

## “A Union dividend”

The UK government has started talking in terms of a Union dividend for Scotland. They tell us there is a “Union dividend of £1941 per person” in Scotland “demonstrating the strength of all parts of the UK working together”.

The “dividend” has two parts. Scottish taxpayers pay on average £308 a year less tax than the UK average. Scotland receives £1633 more public spending per person a year. The dividend of £1941 is up 7.5% on last year.

It is interesting that this increase has happened at a time when polls suggest support for independence is rising. This implies voters in Scotland either do not know this fact, or think there are more important things than taxes and spending levels.

The government is making an economic case for the Union. It points out Scotland would be massively in deficit if it were not part of the UK. The devolved Scottish government which has been given £6.5bn more to spend during the CV 19 crisis would be struggling on its own, with a £15bn or 8.4% budget deficit before the pandemic recession. This means an even bigger running deficit now.

The Union itself should not be in doubt as it was settled for a generation by a referendum a few years ago. I have always only wanted volunteers in our Union and pledged to respect whatever decision the Scottish people took in their big vote. Now is not the time to have another. Wanting to belong to a country is more about feeling and loyalties than about money for the believers on both sides of the argument.

For those with less passion about the issue it is important to remember the inability of the independent Scotland side to settle on what currency an independent Scotland would have or how it would handle a collapse in oil prices which duly happened. What do you think about the current level of the Scottish “dividend”? Why is there no English dividend?