

# Scottish Nationalists Meet, Elect New Leaders

by Alan Clayton

The 66th annual conference of the Scottish National Party (SNP) took place in the Scottish Highland town of Inverness on Sept. 20-23. The SNP's longtime leader, Member of Scottish Parliament (MSP) Alex Salmond, was standing down, and this precipitated a leadership election; and because his deputy, John Swinney, was seeking the leadership, there was also fierce competition for the post of deputy leader. The "LaRouche factor" became part of this electoral process very early on, when one of the candidates for deputy leader, Peter Kearney, gave an interview with *EIR*, stating how he agreed with LaRouche on a whole range of issues, and was a signatory to the international petition for a New Bretton Woods system, as LaRouche has outlined it.

The SNP's internal electoral processes are lengthy and extremely demanding for the candidates, who seek by every means possible to put their case before the voters. Kearney put his *EIR* interview (Aug. 25 issue) on his campaign website. This was picked up by one of Scotland's two main broadsheet newspapers, *The Herald*, under a story by its political editor, Murray Ritchie. The story contained a thoroughly scurrilous attack on LaRouche, containing allegations such as anti-Semitism and fascism, allegations which even in the United States seem well past their sell-by date. LaRouche responded to Ritchie, reminding him, among other things, of the need for journalists to avoid "reckless disregard for truth," although Ritchie never offered the courtesy of a reply.

The "LaRouche factor" intervened at another level, when this writer asked the SNP's Defense Spokesman, Colin Campbell (MSP), to seek explanations from the Royal Navy about a story which had appeared in the *Scottish Daily Express*, that the submarine *USS Toledo* had gone into the Faslane naval base on the Firth of Clyde for emergency repairs in mid-August. Campbell agreed to visit the Faslane base. This is no easy task, as the British government designates all members of the SNP, no matter what their position, as "security risks." Campbell managed to get an interview with Real Adm. Derek Anthony RN, Flag Officer Scotland, North of England, and Northern Ireland. Although Campbell had been briefed about details from *EIR* sources on Russian allegations about what had happened on Aug. 12 to the submarine *Kursk*, Admiral Anthony categorically denied that the *USS Toledo* had been in any kind of collision with the *Kursk*, and indeed told Campbell that as a consequence of the huge weight differential between the *Kursk* and the *Toledo*, "the

Toledo would have come off worst in such a collision." It should be noted, however, that weight differential is not necessarily decisive, since other factors, such as angle of collision, have to be taken into account.

## Oil and 'Wartime Emergency'

The SNP conference took place in the wake of the greatest fuel and financial crisis that Britain has experienced since the ill-fated Anglo-French attack on the Suez Canal of 1956, when President Dwight Eisenhower threatened to "pull the plug" on the British pound sterling if the aggression did not cease forthwith.

On the evening of Sept. 13, some 90% of the gasoline stations on the island were completely empty, and supermarkets reported that dwindling food stocks had precipitated widespread panic buying of food. No fuel trucks were moving out of Scotland's only oil refinery at Grangemouth. In a cold sweat, Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair solicited the highest authority in Great Britain—the Queen and her Privy Council. After meeting at the Queen's Balmoral Castle retreat in the Scottish Highlands, Blair was given "special powers" to crush the protests and ensure fuel deliveries with the use of military troops and riot police.

During the crisis, a friend of mine, the mother of four children who lives at the southern tip of the Mull of Kintyre, phoned me to ask if there was anything I could do to help, as there was only sufficient food for another meal for her family, the youngest of whom is a two-year-old baby. Some people in her village of Southend had seriously considered taking a small boat across the 12 miles of the North Channel to County Antrim in Northern Ireland, where the crisis was much less severe due to the proximity of the Irish Republic with its significantly cheaper fuel. These were conditions of the worst wartime emergency. Indeed, as a young child I lived through the Second World War in the west of Scotland and do not recall food shortages as serious as that, and there is every indication that it is going to occur again.

The fuel crisis was one of the main matters of discussion at the SNP conference, and in particular the fuel tax, which accounts for 80% of the cost of gasoline. Most of the oil in the North Sea is in Scottish waters, where its production exceeds that of Kuwait. Despite this, oil prices in Scotland are among the highest in Europe, with a gallon of gasoline costing \$6-7. The limited powers of the Scottish Parliament do not extend to taxation over oil revenue, but the SNP has promised substantial reduction in fuel prices at the pumps if it can get the powers of the Scottish Parliament extended.

## 'Save the Heather, Ban the People'

Each year, a feature of the SNP conference is the "Donaldson Lecture," at which someone prominent in business, education, or politics speaks on a key theme. This year saw a particularly good lecture by Dennis MacLeod, a founding member of Business for Scotland. He spoke of the developing



*A British Petroleum oil-drilling platform in the North Sea. Scottish nationalists are trying to expand the powers of the Scottish Parliament, to control oil revenues.*

alliance among landowners and environmentalists to prevent the repopulation and industrialization of the dozens of glens which had been cleared of people after the Jacobite uprisings in the mid-18th Century, and which are now used mainly for shooting and game-keeping. Although the conference attendees laughed at his statement that “heather will be declared an endangered species,” Macleod made it very clear that such a scenario is not out of the realm of possibility, and that the oligarchy is determined to keep what they consider to be the ultimate form of pollution—people—out of the rural Scotland which they would like to keep as a vast European theme park.

The leadership position of the SNP was won by Salmond’s deputy, John Swinney. Alex Neil (MSP), his opponent, who had called for returning the SNP to its primary objective of gaining Scottish independence, lost the election, as 67% of the 814 delegates voted for Swinney. The elections to leadership positions were both interesting and disappointing. Peter Kearney, who has shown a determination to remain with solidly nationalist policies for the Scottish future, and had won the endorsement of the SNP’s student wing (the Federation of Student Nationalists), came in third in the deputy leadership election, this being due mainly to the fact that politically he had no internal track record at top levels within the SNP. However, his vote was far from derisory, and there can be little doubt that Kearney will be back until he does make it to the top. His leadership qualities make this obvious to those of us who know him.

The deputy leadership position was captured by Roseanna Cunningham (MSP), a feisty woman who is far from popular

with the oligarchy. Cunningham’s parents emigrated to Australia when she was a young child, and she only returned to Scotland in her late 20s. She considers herself to be “half” Australian, and indeed many of her attitudes and traces of her speech remain Australian. She has attacked the House of Windsor over recent years, and believes they have no part to play in an independent Scotland. Her oligarchical opponents describe her as “Republican Rose,” a slanderous reference to the Imperial Japanese propagandist, “Tokyo Rose,” whose radio broadcasts during World War II attempted to demoralize Allied troops in the Pacific Theater.

The jury is out on whether Swinney, as head of the SNP, has the ability to complete the task ahead, which, after all, is the demolition of an imperialist state which, with its monarchy, has been the scourge of human history for the last three centuries. Certainly, British attitudes and perceptions are still powerful within the SNP, and as long as these remain, there can be no possibility of victory, because the oligarchy is quite capable of adapting to the threat of the SNP. Indeed, the establishment of a Scottish Parliament with limited powers is just the most recent example of such adaptation.

As Scotland and the world face the greatest financial and economic collapse in modern history, of which Britain’s most recent fuel crisis is but a modest tremor, the very power and existence of the oligarchy is threatened. This prospect brings joy in the hope that we can build a new and better future. It will, however, also require the true measure of leadership, a leadership that is not based upon opinion polls, but upon truth, and what is actually required for our nation and civilization to survive and prosper.