

My Intervention to the Minister during the SNP Opposition Debate on Scotland's Future

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): The SNP was very critical of the electricity and energy regulation in the UK, and said that it wanted change in it. It did not seem to realise that all our current regulations are those of the European single electricity market, and that it is only because of Brexit that this Government are now consulting on changing those unsatisfactory regulations.

John Lamont MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland: That is a useful reminder that, while the SNP advocate breaking away from the rest of the UK and breaking away from Westminster and London, it wants even closer ties with Brussels and all the challenges and bureaucracy around that. I always welcome the opportunity that the SNP gives us to talk about the benefits that we all get from being part of the United Kingdom, and all the positives and strengths that come from working together across the whole country. The United Kingdom is the most successful political and economic union that the world has ever seen. In challenging times, we are stronger together. We are better prepared to deal with any crisis, particularly an issue on the scale of the energy crisis, or of the very thing that created the energy crisis—Vladimir Putin's awful war in Ukraine.

In these volatile times, I continue to believe that the last thing people need is greater uncertainty. This is a time for unity behind a common purpose, not division that would split us apart. The challenges facing all of us across Scotland and the whole of the United Kingdom demand all of our attention.

On the substance of the motion, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh East well knows, the Scottish people do not see another referendum as a priority. There is no consensus across Scotland on another referendum and all the division and distraction that that would bring. We already know the process by which a constitutional question can be asked, because it happened back in 2014. We had a referendum and the people of Scotland decided our future by an overwhelming majority. That happened after there was consensus across political parties in the Scottish Parliament, in civic society and among people across Scotland. That is not where we are today.

If SNP Members want to focus their arguments solely on opinion polls, then what do they have to say about the polls, including recent ones, that show that people do not want another referendum on Nicola Sturgeon's timetable? No matter how many polls there are that show a majority of Scots against another referendum, the SNP still wants us to go through the distraction of an all-consuming constitutional debate. It is all it cares about—another referendum at all costs.