

# The Dis-United Kingdom: Saving Scotland from Europe

by James McConalogue

THERE IS NO CLEARER CASE of the European Union destroying a sovereign nation than the decade of devolutionary malpractice which the EU has upheld for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales – a devolved separatism which may very well lead to the deconstruction of the United Kingdom.

On 13 January, Gordon Brown declared in *The Daily Telegraph* that after three centuries of forging a united parliament for Scotland and England, it is again time to defend the case for unionism.<sup>1</sup> The most startling feature of Gordon Brown's recent defence of a 'United' Kingdom is his casual admittance that European multiculturalism might be a major cause in the destruction of national unity. Since 1997, the New Labour government has envisaged a policy of multiculturalism for most religious and political groups – consistent with EU-led advice and statutes – in creating a sense of national unity. Now, in what seems to be a Thatcherite turn, Gordon Brown seems to hold the absolutely opposing view that the UK is pursuing a "dangerous drift" toward separatist divisions, in which "multiculturalism became an excuse for justifying separateness."

At this point in time, it is also common knowledge that the divided Gordon Brown – who sits for a Scottish seat – is hoping to be the next British Prime Minister. It is intrinsic to Brown's political predicament that he discusses his position on unionism. As one commentator reported on Brown's situation: "He has little or no say over the domestic policy in his own constituency – which is decided in the devolved Edinburgh Parliament – yet can force laws through Westminster that affect only English voters to whom he is not directly accountable."<sup>2</sup> This tragic sense of Westminster anarchistic (mis)representation is largely characteristic of New Labour policy since the party came to power – it has devolved power to the regions, while federalising and surrendering powers and responsibility for the greater good of the European Union. On that count, Brown has no real excuse for suddenly defending a case for unionism. It is simply not his place. It seems that defending unionism under a Labour government is implausible if Brown is to continue to

promote the European tendency toward multicultural separatism, coupled with overly-devolved and interventionist government, especially since Mr Brown himself now declares that multicultural intervention underlies the separatism destroying the United Kingdom.

There is an alleged public consensus in which there seems to have been a drift in the Anglo-Scot union, after two major publicised polls – of November 2006<sup>3</sup> and January 2007<sup>4</sup> – suggested that many English and Scottish voters would like to see their respective territories split. However, the situation is truly complex and – as the recent YouGov/*Sunday Times* poll showed – when Scots were asked 'Do you think the union between Scotland and England is or is not worth maintaining?', 53 per cent of respondents believed that the union was worth maintaining, 33 per cent of respondents suggested it was not worth maintaining, while 13 per cent did not know.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, a poll from BBC's *Newsnight* revealed that only 32 per cent will offer support for independence, while 56 per cent will fully back the union.<sup>6</sup> That, in effect, means that the majority hold that the union of Scotland and England is worth preserving.

The news on the supposed unpopularity of the union – whether we choose to believe it or not – comes at a time when the Scottish National Party (SNP) looks set to become the single biggest political party in Scotland. The SNP may well be born by Scotland but its modern lifeblood and organs are essentially a creation of European representation. The SNP has been so empowered by Europe that in January its Holyrood leader vehemently attacked Whitehall departments for intervening in the Scottish Executive's lifeline to the EU.<sup>7</sup> The SNP is so passionately Europhilic, it even promises a consideration of the euro currency, above and beyond the pound.

The SNP have increased in popularity but precisely what it can do with this popularity in terms of constitutional independence remains to be seen. It seems doomed to amount to nothing. The YouGov/*Sunday Times* poll showed that of the 129 seats in the Scottish Parliament, the SNP may be due to take 44, Labour 43, Lib Dems 18, and

smaller parties/independents due to take the 6 remaining seats.<sup>8</sup> One of the SNP's foremost policies is to hold a referendum on the independence of Scotland from Westminster power. Thus, the Anglo-Scot union has been immediately thrown into question. It seems important to remember in this development that regardless of whether the Scottish Executive wishes for independence, the legal and constitutional power over the Edinburgh policy ultimately rests with Westminster. Of course, Scottish nationalists do not like this law recited to them in their own Executive but it is the deepest facet of Anglo-Scot governance in both Westminster and Holyrood that this still remains the case.

What about the calculations for independence? And do they add up? Every economic outlook for Scotland's independence is bleak. Against the drastically simplified assertion of the pro-independence camp that 'we Scots can live off oil', there is not a chance that it actually could. Even if one took account of oil revenues, the extensive welfarist approach to public spending boasted by Scotland would only be sustainable if the region continued to rely on the rest of Britain's taxes. Unfortunate for Scotland, then, that a demand for territorial independence also brings with it the responsibility of financial independence. Who knows? Perhaps the EU will subsidise Scotland's degenerative pathway into socialist statism because that is precisely what the EU has done with its other dependants.

The Labour government has been reduced to panic. New Labour launched an instant campaign to save their main Scottish seats, anxious that they may be lost to the SNP in the Holyrood elections, to be held in May. Although the SNP are not in the position to offer independence during the election in Scotland, the Labour government stepped up their unionist campaign in Scotland considerably, in an attempt to beat the SNP.<sup>9</sup> To its own detriment, New Labour has promised an extensive devolutionary package for the regions but now wishes to recapture the devolved power. From Westminster, the Labour government were quick to despatch the Trade and Industry Secretary, Alistair Darling, to Edinburgh, in

order to oppose the SNP, informing them that there would be no “*quickie divorce*.”<sup>10</sup> Against its previous package of devolving the Union and federalising Westminster powers in Europe, with much regret, it now promises that the party has always been a solid unionist party. It cannot be believed, since a Europhilic, mass-devolutionist approach to unionism is a contradiction in terms.

The best-placed candidate for defending a proper and real sense of unionism is the Conservative Party. The classical line of British conservatism – particularly consistent with Thatcherite practice and policy – is that the union should always remain. In contrast to the New Labour line, the Conservative Party has no such history of turning on previous unionist policies. Historically, it has offered a unionist package of policies defending the unity of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Labour government has done the opposite. The Conservatives have no history of offering (mis)representation, unaffordable welfare and diffused res-

ponsibility within the superstructures of the EU. In contrast, the Labour government has always been committed to the gradual surrender of national parliamentary sovereignty and of its devolved executive bodies to the EU. This places the Conservatives on a Eurorealist platform, from which they are able to unify the devolved Executives and preserve the threatened union of England and Scotland. As national constitutionalists, the Conservatives are able to defend a position of a united nation opposed to the continued surrender of power to both localised and devolved Executives and the unelected European powers above it. No other party has a greater access to this legitimate Eurorealist perspective than the Conservative Party.

- 1 Gordon Brown. ‘We need a United Kingdom’ *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 January 2007.
- 2 Philip Johnston. ‘Brown’s Manifesto for Britishness’ *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 January 2007.
- 3 ICM/*The Scotsman* poll on Scottish independence, November 2006: <http://www.icmresearch.co.uk/reviews/2006/Scotsman%20-%20Nov/scotsman-nov-2006.asp>

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- 4 See the ICM/*Daily Mail* January 2007 poll results on Scottish independence. Benedict Brogan. ‘England and Scotland: a disunited kingdom’ *The Daily Mail*, 11 January 2007.
- 5 YouGov/*Sunday Times* January poll: <http://www.yougov.com/archives/pdf/STI070101001.pdf>
- 6 BBC *Newsnight* poll. 16 January, 2007.
- 7 Tom Gordon. ‘EU row: McConnell urged to speak out’ *The Herald*, 23 January 2007.
- 8 YouGov/*Sunday Times* January poll: <http://www.yougov.com/archives/pdf/STI070101001.pdf>
- 9 Angus McLeod. ‘Labour plans Scots blitz to save Union’ *The Times*, 16 January 2007.
- 10 *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 January 2007.

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