

Scotland's Independence Referendum: Prime Minister David Cameron's Propaganda Campaign to Boost the "No" Vote

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Region: [Europe](#)

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When I wrote about the approaching [Scottish Referendum](#) on independence, I didn't expect such a huge reaction. All I wanted was to make clear the shame and embarrassment I personally felt, caused by the heavy-handed and idiotic efforts of the "Better Together" camp to persuade, browbeat and in some cases bribe, the Scots to vote against independence. Also, as an Englishwoman I had taken no sides; I simply acknowledged how much Scotland has to be proud of, and the rest of us to be grateful for.

Readers responded in their thousands. Why? Were these people with Scottish ancestry, now living all across the globe, suddenly catching up with the referendum and the silliness of the campaigning? But I was assured that "a significant number" of readers were UK-based.

The only other reason I could see was that few if any other writers, and certainly none of those supporting a "No" vote (under the title Better Together), had emphasised how much Scotland has given the world, contributions that are very much Scottish, not British. Were Scots perhaps glad that their greatness was finally being given credit by someone from over the border?

As someone who will have no part in the referendum I can only stand back and wonder at the campaigning for both the "yes" and the "no" camps. Much of the time, the pro-independence people are busy knocking down the daft arguments put up by the anti-independence people. It is all about what Scotland- or England-will lose or gain in monetary terms. And in political power too, with the Better Together people in particular appearing frightened about how much political power they might lose if Scotland votes Yes. Neither side seems to address what Scotland has given in the past and what it can offer to the future.

As an example of how divorced some politicians are from the real concerns and beliefs of people both sides of the border, you can't find a better man than the UK's Prime Minister David Cameron. While he has refused any public debate with Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond and been discouraged from campaigning in Scotland (being a bit of an "own-goal" fellow), he is now paying more and, in some people's eyes, panicked visits to Scotland, trying to boost the No vote.

He recently had a busy two days in Scotland. First he [announced](#) that Glasgow was being given £500m – seen by most people as a bribe. Then he [addressed](#) a Conservative Party rally in Perth, where he begged Tory activists, [all 220 of them](#), Conservatives being in the minority in Scotland, to work hard for the Better Together campaign. They looked [a bit grim](#). He said he was appealing to the "silent majority", probably wisely silent in view of the

flood of words issuing from Westminster.

He talked about British pride and patriotism. He cited his great, great uncle Captain John Geddes, killed in the First World War, as an example of "Scotland's stake in the union". [Captain Geddes](#) was born in Chicago, lived in Winnipeg and served in a Canadian regiment – Better Together did I hear you cry?

He spoke about the UK's brand-new aircraft carrier that was to be christened with a bottle of single malt whisky by the Queen the following day. He said that the carrier project was evidence of the extra economic and military security which Scotland gained from the UK. "In a dangerous world, doesn't it make sense for us to stay together?" he added, ignoring the fact that the UK has had a great deal to do with making it so dangerous.

Is he serious? Extra economic and military security? Ex-UK Ambassador Craig Murray, an independence supporter if ever there was one, [had this to say](#):

"We could have built 120,000 new homes, desperately needed. Instead we spent the money on a [bloody big ship](#). To what purpose? An aircraft carrier is of no use to defend the British Isles – land based planes can do that much better."

The following day, as the aircraft carrier [was named](#) by the Queen at Rosyth, Cameron was booed by some of the crowd watching. Receiving more boos was Alex Salmond, who had had the temerity to bring along his 92-year old father – who had served on two Royal Navy aircraft carriers.

The anti-independence people hailed the carrier as "the flagship of the Better Together campaign". Cameron seemed totally oblivious to the embarrassing history of the aircraft carrier project, costing, as usual, far more than projected, and delivered, as usual, late and incomplete.

The full project concerns two carriers, the second one also being built at Rosyth – about the only good news for Scotland in the whole sorry mess, as it will guarantee jobs for a while longer. Due to the huge and spiraling cost of at least £6 billion, it looks as though the second carrier, when complete, will then be mothballed. But back in 2011 the Public Accounts Committee had [warned](#) that the final cost could be £10 billion.

The first will not be in service (if you can call it that) until 2017. It has had to be converted to take aircraft that it was not originally designed for, and those aircraft won't be ready until 2020. And, the Ministry of Defence procurement division showing its usual acumen, the jet aircraft in question are the too-expensive American F-35s. According to Lewis Page, because of design and cost, "the big new carriers will sail the seas [largely empty](#)".

Commodore Jerry Kidd, now Captain of the newly named HMS Queen Elizabeth, was interviewed on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme. He proudly spoke of the ship being "state of the art... nothing like it has been built before". He admitted that when it finally comes into service in 2017 there would be no planes on its deck. "There will be helicopters", he offered. But no planes until 2020. So, he was asked, as Captain of Britain's biggest-ever ship, what was he going to be doing for the next few years? Er...

There was to have been [fly-past](#) of F-35s at the naming ceremony. It had to be cancelled because all F-35 planes have been grounded due to an engine fire in one of them. However, the MoD then made matters worse by denying there was ever meant to be a fly-past.

And this miracle of overspend and disorganization is the “flagship” of Better Together?

But the Better Together campaign is, according to Cameron, taking a hint from Rory Stewart MP and Baroness Helena Kennedy, really all about “heart”. His “heart would be broken” if Scotland votes for independence.

The day before Cameron talked about “heart” Stewart, whose constituency shares a border with Scotland, and Kennedy, a “proud” Scot who would “hate” to see a severance, had [debated](#) the issues brought up by the campaigning. What were the English doing, asked Stewart; it was like watching the break-up of a marriage. “If we wish to keep this country together, we need to say something else. We need to say ‘we love you’”, he said. And Kennedy urged: “We have to say to them, ‘your contribution is vital and hasn’t been listened to enough’, let’s talk about liberal democracy, let’s talk about the values we all share ... that’s the love letter that will bring Scots together with the English to create a better kind of United Kingdom.”

A love letter? As in:

“Dear Scotland

I know I haven’t said this before, and I know we’ve been married for four hundred years or so – goodness, is it really that long? How time flies! I know I’ve treated you badly at times. Been rude and dismissive and spent your father’s money on my pet projects. Patronised you and ignored you when you’ve been trying to tell me something – but I love the Edinburgh Festival and deer stalking in the Highlands. And the whisky of course.

Still it really is time I got round to telling you how much I love you, how heartbroken I’d be if you left me. Honestly. Truly. I mean, haven’t I allowed you to live with me all these years? Isn’t that proof enough?

Very humbly and exceedingly lovingly yours

David Cameron

pp the rest of the United Kingdom”

So far, Scotland has been alternately threatened and bribed to stay within the United Kingdom. Now it appears there will be a love-in and we will all of us cringe while we watch Better Together sidle up to undecided Scottish voters carrying metaphorical chocolates and flowers. It is so embarrassing.

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