

# **“THE UNION DELIVERS FOR THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND” – KEZIA DUGDALE**

**21 March 2017**

Scottish Labour MSPs will vote against the SNP’s plan for another divisive referendum.

That was the message from Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale today. She said that the clear will of the Scottish people was expressed in 2014, when more than 2million voted to remain in the UK.

Scotland is already divided enough – we don’t need to be divided any further. That’s why Labour is so opposed to yet another divisive referendum.

**Below is the full text of Kezia Dugdale’s speech in the Scottish Parliament today:**

“Presiding Officer I wish this was the start of a two day debate on education in Scotland.

“We could focus on the need to close the attainment gap.

“We could put forward proposals for giving young people the best chance in life.

“We could come up with innovative ways to lift 260,000 Scottish children out of poverty.

“But instead we are back talking about the only thing that has ever really mattered to the SNP.

“Nicola Sturgeon wakes up every single day thinking of ways to engineer another referendum.

“Because leaving the UK is the only thing that matters to her.

“It isn’t improving education in Scotland.

“It isn’t lifting children out of poverty.

“It’s independence. That will always come first and the truth is it always has.

“When the first majority Labour Government established the NHS and the welfare state, the SNP wanted Scotland to leave the UK.

“When the last Labour Government introduced ground breaking anti-discrimination laws, maternity and paternity leave, the national minimum wage, tax credits, rights at work and civil partnerships, the SNP was arguing for Scotland to leave the UK.

“When the UK Labour Government delivered a Scottish Parliament – the expressed will of the people following a referendum – the SNP still campaigned for Scotland to leave the UK.

“Brexit isn’t the motivation for another referendum – it’s just the latest excuse.

“Now we have heard a lot from the First Minister about mandates. But people have noticed the shift in the SNP’s language.

“They used to demand that the will of the Scottish people be respected but the will of the Scottish people was very clearly expressed in 2014.

“Eighty five per cent of our fellow citizens voted in the first referendum.

“And they voted by a very clear majority to remain in the United Kingdom.

“More than two million Scots, in the biggest mandate ever given to any political leaders in Scotland’s history, voted to remain in the UK.

“That’s the will of the Scottish people and that is what should be respected.

“We have already heard from the First Minister about the need to respect the will of this Parliament.

“If only she’d respected the mandate given to government by this chamber before now.

“If she had, several local NHS services would be free from the threat of closure hanging above their head.

“The First Minister would have banned fracking.

“And she would have scrapped the Football Act too.

“This Parliament has had its say on Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Scottish Funding Council. Will the First Minister respect that?

“And this Parliament voted to demand a change of course from the Nationalists on education. Given that’s apparently her defining priority, surely the First Minister will respect that?

“So when this Parliament votes for another referendum – as it inevitably will thanks to the perpetual crutch the Greens provide – let’s not pretend it reflects the will of the Scottish people.

“Because it doesn’t.

“The people of Scotland do not want another divisive referendum.

“Last week the First Minister said the 2014 referendum wasn’t divisive. She obviously didn’t speak to many people beyond her own party faithful.

“Because my experience, and the experience of the very many Scots who have

taken the time to tell me on the doorstep, in the street and by email is that this country – their country – felt more divided than at any time in their lived memory.

“Families argued.

“Colleagues fell out.

“And communities were split down the middle.

“No bus, no train, no pub, no community centre, no work place, no living room escaped that fall out.

“And last Monday, the first day of this campaign, felt just as hostile and polarised as the 847th and final day of the last. Where does it end?

“Some of those who voted to leave the UK and the majority who voted to remain in the UK don’t want to go back to the divisions of the past.

“But if there is to be another referendum...

“If the First Minister must drag the people of Scotland back there...

“The Labour Party will campaign with everything we have to remain in the UK.

“And let me tell you why:

“I believe in the United Kingdom not as a symbol of past glories or purest ideology – but as a living, breathing union of nations that delivers for the people of Scotland.

“The pensioners, whose income is secured through a UK state pension and benefits system.

“The shipyard workers, who are in jobs because of UK defence contracts.

“The staff in East Kilbride, who deliver aid to some of the poorest countries in the world on behalf of us all.

“The schools that are built because of the extra money we receive by being in the UK.

“The NHS that we built together that is sustained because we pool and share our resources across the whole of Britain.

“The businesses, large and small, that are able to thrive because of the access they have to our UK single market.

“The scientists who carry out life-saving medical research because of funding from UK research councils.

“These are the things that I value most.

“These are the things that being part of the UK has delivered for families in

Scotland.

“So much prosperity and security.

“At a time when so much of the world is ravaged by division.

“When the trend in too many places is separation...

“...I value the fact that our four nations come together to share sovereignty and resources.

“That we recognise that together we’re stronger, more so than we ever could be apart.

“And I say to the members opposite:

“It is not this union of nations which is intrinsically unjust or unfair, it’s the actions of the powerful within it.

“Now I hate what the Tories are doing to Britain. I’ve never felt anger like it.

“Their austerity programme is destroying public services that we all value and the poorest rely on.

“But the SNP cannot escape from the facts.

“Leaving the UK would make things much worse for the poorest people in Scotland.

“And in the 6 years I’ve sat in this chamber I’ve never once heard a convincing argument to the contrary.

“Because separation would mean £15 billion worth of cuts.

“£15,000 million worth of cuts to schools and hospitals. The government’s own figures tell us that.

“It means cuts to pensions. John Swinney told us that.

“It means an end to the UK defence contracts that keep thousands in work.

“Those are the facts.

“The Nationalists don’t want to hear them.

“They will howl and they will rage.

“They will question the patriotism of those who back unity over division.

“But they cannot escape the reality.

“We are a stronger, richer, fairer and better nation by remaining in the UK.

“Tomorrow evening, Scottish Labour MSPs will vote against a divisive second

independence referendum.

“That was our manifesto commitment to the people of Scotland.

“And we will honour it.”

**If you believe that together we're stronger as part of the UK then sign out  
pledge at [www.togetherstronger.scot](http://www.togetherstronger.scot)**