

A START TO A NEW SONG: THE 1997 DEVOLUTION REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN

Peter Jones

On the evening of Thursday 11 September, Scotland's chattering classes - politicians who had fought for and against constitutional change, journalists who had chronicled their battles, academics who had analysed the tides of opinion, celebrities who had poked their heads into the capricious winds of politics - drifted into the Edinburgh International Conference Centre to see the results of the referendum on the Labour government's plan for a Scottish parliament.

Sobriety best describes the mood of the gathering, not just because, win or lose, all that was available to celebrate or drown sorrows was coffee and fizzy water, accompanied by such Scottish delicacies as bagels and ciabatta bread. For most, the arguments of the campaign had been as familiar and unremarkable as blue sky and green grass. The general consensus was that the 'yes-yes' campaign had won by a reasonable margin on the first question, perhaps 70-30 at best, and by a less comfortable extent on the second question, maybe 60-40 at the outside. Uneasy jokes circulated: North Lanarkshire voters had all spoiled their second tax-varying ballot paper because it was printed on green paper. The only worry was over how many voters had turned out. Rumours washed about that it was only 55%, worse still, only 50%. Was this good enough?

The Tories, the back-bone of the 'no-no' campaign, tended to huddle in groups. They conceded that they had lost the first question, but anxiously calculated their chances of winning a 'no' vote on the second question of tax-

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raising powers. The Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, swept in, attended by advisers and television lights, but refused to answer questions, adding to the slight air of worry.

In the event, it was all over in an anti-climactic flash as soon as the first result came in. A remarkable 66.1 per cent had turned out to vote in Clackmannanshire. Even more stunningly, 80% voted 'yes' to the first question on establishing the Scottish parliament, and 69% voted 'yes' to the parliament having tax-raising powers. It was all over bar the recording of the results in the other 31 local authority areas.

To a general air of disbelief, conditioned by knowledge of the debacle of the 1979 referendum and the unexpected Tory victory in the 1992 general election, the Scots had broken the defeat-from-the-jaws-of-victory habits of a generation. The turn-out was big, 60.4%, which party organisers estimated was equivalent to a true turn-out of 71% given that the electoral register was 11 months out of date and some 15% of the names on it could not vote because they had died or moved house.

Of those who voted, 74.3% marked the box against 'I agree that there should be a Scottish Parliament', and 63.5% had agreed that the parliament should have tax-varying powers. Only in two areas, Orkney and Dumfries and Galloway, was there a 'no' vote, and those were narrowly (52.6% and 51.2% respectively) only against the tax-varying power.

This was not a complete surprise to all the campaign participants. Two weeks before polling, Andy Myles, chief executive of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, concluded that the public's mood was much as it was at the general election. 'The electorate had made up their mind what they were going to do a long time ago, and nothing was going to shift them,' he said then.

As percentages of the Scottish electorate, 44.8% voted 'yes' to the first question and 38.4% voted 'yes' to the second. Applying the same adjustment to the electoral register as was applied in 1979 to discount the dead, even the second question would have passed the infamous rule in that referendum that 40% of the electorate must consent to the proposal before it would pass.

On 11 September, the Scots did not just agree that there should be a Scottish parliament; they thumped the table and demanded it, unequivocally. The result means that there can be no argument: the Scottish parliament is, in the late John Smith's phrase, 'the settled will of the Scottish people', and cannot

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now, as the Tories were commendably quick to accept, be undone except also by the will of the people.

But it did not always look like that was to be the outcome.

UNEXPECTED EVENTS

This was a campaign that threatened, like perhaps no other campaign, to be de-railed by unexpected events. Firstly there was the Tommy Graham affair - the controversy about the operation of the Labour party in Renfrewshire and the role of Mr Graham, MP for West Renfrewshire, which blew up after the suicide of Gordon McMaster, MP for Paisley South. Secondly there was the death in a car crash in Paris of Diana, Princess of Wales. The first obscured the launch of the campaign in a fog of reporting and speculation about the degree of political corruption in Paisley Labour politics; the second caused the suspension of the campaign for an entire week, unprecedented in modern politics.

Before these events had intruded, it seemed that a minor miracle had occurred. Three political parties - Labour, the Liberal Democrats, and the Scottish National Party - had agreed to put aside their differences and campaign jointly for a 'yes-yes' vote. Although the Lib Dems argued since the announcement of the referendum plan by the Labour Party in June 1996 that it was unnecessary, their long adherence to Scottish home rule meant they had no option but to campaign for a 'yes-yes' vote, especially as it was to be a parliament elected by proportional representation. And because they had stuck with Labour in the Scottish Constitutional Convention through thick and thin since it was formed in 1988, and both parties had put the same scheme in their manifestos for the 1997 general election, referendum campaign co-operation with the Labour party was pretty much a foregone conclusion.

Much more problematic was the co-operation of the SNP. Many of its senior figures have never forgiven Labour for what they saw as the betrayal of the 1979 referendum. Then, the SNP was the only party not split over devolution and put all its effort into securing a 'yes' vote. In contrast, although it was the plan of the Labour government, the Labour Party in Scotland was badly split. Its activities on the ground in support of a 'yes' vote were at best patchy, at worst cancelled out by Labour members urging a 'no' vote. This, plus the facts that the 'yes' campaign actually won with 51.6% of the vote, but the government did not implement the scheme as the vote did not reach the threshold of 40% of the electorate, a requirement inserted into the legislation

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by rebellious anti-devolution Labour back-benchers, were memories deeply seared into the soul of the SNP.

More recently, the SNP had continued to denounce the Convention plan as a 'puppet parliament'. They saw the referendum plan as a ploy by Tony Blair, the Labour leader, to ditch devolution, and scorned it as a 'rigged referendum' because it would not have independence as an option on the ballot paper. The bitterness on the Labour side of the fence runs equally deep. Labour has viewed the SNP as a wrecking party, not only depriving it of seats, such as Ayr and Stirling in 1992, but also distracting the voters from the task of ousting the Tories.

Yet there were plenty of Labour members, some in senior positions, who had equally bitter memories of the divisions and frustrations of 1979, and who had privately resolved that any new referendum campaign should be run by a cross-party coalition. In fact this was readily accepted by Blair. In the few days in June 1996 before the fateful referendum policy decision by a shadow cabinet sub-committee was announced, senior MPs and officials from Scotland pressed him to accept that there should be a cross-party campaign. Blair agreed, and announced that intention in his speech at Edinburgh University on 28 June.

THE YES-YES CAMPAIGN

The strife over the referendum plan which ensued inside the Scottish Labour party had a significant effect on the election campaign. A coalition of left-wingers and nationalists on the Scottish Labour executive committee feared that Blair had devised the two-question referendum in order to ditch the tax-varying powers of the Scottish parliament, or even to scupper the entire devolution project. Their battle to undo the referendum against the executive's Blair loyalists of equal strength and determination forced George Robertson, the shadow Scottish secretary, into some humiliating policy U-turns. Robertson got what he wanted - the original plan preserved intact - by 5 September, but the contortions he went through had a significant cost.

Firstly, they meant that Labour could not give as high a profile as it could have done to its election commitment that it would trust the people over devolution, although the referendum did defuse Tory attacks on the constitutional issue. Secondly, and more importantly, the SNP was easily able to evade election questions on what attitude they would take in a referendum. They pointed out that Labour had had four different policies - no referendum, a two-question referendum, a two-stage three-question

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referendum, and back to a two-question referendum - inside two months. So they would wait and see what Labour did if it won the election.

Robertson paid a price for this: Blair did not appoint him Scottish Secretary after the election on 1 May. The blow of not getting a job for which he worked and planned was softened by his appointment as Defence Secretary. Blair turned instead to Donald Dewar, who had excelled as chief whip in the last year of opposition, was widely respected and had intimate knowledge of Scottish politics from his long spell as shadow Scottish Secretary 1983-92. The importance that Blair attached to the post was signalled by the fact that it was announced in the first raft of senior ministerial appointments alongside those of Chancellor and Foreign Secretary. With an ambitious programme of constitutional reform (where Blair intends to give meaning to his words that his government would be more radical than people expected), he could not afford to stumble at the first hurdle.

The change from Robertson to Dewar altered the nature of the eventual 'yes-yes' campaign. Robertson, with the Scottish party's general secretary Jack McConnell, had begun planning it pre-election. They decided that the Scottish Constitutional Convention was not equipped to run a campaign nor would the SNP, either as a party or as individual members, be likely to join a Convention campaign given the SNP's history of opposition to it. They agreed with Canon Kenyon Wright, the Convention's executive chairman, that it would be best to set up an organisation which was separate from the Convention, but which was seen to be a creature of the Convention.

Nigel Smith, the managing director of David Auld Valves, a Glasgow manufacturing company agreed to chair the new organisation, Scotland Forward. Apart from a rather stolid demeanour, which made him a dull front man as far as the media was concerned, he was the identikit chairman. He was committed to home rule, giving him credibility with Labour and the Liberal Democrats. He was a businessman, so might attract individual pro-devolution Tories. His campaigns for Scottish autonomy in broadcasting also gave him credibility with the SNP.

Robertson, who has a visceral hatred of the SNP, saw Scotland Forward consisting of the Convention's partners plus individual Nationalists and Tories. He did not want the SNP collectively as a campaign partner. Dewar however took a different view; he believed it was important to have the SNP leadership on board in Scotland Forward in order to have the SNP's campaigning machine working on full throttle during the campaign.

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While working on the Scottish parliament white paper, he met privately at the House of Commons, firstly with Margaret Ewing, the SNP's parliamentary leader; and then secondly (taking along Henry McLeish, Scottish Office minister for constitutional affairs) with Alex Salmond, the SNP leader, and Mike Russell, the SNP chief executive.

The SNP were worried by election campaign statements by Brian Wilson, subsequently appointed a Scottish Office minister, that the Scottish parliament would not be able to make any moves towards independence, that that could only be done through Westminster. Salmond and Russell, while they privately believed independence was more likely to come through a devolved Scottish parliament, feared that any explicit statement in the white paper that there was a 'glass ceiling' on the devolved parliament's ambitions would make it impossible for the SNP to support a 'yes-yes' vote.

Dewar told them that there would be no such statement, although there would be many declarations that sovereignty, and therefore the power to make further constitutional changes, would remain at Westminster. However he pointed out that in the practical political world, if there was a majority of SNP representatives in the Scottish parliament and they opted to hold an independence referendum, Westminster could not possibly prevent or ignore such a vote. After all, the Tory government had been unable to prevent or ignore Strathclyde Regional Council's referendum on the privatisation of Scottish water supplies. The SNP's leaders, believers anyway in the gradualist argument that independence is more likely to come through the stepping stone of a devolved parliament, were thus satisfied that there was no fundamental barrier to joining a 'yes-yes' campaign.

Campaigning for a 'no-no' vote was not an option as party policy for many years had been that the SNP would not obstruct devolution. 'We have actually only been for independence and nothing else for one year in our history,' says Mike Russell. Campaigning for a 'yes-no' vote, on the grounds that the proposed fiscal powers were inadequate, was ruled out as an untenable position. The only other options were to advise an abstention or to call for Nationalists to write 'independence' on the ballot paper. 'But,' observes Russell, 'we have always taken part in the democratic process; we have never been an abstentionist party.'

Meeting on 27 July 27, the SNP's national executive committee had little hesitation in recommending to the national council meeting of constituency representatives on 2 August in Perth that the party join the 'yes-yes' campaign. There were only two voices of opposition: Jim Sillars, former MP

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for Glasgow Govan, who argued from his column in **The Sun** newspaper that devolution is a Labour snare, and Gordon Wilson, SNP leader 1979-90, who pressed a similar line. Wilson, who had been deeply scarred by his experience of seeing the assembly thwarted by Labour party divisions after he worked all out for a 'yes' vote on the Labour government's devolution plan in 1979, was however in a very small minority.

Russell says that most SNP activists, a big majority of whom were not involved in 1979, had learned during the general election campaign that their voters expected the SNP to work for a 'yes-yes' vote, not just because a devolved Scottish parliament would be good for Scotland, but because it would be good for the SNP. 'We needed something to change in Scottish politics,' says Russell.

THE NO-NO CAMPAIGN

The 'no-no' campaign which eventually emerged under the 'Think Twice' banner had a curious origin. It was not set up by the Conservatives who, pre-election, made no preparations to run an anti-devolution campaign as they could not afford to be seen to admit defeat. But a number of Tories, well detached from the party, had concluded the election was lost long before polling day. They included Brian Monteith, who had run a student 'no' campaign in 1979, and was now running his own public relations company in Edinburgh.

In early 1995, he met with other like-minded Tories, and began preparations for a campaign to call for a referendum on devolution once Labour had won the election. Plans for fund-raising were laid, but were brought to an abrupt halt when Labour announced its referendum plan.

The organisation was rapidly revived post-election. People such as Donald Findlay, who was known to be a Tory, but had a higher public profile as a lawyer and vice-chairman of Rangers Football Club, were his key players. Monteith was determined that 'Think Twice' should keep a distance from the Tories who could back it, but not be seen to be in charge of it. After a Scottish Conservative Party conference in Perth on 27 June 27, where a high turn-out of party members voted overwhelmingly to campaign against Labour's plans (while accepting that some individuals would campaign for a 'yes-yes' vote), there was little doubt that the Tories would commit their organisation to the campaign.

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But Monteith and his backers believed that an overtly Tory campaign, coming so soon after the election defeat, would stand no chance of success. They resisted initial attempts by Scottish Conservative party director Roger Pratt and Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, a former Scottish Office minister, to take the campaign over.

However Monteith's hopes of a broad-based campaign withered because of two problems. Despite prodigious efforts, he could find no Labour politician nor any Scottish celebrity willing to join. Neither was he able to raise much money. Senior Tories distrusted him because of his close association with Michael Forsyth during Forsyth's disastrous period as Scottish party chairman 1988-90.

Monteith gave in to Tory pressure. Lord Fraser was appointed director of the campaign and Sir Matthew Goodwin, a former Tory party treasurer, was brought in as the Think Twice treasurer. From then on, money rolled in, eventually totalling £150,000, although Monteith insists that the biggest single donation was £5000. But from the moment his campaign was launched, at a press conference in Glasgow on 7 August fronted by Findlay, Lord Fraser, and Goodwin, it was labelled by the media as a Tory front.

THE YES-YES STRATEGY

The organisation of the 'yes-yes' campaign was relatively simple. Scotland Forward acted as a neutral umbrella under which the three different parties could gather for joint events, a device which went some way to neutralising objections in some Labour and SNP quarters about sharing platforms with hitherto sworn enemies. It also prepared campaign literature which could be used by all parties, and helped coordinate the individual campaigns of the parties. Paolo Vestri, a former Edinburgh councillor and director of the Scottish Local Government Information Unit, who was appointed organiser of Scotland Forward, acted as a trouble-shooting liaison officer between the parties' chief officials - McConnell, Russell and Myles - who also dealt directly with each other as did the three political leaders - Dewar, Salmond and Wallace. A neutral go-between was occasionally needed; when Scottish Office minister Henry McLeish once attempted to telephone Russell directly, the official at SNP headquarters who picked up the call thought a prankster was on the line.

Each party organised its own literature distribution and the limited amount of canvassing that was possible. Activity in constituencies was divided up on the rule of thumb that parties would lead in the constituencies they had won,

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and in the council wards they held within those constituencies. With very few exceptions, such as in North Ayrshire where there were problems between Labour and SNP activists, local parties managed to bury their enmities as each was concentrating on their own patches of strength and did not need to come into contact with each other.

From the outset, the campaign was bound to be led by the Labour Party, not just because it held 56 of the 72 Scottish seats, but mainly because the Labour government could not afford to fail. Labour's Scottish general secretary, Jack McConnell, used the same organisational template that had worked well in the general election. In the last week of June and first two weeks of July, meetings were held in Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness, Edinburgh and Glasgow where the general strategy was outlined to about 600 activists. The publicity given to the white paper on devolution, published on 24 July took the campaign through to mid-August, when a meeting of about 250 constituency activists in Dunblane on 16 August was given a final briefing of how the intended short, sharp, three-week campaign would be run.

In the background, however, there was conflict in the party leadership over the strategy. Dewar and his political advisors, Murray Elder and Wendy Alexander, felt that the campaign should be issue-driven, concentrating on policy proposals such as democratising the health service. McConnell and his staff at Labour's HQ in Keir Hardie House, Glasgow, felt it should be more emotively portrayed as a fight for Scotland and be accompanied by simple pledges (for example, that there would be no tax rises), modelled on Labour's general election campaign. Accounts vary as to how this was resolved: one source says that Peter Mandelson, minister without portfolio and Labour's supreme strategist, ruled in favour of McConnell; another that Dewar resolved it by ordering his junior minister, Henry McLeish, to clear his ministerial diary for four weeks and take charge of the campaign team in Keir Hardie House as he had done during the general election.

Whatever the truth, Dewar, McConnell and McLeish were all agreed that they needed the help of the party's London-based election team. Mandelson instructed a slightly reluctant Dave Hill, the party's head of media relations and who is much respected by the media, to take several staff to Glasgow for the campaign. Mirror Group Newspapers loaned Dave Bradshaw, a political correspondent with the **Daily Mirror** who had worked as a speech-writer for Labour during the general election, and Tom Brown, an experienced political writer with the **Daily Record**, to write speeches and newspaper articles for Dewar and McLeish.

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McConnell had already hired Philip Chalmers, a director of Key West, a Glasgow advertising agency, to devise publicity material (he came up with the double-yes poster which each party used in their own colours) and to report on how the campaign was going down with the voters through the use of focus groups. These are groups of 6-8 voters chosen to be representative of groups such as pensioners, housewives, professional people, etc. This research showed that the second referendum question could be lost, but that there were also ways of winning it. Questioning of women, for example, discovered that their fears of tax increases could be allayed if they thought the money raised would be spent on better schools or more jobs. These elements were fed back into the campaign, for example, via speeches and statements by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor. In total, Labour spent around £300,000 on the campaign, £180,000 of which came from London.

The overall strategy was aimed at polarising the voters' choice between 'yes-yes' and 'no-no'. Four themes were picked out: that the referendum was a battle pitching Scotland against the Tories, that the Scottish parliament was an essential new Labour government project to fulfil Tony Blair's aim of modernising Britain, that there would be no tax rises, and that the parliament would mean Scots taking decisions on Scottish issues in Scotland. Without determined unity between the three parties, this strategy could have come badly unstuck. The SNP could have hyped up their belief that devolution would lead on to independence, and the Liberal Democrats could have stressed their election pledge to raise income tax in order to spend more on education. But both parties agreed to down-play these aspects as the major task of the campaign was to get Labour's voters out on polling day. 'The best way to do that was for the campaign to be putting out Labour messages,' says McConnell.

PAISLEY

The Labour message that emerged at the start of the campaign, however, was not in the script. The MP for Paisley South, Gordon McMaster, died on 30 July. Soon it emerged that he had committed suicide and had left a note blaming party colleagues, including the neighbouring MP for Renfrewshire West, Tommy Graham, for spreading smears about him. Media interest in the referendum abruptly switched to Paisley and as Labour's chief whip, Nick Brown, moved to investigate, allegations of factional in-fighting, and political and financial corruption in Paisley preoccupied the media.

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It had not died down by the launch date of the 'yes-yes' campaign. A Scotland Forward press conference on Tuesday 19 August was intended to focus on the unprecedented appearance of the leaders of three of Scotland's political parties - Labour, SNP and Liberal Democrat - on the same platform, all urging the same thing. But the reporters present wanted to know only one thing: what was the Labour party going to do about Tommy Graham, by then fingered as the man at the centre of the Paisley scandal? Dewar was pressed again and again, but could only respond that he could not pre-judge the outcome of Brown's inquiry. Salmond and Menzies Campbell (standing in for Jim Wallace) refrained from normal party knock-about, and were dutifully supportive. But their attempts to draw questioning back to the campaign were hindered by Paolo Vestri's aggressive chairing of the press conference.

The launch was a fiasco, because Labour's normally ruthless publicity machine was absent. Blair and his press secretary, Alastair Campbell were on holiday, as was Dave Hill. According to later accounts, Brown decided that he was going to suspend Graham from membership of the parliamentary Labour party the weekend before the launch, but refused to announce it until he had contacted Graham who proved difficult to find. There was no-one around with the authority to tell Brown to ignore the niceties, make the announcement and kill off the Paisley story. It rumbled on for several days as the media tested Labour's determination to sort out the problem. The Think Twice campaign produced posters featuring Graham and Mohammed Sarwar, the Glasgow Govan MP also suspended for alleged misconduct, suggesting that these would be the faces of a Scottish parliament.

But by 22 August, the 'yes-yes' campaign faced a more serious opponent. Sir Bruce Patullo, governor of the Bank of Scotland, in a long interview with **The Scotsman**, warned that the tax-raising power would be dangerous. His interview, given with the full backing of the bank's board, said that the bank was neutral about the principle of a Scottish parliament, but was concerned that higher levels of income tax in Scotland - which he put at £6 a week for a Scot on an average wage if the full 3p was levied - would damage business and jobs.

The SNP's research department produced figures contending that Sir Bruce was wrong, but the real hard, and ultimately effective, response came from Labour. Dave Hill, by then installed full-time at Keir Hardie House, argued for a much tougher reply than the Scottish politicians present were initially prepared to countenance. They were not prepared to play rough with a senior Scottish businessman whom they knew and respected, but Hill argued that if

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they hit back hard, Patullo would be discouraged from speaking out again and others would be reluctant to follow his lead.

Hill won. Labour's biggest bruiser, John Prescott, the deputy prime minister, in Scotland on 23 August, told Sir Bruce: 'Play around with your money - it does not seem that you know too much about politics.' The Tories were horrified at this brutal stuff and fruitlessly sought an apology. Business people also reeled back in horror, but as Hill predicted, stayed reeled back for the rest of the campaign. The following week, Labour pressed home the effort to either assuage or suppress business fears, with speeches by Dewar and McLeish assuring business audiences that a Scottish parliament with tax-varying powers would not damage business interests. Scotland Forward also produced a dozen business figures, including Sir Lewis Robertson, a former chairman of the Scottish Development Agency, who backed a report from the Scottish Council Foundation, a think-tank set up under the aegis of the Scottish Council Development and Industry, which argued that business had nothing to fear from devolution.

Despite efforts by Think Twice to counter this onslaught, which included parading farmers who feared a central-Scotland-dominated parliament would damaging farming and rural interests, by the end of the week, the business case against devolution was undermined, divided and effectively sidelined. Its campaign was not helped either by a speech by Michael Ancram, the Conservative's constitutional affairs spokesman, in Aberdeen on 27 August. He likened the Tories stand against devolution to that of Churchill's warning of the dangers from Nazi Germany before World War II. The speech was similar to one delivered by Michael Heseltine in Edinburgh shortly before polling day in the 1992 general election and which the Tories had thought highly effective. This time, however, the press rounded on Mr Ancram in outrage. In liberal-minded 1990s Scotland, where no politician could remotely be likened to a fascist, it was a singularly ill-judged remark.

DIANA

But on Saturday, 30 August, all such controversy was put in cold storage. Diana, Princess of Wales, was killed in a car crash. Both sides stopped all activity, except for leaflet delivery. Even that in some areas caused public protest and, where it did, it was stopped too. All Britain plunged into unprecedented scenes of public grief and mourning.

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Some politicians privately wondered if the sense of Britishness evoked by the tragedy would cause people to step back from voting for devolution through heightened worry that it would lead to the break-up of Britain. But the distinct sense of public anger that welled up as the Royal Family appeared to act inappropriately to Diana's death made that seem an unlikely possibility. A brief flurry of demands, from anti-devolution campaigners and **The Herald**, that the referendum be postponed (which would have required the recall of parliament to pass legislation) was summarily refused by Dewar.

One event did occur, however, which may well have ultimately assisted the 'yes-yes' campaign. It was caused by the totally unlikely figure of Jim Farry, chief executive of the Scottish Football Association. When the funeral date - Saturday, 6 September - became known on Monday, Farry decided not to re-schedule the Scotland v Belarus World Cup qualifying match due to be played in Aberdeen that day. To mounting media and public rage and incredulity, he stuck to his guns despite evidence piling up that the players and spectators wanted the game moved and that the Belarusians were happy to oblige.

Hill, watching this from Labour HQ, realised that Farry, already loathed by the media, was turning into the most hated man in Scotland. He decided that the government should pitch in, reckoning that the government would win credit either if Farry gave into the pressure or if he didn't. He telephoned BBC Scotland and Scottish Television while their 6.30pm news programmes on 2 September were on air. Minutes later, both reported that Dewar was contacting the SFA to express his 'grave concern' and seek rearrangement of the fixture. Dewar had little option but to follow Hill's script. The next day, Blair joined the torrent of criticism and, that evening, Farry caved in.

Hill's experience as a media manager was shown in one other matter. On 7 September, when campaigning was due to resume, the **Sunday Times** published an accurate leak of the findings of a Labour party inquiry into the behaviour of senior Glasgow councillors. The story said that enough evidence of malpractice had been uncovered to warrant action including the suspension from the party of the Lord Provost, Pat Lally. If this story had taken off, the final few days of the campaign could have been buried in another avalanche of Labour sleaze.

Hill ordered that all calls from reporters should be referred to him and instructed all staff at Labour HQ to say nothing to anyone. He told reporters that the story was speculation. He found that the reporters expected to 'have a

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gossip' with him about the story, but when they did not get one, the story effectively died.

CAMPAIGNING RESUMED

Planning for the resumption of the campaign proceeded in secret. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, met with Labour's team on Thursday night. The team decided that issue-based campaigning, particularly since the danger from business appeared to have been defused, should be dropped. So far, Labour's contribution had been most effective through the deployment of its big names. The SNP's most significant contribution had been the use of celebrities, such as the actress Elaine C. Smith. For the re-launch, it was decided to combine both elements.

So on Sunday, the SNP-supporting actor Sean Connery took a boat trip across the Forth with Brown (the two are old acquaintances, according to some sources). Later that day, Connery joined Dewar, Salmond and Wallace in a Scotland Forward event in New Parliament House, where the actor made a short speech including a recitation from the Declaration of Arbroath. Corny it may have been, but the resulting pictures made every television bulletin and even the front page of the **Financial Times**.

The publicity blitz continued with Blair on Monday visiting schools and answering questions in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and Prescott on Tuesday. The 'yes-yes' campaign received an unexpected boost from Brian Souter, executive chairman of Stagecoach, who issued a personal statement that a Scottish parliament would 'galvanise and motivate our public life.' This effectively killed off the business case against devolution.

In a series of television and radio debates, Dewar handled 'no-no' campaigners brilliantly. Even a debate where Tam Dalyell, the Labour MP for Linlithgow and die-hard anti-devolution campaigner, was on the other side, passed off as a win on points for Dewar. Against a witty and intellectually agile Dewar, Dalyell looked like a pedantic old bore. An aide later admitted that more careful research by the opposition could have given Dewar a tougher time, but after 20 years of defending the case for devolution, it would have taken someone with exceptional skill to have laid a glove on the Scottish Secretary.

The blitz had the desired effect. It swamped the 'Think Twice' campaign, which had no-one of equal status to deploy. By accident rather than design,

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Baroness Thatcher was in Glasgow on 9 September to address a conference of American travel agents. She dutifully inveighed against devolution, but as John Maxton, Labour MP for Glasgow Cathcart gleefully related, a 'no-no' supporter he met while campaigning in Glasgow's Buchanan Street told him that he wished she was urging a 'yes-yes' vote: 'Then the Scots would vote "no-no" to spite her.'.

Polling day dawned with the newstands packed from end to end with newspapers urging people to vote 'yes-yes'. 'Today we make history', proclaimed **The Scotsman's** headline. 'Dewar set for dual role', said **The Herald**, jumping ahead of itself to assume a vote for home rule and predict that Dewar would lead the new administration in Edinburgh while continuing to be Scottish Secretary. The **Express** forecast 'A New Chapter' in Scottish history, abandoning its usual Tory stance. 'Vote For Us. Vote Yes! Yes!' shouted the **Daily Record** alongside a picture of happy children. 'X Marks the Scot' chimed in **The Sun**. Only the **Daily Mail** stood out against the trend with a contrived warning: 'The £280m Bill for a Double Yes Vote'.

A number of lessons stand out clearly. This was a campaign unlike any other in Scottish politics in that it was conducted almost entirely through the media. Beyond delivery of some five million leaflets and some target mailing by the SNP, there was little traditional activity such as canvassing, identifying of supporters, and getting them out to vote. Celebrity personalities mattered enormously. The 'yes-yes' campaign had lots of them from politics and show-business, but the 'no-no' campaign had virtually none. This may however be due to the fact that after some 30 years of constitutional debate, there were no new issues to discuss. The only time an issue intruded was when a non-politician, Sir Bruce Patullo, intervened.

Because it was a media campaign, media management of political news by an experienced 'spin-doctor' such as Dave Hill was enormously important. His efforts probably come just after those of Blair and Dewar in terms of impact on the campaign. No Scottish political party has ever employed someone of his ability. They are likely to do so now.

Hill was however fortunate. The national Scottish media, with the single exception of the **Scottish Daily Mail**, were overt 'yes-yes' supporters, and backed devolution to a far greater degree than in 1979. Had the media been evenly divided, or mostly hostile, the result might have been very different. There is every sign the newspapers relished their partisan role even to the extent of encouraging or allowing reporters to editorise heavily in news stories rather than sticking to impartial reporting and an editorial comment.

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This partisanship is likely to continue as Scottish politics moves towards elections to the Scottish parliament.

The fact that after an abbreviated campaign interrupted by the biggest national news story for decades which struck extraordinary chords with the public, 60 per cent of the electorate turned out to vote strongly suggests that a short campaign can be just as effective as a long one.

Also decisive was the way in which Labour, the SNP and the Liberal Democrats maintained a disciplined unity throughout. The weakest point in this united front was the apparent contradiction between Labour's claims that devolution would strengthen the Union and the SNP's view that devolution would break the Union. Dewar and Salmond overcame the problem by accepting that neither could claim superior wisdom on this point as the verdict must rest with the Scottish electorate. 'The people are the judge and jury,' said Salmond repeatedly.

THE LEGACY

In the immediate aftermath of the referendum, there was much comment from politicians and pundits that the consensual nature of the campaign was terribly pleasing. The Liberal Democrats and the SNP in particular were anxious to stress their hope that this style of politics would turn out to be the hallmark of the Scottish parliament. They, however, are minority parties who have to hope for a coalition arrangement with the Labour party if they are to have power in the parliament. But there was little in the way of olive branches being offered by Labour, which learned during the campaign that hurling a few bricks can pay dividends. It seems unlikely that there will be much of a consensus left after the parties have finished fighting in the trenches of the Paisley South by-election.

As to the future of the Union, the SNP believe that the big prize they have won is to have shifted the decision-making power about the constitution out of the British political arena into the hands of the Scottish electorate. Once the voters see that the Scottish parliament works, they will be more easily persuaded that independence will work even better. Independence may seem a small step, especially if Britain takes part in European monetary union.

But the logic of this argument is difficult to follow. The SNP have won their current level of support by complaining that Britain works to Scotland's disadvantage. However this argument has most resonance with Scottish

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voters in matters like education, housing, and health which are now to be devolved to Scottish politicians. This leaves the general levels of taxation and public spending as the most likely matters where the SNP can raise a grievance, but even the limited tax-varying power of the Scottish parliament will severely blunt any SNP complaint that London is to blame for Scottish budgetary short-comings.

Moreover, the SNP analysis assumes that the Tories are finished as a political party. This is most certainly wrong. The pro-devolution referendum votes were weakest in the areas of rural Scotland where the SNP have their seats. Having been, relatively speaking, reluctant devolutionists, it is improbable that these voters will be in the vanguard of a push to independence. It is also unlikely that these voters will support the tax-and-spend policies of the left-of-centre SNP when, if they don't like the look of a Labour-run Scottish parliament, there are the Tories to turn to.

Whether this analysis turns out to be right or wrong is but one of many fascinating questions to be answered in the years to come. The Earl of Seafield closed the book on the Scottish parliament in 1707, remarking: 'There's ane end of ane auld sang.' In 1997, there was a start to a new song.

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