

By Nat Butcher, our Political Correspondent



Many had queued outside the parliament all day, as they waited to pay their 'Independence Pound'

This weekend, Danny Alexander, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, took on the claim made by Scotland's Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon that Scots would be at least £500 a year better off under independence.

Rather than base his calculations on the most recent figures available, as Ms Sturgeon had done, Mr Alexander chose to take an average over a period of 12 years, beginning in 1999. As the Scottish Government had been run for two thirds of that period by the Labour Party in coalition with the Lib Dems, the figure which popped out was naturally lower, by exactly £501 as it emerged.

At this point, Mr Alexander and the No campaign could have made one of five distinct choices which were open to them:

- they could have shredded the calculations and never mentioned them again;
- they could have searched for a different period for the sample, such as during the Great War, which would have shown the Scottish economy in a worse light, and published those figures instead;
- they could have simply made up some numbers to show that Scotland is far too poor to be independent, and that all Scots are subsidy junkies (the Ruth Davidson approach);
- they could have released the figures on a day when nobody was listening, such as new Years day, or the end of the Mayan calendar, to distract public attention (the Alastair Campbell classic);
- or they could have published the news that, after months of calculations, the UK treasury has come to the conclusion that the cost of Scottish independence is a pound each.

Incredibly, and to the delight of supporters of seperationalism, they chose the latter of those options.

Prime Minister David Cameron seemed confused by the new policy of 'a pound for independence' and stumbled during Prime Minister's Questions, stammering in a quasi-regal fashion:

"Yes but, no but, yes but, no! Alistair Darling... Sound man. Sound campaign. Sounds like no campaign. No, yes campaign. Shit, it's a Darling little campaign. Oh dear, where's Nanny? Someone call for Nanny! Little Davy's poo-pooed."

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