



**Speech by Alastair Cameron, Scotland In Union Executive Director, Introducing SIU's London supporters' event, 11th July 2016**

Welcome to this Scotland In Union event, and thank you for sparing the time to attend. Some of you are here because you have already supported us over the last months – if so, thank you so much.

Scotland In Union launched in spring 2015, when a few of us decided that there was a need for a non-party, pro-UK group to continue to make the case for Scotland being in the UK. From the start, we set up for the long run – we are properly constituted, as a company limited by guarantee, and we have previously been registered with the Electoral Commission (though that has finished as we are not currently in an election or referendum campaign – and I hope we won't be in one of soon, either).

I won't go into the history of SIU too much - you can read about some of our achievements on our website. But to give you an idea, we have campaigned via economic research (for example our reports on the Scottish Government's finances and on the costs of separation), polling, print media articles and coverage, street stalls, social media, leafleting and even billboards. We have been gaining momentum all the time and are now making a real impact.

We have four staff, two of whom are full time, with unpaid input from me, other directors, and an Advisory Board of experienced influencers from various backgrounds – again, you can read more on our website.

Perhaps most importantly, since our launch we have helped a lot of people to feel more positive about our political situation, providing hope and encouraging them to get involved and take action. This has been all the more important in recent weeks, and our support levels have increased by over 30% since 24<sup>th</sup> June – which tells you how crucial our role is just now. People come up to our street stalls and say quietly “I'm so glad you are doing this”, and you don't need to spend long on our Facebook page to see the expressions of relief and support.

We have the same vision for the future that we had at our launch. Notwithstanding the current situation, we will play our part in achieving the conditions in the 2020s where Scotland, and Scots, are secure and confident in the UK, and the pursuit of Scottish independence is once again a marginal pastime – as it was only about ten years ago.

Scotland In Union will continue to support the moderate majority, based on three strategic themes.

The first theme is the cultural and emotional theme, helping people to feel happy and comfortable to be both British and Scottish, and dispelling the negative myths of nationalism. We want the best for Scotland AND for the UK, and the good news is that those things still coincide. We support Team GB, not just the Scottish athletes. And we recognise the bonds of culture, history and kinship which exist across the UK.

Our second theme is helping people to understand the benefits of the UK —we call this the rational theme. In a logical world, this would be sufficient: the benefits to Scotland, the rest of the UK, and indeed to the world of a strong, positive United Kingdom have been rehearsed many times. I'm delighted that one of guest speakers this evening is Kevin Hague, who has done as much as anyone to demonstrate the holes in the separatists' economic arguments. We also highlight the non-economic benefits of being part of the UK, such as the benefits of a British passport when travelling overseas; of free movement across the UK; and the influence Scotland can have in the world as part of the UK. This rational theme is of course particularly important just now, when we need cool heads and a focus on what is best for Scotland, based on facts and reality after Brexit.

Our third theme is the political one. We are not a party, but we believe we have a role to play in politics. We will remind people that political debates in Scotland should be about using the significant powers of the Scottish Parliament, rather than politicians indulging in constitutional wrangling at the expense of running the country. We will support and amplify the main pro-UK parties in this area.

Mention of the political theme brings me onto recent events, of course. I don't want to obsess about Brexit, but there is no doubt that we need to see the EU referendum vote, the result and its ramifications clearly, and not accept 'received wisdom' which arrives courtesy of the SNP's well-funded PR and media machine.

If you look at the constituency map of the EU referendum results, in yellow and blue (an unfortunate coincidence of colours!), it does look as though there is a stark difference at the Scottish border, but let's think a bit harder about it. First, it's the wrong map – the results are shown by constituency because that's how the vote was administered, but it was really a UK vote, so the map should actually show the whole country in a light shade of blue. For most people, it was a UK vote, and I'd like to use my home town of Edinburgh as a case study here. Edinburgh voted 75% Remain in 2016 – but it also voted 61% No in 2014; those Edinburgh Remain votes – including mine, for what it's worth – were not a mandate to break up the UK.

There were also significant variances within Scotland (for example Moray, which was incredibly close). Furthermore, more people across Scotland voted No in 2014 than voted Remain in 2016: it is too much to assume Scotland wants to leave the UK just because a lot of people in Scotland wanted the UK to stay in the EU. Of course, the SNP are brilliant at hammering a line home, over and over again, “we have been dragged out” and so on. Please, help people to see the more complex reality of the situation – and also the absurdity of the “dragged out” line: if 2014 had gone the wrong way you can be sure the nationalists would have dragged large areas of Scotland out of the UK without a second thought.

Even more importantly, we need to work from where we are now, and consider what is best for the UK and for Scotland – and a second independence referendum is not the answer. I’m actually pretty confident the nationalists would fail again in a referendum, despite all the current rhetoric and speculation – but that doesn’t make us want a referendum.

The nationalists would not prevail because the economic fundamentals have not changed; people don’t actually want a hard border at Gretna, Coldstream and Berwick; and there is actually no deal currently on the table for Scotland to join the EU (and if there was, it might be a difficult one). Despite all that, though, we do not need, and we don’t want, the bitter divisiveness, the expense, and the distraction from government of another Scottish referendum campaign, particularly when things are so fluid at the moment. We need to take stock and see how things are panning out for the UK and our relationship with the EU, rather than be bounced into a premature referendum without clear options. Please remember, Sturgeon and the SNP MPs speak for their party, not for everyone in Scotland, in these matters.

To recap, in reverse order: now is not the time for a new referendum; the fundamental economic facts for Scotland have not been changed by Brexit; and we need to remember and recall the positive aspects of our shared culture, working together in the UK. Please help us to make these points in the coming weeks and months.