

Tuesday 13th September 2011

To:

The Secretary, Renfrewshire & Inverclyde Conservative & Unionist Association

Membership of the Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party

Firstly, may I thank you for your patience and understanding regarding the above matter.

It is not my intention to pen a lengthy valedictory epistle, but I do feel it is important to briefly explain why I have come to the decision not to renew my Party membership.

My experience as a member and latterly candidate for the Party over some 25 years has been a salutary education in the workings of a political party and of politics in general.

I have had the wonderful privilege to meet many fine and honourable members of our Party from the grassroots, through local association and party structures all the way 'up' (if that's a fair way to put it) to Lady Thatcher herself. I have made many good friends and my experiences have undoubtedly shaped me as a person – and overall, I think, they have shaped me for the better.

When I first became a 'Young Conservative' in 1985, the resulting friendship with the late *** and his family from Bridge of Weir shaped much of my early adult life. Since meeting *** at the 1997 election count, he has (as you will know) become both a very good friend and someone who has been a great source of advice and guidance to me over many years – both in my political and personal lives. Other people I have met through the Party, such as my campaign team in North Ayrshire and Arran and the late Phil Gallie, have shown great generosity towards me; offering advice and support, and when the 'chips were down' they showed a loyalty and a willingness to publicly defend me for which I will be eternally grateful. The *** family at *** typified such support in our own local Association. Suffice it to say, the Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party has played a very large part in my life.

That having been said, it is difficult to disassociate such positive and wonderful people and experiences from the current hierarchy of the Party and their treatment of me in the past year or two.

I do not intend to dwell on the individuals whom I regard as having been responsible for the quite disgraceful and malicious manner of my dismissal as a candidate - partly because the Machiavellian machinations of our Party in recent times leave me uncertain as to the extent of their true individual and personal culpabilities, and partly because I do not want to dwell on such bitterness and recriminations from the past. Frankly, those involved will be judged by a Power infinitely higher than me.

However, it must be said that I was dismissed in a manner which cynically sought to gain maximum party-political advantage through the issuing of a malicious and defamatory public statement - the hyperbole of which was a callous and premeditated distortion of my own comments. This was clearly intended to defame my character to the supposed advantage of David Cameron and the Party - without any concern for my career or professional reputation.

In referring to a separate development, The Scotsman newspaper's leading editorial of 6th October last year summed up perfectly the malevolent and deceitful nature of our Party's hierarchy:

THE Scottish Conservatives...are questioning the integrity not only of our reporter but of this newspaper...No amount of attempted bullying from foul-mouthed Tory media minders or snide insinuations from spin doctors will stop us from continuing reporting the facts of this story and the fall-out, which remains a real problem for the party...

In denying the undeniable, the Tories should beware what they bring upon themselves...this incident has exposed the Scottish Tories to be a party which refuses to accept the truth, that dissembles, distorts, and attempts to intimidate; a party, in short, that cannot be trusted to admit the truth and therefore cannot be trusted with power.

The Party's intervention in the Glasgow Regional List selection procedures in the run up to the recent Scottish Parliamentary elections says it all: the Party denied the local members their chosen and democratically-elected candidate, Malcolm Macaskill, and instead - by the most scurrilous and blatantly corrupt conduct - replaced him with the Party leadership's preferred choice, Ruth Davidson. Having been employed by Annabel Goldie as the Head of the Leader's office for much of last year, and having now reportedly been endorsed by Annabel Goldie and David Cameron as their chosen candidate in the current Scottish Tory leadership election, it is difficult to underestimate the extent to which the elevation of Ruth Davidson represents the brazen corruption and dishonesty pervading the hierarchy of our once-great Party, and the contempt with which that leadership regards our ordinary members.

Recent public revelations surrounding Andy Coulson - David Cameron's senior media adviser at the time of my dismissal - have shed yet further light on the depths to which our Party has sunk. Mr Coulson's character was well known prior to his appointment by Mr Cameron and I made my feelings clear at the time that his previous and well-documented association with his newspaper's underhand treatment of Her Majesty The Queen and the Royal Family made his appointment to our Party both ill-judged and unacceptable.

The way in which the Party hierarchy treated me as a candidate in April 2010 led directly to my suspension from my job as a teacher. No one - least of all Annabel Goldie - has shown any concern whatsoever for the way in which the Party's actions have impacted on me and the cynical and disturbing way in which others have exploited the Party's treatment of me to attack and silence the voice of conservatism in the wider sense. I am being used as an example of what happens when a conservative stands up for conservative causes and the right to freedom of speech in the wider sense has been severely impugned as a result. The late Phil Gallie was the only member of our Party's executive to show any concern whatsoever about my case, and he was roundly vilified by that Executive for doing so. It was largely at Phil's suggestion, and out of loyalty to *** and the local association that I renewed my membership last September in the hope that all was not lost - it is now clear, regrettably, that in fact it is.

It would seem not only fair but essential to recognise that our grassroots membership and local associations are largely 'lions led by donkeys'. Our Party's Executive and leadership is utterly dominated and directed by weak, self-interested and often malevolent forces which lack sufficient principle or integrity to defend conservative values from David Cameron's placemen and women. Our Party leadership - at Scottish and UK level - now seeks to serve only the personal interests of the clique in control and the puppeteers who pull their overly-compliant strings. That leadership has abandoned the interests of our country and our people as its primary function and it is certainly no longer conservative in any recognisable sense. In its current form it only serves to damage the Union and our United Kingdom

further. Therefore, I am no longer able to support The Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party in its current, sad and corrupt state.

Sir Winston Churchill warned that no one man could change the tide of history but might only divert it a little. I have tried my best over 25 years to support and defend what I thought was best for Scotland and the United Kingdom and perhaps in some small way, somewhere, I might have contributed a just a little towards a diversion for the better. I do not consider my efforts wasted even if others may do so – one day we shall all have to answer to God and my conscience is clearer than most.

On a personal level may I offer my sincere best wishes and kind regards to yourself, *** and to the local Association.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Lardner