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- McDonnell: Labour wouldn't stand in the way of indyref2

4 Nov 2018



The second most influential figure in the UK Labour party has admitted his party wouldn't stand in the way of a second independence referendum.

Shadow chancellor John McDonnell told BBC's Sunday Politics a Labour government would "consider whatever proposals come forward" in relation to a re-run of the 2014 vote.

It follows remarks by leader Jeremy Corbyn in September that he would hand the SNP power to hold its own referendum.

The comments appear to jar with the leader in Scotland, Richard Leonard, who has recently tried and failed to toughen the party's line on separation.

Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said:

"This is further evidence that Labour are comically weak when it comes to standing up to the SNP's independence demands.

"It's no wonder the party is tanking north of the border when its two most important figures couldn't care less about Scotland.

"It's clear a Labour government would lie down and allow Scotland to be ripped out of Britain.

"That's a shameful failing on Labour's part, and one which completely betrays the majority of voters in Scotland.

"This all goes to show, once again, that only the Scottish Conservatives can stand up to Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP."

Notes to editors:

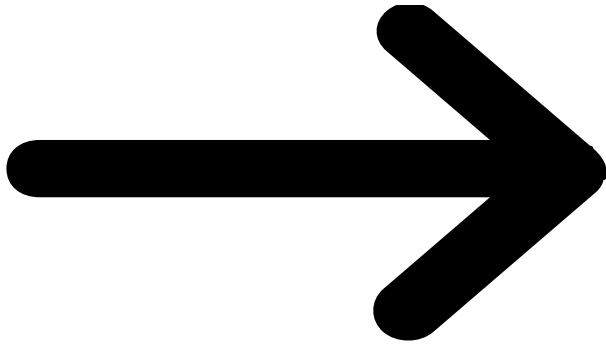
John McDonnell made the remarks on Sunday Politics today:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bptkvz>

SNP has “lost touch” with the north-east of Scotland

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3 Nov 2018



The SNP has ‘lost touch’ with the north-east of Scotland, interim Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw will say this weekend.

Mr Carlaw is one of several speakers at the Scottish Conservative party’s annual North East Conference on Saturday.

The event in Westhill will be attended by five Scottish Conservative MPs representing north-east constituencies and five MSPs – as well as councillors from the ruling administrations of both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils.

In his speech, Mr Carlaw, who is standing in for Ruth Davidson while the party leader is on maternity leave, will say that this week’s Budget was further proof of the Scottish Conservatives delivering for the north-east.

The Chancellor announced support for the oil and gas, whisky and fishing sectors following lobbying from Scottish Conservative MPs.

Mr Carlaw will say: “This week has seen more proof that the Scottish Conservatives delivering for the north-east.

“We lobbied hard to deliver a freeze on whisky duty and fuel – two massive issues of concern for this region.

“We called for the Chancellor to deliver stability for the oil and gas sector.

“And our Scottish MPs have again made it clear: when it comes to Brexit, we will support our fishing industry to the hilt.

“We lobbied. The Government acted. The north-east of Scotland will benefit as

a result.

“The reaction from the SNP to all this has been frankly bizarre. Indeed, bordering on petulant.

“Despite the fact that Oil and Gas UK welcomed the measures in the Budget, the SNP claimed it delivered “nothing” for the north-east.

“Despite the fact that they themselves lobbied for a freeze in whisky duty, Nicola Sturgeon and Derek MacKay still haven’t been able to bring themselves to welcome it.

“And on fishing, their big plan is for us to stay in the CFP.

“It all points to one conclusion: the SNP has simply lost touch with the north-east.

“Whatever else you may have thought of them, politicians like Alex Salmond and Angus Robertson at least knew their patch.

“By contrast, when it comes to the concerns of people and businesses the North East, Nicola Sturgeon has been posted missing.

“Her only bright idea being to force skilled workers here to pay an extra £1000 a year in tax compared to people working in other parts of the UK.

“The SNP has given up on the North East of Scotland. The Scottish Conservatives are now the party of the North East.”

[SNP ‘putting nationalism before farming’ by snubbing UK-wide approach](#)

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- SNP ‘putting nationalism before farming’ by snubbing UK-wide approach

3 Nov 2018



The SNP has been accused of “putting nationalism before farming” with its refusal to join all other parts of the UK in a post-Brexit agricultural plan.

The UK Government has revealed that while Wales and Northern Ireland are on board with the Agricultural Bill, the SNP government has “chosen not to take part”.

The bill's extension allows devolved administrations to develop their own support systems to replace the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Despite the snub from SNP ministers, the UK Government said the offer "remains on the table".

The Scottish Conservatives have criticised the move, saying the SNP was simply trying to be different to avoid co-operation with political colleagues in England.

Shadow rural economy secretary Donald Cameron said farmers here could be left behind as a result, particularly as the SNP had failed to come up with any of its own plans.

Scottish Conservative shadow rural economy secretary Donald Cameron said:

"The SNP are simply creating further uncertainty and confusion for Scotland's farmers and crofters.

"This decision not to follow other devolved administrations is simply a case of putting nationalism before the interests of agriculture.

"The short-sighted refusal of the SNP to include Scotland in the UK Agriculture Bill will mean that Scotland's farmers are left behind in comparison to those in Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

"The SNP's blinkered ideological stance flies in the face of organisations like the NFUS who are concerned that as a result Scotland may be unable to participate in designing a new agricultural policy after Brexit alongside the rest of the nations of the UK.

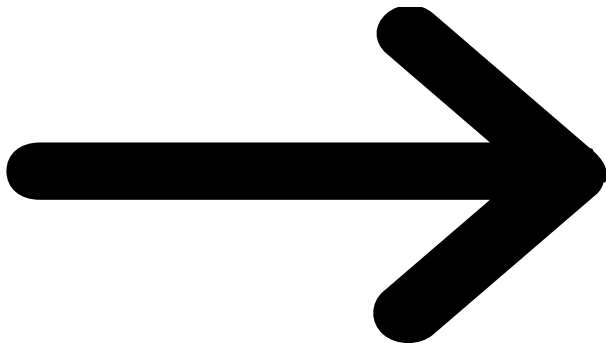
"Given the SNP government has yet to set out any substantive policy for future farming support, Scotland's farmers are being kept in the dark at the very time when they need clarity.

"It's high time the SNP took a pragmatic and constructive approach on post-Brexit agriculture which puts the interests of Scotland's farmers and crofters first."

[Sturgeon rules out tax help for middle-income Scots](#)

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- Sturgeon rules out tax help for middle-income Scots

1 Nov 2018



Nicola Sturgeon has refused to help middle-income Scots in the upcoming budget, even though millions elsewhere in the UK will receive a tax break.

At First Minister's Questions today, she was challenged to set out what she would do to reduce the widening gap in taxes paid between workers here and in the rest of Britain.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw pointed out that middle-earners like senior teachers, nurses and police officers could end up paying up to £1000 a year more than those doing the same jobs south of the border.

He asked Ms Sturgeon to give some "hope" to those workers ahead of finance secretary Derek Mackay's budget next month.

But she refused, instead setting out how she would have different spending priorities.

The First Minister was also challenged on the difference between projected public spending for Scotland under UK Government plans, which is almost three times higher than plans contained within the SNP's own independence blueprint.

Chancellor Philip Hammond said UK public spending would increase by 1.4 per cent every year until 2024, whereas the nationalist's Growth Commission only aspired to 0.5 per cent.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"Despite demanding more money from the UK Government, and getting it, the SNP appears reluctant to pass on the same tax cuts.

"This was a chance for Nicola Sturgeon to offer a glimmer of hope to middle-earners across the country, including senior nurses, teachers and police officers, that she is on their side.

"But they'll have seen her reaction, and will be bracing themselves for more misery in this upcoming budget.

"The SNP's response to the budget has been an all-too-predictable whinge.

"The nationalists asked for a freeze on whisky duty – they got it. They asked

for support for North Sea oil – they got it. And they wanted more overall investment from Westminster – they got it.

“The dismal reaction since is evidence that this is a grudge-and-grievance SNP government, led by a grudge-and-grievance First Minister.”

[Bill passes first stage to secure the banking network in rural communities](#)

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- Bill passes first stage to secure the banking network in rural communities

31 Oct 2018



Banks that have been helped by the tax payer after the financial crash and are the last remaining bank in rural communities should have a legal responsibility to ensure access to banking provisions are in place, Scottish Conservative MP Luke Graham said.

The Campaign for Community Banking Services produced an estimate of the number of unbanked communities, which stated 1500 communities have lost all access to their banks.

Today Mr Graham successfully introduced a Ten Minute Rule Bill to the House of Commons to amend the law relating to rural banking and small communities.

The Banking and Post Office Services (rural areas and small communities) bill will make provisions to place the Access to Banking Standard onto a statutory footing; to place a duty on a closing bank to provide a community investment fund from those banks which has received significant tax-payer assistance in the aftermath of the last economic crash; and to strengthen the provision of post office services for rural and small communities across the UK.

The bill will also seek to establish a Community Fund of £100,000 for each branch closure of tax payer owned banks to help support the communities and customers they are abandoning.

Commenting the MP for Ochil and South Perthshire, Luke Graham said:

“The treatment of our rural communities by our banks, especially those such as RBS, that have been bailed out by the British tax payer, is an injustice.

“In some parts of my constituency, those with no access to their own vehicle are expected to make a 50 plus mile, 2 hour round trip by bus to access their bank. This is hardly going to become more bearable as we head into the cold months of winter in Scotland.

“For any further closures, a rural weighting should be added to ensure the local Post Office has the resources to cope, and that local geography, weather patterns, public transport, broadband and mobile coverage is considered. It would give additional heft to hold the banks to account and ensure rural communities are not deserted.

“When banks and institutions have accepted public funding, they must accept it comes with public responsibilities. We cannot have rural and small communities being abandoned, we cannot have a two-speed UK, which is why I am delighted the bill has passed its first stage.”