

**By Nat Butcher** *our Political Correspondent*



**BBC Scotlandshire has discovered a conspiracy with its roots deep inside the SNP, a cynical plot designed to let separatists dominate the referendum negotiations and even shamelessly control the entire process.**

A separatist insider has spilled the beans on a series of "dirty tricks" which have brought them total control of the referendum, and a bonus prize of a section 30 order.

He said, "We were worried about three things when we won a majority in 2011. The first was that all three conservative parties would try to use the courts to block or delay the referendum, probably by setting up some merchant banker (excuse the rhyming slang) to challenge it in the 'supreme' court. That meant we were quite keen on getting a section 30 order, but without any Westminster strings.

"We also wanted to block any move by the unionists to use Devo Max or Devo plus as a spoiler, by offering it before the vote, then failing to implement it later. We've been there before, after all. Alex Douglas Home Rule, and all that.

Finally, we had a wheen of things we wanted to get into our section 30, such as control of the wording of the question, no scope for Westminster to pauchle the ballot, control of spending etc.

"Then Angus Robertson came up with this great wheeze. If we became the great advocates of Devo max, not by supporting it, but by arguing that it be included on the ballot, we could achieve all three of those goals.

"The Conservatives, particularly the Labour ones, would do anything to avoid an SNP policy, so they could no longer appear to offer Devo Max. That was the end of that. In fact they would be so keen to stop that from being on the ballot, that they would be prepared to give us a Section 30 on almost any terms, as long as we agreed to drop the second question.



"And that is what happened today.

"By allowing the Tories to concentrate on the single question issue, we won a legally binding referendum, control of the wording and polarity, with some non-binding testing by the Electoral

commission, an agreement on funding to stop the City of London from buying votes in the referendum, and control of the timing, and we got the franchise we wanted. We even got votes for 16 year-olds which was, quite frankly, a bit of a punt which we expected to lose in negotiations.

"Even better, we have killed off any talk of Devo max, and probably of any extra powers, so anyone who favoured this now has to choose between the status quo and Indy, which is almost the same thing as Devo Max. And all three Tories get the blame for taking it away as an option. Not too shabby, eh?"

SNP MSP Christina McKelvie, Convener of the Scottish Parliament European and External Relations Committee, said: "if we had gone with a Devo question, we would have lost the Yes vote and been offered control over peat bogs as a compensation. There was no way we were going down that road anyway, and they fell for it.

"Amazingly, we got everything we asked for and we didn't even need to fight for it. I can't believe it's not Bitter!"

"Now Lamont and the rest of the Tories will need to spin faster than Ian Davidson's nunchucks to make this look like a success, and they can only do that by telling us how terrible and destructive Devo max would have been, and how English MPs would never have given it to us anyway. So that's the end of that option. Whoopee!"

First Minister, Alex Salmond MSP, chortled: "Ha ha ha. Ha ha. He he he. 'Sooner rather than later'. See what I did there? Ho ho ho ho ho."

One-time leader of the now defunct Scottish Liberal Democrats, oor Wullie Rennie, mumbled: "We did what? No way! Really? That bampot Moore! Ah should have grabbed him by the bolts in his neck and shaken some sense into him," adding, "But hey, whit can you do, eh?"



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