

# Gordon Craigie



*An independent mind...*

## ***This month, I'm thinking about how Scotland's reality mirrors fiction...***

**A**FTER ALL THE EXCITEMENT – bittersweet though it was after Alex Salmond's untimely passing – of producing issue 100 of your award-winning *iScot Magazine*, in the final high-level publication planning meeting of 2024 (aka a series of phone calls and texts between *iScot* Towers in Stirling and the branch office in Dundee!) our glorious leader Ken floated the idea of using "Route 101" as the theme for issue 101. My first thought was, *why does he want to celebrate the bus I used to take from Carnoustie to Dundee back in the day, closely followed by, or maybe he's thinking of satirising the 101st cover of The National promising an independence referendum next week!* But no, his vision was actually about signalling the route to independence, though I'm still unclear on the significance of his "101"...



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Anyway, mention of "101" tends to make me think of Room 101 and the uncannily accurate predictions of George Orwell in his classic novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – he may have got the year wrong, but we all appear to be living in the scenario he described a mere 40 years later! I first read *Nineteen Eighty-Four* when I was at school and, alongside *Animal Farm*, I would still consider them to be among the best things I have ever read. More recently I thought I should read some of Orwell's other work but, having laboured through both *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *Homage to Catalonia*, decided that I should quit while I was behind! Still, two absolute classics is not too shabby an output. But, I digress – probably not for the last time! – so let's get back to Room 101 and to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in general...

*Everyone knows what is in Room 101*

Apparently, in the book, Orwell named Room 101 after a conference room at the BBC – even that seems appropriate! – where he had previously worked as a producer. However, at the State Broadcaster he only had to suffer through boring meetings whereas in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the room was used as an actual torture chamber! Citizens who did not conform to the wishes of the totalitarian state were routinely imprisoned and then "re-educated", and Room 101 was where this process of re-education was carried out in order for the recalcitrant citizen to be reintegrated into society.

*There are three stages in your reintegration ... There is learning, there is understanding, and there is acceptance...*

In my humble opinion, the British State has used Room 101 tactics in Scotland since the Union in 1707. They have attempted to re-educate us about our language, our speech, our clothing, even our history, in order to eradicate the very notion of Scotland as a nation and force us to accept our place as an inferior region of Greater England, or North Britain – the fact that they really tried to force that "North Britain" keich on us is indisputable! And it is not "blood and soil nationalism" or



"anti-English" racism to point this out. It is well documented that English placeholders were put into positions of influence and prominence in Scotland, particularly after 1746, to reinforce the idea that *our* language and culture had to conform to *their* superior norms – not to mention the extensive network of military encampments all over Scotland to ensure that the "natives" knew who their imperial masters were. The "parcel o rogues", and their heirs and descendants, continued to adopt and promote "Britishness" as this benefited them personally, while ordinary Scots were being forced out of their homes and/or punished for trying to maintain their culture and traditions. This practice of anglicisation undoubtedly continues and in recent years some of this activity has even accelerated – witness the demographics of the Universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews, as only one example – possibly because we are considered to have become a wee bit too dangerously uppity after 2014. Remember, a majority of Scottish-born voters voted Yes in 2014...

But that's where we come in folks, it falls on all of us to learn our real history, our real culture, and to support and promote our real languages at every opportunity – we must promote all of these positively wherever and however we can. That's what *iScot Magazine* has been about since issue 1 and continues to be in issue 101 and beyond. Once people understand the issues, properly, then they move quickly to accepting that the restoration of our independence is the answer to every single issue that causes problems in today's Scotland, whether that's energy or food security, the SNHS, education, welfare, pensions, or our overall standard of living.

Anyway, before this rant runs away with itself – what do you mean it already has? – let's get back to Orwell's interpretation of re-education. The underlying premise of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is that the government of Oceania is administered by four ministries – Truth, Peace, Love, and Plenty – and the Ministry of Truth is responsible for, well, the truth! Or the truth as the government sees it anyway, as it is actually the ministry of propaganda, tasked with "correcting" or rewriting history to reflect the government's own truth. This is scarily realistic given events in our recent memories. We keep hearing that we live in a post-truth world, which is pretty much an admission that they know that we know that they know they're lying to us, and yet, somehow, we just carry on as if everything's fine. No weapons of mass destruction? Nothing to see here, move along! £350 million every week to the EU? Let's take back control and invest that in the NHS! The Scotland Bill will deliver one of the most powerful devolved parliaments in the world... aye, right!

After watching the car crash that has been the first six months of this new Labour government in Westminster duping us in real time, and totalling up the number of downright lies, broken promises, misrepresentations of reality, and the complete political



incompetence of those elected to the major offices of government, perhaps the penny has begun to finally drop with our fellow citizens in Scotland given the most recent polling predictions for both Holyrood and Westminster. Not in England however, as their obsession with Farage and his ilk seems to grow unabated – for me, and I'm certain for you, this is completely unfathomable, yet

it's happening. Remember too that Starmer's 174-seat majority was achieved with only 34% of the votes cast – on a 60% overall turnout, that means that a mere 20% of eligible UK voters supported Labour... 20%! This shows the absolute unfairness of the first-past-the-post system, but the Labour party are not going to address that anytime soon – they've been promising to abolish the House of Lords for over 100 years! – nor will the Tories, or Farage's limited company, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* sets out a possible (probable?) explanation:

*We keep hearing that we live in a post-truth world, which is pretty much an admission that they know that we know that they know they're lying to us, and yet, somehow, we just carry on as if everything's fine*

*The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness: only power, pure power. What pure power means you will understand presently. We are different from all the oligarchies of the past, in that we know what we are doing. All the others, even those who resembled ourselves, were cowards and hypocrites. The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognize their own motives.*

*They pretended, perhaps they even believed, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and that just round the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal. We are not like that. We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means, it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship.*

*The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power. Now do you begin to understand me?*

Even Bob Geldof knew!







predictions of a dystopian future – quite apart from the lying and rewriting of history already referred to – are eerily prescient, particularly considering he wrote the book in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Who could've imagined at that time that a genuine version of Big Brother – the ruler of Oceania, not the naff reality TV show! – would emerge, with the state constantly monitoring our every movement. Today, the

UK has around seven million CCTV cameras in operation – the highest number in Europe – and, wherever we go, “Big Brother” is, literally, watching us. Our road movements and, increasingly, parking activities too, are monitored by ANPR cameras and mobile versions of these roam our streets randomly to identify – and clamp! – cars that are not legally taxed and insured. Now, for many of these activities we may think that's a good thing, but we can also easily see how it can be used maliciously... since then UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak equated Scottish independence activists to terrorists not so long ago, it makes you think? Plans have also been floated to enable the British State to monitor our bank accounts in order to, allegedly, cut out fraud and money laundering, yet they appear to have no plans, or desire, to recoup the fraudulently obtained proceeds of assorted high heid yins during, for example, the pandemic even though no such monitoring of bank accounts would be necessary to prove their guilt! In *Animal Farm*, Orwell's central theme is that *all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others*, and once again he's bang on the money!

The importance of ensuring a pro-independence majority in Holyrood next year has taken on ever greater significance given everything else that is happening around us. *Our* political parties have to get their act together without any delay. At *iScot Magazine*, we keep promoting the idea of Scotland United, but if that is somehow unpalatable to the SNP because “we didnae think o it first” then call it whatever you like but just get around the table and agree to put country first. Agree to work together and agree a strategy that will lead to independence in the shortest possible timescale.

And that message, that heartfelt plea, goes to all of the pro-independence parties – Alba, ISP, Scottish Greens, SNP, SSP – along with a similarly heartfelt plea for all of those parties to engage with, take direction and inspiration from, and agree to promote and enact policy ideas and political strategies and tactics from the likes of Salvo, Liberation, Common Weal, the Scottish Currency Group, and any other organisation that is committed to the restoration of Scotland as an independent nation without being restricted by tribal politics. The “we don't like it because we didn't think of it” approach must be binned, and an open-mindedness to good ideas irrespective of where they come from has to be adopted by all of our pro-independence parties. If not, history will not judge them kindly, nor will Scotland.

*Many of Orwell's other predictions of a dystopian future – quite apart from the lying and rewriting of history already referred to – are eerily prescient, particularly considering he wrote the book in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War*

And there we have it! What we know to be a fictional work has instead been increasingly used as a playbook by Blair, Brown, Cameron, May, Johnson, Truss, Sunak, and now Starmer – and probably most of their predecessors too, even if they were a bit more subtle and restrained about it. That they increasingly don't even feel the need to hide it from us any more is truly, truly frightening.

Given how I've adapted an interpretation of his book to our situation in Scotland, it seems ironic that Orwell actually wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in our country, on Jura, and equally ironic that his alternative title for the book was *The Last Man in Europe!* Many of Orwell's other

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