

# Gordon Craigie



*An independent mind...*

## ***This month, I'm inspired by someone else's words...***

**S**OMETIMES it's really difficult to choose a topic for this column, usually because there's far too many possibilities! This month was going to be no different until I heard Kenny MacAskill speaking after the All Under One Banner march in Glasgow on 4 May. Not for the first time, I was transfixed by his oratorical skill – his fluency, and his depth of knowledge and command of facts and figures, all delivered without reference to notes, without any hesitation or stumbling, and with passion and conviction. He managed to concisely make a particular case for independence based around the ludicrous way that Scotland is actually being penalised for having the temerity to possess oil, gas, and renewable energy in our territorial waters! I've heard Kenny on these topics before, and he is always a compelling speaker, but here he boils his argument down to just over 7 minutes of right-on-the-money analysis...



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*Good afternoon. Can I start by thanking each and every one of you for turning up and showing your solidarity today. Not just today but on other demonstrations that have been taking place. Because there was a reason and an excuse for stopping marching during Covid, but we're in turbulent times and we need to be out, and we need to be visible. And yet there's been demotivation and demoralisation within our movement – that is wrong, and it's misplaced, because the time for independence is now – it has never been more needed.*

*We were lied to in 2014. We are now paying a price that even those of us who knew that there would be a price to be paid if we lost, never envisaged it would be as grim as this. But no issue makes the case for independence more than the energy situation. Those of us here believe in independence and believe that Scotland should be a nation state irrespective, other people require to be persuaded, but the one thing that makes the case is the situation that you have an energy-rich country, and you have a people who are in fuel poverty. That makes the case for independence.*

*We should be wealthy and instead our people are huddling, trying to keep warm. Let's look at the statistics. 36% of our pensioners are in fuel poverty. A quarter of our pensioners are in extreme fuel poverty. It is simply perverse that we are energy rich and yet we're fuel poor. As an old pal of mine, Willie, says to me, "but surely they'll just want to get shot of us at some stage, the same as is happening in Ireland?" Well, no, they don't, because we're a resource to be enjoyed and to be exploited. And there's actually an article by George Osborne some two or three years ago who made that clear. As far as the English Establishment are concerned, Northern Ireland – who cares? They can't wait for a United Ireland that gets the North off their hands and they'll shed no tears. Wales? They don't really care either way. Scotland? Osborne was quite clear, that's ours!*

*Why is it "ours"? Well, they like to enjoy it. When their kids can't get into Oxford or Cambridge, they can come up to St Andrews, or Edinburgh, or Glasgow. They can come up and enjoy the Edinburgh Festival, and they can even come up and enjoy hunting, shooting, fishing, on our hills and our glens. But more importantly than that, we're a resource to be exploited. We're a resource not just in oil and gas but now in renewable energy. And they know that, because we're [now duty bound to see 124 billion kilowatts*



of renewable energy going south of the border]. 124 billion kilowatts – that could power every house in Scotland twelve-and-a-half times over!

The situation is though, we're getting no revenue for it, we're getting no work from it. I can go down to Dunbar harbour and I see turbines now out in the River Forth, there's almost 40 now and that's just one field, there will be hundreds. And yet Methil lies idle. They're bringing the turbines up from down south, or even from across the seas. The work is going elsewhere. And even the jobs are going elsewhere, because I've had constituents sailing out of Montrose, who were laid off and replaced by South Asian labour being exploited. Why's that? Because if you're more than 12 miles out you're outwith the maritime limits and the employment laws and the minimum wage doesn't apply.

So, we're getting no business, no work, we're being ripped off. That's just the situation with renewable energy. People in East Lothian can see the turbines in the Lammermuirs, and they can see the turbines offshore, and yet we're going to get our environment damaged because they want it fast and cheap, and they'll put up pylons rather than cabling it and yet we can't afford to heat our homes. It's a replication of what happened with oil. Norway discovered oil and got immensely rich. We discovered oil, as Jim Sillars said, and have seen an industrial desert made.

40 years ago, the big fight was the miners' strike, but now in oil and gas the big fight is Grangemouth Refinery. We have to make a stand for that. I grew up just along the road from it and, as Mick McGahey said about the miners' strike, this isn't just about the current generation – and believe you me there's a young workforce there and if they lose their jobs they'll probably have to go south or abroad – this is about training future generations. We already have a skills gap in Scotland and yet I knew folk in school that went and got a training in what was then BP/ICI. We will lose not just current jobs we will lose necessary skills.

And yet what are we seeing? A UK Government that's selling us out. The ethylene plant has been shut – at the same time the UK Government is giving 600 million euros to Ineos to open a brand-new plant in Antwerp. Scottish workers are being made redundant, Belgian workers are being supported on the money that the UK Government is getting from [our] North Sea Oil that comes ashore up in the North-East and comes in the Fortes pipeline down to Grangemouth. That's why Grangemouth is our fight. We've got to ensure that we're not deindustrialised. The knock-on effect would be significant. It's vital for the fuelling not just of our cars but of our industry. It's vital for the fuelling of our aviation centre. It's for that reason that we have to stand by Grangemouth.



Coming down in the march I was listening to The Proclaimers singing "Cap in Hand" – we boast then we cower, we fight for a wee bit, you know? At the end of the day this belongs to us. It's our oil, it should be refined here. It cannot be "Grangemouth no more", what it must be is "Union no more". For that we need a strategy, we need a movement back together, and we need to be pushing for independence not running from it or hiding from it. Thank you.

In a week where all of us who believe in the democratic cause of the restoration of Scotland's independence have been tagged as "extremists" by the most extreme (so far!) right-wing nonentity currently occupying Downing Street – who knows how that will pan out before this issue is published! – it's reassuring to have the powerful rhetoric of people like Kenny MacAskill to help us keep our eyes on the prize. Kenny's final exhortation that we need a strategy, a united movement, and a sense of urgency about pushing for independence reflects what we have constantly been saying in this magazine for almost ten years now – it's always got to be "cause before party and before personality". We just need a leader to show us the way...

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