

## **EITHER WAY**

*Written in advance of the Scottish Independence vote in 2014*

For those of you who haven't witnessed, first hand, the events up here and have had to rely on the various misguided media companies, including the 'impartial' BBC, for what has transpired to be a hugely misrepresentative depiction of the run up to the Referendum, can I just say that the honest debate and engagement with politics that I have witnessed in Scotland over the past few months has been staggering and, whether we stay or go, the majority of the population have done themselves proud. Sadly, as with anything, there have been unsavoury incidents from both sides of the coin but, for the most part, it's been a civilised, exciting and vibrant outpouring of discussion, debate and political engagement across the board. I hear people discussing it in pubs, on buses, whilst out running. It is rarely vicious or personal but genuinely well informed, insightful and always passionate. Please don't mistake our passion for anger. And whether we stay or go, there has been no doubt that the noise this little country has made has rocked the foundations of Westminster government and made me more proud than ever to be Scottish. I hope, above all else, that we will continue to make that noise and ensure that the opportunity we have been given on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept is the starting point to a more just and unified political system not just for Scotland but for the whole of the UK and I hope that, as a nation, we've inspired people to believe they can make a difference and that their vote matters.

I hope, more than anything, that this level of political engagement will carry on and we're able to show the rest of the world that, if we vote Yes, the overall unity of the whole referendum campaign will continue on in a government that's representative of the country, as whole. And, if we vote No, we will continue to stand together, as a nation, and continue to discuss and debate and make noise for a more progressive and just government and make sure that Westminster doesn't just breath a sigh of relief and congratulate themselves on dodging a bullet but rather, take heed from that nation, North of the border, that they ever so greatly underestimated at the start of this campaign and realise that something has to change.

I have been No, I have been Yes and have been everything in between. This decision has torn me apart and there are times I've found it so hard to decide that I almost wished I didn't have to make it. But I've made my choice, for which Facebook is not the platform to share it, and I go to the ballot on Thursday knowing that I've made this choice with both my head and my heart and looked at all the facts that I can, whilst also accepting that, whatever I decide, there is always going to be an element of the unknown. For can you ever truly determine, for sure, the long term financial landscape of any country? I go to the ballot on Thursday making the choice that I believe to be the right one.

And so back to my photograph. On the day before the election I have realised what it has come to mean to me. That whichever way the vote goes Scotland stands proud, with their Saltire held as high as our heads and that the Referendum debate isn't about 'being the nation again'. For with 96% registering to vote and taking a stand and acknowledging they can make a difference and, for the most part, harmoniously coming together to figure out where we go from here we have, in fact, proved, that we already are that nation.

Godspeed one and all who face the ballot boxes tomorrow and for those of you that can only watch and wait with us, I hope that we have your support whichever way it goes and know we're not walking away from anything, we're just trying to make things better.