

Example of essay on the scottish national party and the

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Referendum on Independence

Introduction

The Scottish National Party (SNP) has gradually gained popularity among citizens in Scotland since its creation in the 1930s, and is now the third largest party in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In 2011 the SNP made history when it gained the majority of seats in the Scottish Parliament. For the first time in history the SNP had a majority government, and so began their journey towards independence from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In September of 2014, that journey was halted when citizens of Scotland voted “ no” to the Scotland Referendum on Independence. In the months since the referendum was defeated, analysts have provided numerous political, social, and economic factors that aid in explaining why the Scottish government lost the referendum (Dardanelli & Paolo 88-93).

The Scottish National Party

The current leader of the SNP is newly elected Nicola Sturgeon. There have been numerous reasons why the SNP has been able to gain the majority within the Scottish Parliament. To begin, the SNP is known to be a party based on social ideologies, and have stayed current in proposing and passing legislation in regards to human rights and other popular, social issues. Compared to their counterparties, the SNP has focused its platform similar to that of the Democratic Party in the United States. The eradication of poverty, access to free higher education, increase in low-income housing, alternative energy sources, regulations regarding same-sex marriage, personal taxation,

and lowering the voting age from 18 to 16 are all among the primary issues the SNP has used to form its political platform. Understandably, these social ideologies have drawn in a large following of young voters, which are overwhelmingly registering as members of the SNP compared to the other two main parties in Scotland. The Young Scots for Independence and Federation of Student Nationalists have played vital roles within recruiting members into the SNP, and aiding leadership within the SNP to recognize the issues important to the youth of Scotland (Dardanelli & Paolo 96-99).

Referendum on Scottish Independence

Since gaining popularity in the 2007 elections and becoming a minority government, the SNP started developing a plan towards Scottish independence. Once the SNP had published a draft bill and published a manifesto on the referendum, it was obvious that Scottish citizens agreed that Scottish Independence was needed. After a majority win in 2011, it was apparent that the Scottish Independence Referendum Bill would soon come to fruition, especially since former SNP leader Alex Salmond had been working diligently to keep the promises in which he campaigned on (Dardanelli & Paolo 99)

For the first time in history the SNP was a majority government and had to seize the opportunity to fulfill their agenda. Why then, on September 8, 2014, did over two million citizens of Scotland vote “no” to the Referendum on Scottish Independence? The bill lost by a staggering 10.6% with almost 85% of Scotland turning out to vote. In the months since the referendum was defeated, analysts have provided numerous political, social, and economic

factors that aid in explaining why the Scottish government lost the referendum (Dardanelli & Paolo 89).

Political Issues

Another primarily political factor in the criticism of referendum was the SNP and its stance on European Union membership. Understandably, the SNP wanted to join the European Union like Great Britain, yet there were conflicting factors involved such as what type of benefits Scotland would receive by becoming a new member of the organization. Arguably, the longer a country has belonged to the EU determines the type of aid, funding, and membership role they play. Many argued that this was a gradual process, and thus would hinder Scotland from receiving the full benefits they currently receive under Great Britain (Dardanelli & Paolo 100).

Social Issues

The issue of citizenship was central to the debate surrounding the Referendum on Scottish Independence. Both the Conservative and Labour parties felt that the referendum was much too vague on the proposed requirements of legal citizenship. Additionally, they also felt that too many citizens were eligible to vote on the referendum itself, failing to reflect a true Scottish citizenry. The majority government, however, overruled these objections. Overall, if the referendum had become law, over three million people would have been eligible for Scottish citizenship. Lowering the proposed voting age from 18 to 16 was also part of the referendum, and also one that most voters failed to agree upon. While the youth wing of the SNP rallied diligently for this to pass, members of the Conservative Party thought

the age of 16 was far too young to make such important decisions. Some have argued that if lowering the voting age had not been included, the referendum would have seen more success (Dardanelli & Paolo 100).

Economic Issues

Perhaps the most prevalent of issues as to why the Referendum on Scottish Independence failed to pass was due to varying economic issues, including the economy itself. Currently, Scotland has a very large banking system, twelve times larger than that of its gross domestic product. This makes financial experts skeptical that an independent Scotland could survive a financial crisis. Furthermore, the idea that an independent Scotland would adopt the Euro as its official currency did not bode too well with citizens. The pound is the only currency known to citizens of Scotland, and even though the euro is currently worth more than the pound, having two different types of currency may cause conflict on trade values between Scotland and Great Britain. The two countries would need to work out fair trade value, taxes, importation and exportation fees, and legal rules and regulations. Many of these issues failed to be solved prior to voting on the referendum (Dardanelli & Paolo 102).

Conclusion

In summation, the SNP continues to gain momentum and popularity as Scotland's majority government. In order for Scotland to solve their existing political, social, and economic issues hindering them from gaining independence from Great Britain, the SNP will need to collaborate with both the Conservative and Labour parties. The increasing approval of the

SNP exemplifies the issues found to be important by the majority of the Scottish people; however it appears as if independence may not be one of the main concerns. Rather than focusing on why Scotland should gain independence from Great Britain, the government needs to focus on addressing solving the plethora of issues it would face as a newly founded nation.

Bibliography

Dardanelli, Paolo & James Mitchell. " An Independent Scotland? The Scottish National Party's Bid for Independence and its Prospects." *The International Journal Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs* 39. 3 (2014): 88-105. Web. 18 August 2014.