

# Gordon Craigie



*An independent mind...*

## *This month, I'm scunnered...*

IS IT JUST ME, or is it often the case that only a word or description from our native language can accurately summarise the range of emotions we're experiencing? As I think about where we are today politically, with a Scottish government seemingly unable to enact the latest in a series of independence referendum mandates stretching back 12 long years, against a Westminster backdrop of incompetence, sleaze, corruption and a complete disregard for democracy, decency and compassion, how do I describe what I'm feeling on a daily basis? Disgusted... disillusioned... despondent... weary... well, aye, all of those, but individually they don't go far enough. I'm jist scunnered!

The *Scottish National Dictionary* definition of scunnered includes:

- a feeling of aversion, disgust or loathing, to feel nauseated
- bored, uninterested or antipathetic
- repugnance, distaste, dislike, a loss of interest or enthusiasm

But, since it's a word I've been familiar with for as long as I can remember, it means all that and so much more! So, without getting too involved in the precision of linguistic semantics, I'm entirely confident that iScot readers will understand exactly what I mean when I say – again! – that I'm jist scunnered!

After almost 13 years of Tory rule at Westminster, aided and abetted by right-wing fanatics like Farage exhorting them to "take back control", the British Establishment

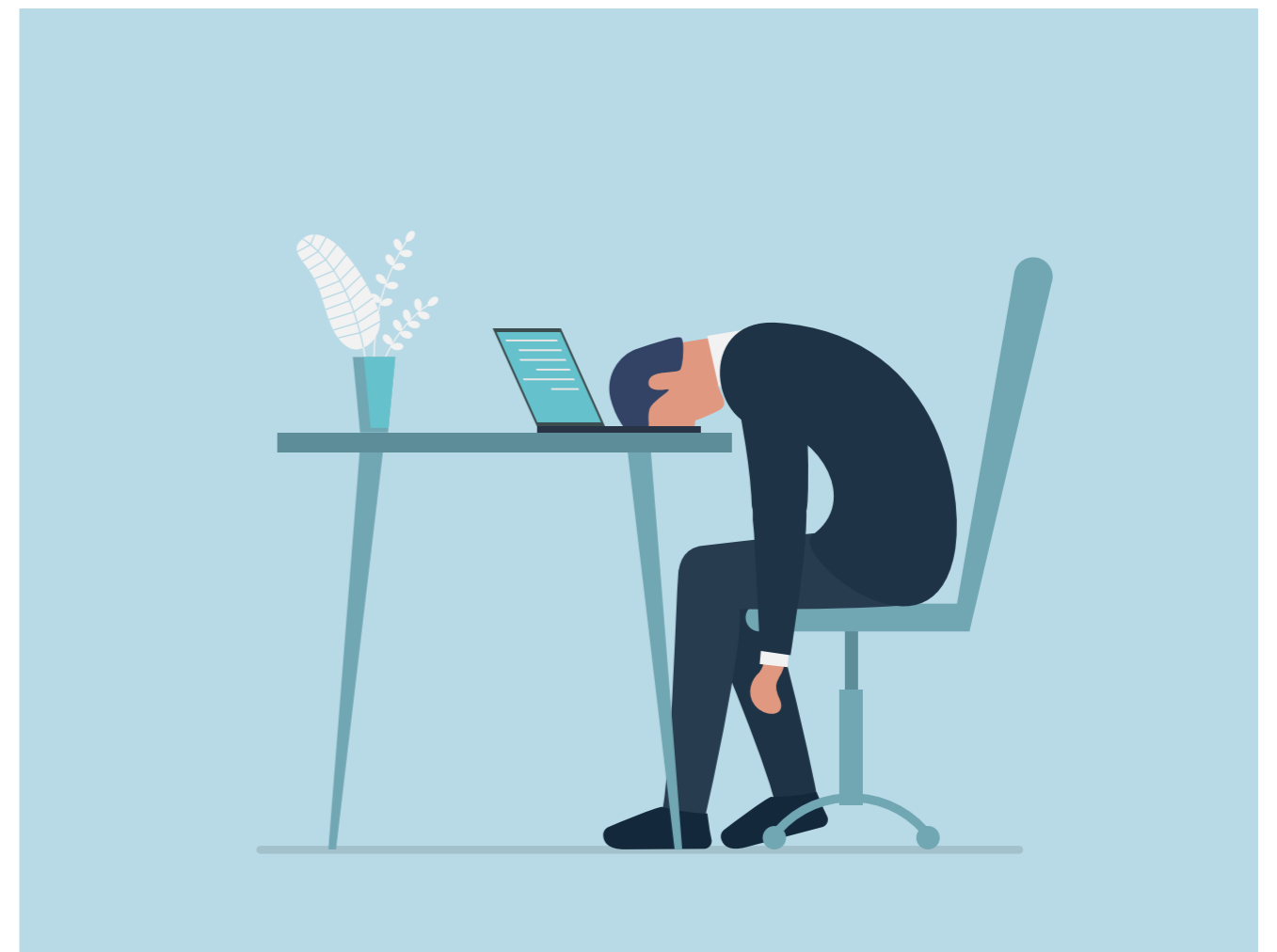
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has been enabled and emboldened to levels probably not this obvious since the 1960s. As we're all only too aware, they don't even bother to hide it anymore! A procession of cosplay Prime Ministers – all from the same Oxford mould – has seen any semblance of propriety disappear from public life as they each made up the rules as they went along with the only apparent underlying philosophy being to make sure that they and theirs were immune from the havoc created by their ill-thought-out decisions and actions:

- An advisory, and unnecessary, Brexit referendum which then suddenly became the will of the people... except for voters in Scotland!
- A completely shambolic period of Brexit negotiations, followed by an inability to reach any kind of reasonable agreement, resulting in a self-destructive withdrawal forced through by the charlatan Johnson.
- Criminal negligence, incompetence, corruption and criminality during the Covid pandemic... again, except for voters in Scotland!
- The eventual, long overdue, ousting of the worst-ever Prime Minister only to be replaced by an even worse one, for a few weeks anyway!
- The appointment of a billionaire puppet who only a few weeks earlier was overlooked by his party's membership in favour of the aforementioned clueless specimen.

That's not even remotely close to an exhaustive list, but it'll suffice for this rant!

In fact, the only consistent theme for these incompetents running through this period has been their total disregard for Scotland and the people of Scotland. Apart from Cameron graciously agreeing to the 2014 referendum – only because he never for one second considered that it was even remotely possible to lose (just one of his many misjudgements!) – they've consistently told us either "now is not the time" or patronised us with something along the lines of "well, what the people of Scotland really want is..." despite us telling them very clearly at each Scottish and UK election what we really, really want! And don't expect anything different to happen should



the other lot manage to blunder their way into Downing Street as Starmer has already adopted the same Tory playbook in relation to Scotland – just as he seems to have adopted every other Tory policy!

And now here we are, heading into 2023, the year in which we were promised a "no ifs, no buts" referendum in October, with it looking highly unlikely that that promise will be fulfilled. We all know bits of the

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arguments by now, the for/against arguments of a referendum versus a Holyrood or Westminster plebiscite, and we're also aware of other initiatives involving the Claim of Right, the Declaration of Independence, the invalidation of the Treaty of Union, but... where is all this leading?

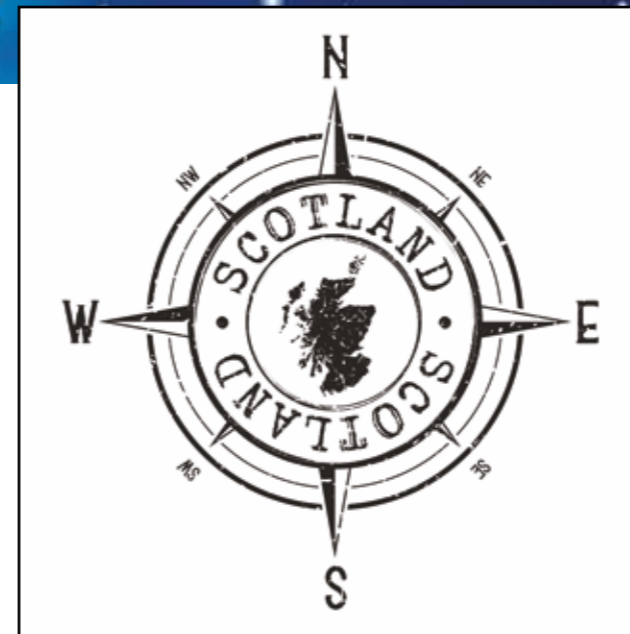
I'm absolutely not an expert on any or all of the above but, as someone who has taken more of an interest than most in the cause of independence since I was at school, I often think that if I'm a wee bit confused about where we're going then how on earth is the so-called man or woman in the street, who only thinks about politics when they absolutely have to, meant to make sense of it all? I so badly want to live in a normal country, where we discuss and argue about normal politics – health, education, welfare, climate, international relations – without constantly being hamstrung by the constitutional divide. And what is that divide? Is it close to 50:50 as is constantly chuntered out in the media? I just don't believe that, I really don't, and I suspect the British Government doesn't either – why else are they so reluctant to release the "private" polling figures that Tommy Sheppard has been pursuing through the Freedom of Information Act and, by the way, how exactly are they able to ignore legal directives to release the figures? This is the British Establishment at their best! I reckon the true figure is way above the 60% mark and that the polling companies are either deliberately skewing their polls or, probably more likely, just not as accurate as they used to be. And how valuable is a poll anyway, no matter how well designed or administered, in the absence of a definite question attached to a definite date?

So, I'm scunnered by the British political system and the resurgence of the British Establishment, and don't even get me started on the monarchy! I'm scunnered by the glacial sense of urgency being demonstrated by the Scottish Government and the SNP in addressing our democratic deficit. But I'm also scunnered by the increasingly

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toxic nature of discourse between the different factions of the independence movement. I completely fail to see how some people think that continually denigrating people and organisations that share a common ultimate goal is helpful in achieving that goal. Personal and vitriolic attacks that spiral quickly out of control do nothing for our cause.

I have no time whatsoever for those who profess to want independence but only if it's guaranteed to fit with their personal worldview. There are so many things that we can all ultimately have differing points of view on, and they can all be debated, discussed, and decided upon once the goal of independence is achieved, as they would be in any normal country. Indeed, on the first day of an independent Scotland absolutely nothing will change... except for the ability to change absolutely everything! As in 2014 with the *Scotland's Future* white paper, many people don't appear to like the SNP vision of an independent Scotland as espoused in the *Sustainable Growth Commission* report or the slowly emerging *Building a New Scotland* papers. But if these papers had never been produced then the SNP and/or Scottish Government would stand accused of having no plan for after independence, and that's before stating the obvious that... in the first election held in an independent Scotland the electorate will be choosing from a new list of parties – we know that the three current Unionist parties won't be eligible as they aren't even registered in Scotland!



– each of whom will have to present a manifesto which is free from Westminster influence or control and is totally focussed on their proposals for the future of Scotland. At which point everything is up for grabs – EU or EFTA? Monarchy or Republic? Currency? – all the things that normal countries discuss, debate, and decide on every day of the week.

I'm also scunnered by the polarisation that has happened over the last few years with respect to "supporters" of Nicola Sturgeon and Alex Salmond where, on social media at least, it seems almost impossible to find a middle ground. And yet my personal experience is that many people share my view that they are both excellent politicians – albeit with different approaches in many respects – who are infinitely more capable than their political opponents and who continue to have real relevance in the independence debate. To shut either out on spurious grounds is mind-blowingly stupid and does the independence cause no favours at all.

I'm just so scunnered by the *Groundhog Day* nature of all of this pointless whataboutery, and by politicians who should know better telling us what we should be thinking. Just one example – being lectured at by one of our own MPs, patronisingly telling us that we shouldn't perceive the independence cause as a "liberation struggle" and that "Scotland is not a colony and our people are not

oppressed". Well, where to begin with that one! Thankfully, I don't have to expand on that too much as the whole idea of Scotland as a colony is covered in great depth elsewhere by one of this month's contributors. But a wise friend recently gave me what I think is the perfect riposte to that "not a colony" observation, and that is to ask what language we're having this conversation in... If Scotland wasn't a colony then we'd be permanently communicating in one of our native languages and not in the language of our occupiers post-1746. Scunnered!

And yet, despite my current state of scunneration, I'm still optimistic that we're heading in the right direction... albeit a wee bittie too slowly for my liking. Another of my wise friend's sayings in relation to independence is that "the river's only flowing in one direction" and, when you look at the demographics, he's right. That's not to imply that we should just wait around for the younger generations to be in the electoral majority but rather that the focus created by a date and an event, whatever shape that takes, is all that's required to get the momentum building again. Our esteemed *iScot* Editor's analogy is that we're all following the same star – I would add that the main thing we have, that our opponents don't, is that we have a cause. My hope is that our fellow travellers can put aside their differences, real or perceived, and be kind to one another as we move towards our goal. Ignore the naysayers and the egotists, (and the bams!), be wary of false friends – remember, the sun never sets on the British Empire because God doesn't trust the Brits in the dark! – and keep the heid. It's comin yet for a' that... I'm still scunnered mind!

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