

I awoke at 2am with my usual head-buzz about my house renovation, and the sustainability of my lifestyle at present... but rather than nodding off amongst ever-decreasing eddies of problems-versus-solutions lapping round my mind, something started to germinate from what my dad had said on the phone earlier, about the question of Scotland's independence from England: If we are such a dead weight, so unable to stand without the crutch of English political, economic, etc support, then why (the hell) is it that England is hanging on so adamantly to our inconvenient weight? And in their Christian good-neighbourliness, so familiar from the colonial days, and so similar to the American consumerism of all world cultures; what are their real interests in/ on behalf of their poor northern relatives?

So many thoughts streaming along, and I was thinking about the very interesting shift in the discussion lately. Listening to the Jeremy Vine show this lunchtime it struck me with sudden lucidity that the tone has changed, the light on the whole matter has altered. It was always something laughable, the question of Scotland going it alone; why bother, and who would lead, and where would we go? But, like our nation's character, stoic and determined, willing and intelligent, we appear to have bided our time and quietly gone ahead and done it. Not many people are mentioning the fact that it is already done; we already voted in a majority government whose main drive is independence- rest is mere detail, no matter how Londoners want to dress it up.

A query which comes up so often in this particular debate; why do so many of you live abroad then, if your country is so great, why did you leave? My answer is only clear to me now, in the context of the heating debate: because we cannot thrive in our own country. But not for the reason that is being put to us now by decision-makers in the English capital; that our country cannot support us, no... Not flourishing is something which comes from the poverty psychology, and which is prevalent in every abusive relationship; that eternal muttering of negative put-downs about you are not strong enough, not able to survive without me: The Fear. This Fear, large and all-consuming, contagious, viral, is one of the last ditch attempts of the raving materialism-driven society to exert it's power over the inherently free. This is where we differ so greatly, our northern and southern cultures: we possess vastly opposite psychologies, and we in Scotland have been silently labouring to avoid assimilation all these years. Unlike the follow-the-flock culture of the south, which blindly remains loyal to the collective mindset, even down to its recent self-destructive rioting, the Scottish are a nation of free-thinkers, adventurers, inventors, engineers, artists, the list goes on. But the point is, our collective spirit is one of quiet tolerance, though this has been to our own detriment, and will have to change now, this can still be viewed as a positive trait, a strength gleaned through adversity.

This sense of tolerating something distasteful, it is a thing which has sat in my psyche and energy all my years, and affected each and every step of my life and work, from being on the dole in a Glasgow bedsit, to living in a high-rise in Edinburgh and campaigning for tenants' rights. It has fuelled all the dark moments, where I have felt inherently weak and unable to step forward into my destiny. Throughout my path there has been this intangible sense of something being glaringly obviously wrong, but there not being words for it... only now making sense, as the debate thickens and congeals into more substantial rhetoric. Our national conversation (like our traditional whisky-fuelled custom of fireside philosophising which runs on through the night) is nearing its peak; the weak dawn rays seeping in on the point in the dialogue where real truths start to come flowing, stimulated by that profound clarity which can only come at the end of a long night of untangling and reconstructing of ideas. I feel like that, like my mind has been pulling and tugging in all the wrong places on this issue, but is finally seeing something whole, as the right time comes to pass.

The question of our independence is no longer a query, it is a thing unfolding, as inevitable as the unravelling of the consumerist tendency, and the wealth-dependent notion of happiness. The

English, alongside their special friends in the US, have the harder job in this unfolding, because they do not have the inner resources, which we -perhaps similarly to other nations which have semi-willingly been suppressed- have had to develop in order to survive. Strange that the English parliament and other cynics still have this idea that Scotland, despite being the birthplace of such genius, adventure and art, might somehow not be able to thrive, when there are so many countries and cultures upon this fabulous planet who get along just fine with far less resources, technologies and/ or enthusiasm. The most pressing of our challenges is not how we will bail out our own banks, bring in businesses who do not trust our 'hasty' actions, nor the rest of these lame distractions, but rather whether or not we can stand tall and laugh at our enemy.

Two years ago, I decided to quit my country (again), and head for the sun, the positivity, the relative freedom of southern Europe, where people are not bound by this sense of something pressing down on them, stopping them from growing. Yes- the warmth, the good food, the family-oriented culture, and affordability of comfort, these are things which come from being closer to the sun, simple as that... but there is something essential to this bountiful freedom; an inherent need which is lacking in my own country's psyche: confidence. If you ever read that book 'Rich Dad, Poor Dad' you will know what I am describing; that entrepreneurial enthusiasm which one rides like a tight ship, when you are on course for your goals, when you know that you will achieve them all, if you set your mind and gain the resources that you need, and make the necessary efforts in the right direction... *This* is the psychology our world is evolving; one of cooperative self-evolution, where we set our minds to our vision, then we go out and make it happen. It is the modern language of business start-up, social entrepreneurship, new politics, deep ecology, which is rich with this kind of thinking, with positivity and 'we can do it' intention. Funny that this is applied to every other situation in our eccentric little island of not-so-united kingdoms, but that when it comes to Scotland, suddenly it is all 'exaggerated intake of breath, (imagine the cliché of the builder/ plumber/ mechanic telling the naïve customer) oh nooooo, you don't want to go and do that!' Though we have our genius and our prodigies, we need very much to develop a collective sense of direction and self-assuredness, which will remain unaffected by such undermining run-downs as the above.

It is so tangible when I have visited other countries, particularly where I am now in Italy; the absolute *surety* of all people, even from a very young age; the stance, mannerism and words, all shining with this standing-tall self-confidence. This is all that we could do with more of in our young Scotland! I, like many other of the Scottish diaspora, cannot stand to be around this vacuum of sureness: it is a draining, down-ward spiralling energy, which leads eventually to self-abuse and self-destruction. It is the bane of our inheritance, and yet it is the code to unlock our own transformation. When it comes to it, there will be no shortage of enthusiasm, abundance, energy or resources in our liberated existence. We already have all that is necessary for our collective evolution, whether it is on our own doorstep, or spread out around the planet, like its dynamic ever-migrating, ever-returning population (who, whilst we're on the subject, bring a wealth of ideas, resources, and energy back with them to Scotland, in a constant, self-initiated and self-sustaining cultural enrichment programme). Remember that our small nation is loved worldwide, not just liked, nor tolerated, but adored and welcomed throughout the lands. This is reason enough to want to be independent of our southern neighbours, who are derided on so many levels, for so many just reasons, and in so many countries.

Any major shift in power will necessitate a huge, balancing taking up of responsibility, and this will mean looking at our own social structures, problems, dynamics. But likening our situation in Scotland to the welfare state, this mutually-binding 'agreement' (if we can call it that) has served its purpose, but outlived its use; it is no longer a functioning or sustainable system. The dole culture now contains third (and probably fourth) generation folks who have never worked, and now, frankly, never intend to. This has little to do with posts being available, or money being there to be

earned; rather it's a life choice, and this dynamic is mighty similar to our arrangement with the London-based political structure, in which a large sector is kept docile and dis-empowered. In time, we will all see the sense in a more appropriate (more local) rule, where the people who are making decisions about life in crofts, villages, glens and islands, have actually *been* to a croft, village, glen or island, and understand something of the biodiversity of our unique land. Hopefully, before too long, we will start to see the logic of capturing the imaginations of the dis-empowered, loosening their reins, giving them the responsibility to fend for themselves...

Obviously this independence malarkey will be neither all hunky-dory nor *The Good Life*, but Scotland will grow in its own spirited way, into its own vision, under the steam of its own inimitable, indomitable spirit. This spirit cannot be roused when it is being tied like Gulliver in Lilliput by a million small strands of bureaucratic restriction from a vastly different culture, nor e.g. when the flow of economics is so atrophied by home and business owners from the south buying up land and property (and a better way of life), and pricing the Scots out of their own market. But these issues are just part of the binds which we are already cutting away; Scotland will find its own solutions in its own good time.