

# We need to renew the UK and bring Scotland together.

By Kezia Dugdale

The effects of Brexit and the drumbeat of a second independence referendum coming from Nicola Sturgeon means that questions about how we run our country are again at the centre of our politics.

But what is clear is that neither a Tory hard Brexit nor a divisive second independence referendum is what the majority of Scots want.

People want change, but they don't want the country to be divided again. Instead, we need to start thinking about how we work together. We need a new deal for how power is redistributed in this country. One that brings power closer to communities. Not just in Scotland but across the whole UK.

Nicola Sturgeon and Ruth Davidson sit in the Scottish Parliament chiefly because of the efforts of the Scottish constitutional convention in the 1980s, which led to the creation of the Scottish Parliament.

It was Labour that championed devolution for decades. And it is bitterly disappointing to Labour politicians like me that in a decade of SNP government, they have not unlocked the potential of devolution.

That potential includes bringing power closer to the people, bridging the gap between the governed and those who govern and to give people more influence over the decisions that affect their lives.

The vote for Brexit isn't just the failure of the Remain campaign; it's a failure of our system of government.

If you think Westminster feels remote in Glasgow then imagine how it feels in Wigan or Sunderland.

I lost count of the number of colleagues from across the rest of the UK who reported back from the doorsteps during the EU referendum that people were willing to gamble on Brexit because, really, how much worse could it get?

In Scotland those feelings revealed themselves two years earlier during the independence referendum.

Then it was my turn on the doorstep to hear that, while the SNP had not made the case, people were willing to take a leap into the dark because, really, how much worse could it get?

In a generation the UK has gone from feeling that things can only get better to things can't possibly get worse.

That's why we need to change how we govern ourselves.

Our system of government was not doing the job it should have done before Brexit or the independence referendum.

That's why I want to see a People's Constitutional Convention and a new Act of Union to renew the UK for a new age.

This proposal means more powers for Scotland but strengthens the whole UK as well.

It seeks to build out from the benefits we already derive from being part of the UK, and it would bring power closer to people.

Our country feels so divided just now. Between remain and leave, yes and no, rich and poor. But together we're stronger. That's why Labour is making the case for bringing power closer to communities, redistributing power through the UK the way we redistribute wealth through the UK.

That's a better future for Scotland than a hard Tory Brexit, or a divisive second independence referendum.

That's why we need to change how we govern ourselves.

This article originally appeared in the Daily Record on 14/02/17