Vietnam, campaigned for reproductive rights, marched to make poverty history and marched against the invasion of Iraq. I don't have much time left. So it's time to seize hope, acknowledge fears and make Scotland a nation of our choosing."

Kathy Wiles

Kathy was born in Aberdeen and grew up in Ayrshire. She arrived in Dundee in 1987 as a student and has lived in the area ever since. She started her career working in Whitfield and was involved with various community and volunteering projects, before going on to work in Higher Education for 13 years.

She worked at the Universities of Abertay, Newcastle and Teesside, first specialising as a teacher of information technology and then as a Director of learning and teaching. She left that life behind in 2010 to start her own small business, and also works for a charity in Arbroath as a sessional worker.

"My heart is breaking, because I feel that the country in which I was born, was educated and where I've worked all of my life doesn't seem to want me any more. The Yes campaign frequently say that the Better Together campaign is negative, but from my experience this referendum has been one of most negative things to happen in Scotland in my lifetime. Ordinary people have been turned against each other – neighbour against neighbour, family against family and yes, women against women.

I worry we are creating wounds that will take decades to heal, whatever the outcome in September. Am I exaggerating? The Yes Scotland endorsed 'Wings over Scotland' site would suggest otherwise. They ran a poll, asking if unionists are really anti-Scottish? One supporter tweeted back 'they are definitely something less than Scottish'. Does that reflect the future that we want for Scotland?



I know that Scottish women will not be taken in by tawdry gifts and headline grabbing offers when there is no substance underneath. For example, the proposed childcare policy cannot work unless we magically manufacture 40,000 economically inactive mothers. What jobs await these women given that cuts have meant we now have 80,000 in further education?

Scotland's women deserve better.

Who will best understand the struggle of Scottish women to raise their families to struggle to make ends meet? The wealthy oil workers in Aberdeen, the chattering political classes in Edinburgh or the millions of women across Britain who share that same struggle every day?

Social justice does not mean withholding free childcare or school meals, or grasping hold of the iniquities of the bedroom tax to score political points. Social justice is not delivered to the poor and needy by making the first act of an independent Scotland to deliver a massive tax cut for big business.

What will a Yes vote deliver for women? An opportunity for greater equality and a greater say? Or even any positive change at all? No. Simply the same old establishment of middle aged men in charge of the departments of justice, health, and finance. What kind of a different future is that for us?

We could have the best of both worlds if the Scottish Government would stop wasting precious time and resources and bend their minds to the things that count. We have a devolved NHS in Scotland – it is any worse than the NHS in England? Certainly not. Is it any better? Certainly not. Could it be? Of course it could, and it should. Education is also devolved. Is it any worse or any better than in England? Again, no, but it could and should be.

We have huge devolved powers but we are not taking golden opportunities to make the changes that Scotland wants. In some cases we are going backwards, particularly here in Dundee where the great strides made to reduce classroom sizes have been reversed. In fact, what do we have to show from a Scottish Government that controls 60% of the spending in Scotland? Free prescriptions for the rich. A council tax freeze that benefits the wealthy when services for the elderly and disabled are cut and class sizes grow.

Instead of progressive policies that alleviate poverty and suffering, we are seeing the same tax cuts for the middle classes and the wealthy that the Tories offer. We have even more devolved powers coming to Scotland. A new Scottish rate of income tax, stamp duty, land tax, and the aggregates levy are all to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

We're going to get more powers to increase capital investment and the Scottish Parliament will have the power to legislate over drugs, weapons, drink driving and the national speed limit.

We have heard almost nothing about these new powers and are yet to see a single offering from the SNP as to how these powers can help improve the lives of Scottish people now. Instead we hear what might be, what may happen if we vote yes. How can we be sure that the powers delivered through independence will be used to create a more equal society from 2016, when the Scottish Government will not take the time to tell us about how it can use the powers it already has.

Why are we kept waiting? Why are we being kept in the dark? Simply seeing these new powers being ignored, covered up even, and opportunities squandered for the sake of political dogma that I and the vast majority of Scots did not vote for at the last election.

So far in this referendum debate the women of Scotland have not been offered anything better than we have now, we have merely been offered a leap of faith. I want to know exactly what is on offer before we make such a monumental decision and exactly how that will affect our families and their future.

We know that being part of the UK gives us access to and the choice of healthcare services across the country. It gives us access to huge charitable funds like the National Lottery which funds so many organisations and has also helped bring the V&A museum to Dundee. It gives our universities access to research funds which have fuelled the growth of the booming academic sector in this city. Women know that being part of the UK spreads the cost of Scotland's green energy across 20 million households rather than placing the burden squarely on the shoulders of Scottish bill payers.

Scotland's women know that being part of the UK means Scotland gets back more in funding than it contributes. £1,100 more is spent per head on public services here compared to England. We also know that being part of the UK means we retain our opt-outs from the EU on charging a minimum 15% VAT on children's clothes and food. We retain choice over where we choose to live, work, trade and learn. Over 850,000 Scots exercise this choice and work and live in England, with no immigration forms to fill in. Being part of the UK broadens our horizons. Breaking away only limits them.

I am a self employed businesswoman and have access to a huge market with very little red tape. If we became independent, I would have to obtain import licences for the goods I sell and my market access would be cut by 90%. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) make up 99% of private sector in Scotland. We won't survive a yes vote and face a stark choice – either close our businesses or move south to access a bigger market. Do we want to lose the many small businesses that drive our economy?

I choose to be part of union that is future-proofed against declining and volatile oil resources. I choose to fight with my sisters across the rest of the UK for social justice for all, not a one off hand-out made up on a whim to win my vote. I choose to be positive about my country and how it can influence others, not to shirk responsibility to work for an equal society for all. There are many important battles to be fought in this country. The referendum should never be one of them. Please help me mend my broken heart. Be positive and vote No.”



Question and Answer Session

The main focus of this event was the ‘Question Time’ style Q&A session. This gave local women the opportunity to ask a panel of representatives from Yes Scotland and Better Together questions around a number of issues.

BETTER TOGETHER

Katrina Murray joined the Labour Party whilst at Heriot Watt University over 20 years ago, in the middle of an occupation of the library to protest at the introduction of student loans. It was a wee bit ironic that the occupation took place about 10 days before the end of year exams started.

After university she moved back to Fife and worked in the voluntary sector in Whitfield and then Falkirk. As a UNISON member, she became involved in her local branch which led onto being a member of the STUC General Council. She was President of the STUC in 2007.

Katrina currently lives in Glasgow and works in Lanarkshire in the Health Service. If life wasn’t busy enough, Katrina became a member of the Better Together Board of Directors in November 2013. When she does get some spare time, Katrina enjoys spinfit classes and messing about on Twitter.

YES SCOTLAND

Cat Boyd is a trade union activist and co-founder of the Radical Independence Campaign. She is also involved in Women for Independence and making the socialist and feminist case for a Yes vote.

“The most pressing decision regarding Independence must be the currency to be used in the event of a ‘yes’ vote. This must certainly be decided BEFORE the public are asked to vote. So what has been or will be decided?”

Kathy Wiles (KW)

The answer is that none of us know. What we do know from the UK Government is that it won't be the pound as things stand. A recent poll conducted across the rest of the UK asking about sharing currency showed that they are very much against a currency union. We really need to have serious discussions about that, especially as everyone's savings, mortgages and credit cards are in pounds. Everyone deserves to know how they're going to be paid and how their pensions are going to be paid. This is not a decision we can leave to negotiations. We need to know before we cast our votes.

Katrina Murray (KM)

We need to look at what the alternatives are. I can't understand why Yes are arguing for a currency union that centres around the economy of the South East of England. If one of the reasons for independence is that too much power is centred in that part of the country, then why leave all economic decisions to be taken there by a Government you can't vote for? An economic and political union is necessary to maintain an effective currency union.

Marsha Scott (MS)

The idea that a currency union would mean all financial and economic decisions would be made down south is an overstatement. There are dozens of examples of countries that have become independent who have made arrangements around currency with the country they have split from. There is a significant financial risk for the UK if there's no currency union. If anybody is going to make their Yes or No decision based on currency, you need to check out whose political interests are being served by the debate. It is certainly not those of women and children in Scotland.

Cat Boyd (CB)

It's important to clarify that it's not the position of the Yes campaign to have a currency union, it's the Scottish Government's position. It's also important to note that over the last 12 months over 300 organisations, independent of the official Yes campaign and the SNP have sprung up campaigning for a Yes vote all over Scotland.

I absolutely agree that currency needs to be discussed now. The question is usually framed around economic guarantees and stability, as if maintaining the union and being part of UK gives us economic stability. This is not the case. The UK is currently the least stable state in northern Europe.

When the story started to break that Scotland wouldn't be allowed to use the pound, it made me think. If the people of Scotland, in a democratic ballot, express the right to self determination, will a coalition of Labour and the Conservatives do everything in their power to damage this new nation and economy? I tend to think it's all a bit of a bluff. The city of London, which is based on finance, don't want to increase transaction costs across borders. Eventually I would like Scotland to have its own independent currency. All of the strongest economies in Scandinavia have their own currency and also a lower degree of economic inequality.

Agnes Tolmie (AT)

If I know some of the answers given by politicians at previous SWC referendum events, I will put some clarity round some of the comments made. Jackie Baillie MSP said at the last event that in the event of a Yes vote, in no way would Labour do anything but embrace that and work towards it.

Points from the Floor

"I feel that in this context it's necessary to mention that EU rules state that any new member country must adopt the Euro in due course."

"With the amount of trade done between Scotland and England, they are going to try and be as gentle as possible to keep trade flowing. We currently buy about £60 billion in goods from south of border. They make more out of us and will want to keep it as easy as possible for them."

"If we break away from the pound, what are we going to deal in? We need the pound and we need to be able to trade – united we stand, divided we fall."

If we are really looking for independence, why do we need the pound?"

***"If there were to be a successful Yes vote, in the subsequent negotiations, which of the much talked-about principles would each side be prepared to abandon in order to achieve their aims?
(e.g. allowing a nuclear presence to remain in Scotland as the price for a monetary union with the remainder of the UK.)"***

KW

I can't speak for people who will be doing the negotiations but I was very surprised with stance the SNP took with regards to NATO. They had always been dead set against membership and have formed quite a turnaround over last few years. If Scotland is part of NATO then we would have to agree to have other countries nuclear weapons stationed in our country if they want to.

In a hypothetical situation, we could ask the rest of the UK to remove Trident and then the Americans could come along and say we want to put our weapons there. As a member of NATO, Scotland would have to say yes. The only difference between, for example, American nuclear weapons and British ones is that we would lose 17,000 Scottish jobs.

KM

It's important to note that as of the 19th September, Better Together will no longer exist. We were formed purely for the referendum. We have not taken any decisions and will not take a united position as to what will happen after the vote. That is the role of political parties, not the organisations to do so. All parties involved in the organisation will have different views so we can't collectively say what negotiations will be.

MS

The suggestion that Scotland would compromise on Trident for a currency union was made by a UK politician and was never voiced by anyone in Scotland. There are a few things upon which there seems to be a bigger consensus than on the dislike of nuclear arms in our waters. There are never any guarantees as to what politicians will bargain for, but it is more likely that nuclear arms will still be in Scotland after a No vote than a Yes vote.



I don't trust politicians because they don't, for the most part, have women and children's interests at their heart. We need to start demanding that every committee and negotiating panel is made up of 50% women. We are nowhere near that in Parliament at the moment. I realise that we're not going to get any guarantees on either side because the women in this room are not the ones making the decisions. We can try and make sure that the decisions are better and start demanding that the people who make them look more like us.

CB

I believe in people power and I think when people work together to change things they can. I will do everything in my power to make sure that Trident is out of the Clyde as part of negotiations towards an independent Scotland.

An STUC report co-authored across civil society said that the removal of Trident would cost less than 1,800 jobs. The cost of the renewal of Trident is a cost on women. Money is siphoned off of education, social care and social security to pay for it. These policies, which have a disproportionate impact on women, are having money taken from them and put into defence. This contributes to the macho culture which says that we have to protect ourselves and have a nuclear arsenal.

AT

Last Saturday in Glasgow there was an anti-Trident demo. There were 7 speakers, all of whom were women, from all political parties and none. I was one of them representing the STUC. It is fair to say there was universal acceptance that if there is a Yes vote, Trident will go.

Agnes asked all of the women for a show of hands as to who wanted Trident out of Scottish waters. All of the women in the room raised their hands.

“What would the panel do to eradicate the need for women's groups? The thinking behind my question is that in an equal society, that treats everyone with respect, we should not still 'need' groups that aim to counteract the "isms". What would YOU do to bring about a more equal society?”

CB

Until there is radical social change, and a real restructuring of the way in which the economy works and is structured, there will always be a need for women's groups. The only way to get an equal society is to change the way that society itself is structured. This is a big process, as we can't just change society by tinkering about with tax rates. A Yes vote opens up some space for re-empowering people at the very bottom of society so they can start to challenge institutions.

MS

The phrase 'economically inactive', when being used to describe women, is almost as offensive to me as the term 'workless family/household'. We have an economic structure where somebody who cooks at home is seen as inactive, but someone who wears a big tall hat and does it on TV is seen as active. We work and live in an economy which is organised by people who say that when women take care of their children they're 'inactive'. There's something deeply wrong with that. The economy is set up so we have a large pool of workers in precarious employment, who are paid less than people of a different gender who do the same job and who are funnelled by our media and cultural institutions into low paid work.

If we want to change the need for women's organisations, we have to understand what it is about the structure that requires women to work harder, for more hours, get paid less and get valued less. A new country that doesn't need women's organisations or race organisations is one that's willing to grasp the idea of who really profits from our inequality. We require a redistribution of wealth, with real wages paid for real work. We need to fight for our working rights, and for a citizens basic income. It's about restructuring things so the rules are different and the only way that will happen is if we are part of the decision making processes.

KM

This is a global issue and is not just restricted to women in Scotland. Putting up a border and deciding it's a constitutional issue is a way of copping out of the debate. We need to be challenging stereotypes, such as the toys that children play with. For example, in a certain brand of play figures, there is not a single woman featured in any of the career vehicles. The ambulance driver and bus driver are men, and women are the passengers. Almost all of the figures are white. This only acts to enforce stereotypes which sadly still exist.

I don't think we are ever going to obliterate or should ever try and remove the need for women to organise together. It is of great value even if and when we do achieve an equal society. We benefit from being able to come together and share our experiences. We can't give up the fight as we will always have to keep a watch to make sure we don't go back the way.

KW

There are things that I completely believe in as an individual, such as ending the pay gap, equal representation, and a living wage. Legislation is the way to go. I don't believe in the organic growth of equality because how much longer are we going to have to wait? We have to start legislating and women have to work together. I don't think we ever will stop having women's groups. I want to see women at the fore and have guarantees they are going to be at the table in negotiations. We have seen too many men and not enough women in the independence debate.

Questioner

I started my engineering apprenticeship in 1986 and I am still with the same company but things overall haven't changed. I have a 15 year old daughter and I want things to change for her. I want my daughter not to have to fight because she's the token woman or that she's capable of being an engineer or a nurse or a stay at home mum. She should be able to do whatever she wants. We need to be a lot more equal.

AT

The STUC Women's Committee headed a campaign about 50/50 representation in the Scottish Parliament and engaged with women's groups and wider society to achieve this. We saw policies being made that were of benefit to women in communities that would not have happened had the Parliament been full of men. We need to hold onto that because we're 'slipping away' again.

Points from the Floor

"This is not just an equality issue but one of freedom. I don't want to live in a Scotland where groups can't come together to discuss issues."

“As women are often the poorest group in society, in an independent Scotland how would we be able to ensure that prosperity was shared by all?”

Likewise, if the Better Together campaign is successful, what would change to reverse a long-term economic policy pursued by all parties at Westminster, which has resulted in high levels of inequality?”

KW

I have not yet seen anything from the Yes campaign that says women will be more equal or taken more seriously. We do have a lot of powers coming to Scotland and it's the duty of all parties in Holyrood to make sure they are used to benefit women in Scotland and make it a more equal society. We have made some strides, but I would rather be fighting together as part of 30 million women across the UK than 2.7 million women in Scotland.

KM

How do we make sure post-referendum that we have a better deal for women? That very much becomes part of the manifestos for all political parties fighting the Westminster, Holyrood and Local Government elections over the next few years, as well as the European elections in May. We need to enshrine the living wage, which should become the new national minimum wage. Why should we be funding employers to pay their workers less than they can live on? We should also be looking at a maximum level of rent in the private sector.

Nobody who is working should have to be in-work poor. Everybody should be able to survive. People should not be in a position of having to turn down jobs because they can't get childcare that meets their needs or is more expensive than what they earn. We need a decent public transport system that allows people to get out of the areas they live in after 6pm. Without that, many face getting a taxi home from work or having no social life because of where they live. All of this can be achieved by working with Government at all levels. We need better politics and Government, not necessarily a different border.

MS

If the people of Scotland are appropriately involved, we can enshrine equality into our constitution in a way that legislation has never delivered. The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1975, over 40 years ago, and on its current trajectory it will be 2060 before we have full equal pay. Legislation itself has never ever delivered social change. We live in a country in which we talk a lot about social justice and equality. We have absolutely no guarantees, however, that our legislation and politicians will be held to the kinds of values we hope they will deliver. It's not the SNP's constitution, or the Government's constitution, it's our constitution. I hope that the first paragraph enshrines equality at the heart of the way the country is formed and should operate.

CB

How do we ensure prosperity happens? It has to be based around a redistribution of wealth from rich to poor. This is the only way to share out prosperity. I don't just mean wealth in monetary terms, but also societal wealth and the value that's placed on things. I agree that a living wage should be first and foremost. It should also be accompanied by a constitutional right to freely organise in the workplace and join a trade union without fear of discrimination and blacklisting. Since the 1970's, the gap between the lowest and highest earner has gone from approximately 12 times larger to approximately 70 times larger. That level of inequality reproduces itself in society. There are twenty countries in Europe that have a lower pay gap than us – why is that? It's something about the way our economy runs that creates and replicates inequality over generations.

“It has been suggested that the Red Cross organisation cannot work in a country which has not signed up to the Geneva Convention and this apparently could take some time for Scotland to do?”

KW

Nobody is arguing that Scotland won't sign up to the Geneva Convention as soon as possible, the same way as I believe we would become part of the EU as soon as it was possible. We are a socially aware country that is and would want to remain part of all international treaties. I am, however, worried about the charities who receive Big Lottery funding, such as the one that I work for. The rules clearly state that countries outside the UK cannot apply for and use their funds. Thousands of Scottish charities working with very vulnerable people are going to have to try and sort out the mess of where they will get their funding from. I worry for the people I support working for my charity.

KM

Whatever happens after the 18th September, we are all going to have to come together to make Scotland a better place. I don't think that we have that dramatically different an agenda on the panel overall. It's important to make sure that if it is a Yes vote that we work through it and the same if it's a No vote.

MS

This issue will have been dealt with in other countries that have become independent so I imagine we could also sort it out very quickly.

CB

This question highlights just one of the issues as to how people are worried about what will happen after the vote.

I know of a lot of people in England who are saying please vote Yes, because for so long we have been told there's no alternative and no other way to do things. I want Scotland to show that there is a way forward and that things can actually be done differently. Devolution has given us a lot of good things and has created a buffer for what's happening with the NHS down south. A Yes vote is a chance to change things completely. There are so many grassroots activists in the Yes campaign and there has been a groundswell in people who have not been involved in politics before who see a chance for change. The polls show that the more deprived an area you live in, the more likely you are to vote Yes. That's because those people have had nothing else to vote for.

Points from the Floor

"We also have to think about our brothers and sisters down south hoping for a No vote. The reality for them is that they will be left with a Tory Government and with that there are many issues. It's important to recognise that amongst us in the audience leaning towards a No vote, that doesn't mean accepting the status quo. We know there are huge inequalities in England and Wales and this shouldn't be about shutting borders, but continuing to fight with people from throughout the UK. In Dundee women are unemployed, underemployed, are on zero hours and assignment contracts. We have to take this on. I think that personally we have a stronger voice when unified."

"I'm a disabled woman and I'm really scared about what would happen if we don't vote Yes. Everything that's coming out of Westminster at the moment is hitting women and disabled women in particular. I would like to work but it's so difficult to find a job that can cater for my disabilities. This is the biggest chance we've got to change the way we live as a society. I don't care what the currency is, because when you haven't got a lot it doesn't matter if you're paid in potatoes or beans. You can't take away something that somebody doesn't have."

"How can we encourage more women to take a much more active part in politics including standing in the elections post referendum?"

KW

Women who are in politics should do all that they can to encourage others. If somebody says you should be in politics, listen to them, be brave, grasp the thistle and go for it. As well as encouragement, measures need to be put in place such as support, training, and education for women who want to get involved. For example, if a woman works two or three jobs, how much time does she really have for political activism? We have to find ways of supporting women into politics.

KM

It's so important to have the help of other women.

The current generation of politicians now have to do all they can to find the next generation. Find people who will turn up to meetings with you, support you to go for selection in seats you won't get elected in and most of all have a bit of fun while you're doing it.

MS

We need to stop talking about the underrepresentation of women and talking about the overrepresentation of men. Whenever there has been a real demand for women in politics, they have shown up. We need to also address structural barriers through quotas and other temporary special measures. We have to put to bed the myth that we have a merit system – if we did, we would have 50/50 representation.

CB

I never spoke out at a meeting until about 4 years ago when I went to a fringe event at a Trade Union conference. Tony Benn was on the panel and I really wanted to ask a question. The woman sitting next to me nudged me and told me to ask my question, so I did. It was that environment of support that made me do it and I try and do the same with all of the women I meet, particularly young women. I tell them how I write a speech and I'm open about being nervous and about not having all the answers. Sisters encouraging other sisters to get involved is the most powerful way.



CLOSING STATEMENTS

CAT BOYD, WOMEN FOR INDEPENDENCE

“Events on independence which focus on women are really important. We know that women are in the bracket of the most undecided, so it's important to have debates in a friendly and safe space.

I am involved with the Radical Independence Campaign (RIC) as well as Women for Independence. The RIC is a broad coalition which focuses on five ideals which include getting rid of Trident, social justice and women's liberation. We set RIC up because we didn't want a debate defined solely by nationality. I don't want this debate to be about Scotland versus England and I don't want a debate that's just about political parties. It needs to be defined by social justice.

The 18th September for me opens up a gap in a political system that for many people has represented misery, despair and expulsion from politics. A Yes vote for me would wedge that gap open even further. It would give a voice that could be expressed in Parliament.

It could provide the opportunity to legislate for an alternative to austerity and war, where society is run in interest of the majority.

At the RIC conference in November, which over 1,000 people from all over the world came to, there were three themes – failure, hope and change. For me those themes are quite significant, and they chart my journey to becoming a supporter of independence.

My political education began in 1997, aged 11. I have very clear memories of Tony Blair's Labour Government winning the election. My parents are both Labour party members and I remember my dad waking up the next morning to tell me what had happened. However, that Government came to represent something very different than many had hoped.



The people of my generation don't recognise the Labour Party as a return to social democracy, or the party which brought about the reversal of Thatcher's policies. We see an illegal war. A lot of the RIC founders came from the anti-war movement. We've seen the skies of Baghdad turn orange, and friends and family members sent off to fight an illegal war. We marched on the streets and no-one listened. An independent Scotland has the chance to shape the world stage and stand as a country that believes in peace, not war.

A country that challenges Britain's obsession with global military power. That macho culture is so embedded and the societal cost of war has a real impact on women's issues. What message does it send out when than a Government cares more about how much money it puts into housing it's nuclear weapons, compared to how much it spends on housing its own citizens. It's a question of priorities.

I think that Britain has failed economically, socially and politically. With regards to the economy, we have seen severe cuts to benefits whilst the wealth of the rich grows. We know that austerity disproportionately affects women. I know too many women who want to work but can't afford childcare because the costs are astronomical. The UK has a low wage economy that needs to be topped up either with tax credits or with credit cards and that has led to lot of the problems following the 2008 financial crisis.

When I say Britain has failed socially, I believe it has failed on the arguments that I care about. We have the second lowest pay amongst advanced economies, while at the same time we have the highest housing costs, rail fares and high levels of fuel poverty. We have the least happy children in the developed world and our elderly are the fourth poorest in the EU.

We have also failed politically. I recently looked at some YouGov polls that showed interesting results.

People in the UK are twelve to one against the privatisation of the NHS and 67% in favour of the Royal Mail coming into public ownership. 66% want our rail networks re-nationalised and 68% want the main energy companies brought under state control. Despite this, no party at Westminster reflects those views.

The official Yes campaign often talk about Scotland becoming free from the system of Westminster and that somehow if we vote yes we will be free from the shadow of the House of Commons. However it's the unelected aspects of the British system that worry me. Things such as ancestral rule, having an accident of birth give you a better chance in life, militarism, the Bank of England and NATO. It is those institutions that pull politics away from progressive public opinion. The way that the UK democratic system is structured pulls it beyond reform.

I don't think that the referendum itself will lead to change. We have a choice of two futures and for me one opens up a promising gap. It gives us the opportunity to shape a new type of politics, especially for women. I'm always the token woman speaker on a panel and I want more women's voices in this debate. I don't want to be patronised by a political system damaged by its lack of ordinary women's voices.

With independence, we can begin to shape the blueprint for politics that represents and involves women. I believe that any decision made in an independent Scotland, on any policy that disproportionately affects women, should have to pass first through a women's Parliament. Instead of the House of Lords we should have women balancing out the system, as elected delegates from local communities. This could be a constitutional right.

The heart of this debate is not about parties, it's about people. Women throughout Scotland have led the way in rent strikes, the battle for equal pay and many other issues. Women in Scotland will lead the way forward regardless of the outcome. In the event of a Yes vote, it is the greatest chance for us to have a system that recognises our voice in politics and doesn't shun it and put it back onto the sidelines."



KATRINA MURRAY, BETTER TOGETHER

"It has become clear that there's more that unites than divides all of us on the panel today. The only thing that really does is a belief that's actually all about a border.

I've spent the last fifteen years working within the public sector and I have become very aware that the minute anybody realises that something's not quite working, the people who make the decisions will change the structure. All that happens in those instances is that you get exactly the same way of working, but with different letterheads.

So what does saying No mean? A No vote is not a vote for no change. Nobody within Better Together has said that everything is great the way that it is. There are lots of things we want to change. I have spent my entire political and professional life campaigning to change society for the better, and once the outcome of the vote has been decided I will be back working with everyone trying to make a real change in society.



Each of the parties in Scotland has agreed that the 1999 devolution settlement doesn't meet the needs of Scotland today, and that there is a requirement for further devolution.

Labour have said that they would want further devolution, for example control over housing benefit in order to be able to get rid of the bedroom tax. They would also devolve large parts of welfare benefits to create a joined up approach to job creation and prosperity. This would ensure that long term unemployed and disabled people are not spending time in a place where they're absolutely stuck and have no hope or options. The Liberal Democrats have also always favoured federalisation so it's wrong to say that there would be no change to benefits if we vote no.

We have to be clear what all of this is about. It's about power, priorities and politics, not structure. Dundee had one of the most progressive childcare strategies in Scotland in the 1990s. Services were funded by Dundee City Council and the Westminster Government through the Scottish office. We had a strategy that met the needs of parents and was free to access. We do not have to wait for Scotland to become independent for things like this to be achieved.

Whatever happens, the Scottish Parliament will still exist, with enhanced powers, along with Westminster. I really believe that by voting no we have the best of both worlds. We have the power to determine our own priorities within the Scottish Parliament and in Local Government. It is important to bear in mind the importance of Local Government in local areas.

The oil fund, which we have heard a lot about, is volatile at it's best. Planning an economy that is so in profit one year and so in deficit the next would have a real and detrimental impact on everyday living. I would rather have the broad-based approach to the economy that being part of the UK can give us.

An example of great Governmental support is the Department for International Development (DfID), which is based in East Kilbride. They are doing vital work, particularly with regards to tackling VAW on a global basis. We should be looking at and celebrating DfID's achievements. Scots in East Kilbride are providing a service based on a level of funding that we wouldn't get as an independent country.

I have been fortunate enough through my trade union activities to be able to go to many countries in the world. I visited Colombia in the summer, which is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a trade unionist. Many of the people I visited are under active death threats. While all of this is happening, Colombia's constitution has one of the strongest statements on human rights in the world. What's written on a piece of paper is all well and good, but it will not work unless you have the political will to support it. We need to change politics. Changing the country is not necessarily the answer."



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