

# Real Democracy Denied by Our Governments: A Letter to the Scottish Independence Folk: “I Want What You Want”

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Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*Of course, although [this was addressed to the people in Scotland](#) who had been campaigning for independence, there is a message for all of us, denied as we all are by our governments of real democracy. How can we wake ourselves up and take part in the kind of inspired political debate that the referendum on independence generated among the Scots, whichever side they were on?*

When I first became engaged in the debate about independence for Scotland it was because of anger and embarrassment at the slant presented by the Better Together campaign. But as I talked to friends, acquaintances and strangers, all of us English, in the run-up to the Referendum, I found I wasn't alone in cheering on the independently-minded Scots.

Despite the blanket of accepted opinion that implied the English were totally pro-Union, it seemed that there were many such supporters south of the border, hidden allies that the Scots didn't know they had. And still have, because we go on following the debate post-referendum, still follow your journey. But why does it matter so much to us?

Personally, it seemed to me that most of Scotland's talents and contributions to the greater world were being ignored while Westminster kept insisting that poor Scotland could not exist without us. Except I didn't feel I was part of that 'us' in the same way I have never been one of the 'we' in David Cameron's "We're all in it together".

With some trepidation, and having done a crash course on the push for independence I wrote an article or two about it, one so popular it convinced me I truly wasn't alone in my opinion – and all this from the viewpoint of a very English woman living in rural Dorset. How dare I?

I dared because I believe in true democracy. If, as it seemed at the time, the majority of Scots wanted independence then they should have it. What Scotland then made of it was entirely up to Scotland. But I also wanted it because I thought if Scotland voted for independence it just might wake up the English from the comfortable non-think prison we live in.

Looking back over all the campaigning and reading what I can of the political conversations still being conducted in Scotland, I've come to see how great a gap had been falsely engineered between the English and the Scots, largely due to media misinformation fed by Westminster. For instance:

As almost all Scots will know, but not many on my side of the border will, the independence

campaign was not just about the SNP. We didn't know how many independence groups/campaigns there were. We didn't know how diverse the views, how intelligent the arguments and how far-seeing much of the debate was. It never got on to national media and we remained supremely ignorant of the political wonder that was happening up north.

The media campaign denied us English the chance to gain that deeper knowledge of who our neighbours are. And having been conned over the years into being incurious about everything except celebrities' lives, we remained largely ignorant. Otherwise we might have found common cause. An [editorial](#) on the National Collective website said:

"Regardless of who I'm speaking to about the referendum; Yes voters, No voters, undecideds, non-voters; the one thing everyone is without fail in agreement on is that Westminster and those who work there mean absolutely nothing to us. And when I say 'us', this is composed of all sorts of people from all sorts of different backgrounds. It's all of us. It's all of us who have had apathy instilled in us from an early age and, if the UK establishment has its way, this apathy is used as a means of non-participation."

How true that is. But maybe some Scots don't appreciate that it is just as true for us English. Reading David Younger's article [Can Scottish MPs Make a Difference in Westminster?](#) I came across this:

"The only path that the SNP could take is the most difficult of all. They could negotiate a withdrawal of Scottish MPs from Westminster. We could call it DevoMax to make everyone comfortable, but even if it comes out as complete independence, this is not so outlandish as it may first appear. The Conservatives, for one, would identify advantages in that they would probably be able to continue their coalition in a reduced parliament while being free of the stigma of being the party which oversaw the break-up of the UK. Labour, after their meltdown in Scotland, would be desperate to avoid a repeat in England and the English electorate would at last feel that they had a legislature that was for them and not influenced by others." (My emphasis)

Would we? We are not Westminster and many of us really do not want a legislature that is for and run by Westminster. The political elite, the Westminster bubble, the rich and the corporate, they have one glaring fault: they simply don't understand people. They don't 'get' us, you and me. It is why they got their campaign over Scottish independence so wrong, and why, although they technically won the referendum, they have lost the argument.

Because of Westminster politics, people in both cities and villages, wherever they are in the UK, are being reduced to living a contradiction. As consumers they are expected to keep the economy going (for which read making the rich richer), yet at the same time Westminster is allowing them less and less money with which to buy, and fewer and fewer public services which they have done their best to pay for by way of taxes and National Insurance.

Dorset is a 'rich' county but even small Dorset towns have food banks. Westminster is damaging the English as much as the Scots. And I for one am tired of being talked down to; of being told that it is the fault of the electorate that so few turn out to vote; of being told that the electorate is 'apathetic'; and "we need to talk to the voters more".

Does Westminster ever listen? Does Westminster care about low turn-out or our anger? No and no. Not when the 'first-past-the-post system' can deliver them the power they want, regardless of how low the percentage is that has given a politician a seat in Westminster.

And does that tiny rant from an Englishwoman sound familiar to you Scots? Because it should. We English really are not represented by the voices of the rich, the powerful and the large land owners (or, come to that, the English Defence League). I don't want to be controlled by the voices of people like Owen Paterson, our embarrassingly useless ex-Environment Secretary, claiming that "we understand how the countryside works." There's that 'we' again.

Let me tell you about the village where I live. It's not big but it also has 5 outlying hamlets. The parish has a total of 400-plus houses, some of them large. We also have an increasing amount of land devoted to pheasant shoots – sporting estates rather than 100 per cent farms.

But of those 400 households, well over 80 are running businesses from home. The lack of affordable housing is a real problem, and people are living on shrinking incomes. They can't always afford the call-out fees charged by tradesmen from the towns, all some miles away. So, like any true village, there is an electrician, a plumber, a builder or two, a handyman and all the other necessary people that help a community to be as self-sufficient as possible.

That is the way it works for communities either side of the border – at a human level; not a political, rich, land-owning, David Cameron/Chipping-Norton-set and Westminster level. I'm English and you're Scottish but the soil beneath our feet is where we come from, and we want it back.

The major landowners' [reaction](#) to Nicola Sturgeon's decision to start stripping sporting estates of their tax breaks was to be expected, although few if any mentioned how many millions they are paid in farm subsidies. And the Tory rural affairs spokesman Alex Fergusson said it all:

"Big Brother is about to be legislated for by a government that said it would govern for all Scotland's people. It would appear that that is not the case if you own land." But when around 400 people own half of Scotland's rural land, I would say that Sturgeon is perhaps thinking of the remaining 5,327,300 citizens of Scotland and moving to finally implement the land reforms decided upon some years ago.

While the case is not so extreme in England its sporting estates and large landowners also do well out of tax breaks and subsidies and far too much land is still in the hands of a privileged few, the few who expect Westminster to govern for them. They are, so they believe, 'the people', the 'us' and 'we' who have more powerful voices than the rest. Indeed, quite a number of them are in government and I fail to understand why so many who are struggling to make ends meet should vote millionaires into power. But that is how asleep we are in England.

I want Scotland to be independent because I want it to reclaim its land and its self-sufficiency. And I want the same for England, indeed, for all of the UK. I want all of us to experience the political engagement that the debate over independence produced for the Scots. With the effects of climate change and global insecurity looming, I want us all to live lives not governed by Westminster, or power, or money – lives that are locally sustainable

communities; lives that are based on real inclusive democracy; lives that are independent but gladly sharing what we have with our equally independent neighbours.

I want what you want.

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