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- Organiser of racist protest admits taking inspiration from Blackford

7 Jul 2020



One of the orchestrators of “despicable” stunts on the Scotland-England border has suggested the group took inspiration from SNP Westminster leader Ian Blackford.

Speaking to the *National*, Ian McNeil said of the protest: “For some weeks now the locals up north, including one [SNP](#) leader, have tried to discourage tourists from holidaying here until further notice ... that’s what the demo was all about.”

It has since emerged that Mr McNeil has been cheerily pictured with a number of senior SNP figures, including Nicola Sturgeon and Angus Robertson, as well as at SNP campaign events and conferences.

When challenged yesterday whether or not the protestors were SNP members, the First Minister refused to be drawn on the issue, and wouldn’t say if disciplinary action was being taken.

Mr Blackford was criticised earlier in the lockdown period for endorsing a tweet which used expletives to suggest English people should stay away from Scotland.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Annie Wells said:

“This proves the point that, by deliberately stoking up divisive rhetoric, SNP leaders encourage the racist fringes of the party.

“One of the orchestrators of this despicable stunt is effectively saying they were inspired by Ian Blackford’s words.

“It’s bad enough that it took 48 hours for Nicola Sturgeon to grudgingly condemn this racist behaviour.

“But the fact these individuals are taking their lead from SNP leadership should be a matter of real shame for the party.”

Sturgeon fails to clear up Yousaf's misleading parliament row

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The Scottish Conservatives have urged the justice secretary to “front up” over accusations he misled parliament.

Nicola Sturgeon failed to provide convincing answers on why Humza Yousaf claimed police had told him compliance with quarantining measures was “very high”.

It's since emerged that Police Scotland didn't have any information relating to whether or not incoming passengers were sticking with quarantine rules or not.

In fact, the checking process which was meant to be underway at the beginning of June only started today.

When challenged at her daily briefing, the First Minister said her justice secretary would correct the record, but failed to explain why he said he'd received such positive messages from a police force which had no information.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“It's increasingly clear that Humza Yousaf misled the Scottish Parliament, and he now has to front up and explain why.

“He can either do that at the First Minister's daily briefing or to Holyrood itself – but either way he needs to account for these claims.

“Mr Yousaf very clearly not only reeled off specific statistics in relation to quarantine checks, but said police had told him the compliance rate was very good.

“But now we know the compliance rate couldn't possibly have been good, as no checks were taking place on this.

“And even if they had been, Police Scotland didn't hold any information on the matter.

“This is another embarrassing gaffe by Nicola Sturgeon's increasingly exposed and ill-equipped supporting cast – Humza Yousaf has clearly taken some liberties with the police and now needs to come clean as to why.”

Increase in Scottish drug deaths a 'national scandal'

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The Scottish Conservatives have condemned the latest reported rise in Scots dying from drugs as a 'national scandal'.

According to a report in the media, the drug death rate in Scotland has risen during the coronavirus lockdown.

The report states that the number of deaths since March is higher than the same period in 2019.

The Scottish Government set up the Drug Deaths Taskforce last July to combat the extremely high rate of people dying from drugs in Scotland.

While the report states the increase is 'slight' it is nowhere near the reduction in drug deaths that is expected or needed.

Annie Wells, Scottish Conservative deputy leader said;

"Last year the number of Scots dying from drugs was a tragedy, this is now a national scandal.

"It's clear that the Drug Deaths Taskforce has not been able to turn this tide or make any meaningful impact on the number of people dying from drugs.

"The number of rehab beds has dropped by 282 on the SNP's watch.

"The Scottish Conservatives have repeatedly called for these beds to be reinstated – the SNP government must listen because their approach is not working.

"The SNP government's approach has failed – they must change course or even more Scots will needlessly die."

SNP must reintroduce childcare expansion commitment

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The Scottish Conservatives are demanding answers from the SNP government over the expansion of childcare provision as Scotland moves into Phase 3 of lockdown and parents get back to work.

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary has written to the Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd, and asked when will the SNP government reintroduce the obligation for local authorities to provide 1,140 hours of funded childcare in accordance with their commitment.

In the letter Mr Greene highlights that he has been informed that several local authorities are now unable to honour their previous commitments to provide the expanded, funded hours.

This could lead to a reduction in provision in the private, voluntary and independent sector which in turn could add to the burden of provision on council-provided childcare settings.

Jamie Greene MSP has therefore asked the Minister a series of questions including; when will the SNP government reintroduce the commitment to 1,140 hours of funded childcare, and what financial help will there be for local authorities who have used their budgets to weather the Covid storm.

Mr Greene also asked what progress the Scottish Government has made towards addressing the issues endorsed by a majority vote in the Scottish Parliament, regarding concerns over buildings, staffing, PVI sustainability and living wage loopholes.

Jamie Greene, Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary said;

“After three months of lockdown, it is abundantly clear that without reliable childcare parents simply cannot get back to work.

“The promised expansion of funded childcare to 1140 hours was something that nurseries have already been working towards and parents were depending on.

“The SNP government must now clarify when this commitment will be reintroduced so that nurseries can plan and parents can work.

“In addition, nurseries who have already spent money updating premises and hiring staff must not lose out.

“The SNP government was defeated in the Scottish Parliament – we have not forgotten and we will continue to ensure they resolve the major issues relating to the expansion of childcare that were demanded.”

Military workers will continue to be compensated for 'unfair' SNP taxes

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6 Jul 2020



Scottish Conservative MP, John Lamont has welcomed confirmation that the UK Government will compensate military of defence workers stationed in Scotland who are currently having to pay higher taxes than their colleagues stationed in other parts of the UK.

James Heappey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence confirmed this was the case in response to a question asked by Mr Lamont at oral questions in the House of Commons this afternoon.

Mr Lamont, MP for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk, asked the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence, "With Scotland being the highest taxed part of the UK, what steps is the government doing to protect our armed forces personnel who might be left out of pocket, with any further tax increases in Scotland."

Mr Heappey said that it was "unfair" that our soldiers, sailors, airmen and women, living in Scotland should be made to pay more in income tax compared to other military personnel living elsewhere.

Mr Heappey then went onto confirm that the UK government will announce soon how they will be "continuing to mitigate against the effects of these higher Scottish income taxes" on military personnel based in Scotland.

This follows the Scottish Conservative manifesto pledge last year to protect armed forces personnel stationed in Scotland from differences in income tax.

And continues UK Government actions for the past two years where soldiers, sailors, marines and RAF personnel based in Scotland have been compensated for the extra tax they have to pay.

John Lamont, Scottish Conservative MP for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk said;

"Scotland is the highest taxed part of the UK and many military servicemen and women based here have to pay more tax than their colleagues elsewhere in the UK.

"That is clearly an unfair situation and incorrectly penalises servicemen and

women based in Scotland.

“The UK Government understands this disparity and has been compensating military personnel north of the border to ensure they are not out of pocket.

“It is extremely welcome that the UK Government will continue to mitigate against the SNP’s higher taxes.

“The Scottish Conservatives have campaigned hard to achieve this recognition and this significant cash outlay, simply to repair the damage of the SNP taxes.

“I look forward to hearing the UK government’s proposals in full.”