

# Nicola Sturgeon isn't offering Scotland a say, she is offering false hope.

By Kez Dugdale

Just over two years ago, Nicola Sturgeon used the pages of the Daily Record to tell readers that improving Scottish education would be the driving and defining priority of her government.

So much for that, then.

After her speech yesterday, here is my message to Nicola Sturgeon : [Our country is divided enough, it should not be divided again.](#)

The vast majority of Scots don't want to replay angry arguments between family and friends.

Nicola Sturgeon should think back to those bitter arguments before she tries to divide us again.

Specifically she should think about how wrong she was then and how wrong she is now.

The SNP said the only way to have a fairer Scotland, to end austerity, was independence.

That argument has now fallen apart. The SNP's estimates for oil for the first two years of an independent Scotland were out by £21billion.

That's more than our country's annual health and education budgets put together. This isn't just about the black stuff – it's about the future of our schools and hospitals.

Labour warned that the SNP's plan was reckless at the time. The SNP Government agreed with us. In secret.

An official analysis paper prepared by the civil service for them outlined the cuts that would happen with independence.

Rather than release the paper, the SNP tried to hide it. The SNP knew the sums didn't add up. But they offered false hope, especially to the poorest in our country.

Nicola Sturgeon told people independence could end austerity, knowing that wasn't true. She knew it would mean even bigger cuts to our public services and told people the opposite on doorsteps.

That's not clever PR, that's misleading the country on an industrial scale.

Thousands of Scots voted Yes on the basis of a lie the SNP knowingly sold them. Nicola Sturgeon should be ashamed.  
Two years on, she is ready to do it again.

None of the fundamental questions of 2014 have been answered. The SNP still don't know what currency an independent Scotland would have. They still can't explain how they would pay for pensions and there is still no reply to how our public services would cope with unprecedented cuts.

Even if oil revenues had not fallen through the floor, an independent Scotland would still have faced public spending cuts much worse than whatever the Tories have been planning. With thousands of Scots in need of a payrise, the SNP can't say what their wages will be paid in – and if they would be worth the same as they are today.

Having campaigned to remain in one political union last year, the SNP now can't explain why we should leave one which is four times as important to our economy and through which we built the NHS and the welfare state.

Just over two years ago, our country debated independence. It was the biggest democratic exercise in history. For two years there wasn't a pub, coffee shop, workplace or Facebook timeline without people having their say.

And after those two years of debate. A record turnout saw a staggering 85 per cent of people vote in the referendum and the answer was clear: Together, we're stronger.

That is why Scottish Labour MSPs will vote against a divisive second independence referendum at Holyrood next week.

We should be using the new powers of Holyrood to look to the future, which is why Labour will hold a People's Constitutional Convention to chart Britain's course for the next generation.

Labour want to see a radical federal solution that will mean more powers for the Scottish Parliament while keeping the security and opportunity that comes with being part of the UK.

That is a plan to unite our divided country. An alternative answer that will mean more powers influence and control not just to our Scottish Parliament but down to our own communities and right across the UK.

More than 200,000 children in Scotland live in poverty. Attainment in our schools is falling. Our NHS does not have enough doctors and nurses. Our economy is sluggish, jobs are too often low-pay, low- skilled and short-term.

None of these problems is addressed by a second independence referendum.

Only a nationalist could think they are, because their obsession with winning independence trumps everything else – even telling people the truth about independence.

The questions of 2014 remain unanswered.

The economic case of independence, which was tissue-paper thin in the first place, has collapsed.

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