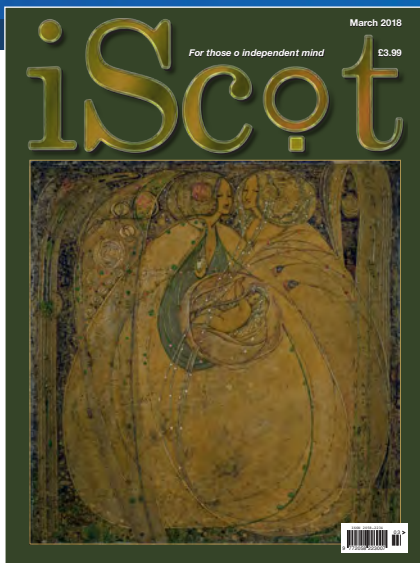


# Gordon Craigie



*An independent mind...*



## ***This month, I'm wondering what comes next for Scotland...***

I'VE RECENTLY realised that I've written over 70 articles for *iScot Magazine* since Ken McDonald invited me into the *iScot* family in March 2018. The first, commemorating International Women's Day, celebrated the life and achievements of Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh and her influence on her, arguably, more famous husband, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. It was Ken's idea, and during our conversation, he also suggested an article about the rent strikes of 1915 and the role of Mary Barbour. Me being me, I misheard "rent strikes" and completely missed his mention of Mary Barbour, so I enthusiastically set about researching the poll tax protests of the 1980s instead! What emerged was a no-less fascinating tale of the role of women in setting up the *Pollokshields Against the Poll Tax* group. What was particularly inspiring about these stories – published in issue 43 – was that individuals followed their hearts, artistically or morally, and did what they believed in. I'm reminded of this crucial message for independistas – Be the change you want to see.

In one way or another, people getting

on and just doing it – has generally been the underlying theme in most of my contributions to this magazine and, indeed, the reason the magazine came into being in the first place. I've told the story before about how Ken's long-suffering wife finally lost the head with him for screaming at the TV back in 2014, telling him that if he felt that strongly, then to do something about it. And here we are, ten years on, fast closing in on 100 issues of our wee award-winning magazine, because one man had the vision to create something worthwhile and the belief and persistence – oh the persistence! – to keep the restoration of Scotland's independence at the forefront of every reader's mind. I ask myself, does anyone in the Scottish Government have the same mindset...?

We know that we are heading for an imminent Westminster election, the only question is how imminent? We also know that the next Westminster government will, in all probability, be led by Keir Starmer and that the policies he intends to pursue are more or less indistinguishable from those currently being followed by the Tories. In particular, we know that he is no less inclined to entertain the notion of a second Scottish Independence referendum than any of his Tory predecessors, despite poll after poll indicating that support for independence is at or above 50% – I believe the actual figure is significantly higher and have no faith in the motivations or methodologies of the polling companies.

So, given this level of support for independence, why is the Scottish Government meekly allowing Grangemouth to close? Why are they not supporting the Rosyth–Dunkirk ferry route? Why are they not using every piece of legislation available to them to prevent our offshore power from being directly transported to England? Why, oh why, are they naively allowing freeports to take over swathes of our land? Why is the SNP not shouting ever more loudly about the untenable and anti-democratic colonial-style denial of the Scottish people's right to self-determination? Why are the SNP MPs not using every procedural trick in the book to disrupt the daily activities of the Westminster parliament to force the issue of this anti-democratic, anti-Scottish, unionist consensus? And why has nobody in the party, particularly those in Holyrood who were voted into power on a mandate to

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arrange a second referendum, come up with a strategy to circumnavigate this intolerable denial of our rights?

Now, there's a lot of "smoke and mirrors" rhetoric around so-called "controversial" legislation – like the Hate Crime bill, Gender Recognition, Jury Trials, etc. – much of which is fuelled by a unionist media and commentariat hostile to anything that originates in Scotland – which means that it's difficult to know exactly where the truth lies with these developments. But I can't help feeling that they're all a distraction to the Scottish Government's main business, which must be regaining our independent nation status at the earliest possible opportunity and building the fair and free Scotland we all know to be possible. So why the stasis?

And why do we still see this nonsense of the SNP not collaborating with other pro-independence parties? The Scottish Greens have already made it clear that independence would not be a red line for them in supporting some mythical, future Labour government, so the Bute House agreement clearly never signified any fundamental commitment on their part to the cause of independence, it was merely a means by which they could influence Scottish Government thinking on selected policy areas, most of which have proved to be unpopular, if not disastrous, and have harmed the integrity of the senior party in that agreement. Indeed, there were ten areas excluded from the agreement at the outset, including, interestingly, freeports... What exactly is going on there?

Somebody must be the bigger person here and have the bigger vision and, following his resignation as First Minister, we now know for sure that it's not going to be Humza. Equally, it appears that some of those who lost faith in the SNP and thought they'd found salvation in Alba are intent on burning that party to the ground, too – why? If every one of us decides to hold out for a party or a politician with whom we agree 100% of the time on 100% of the issues... then the game really is a bogey!

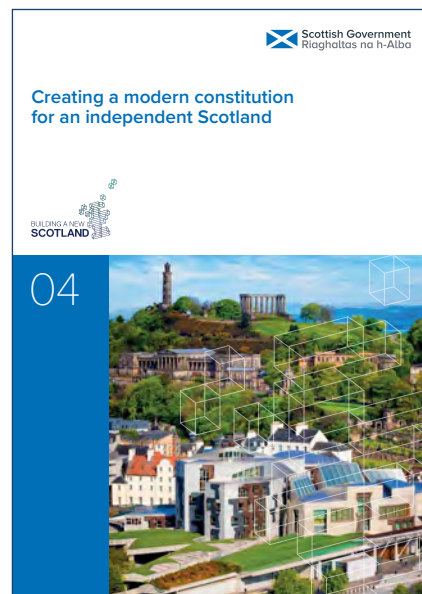
So, the principle of "getting on and doing it ourselves" appears to me to increasingly be the one that's going to get us to where we want to be, as the politicians are failing us and failing us quite spectacularly. We have been promised a Constitutional Convention if the SNP "win" the next Westminster election in Scotland but, much like the fabled SNP Rebuttal Unit, that appears to have disappeared from the party's agenda in recent times. That must be brought into being without any further delay no

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**When will dawn break over an independent Scottish Parliament... Credit: Shutterstock/Ulmus Media**



**Scottish Government White Paper on the Scottish Constitution Credit: Scottish Government**



matter what may lie ahead in terms of Westminster or Holyrood elections because, whatever the outcomes of these events, there has to be clarity as to how independence is going to be achieved and a viable plan to establish the infrastructure and organisations that will be required before Independence Day. The plethora of white papers on independence produced by the Scottish Government will undoubtedly be interesting and useful starting points for much of the proposed convention's work. Still, surely we need and deserve a broader representation of the people to analyse, debate, fine-tune, and develop these ideas on a non-party political basis? The promised Constitutional Convention, as defined by Joanna Cherry, "should be set up with MPs, MSPs and civic Scotland to take forward our journey to statehood". As the STUC has already signalled its willingness to participate, and other civic bodies would surely do likewise once something is actually in place, what reason could there possibly be for delaying the establishment of this body until after the Westminster election or making it conditional on the SNP "winning" that election?

Independence-supporting politicians and activists of all persuasions – particularly those from the SNP and Alba – have to put any minor (in the overall scheme of things) disagreements to one side and come together to make this Constitutional Convention happen and work together to get us over the line. The people of Scotland deserve better – just do it!