



Let's hear it for the loser: Alex Salmond yesterday in Aberdeenshire

# Salmond: We could go it alone

## Rivals call beaten leader's plan a 'coup'

SCOTLAND could one day declare independence without holding another referendum, Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond said yesterday.

The country may reach a point when it has so many devolved powers that it is independent in all but name, the outgoing Scottish leader claimed.

By Daniel Martin

The SNP could then simply announce that Scotland has achieved enough freedom from Westminster to become a separate state.

In a series of provocative comments, the SNP leader said the 'writing is on the wall' for rule from London - and claimed there were 'many routes to independence'.

However, he was immediately accused of plotting to overthrow the will of the Scottish people in a 'coup'.

Despite the nationalists' heavy defeat in last week's historic poll, Mr Salmond said the strong backing for a breakaway Scotland among the under-55s meant that public support was bound to rise in years to come.

'I think that the destination is pretty certain, we are only now debating the timescale and the method,' he said.

Mr Salmond also claimed the 'Westminster gang' of David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg had tricked people into voting No to independence with their last-minute promise of more powers for the Scottish parliament.

He alleged that they were already going back on a pledge to extend control over issues including tax and welfare.

### 'Referendum only one of the routes'

Interviewed yesterday on Sky News, Mr Salmond said: 'There are a whole range of ways Scotland can improve its position in pursuit of Scottish independence. I think that's going to happen.'

'I mean when you have a situation where the majority of a country up to the age of 55 is already voting for independence then I think that the writing's on the wall for Westminster.'

'I think the destination is pretty certain, we are only now debating the timescale and the method.'

Mr Salmond said he was in favour of a referendum, but hinted that some SNP figures had different ideas - meaning the position could change after he steps down.

He added: 'I think referendums are great, they have been my policy and even I have been surprised by an 85 per cent poll and the degree of public engagement, but of course for many years there was a "gradualist" attitude to independence.'

'That is to say, you establish a parliament, you establish successively more powers until you have a situation where you're independent in

all but name and then presumably you declare yourself to be independent. Many countries have proceeded through that route.'

'There is a parliamentary route where people can make their voice heard as well - so a referendum is only one of a number of routes.'

'I think it's the best route incidentally, that's always been my opinion but my opinion is only one of many.'

Last night former SNP deputy leader Jim Sillars wrote on Twitter that a nationalist victory in the next Scottish parliament elections in 2016 would be enough to declare independence - and that no more referendums were needed.

He tweeted: 'Let Yes assert new indy rule - no more ref - majority votes and seats at Holyrood 2016 enough.'

But Scottish Labour leader Johann Lamont said: 'Having decisively lost a democratic referendum on independence, Alex Salmond is now suggesting the nationalists can ignore the sovereign will of the Scottish people.'

'His words are fundamentally undemocratic and an insult to the people of Scotland.'

'Alex Salmond lost. It is not for him to try to overthrow the will of the Scottish people in some sort of coup.'

Mr Salmond, who will step down later this year, said the 'vow' by the three Westminster leaders to extend more powers to Holyrood was pivotal in the success of the No campaign.

But he said it was now clear the Labour and Conservative positions were now 'irreconcilable' - meaning the promises may not come to pass.

'It's the people who voted No because they believed these commitments from the Westminster leadership, these are the people who are feeling most angry, most hurt, most disappointed in Scotland today,' he said.

Making reference to a Star Trek film, he added: 'The wrath of Khan will be as of nothing to the wrath of a No voter who has been gulled by the Westminster leadership.'

He added: 'The people who are really angry are those people who were persuaded to vote No by that vow, by that solemn pledge and are now already beginning to feel let down, angry, disappointed because it looks like they have been tricked.'

A Downing Street spokesman said: 'The three pro-Union parties have made commitments on further powers for the Scottish parliament and we have set out a clear timetable to do this.'

'This government has delivered on devolution and we will do so again in the next parliament.'

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FREE PARKING

## GAA star recovering

By Eamon Donoghue

DUBLIN footballer Jonny Cooper was last night recovering at home after a brutal stabbing incident in which he almost lost his eye, according to his friends and family.

Cooper needed around 30 stitches after the savage attack on his face, neck and shoulders.

He was assaulted as he sat on the steps of a takeaway in the north inner city at 5.40am on Saturday.

The North Dublin native had been expected to attend a DCU Alumni All-Ireland football final brunch yesterday morning. A former teammate of

Random attack:  
Jonny Cooper

24-year-old Cooper told the Mail last night that the Na Fianna club player was 'making a good recovery'.

Cooper tweeted on Saturday: 'Absolutely humbled by the msgs & calls over last few hours! Thank you all! I've an amazing group of friends and family!'

His father, Brendan Cooper, said: 'Another centimetre to the left and his eye would have been gone. His ear is all cut up, his neck is destroyed. He tried to protect himself, but the guy just didn't stop.'

