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## 1. We need a fresh approach

SCOTLAND is a country whose scenic beauty is unsurpassed. From the rolling green hills of the Borders to the rich agricultural lands of Central and Eastern Scotland, from the mountains and glens of the Highlands to the dramatic flatlands of the far north, all this together with its history, a mixture of the violent and the enlightened, of the unexpected and the traditional, makes us what we are, though perhaps geographically small, still we are a spiritually large country. Sometimes dour, often hospitable, almost always welcoming, we are a mixture of the expected and the surprising, of the difficult and the easy going, of the constructive and the destructive. It's all part of what we are.

The impact of Scottish people on the world has been far greater than the size of our population should allow. Wherever Scots have settled, from the Americas to Africa and Asia, we have maintained pride in our history and in our country and upheld the Scottish values of enterprise, thrift, respect for others and friendship towards other nations.

A dynamic and enterprising people, we have helped shape the modern world. The Scottish Enlightenment gave the world the philosophical and economic insight of Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and David Hume.



From the engineering inventions of James Watt, Alexander Graham Bell and James Clerk Maxwell to the medical discoveries of Alexander Fleming, Scots have revolutionised modern life. We have produced anthropologists like Sir James Frazer, explorers like David Livingstone, architects like Robert Adam, and literary figures as varied as Robert Burns, Robert Louis Stevenson, Sir Walter Scott, Arthur Conan Doyle and James Barrie.

Yet despite this great heritage our homeland seems to have lost its way. Where once we were adaptable and innovative we are becoming xenophobic and hidebound. Where we were hospitable and gregarious we are becoming unwelcoming and introverted. Where we were independent minded and proud to fend for ourselves we are becoming ever more dependent on the state. We have allowed ourselves to be over governed and over controlled.

The Scottish spirit of enterprise appears diminished at home. Many of our young people leave Scotland to seek opportunity elsewhere. For decades the Scottish economy has struggled to match the growth of our European neighbours. Long term and persistent social deprivation blights the lives of many of our fellow countrymen. We have some of the worst council estates in the United Kingdom: slums beset by crime, drugs, ill health and a shocking mortality rate. And now our public services are faltering.



All these problems persist in spite of the devolution of political power to a new Scottish Executive in 1999, and since 1997 a significant representation of Scots in the Westminster parliament and at the highest level in the British Government. Eight years into devolution it is clear that Scotland's political class has failed at the task with which it was entrusted.

In the three main areas of public policy over which Holyrood was given power - health, education and criminal justice - progress has been minimal. Compared with neighbouring countries we have actually regressed. In the economy, social welfare, infrastructure and the environment, areas where the Scottish Parliament also has influence, Holyrood's impact has been trifling. Our politicians have spent the last eight years demanding more powers or pettily interfering in Scots' personal liberties.

The time has come for a fresh approach to politics, for the Scottish people to circumvent the tired old parties and ideologies that have held back our great country for decades. The purpose of this pamphlet is to explore this disconnect between politics and the real problems facing Scotland.

Scotland is my country and that of my children too. What kind of a Scotland will they and their generation inherit? Can we leave this country to the next generation in better shape than it is today? Of one thing I am sure: the answer lies in our own hands.



## 2. Devolution: A shaky start

Holyrood was meant to break with the old and remote style of government from Westminster. Our new model Parliament was designed to give us a fairer voting system, more effective parliamentary scrutiny, better local accountability and even a committee to hear petitions from ordinary citizens.

Hopes were high. In 1997 an opinion poll found that 79 per cent of Scots thought that devolution would give them a better say in how their country was governed. Two years later Scotland's new Executive was established under the leadership of Donald Dewar and a wave of optimism swept the nation.

Yet by 2002 an opinion poll found that only 31 per cent felt that even this simple ambition had been achieved. I suspect the proportion is even lower today.

The apparently uncontrolled rise in the cost of the new Parliament building was a sad indictment of the politicians who conceived and oversaw the construction.

The confusing spectacle of the resignations of First Minister Henry McLeish and subsequently his Conservative Party opposite number David McLetchie, did not help to instil Scots with confidence in their new institution.



Yet while the Scottish Parliament and its Labour-run Executive have clearly disappointed many Scots, it is hard to detect enthusiasm for the other political parties. Low turnouts in successive Scottish elections reveal just how badly both governing and opposition parties have failed to inspire people. We were promised excellence, we got mismanagement.

### 3. Government by volume not quality

But occasional incompetence and alleged malfeasance by some parliamentarians only go part-way to explaining the cooling of the Scottish electorate's enthusiasm for their new parliament.

Some measures enacted by the new parliament have merit. But to date little of the notable legislation enacted by the Scottish Parliament has been people-led or people-liberating. In fact most new legislation has involved either spending money or banning something, and all have been accompanied by the growth of both the state and the red tape that inevitably goes with it.

It is as though our politicians believe that the quantity of legislation produced equates with productivity, as though the more acts that are passed by the Scottish Parliament the greater the sum of human happiness.

Accompanying this flurry of legislation has been a blizzard of "Statutory Instruments", over 3,100 of them, or approximately two for every working day of every year since the Scottish Parliament first assembled.

If the production of legislation and the daily issuance of statutory instruments were not sufficient to run a country of barely five million people, Quasi Non-Governmental Organisations or Quangos have sprouted up at every turn increasing in number by over 40 per cent since 1999.

Little wonder that to cope with all this legislative and administrative activity the Scottish Executive now deems it necessary to employ a workforce that is 20 per cent larger than seven years ago.

The Scottish Executive has not been alone in fostering ever-greater levels of spending and employment. State spending represents 52 per cent of Scotland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the workforce employed by the state across Scotland is now in excess of 586,000 people, or one in four of the total workforce employed in Scotland and some 58,800 more than there were in 1999.

Superficially at least some Scots have never had it so good. We have the lowest official unemployment for a generation and more of us own a home and a car and take a foreign holiday than ever before.

Yet there is a price to be paid both for a growing state sector and increased individual spending, the former by way of higher taxation and the latter in record levels of consumer debt.

Scots now spend a higher proportion of their personal incomes than any other nation of the United Kingdom. Once famous for our attachment to thrift, we appear determined to prove the opposite. If interest rates were to rise significantly there is a real chance that the economy might stall and thousands of Scots could face financial ruin.



## 4. The facts of economic failure

The corollary to higher state spending is higher taxation. Whilst the tax burden has increased as a result of decisions taken at a UK national level, the burden of local taxation in Scotland has become all but unbearable. By way of example the Council Tax levied on Band D for a house in prosperous Stirling is now over £1,200 per year. In equally prosperous Wandsworth, London it is just over £600.

Between 1964 and 1998 Scotland's economy grew by an average of 2.1 per cent per year, while that of the UK as a whole grew by 2.4 per cent. Surprisingly, post devolution, the growth gap has widened. The average economic growth in Scotland since 1999 was 1.9 per cent. In the UK over the same period it was 2.7 per cent.

It is not just the headline economic growth figures that provide evidence of Scotland's economic failings.

We establish fewer businesses, have lower rates of self-employment, lower rates of productivity, and spend less of our GDP on research and development, a key indicator of long term economic health, than the rest of the UK.



In two areas at least we outperform our neighbours. Scotland's £6bn net deficit, the money that is spent in Scotland but not raised in Scotland, is 13 per cent of its GDP compared with four per cent for the UK as a whole and the number of working days lost each year to strikes and sickness is as much as five times greater in Scotland than in the rest of the UK.



## 5. Is Scotland becoming two nations?

Official figures attest to Scotland enjoying its highest ever level of employment. But there are many “hot spots” of unemployment throughout the country, and changes to the way in which the unemployment figures are calculated mean that the true level is heavily masked.

In the Calton district of Glasgow, perhaps surprisingly, only nine per cent of working age adults are officially unemployed. But the reality is that 58 per cent of adults in the area do not work.

Across the country over a third of a million people are claiming benefits because of sickness or disability or both. In Inverclyde, across Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire one in six adults under retirement age are deemed too ill or disabled to work, at least in some part due to drug addiction and alcoholism. In Glasgow the figure is nearer one in five. We must be a nation either more physically frail, or have a government more administratively feeble, than we thought. I suspect the latter.

Add to all of this the fact that nearly half a million working age adults in Scotland receive Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or



Income Support, and remembering that one in four of those in work are employed by the state, the depressing realisation dawns that we live not so much in a welfare state as in a state of dependency.

Of course there are many Scots who feel buoyed by newly created wealth and the knock-on effects of increased state spending. But there are hundreds of thousands of others trapped in a life of poverty, deprivation and dependency. Economically and socially Scotland is becoming two nations.



## 6. A nation in decline

Scotland's demography will exacerbate the problems of both long-term economic under-performance and of welfare dependency. Official forecasts predict that as a result of a declining birth rate the country's population is likely to fall below five million before the end of the decade and continue to fall thereafter unless inward migration is sustained. For the foreseeable future a decreasing number of tax paying workers will have to support an increasing number of dependents. Is it any wonder that so many graduates choose to develop their careers elsewhere?

By any standards Scotland's economic performance has for some time been inadequate. If the problem is not addressed and long term and sustained improvement in the country's economic vitality is not achieved, the future for Scotland holds only the prospect of further economic, social and cultural decline.

We cannot any longer lay the blame at Westminster's door for our economic under performance. Scotland operates under the same fiscal rules as the rest of the United Kingdom, rules which are not rigged against us.



Yes, it is true that Scotland's economy, based as it was on heavy industry, steel making, ship building and coal mining, suffered badly as the world changed in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, as these once great industries declined. It is also true that a lack of understanding, and with it inappropriate policy decisions in Westminster, magnified the damaging effects of the decline. But we cannot go back in time. We are where we are, and anyway, that is only part of the picture.

## 7. No help for the left-behind

When Scotland's great monolithic heavy industries collapsed, the mindset that went with them remained intact. Politically and culturally we encourage employment rather than self-employment. Figures for the year 2000, for example, show that for every 10,000 of the population, only 28 Scots set up their own business compared with 39 over the UK as a whole.

The small and medium-sized business sector that forms the basis of more vibrant and flexible economies throughout the world has not been encouraged in Scotland. High business rates and rigid planning controls are hardly a tonic for the entrepreneurial spirit.

When devolution came, the annual Scottish Executive budget was just over £16 billion. This has now almost doubled to £29 billion. Some economists contend that high levels of public spending are actually crowding out economic growth. They argue that the creation of small businesses is inhibited by the level of state spending and employment. Why set up your own small business with all the attendant risk and stress when there is a secure job with the local council round the corner? When it is possible to work the system and prosper in the public sector without risk, why become an entrepreneur?

The performance of Scottish Enterprise in recent years underlines my point about our misplaced faith in public spending. This is a body that spends £450 million of taxpayers' money trying to second-guess what skills industry needs, instead of encouraging industry to take on apprentices and train up their own staff. The Executive makes industry pay more in tax than its English counterparts, it tells them that the State knows best how to spend the money on training and skills, and then it spends it on bureaucracy and waste.

Scottish Enterprise's failure to deliver results is symptomatic of a wider malaise in the public sector. Politicians have almost doubled public spending, while allowing public sector productivity to stand still.

No doubt the Scottish economy has problems with its supply side. We have a small labour force, and while many Scots currently in work stand favourably in comparison with the quality of the workforce in the best performing economies worldwide, it is those without productive jobs whose skills need to be improved. It is estimated that nearly one in four Scots has low level literacy and numeracy. They are for the most part unemployed and many languish in centres of social and economic deprivation. Scotland's politicians are not addressing the problem of the left-behind who have no stake in Scotland's future prosperity. We must understand that part of the solution to our problems lies in providing an environment where those who have nothing can be helped into a more self sufficient and fulfilling way of life. We must give them a stake in Scotland's future.

## 8. The crisis in schools

Scotland's role in the development of public education is one in which we can be justly proud, and from which our country has benefited greatly. For 300 years Scotland led the way, not only in terms of providing an education system based on excellence but also in spreading the opportunities for good education to the mass of its people and abroad.

The Scottish Enlightenment grew from the roots of Scotland's basic education system first set down in the late Seventeenth Century. From it, educated Scots pushed forward the Industrial Revolution, and their expertise was exported across the world. Scotland and the world benefited from Scottish ingenuity, learning and energy.

Until recently, our pride in the superiority of the Scottish education system has been largely justified. Now, however, it is difficult to come to any other conclusion than that Scotland's state sector education system is in large part failing. Whilst there are many excellent schools, on the whole our education is not bringing out individual talent as it once did. Many young people are not being taught the skills that they will need to hold down jobs in a competitive world.

Newspaper headlines annually declare ever higher exam success, with over 98 per cent of pupils reaching the Standard Grade pass rate. Closer scrutiny provides less comfortable reading. The number of pupils sitting examinations for what are generally regarded as the more difficult subjects - maths, physics, chemistry, geography, history and foreign languages - has declined and there has been an increase in those opting for less exacting subjects.

It does not bode well for Scotland's future if we cannot produce the scientists and the engineers that the country needs (and indeed enough professors to teach them) and it says nothing for our culture if our people do not understand our history.

Despite the large increases in funding given to state schools, parents who send their children to Scottish independent schools have seen their children's results improve at a faster rate every year than those at state schools. And despite significantly higher spending per person in Scottish state schools compared to those in England, our children are doing no better than English children by any measure you care to take.

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has noted that its members have to take steps themselves to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of their young recruits and this is especially true in Scotland.

## 9. The roots of failure

Our education system, once Scotland's greatest source of pride, is failing to turn out students educated to the level of previous generations. Two thirds of 14 year olds fail national reading standards and half fail writing standards. This is despite Scotland spending at least 25 per cent more per pupil than in England.

An obvious cause for the failure of many pupils to thrive in school is the social deprivation to which I have already referred. In many parts of our country, particularly in the urban areas, many of our children grow up surrounded by crime and drugs and without sufficient parental guidance or encouragement. Indeed, if it is not too out-dated a concept, without love and care. The attitudes they encounter - the ill-discipline, violence and lack of respect for others - are not left behind at the school gate but carried into the classroom.

Prime Ministers, First Ministers and Secretaries of State for Education, have all called for higher standards. What they have actually produced is higher exam pass rates. The two are not the same. This change of focus from educating children to training them to pass exams is to the detriment of all.

Teachers have less time to teach the more they are swamped with paperwork,

headteachers are often forced to put the school's rating before the needs of individual pupils.

Another of the principal causes of the poor performance of many of Scotland's state schools is attributable to local education authority management rather than any lack of talent on the part of the pupils or the teachers. This ability to interfere in the running of schools undermines the authority of the head teacher, discourages initiative and stifles innovation. The running of schools should be a collaboration between head teachers, staff and parents. These are the people with most at stake.

The truth is that a generation of young Scots, or at least a substantial portion of it, have been failed by the inept handling of our education system. It is surely time to return to the values that allowed successive generations of Scots to conquer the world.

## 10. Big health spending but poor results

The Scottish health service has similarly enjoyed massive increases in expenditure since devolution. We now spend 20 per cent more per head than England, but the country's overall health record puts us to shame.

One in three Scottish adults smokes. We have the highest rate in Western Europe of obesity, diabetes, asthma and lung cancer. Add in higher levels of alcohol abuse and one can begin to understand why premature death is twice as likely in Scotland as in many western countries. On average we live three years less than people in England. In parts of Glasgow life expectancy is lower than that in Bangladesh. Of the fifteen UK parliamentary constituencies with the highest rates of premature mortality, nine are in Scotland.

Scotland's ageing population also has implications for Health Service provision. By 2021, when the "baby boomers" of the 1960s will be reaching pensionable age, it is estimated that there will have been a 29 per cent rise in the number of people aged 60-74, and a 30 per cent increase of those aged over 75. This will further increase the strain on our services.

Despite the higher levels of spending on health care in Scotland, productivity is lower than that in England.

A recent report showed that only 79.2 per cent of cancer patients were treated within two months of diagnosis. This performance compares poorly with England where the latest figures show 93.8 per cent treated within two months of referral rising to 99.6 per cent for breast cancer. What surprised me is that no one seemed to question the acceptability of a two month waiting period.

Post-devolution productivity has fallen despite record levels of spending and Scotland's most senior cancer clinician has warned that the strain on budgets and services are so severe that if radical change is not implemented the whole system could break down. Part of the problem is that Scottish health ministers have implemented changes in policy without anticipating what the results might be.

Dr Andrew Walker, a leading health economist working for the Robertson Centre for Biostatistics at Glasgow University, has stated that of the 14 targets set by the Executive, eight were unachievable because performance could not be measured, four were probably not achieved because data collection was inadequate and only two were successfully met, and arguably those were part of an existing trend and not as a result of Executive endeavour.



With ill conceived initiatives from the Executive we now have fewer doctors willing to provide out of hours service, closure of rural clinics, disappearing dentists and with the introduction of NHS24 a system which has proved unpopular and frustrating for many of those using it, despite the willing and helpful attitudes of those attempting to operate it.

The truth is that no amount of money will succeed unless first you fix the system.



## 11. The blight of crime

It is little wonder that crime flourishes in the areas of Scotland plagued by high unemployment, poor housing and social deprivation.

According to a United Nations report Scotland has the third highest murder rate in Western Europe. Men in Scotland run more than twice the risk of being murdered than those in England and Wales. Experts attribute this to the “booze and blades” culture but the question we should be asking is where does this originate? Where is the source of this indiscriminate violence?

Social scientists have long drawn a link between multiple deprivation and criminal behaviour. A study in 2003 by Roger Houchin, former prison governor at Barlinnie Prison and now Co-Director of the Centre for the Study of Violence, found that levels of imprisonment almost directly correspond to the levels of social deprivation in a given area. For every hundred thousand people from non-deprived communities, he found four people in prison on the night of his survey: for every hundred thousand people from communities defined as deprived, he found 953. Of the total prison population, 50 per cent came from just 155 out of Scotland’s total of 1,222 local government wards.

This again emphasises that there is a section of society which is under-educated, de-motivated and feels it has no stake in society. Aggression is part of the macho culture in which they live. And despite the promises of successive politicians both nationally and locally there remain few opportunities for these individuals to turn their lives around.

Politicians do not appear to be able to handle the problems arising from such deprivation. Criminals are twice as likely to be spared prison as they were five years ago. The number of criminals who re-offend while on probation has risen by 20 per cent in the past year and in the same period the number of non custodial sentences increased by 10 per cent to 28,000 in an attempt to release space for more serious offenders. So desperate is the situation that life imprisonment, while still on average being thirteen years and six months (nearly two years less than a decade ago), has recently been as low as five years. While we must remember that the proper objective of prison is reform and rehabilitation as well as punishment, it is unacceptable to give early release simply in order to make room for more prisoners.

## 12. The problem is not lack of money

One can argue over the root causes of the problems facing Scotland's public services. But a lack of spending would surely not be listed among them.

State spending per person in Scotland in 2004/5 was estimated to be £7,597. This was £1,034 higher than the average spent in the United Kingdom as a whole and £1,236 above the average spent per person in England.

Scotland's spending on state education has consistently been some 25 per cent higher per pupil than in England for some years, and spending on health has been 20 per cent higher per capita than in England for many years.

We have seen record levels of growth in Health Service spending in recent years. In 2006, including both the public and private sector, spending on healthcare in Scotland will be some 11-12 per cent of GDP, one of the highest levels in Europe. A report by the Nuffield Hospital Trust in 2003 concluded that, "On every measure of resource input, whether it is the availability of hospital beds, the number of doctors and nurses in hospitals and the community or the prescribing of medicines, Scotland's health care system is better resourced than any other part of the UK." All this money and resources, yet by all accounts the system is not performing satisfactorily.



The Barnett Formula, the mechanism by which central government in Westminster allocates regional spending, has resulted for over 30 years in more money being spent per head in Scotland than in most of the rest of the UK. Scotland now receives some £20 billion annually from Whitehall, approximately £3,846 for every man, woman and child in the country. Without it Scotland's public services would be unable to operate as they do.

Meanwhile the public sector is expanding at more than twice the rate of Scotland's economy. Ministers spend an average of four per cent more of the taxpayers' money each year while the country's economic growth rate languishes below two per cent.



## 13. A country in the grip of machine politics

We must ask ourselves why has Scotland, which has produced so many dynamic and talented people, failed to achieve at home what we have so obviously achieved elsewhere in the world? Have our talented citizens all left the country? The answer is clearly no. Everywhere I go I meet people of energy and talent, hard working and successful men and women, achievers, people of independence and resourcefulness. Why then is the country failing? I think the answer lies in part in our own failure to participate in devolved democracy. We see inefficiencies and even mismanagement in Holyrood, in some local councils, and in parts of our public services, yet simply shrug our shoulders and get on with our lives. It is time to get involved if we want our nation to prosper.

It is said that back in 1999 even Donald Dewar privately expressed doubts about the quality of his colleagues who joined him in Parliament. All the talented Scottish politicians remained at Westminster, many of them filling cabinet ministries with responsibility for English matters rather than putting themselves forward for election to Holyrood.

“That left”, as The Independent newspaper commented, “an assembly of the second-rate, the inexperienced and the unknown, with the Labour contingent heavily influenced by the prevailing culture of local-government politicking rather than any sense of national mission”. For The Scotsman it was “municipal cronyism writ large”.

The lack of people with experience outside the public sector on the ruling Labour benches is illustrated by an analysis of the background of some of the Scottish Labour’s 50 MSPs, the largest bloc in parliament. Of these, 15 have a professional background as lecturers or teachers, 10 as trade union or political party officials, eight in local council or civil service employment, a further eight were community or social workers, two had been journalists with the BBC and one an NHS nurse.

It is perhaps little wonder that this background results in an attitude that values the collective over the individual Scot. There seems to be little or no comprehension that releasing the energy, talent and drive of the individual can only be achieved by less political interference, not more.

In the last Holyrood election only 49 per cent of the electorate voted, yet 61 per cent turned out for the Westminster elections. This means 12 per cent felt so uninspired and uninvolved they could not bring themselves to vote.

## 14. “Top down” control crushes vitality

When looking at recent Scottish history and the actions of the Scottish political establishment it is hard not to come to the conclusion that there is a default disposition that views change as a “top down” process in which the powers that be pull the levers of state in an attempt to address problems, improve people’s lives or create wealth. They seem not to have learnt from our forbears or from world economic history since the Second World War, that not only does this approach simply not work but that it also crushes the vitality of the people upon whom it is visited.

The results of the Scottish Executive’s own Employee Survey for 2005 showed that fewer than four in ten Scottish Executive staff believed they were making any difference to people’s lives. Only a third of civil servants believe the Executive is well managed or have confidence in their bosses. Just one in four believes poor performance is properly addressed, and less than a third believes the government makes good use of financial resources or has a culture of sound financial management. Only six out of ten civil servants say they are happy in their jobs with the Executive.



## 15. Changing the state mentality

Paid for by the state, working for the state, and ruled over by politicians who have little experience outside the state, it is small wonder that there has grown up in Scotland a tendency to seek change and advancement through national structures rather than our own business and personal lives.

The statist mentality that grips Scotland at all levels of government and public administration is suffocating the nation. We have to replace this with a new Scottish spirit of enterprise if we are to transform the country into a viable and vibrant economy.

Affecting such a change will be difficult. We have reached a stage where so many are employed by or dependent on the state that it could be electorally damaging to politicians not to pander to what is effectively a payroll vote. This alone should set alarm bells ringing to warn us of the threat that this poses to good governance and democratic accountability.



## 16. Changing a mindset and culture

The scenario I have laid before you is of a Scotland whose economy has consistently underperformed. A country in parts of which social deprivation and dependency have long been entrenched. A country overseen by an ever-growing state that fails to adequately address these underlying problems.

It is a picture of two Scotlands. One is employed, educated, well trained and flourishing. The other is unemployed, or classed unfit for work, untrained, ill-educated unhealthy, and reliant on state benefits to subsist. The public services tasked with alleviating and eradicating ignorance, poverty and poor health are unable to deliver effectively despite massive state spending. The real worry is that the basis for that spending is insecure, relying on a declining and aging population, a lagging economy and an annual block grant from London.

Seven years on from devolution, what the public really want to know is whether the politicians in our devolved administration are living up to their promises. Are their actions improving or diminishing the quality of our lives? Are we better educated? Are we healthier? Are we better housed? Are we more prosperous? Are we happier? Are we less fearful?

Many thought that a new and better Scotland would arise as a result of constitutional change.



Those hopes remain unfulfilled. It is as if after seven years of devolution our politicians have not yet decided what they want to do with it. Devolution is a tool which must be made to work. The present system needs to be streamlined with the emphasis on the quality not the quantity of legislation and regulation, on good administration, not just more bureaucracy.

Bringing this about will be no simple matter. It will require both a re-engineering of the processes by which we are governed and a fundamental change in the mind set of politicians, administrators and business. Moreover, I am not just arguing for a change of attitude but ultimately a change in Scotland's cultural climate to one that encourages creativity, initiative and innovation, which lauds a positive attitude and encourages confidence and when success is achieved, both recognises and admires it.

That we have the people to do it I have no doubt, but does the current political establishment, in all its forms, have the flexibility of mind and the political courage to allow it to happen? I fear not, for it needs a confrontation with long standing political orthodoxy and a change of mindset of which few will be capable. It requires recognition that there are limits to what governments and government agencies can achieve. Initiative and imagination will have to replace conformity, regulation will have to step back to allow enterprise to flourish. With the political will it can be done.



## 17. Needed: A 'can do' spirit

I believe Scotland is the greatest country in the world. It is my homeland and where I live, but I also believe that it is a country that is poorly run and where the manifestations of that incompetence are to be seen all around us.

I have argued primarily that a vibrant future for Scotland rests on the need to release the enterprising talents of our country's greatest asset: its people. To do so we need to reassess how we make devolution work, tackle the stifling effect of the growing Holyrood establishment and the mindset of those that run it, improve the effectiveness of our education system, and confront the problems of ill health, poor housing and rising crime.

I make no apology for the fact that my primary aim is the increased wealth of Scotland as a nation. Upon it rests not just the prosperity of the country in an economic sense but the well being and self-esteem of all the people of Scotland. It is not however a free-market prescription for Scotland's ills or a manifesto for commercial interests, for the central objective must be to change the appalling social deprivation that in parts of our country points an accusing finger at us all.

Many people in the impoverished inner cities of Scotland, and more than we would care to admit in yet more towns and villages



throughout the country, are trapped in a world of unemployment, ill-health, bad housing and increasing crime. Surrounded by a rising tide of hopelessness, they have become dependent on state handouts and are without the education or skills necessary to start again.

Many of our politicians and the parties they represent have for decades built their political careers on supposedly representing the needs of that other Scotland. If their prescription were to have worked it would have worked by now. In large measure it has not.

We need politicians who have real aspirations for the people they represent and serve. We must set our standards high and have the confidence that the Scottish people can achieve those standards. We must allow the creativity and initiative of the Scottish people to come to the fore. We must trust the individual Scot and spend less time telling them what not to do. From such a change will come greater confidence and growing national self-esteem.

We must take pride not only in our past and the great men and women of our nation that have gone before us but also foster and take pride in the success and the achievements of Scottish people today. If we do not provide opportunities for the next generation, then our sons and daughters will continue to leave the country of their birth to seek a better life elsewhere. We who remain will be the poorer and so will our country.



## 18. Time for action, time for change

When I first sat down to write my thoughts on how Scotland has lost its way and what might be done to redeem it, my intention was to try to influence the debate in the media and among opinion formers and politicians on the future direction of our country. In the process of doing so, however, I have realised that debate in itself is not sufficient to bring about the changes I believe we should seek. I have found the study of the actions and attitudes of Scottish politicians and the parties they represent a depressing experience. I now believe that the traditional political parties cannot change sufficiently to meet the challenge that must be faced because the mindset of so many of the Holyrood establishment is incapable of change. I therefore believe that a more direct approach is needed.

The political establishment in Scotland must be shaken up and the power blocs that have dominated Scottish politics must be broken up.

We can only achieve this if we bring new blood into Holyrood, an injection of pragmatic, practical, realistic, experienced Scots from all walks of life, not drawn from the party political machines or the current political establishment. New faces with new ideas and attitudes who have real ambition for our country.



If the majority who have not voted at elections are to have a voice, if our energetic and entrepreneurial people are to realise their potential for the betterment of both themselves and our country, if our young people are to be encouraged to make the country of their birth their home, and those that have left enticed to return, then their needs must be represented.

Scotland needs a broad based movement to protect our democracy and to ensure it represents the views of hundreds of thousands of ordinary hard working enterprising Scots. We need to attract the many talented and practical Scots who want to see better government for the Scottish people.

For change to happen we must now be heard. Scottish Voice will audit the performance of the Scottish Executive. We will promote and encourage good government. And we will provide the opposition that is so clearly lacking.

Above all, we will start to build the base of excellence and talent to raise the quality of government in Scotland.

I end where I started. Scotland is still a great country and the Scots a great people. It is time to light the flame and find the people to lead our country to a better future. It is time to find our voice.

## Archie Stirling



Archie Stirling is a farmer and businessman who believes passionately that devolution must be made to work and that to help achieve this more people of talent from outside the party machines must be encouraged to take part in the political process.

We want you to help - contact Scottish Voice at:

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