



Scottish Government
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Statement to Parliament from the First Minister
24th July 2017

Section 1: On the Rights of EU Citizens

Good afternoon parliament, I will on Thursday take my inaugural session of First Minister's Questions, an event that we should be proud of, at the heart of our democratic process. Before this takes place, I would like to formally announce the positions of the government on two key areas which we cannot currently legislate on, the rights of EU citizens and further devolution of welfare powers.

Parliament, we are gathered here in Edinburgh, the Athens of the North, in a building iconic of early 21st century architecture. Have you ever stopped to think about how we are so linked to our continent's other Athens, and another early 21st century building? First we copied their ancient architecture for our national monument and then one of our aristocrats stole their marbles, which now bear the name of his ancestral town. The 21st century architecture is of course the museum at the bottom of the acropolis, awaiting their repatriation. Scotland and Greece have an unlikely marriage, being at opposite ends of our grand old continent. Relationships like this have been forged, whatever our future holds, my government shall not undo them.

Before I get to the crux of the matter, I would like to demonstrate to parliament how identities can overlap, and how that is crucial to the EU debate, and our nation,

Show me a spurious patriot, a bombastic fire-eater, and I will show you a rascal. Show me a man who loves all countries equally with his own and I will show you a man entirely deficient of a sense of proportion. But show me a man who respects the rights of all nations while ready to defend the rights of his own against them all and I will show you a man who is both a nationalist and an internationalist.

That was a quote from Lord Belhaven, in this parliament, an opponent of the decision made in 1707, showing how we have always been an outward looking, tolerant nation.

And I will begin on that note, by saying that I, indeed my government, and hopefully all of this parliament is shocked and disgusted by the Tory and NUP Westminster government refusing to guarantee that EU citizens living in Scotland, and elsewhere in the UK, on the day that we leave the EU, will have the same rights at the subsequent sunrise. These are people who work in our NHS, our farms, our schools and universities and in every single other sector of our economy.

Yes, we voted to leave the European Union but we did not vote to cripple our cherished health service, leave students without teachers, or food unplanted. We most certainly did not vote to split up families across our continent, for that would be truly evil. What's more shocking still, is that the Westminster government have not provided any details on how their new immigration system will work, exacerbating the uncertainty. They have no right to do this, these are people's lives that the Tories and NUP are playing politics with.

I want every EU citizen in Scotland to know, that my government cherishes and respects you, you have been woven into the fabric of Scotland's tartan. I will do everything in my power to ensure that you can stay here, in what is now your nation as much as mine.

To this end, I will be speaking to the Westminster Government, including the Prime Minister, later this week, where I will press them to guarantee the rights of our country's people. At the very least they could provide clarity on what their new immigration system will look like.

I will work tirelessly, every day of my premiership if necessary, to ensure no one is worse off because of what a Westminster Government Scotland rejected is imposing.

You are Scotland, and I work for Scotland. We don't want to see you leaving Scotland, forced or otherwise. Our nation is poorer without you.

Section 2: On the Devolution of Further Welfare Powers

The second part of this statement covers an entirely separate issue, but one that is equally as important for Scotland. If I take you back just a couple of weeks, to the manifestos we all produced for the election, ours was entitled "Empowering All of Scotland", the Tories was "Change Scotland's Destiny", I believe that these two terms go hand in hand with each other. However, doing the latter without the former is simply immoral.

Basic Income is a lifeline for thousands of people right across Scotland, it is crucial funds to pay the rent, keep the lights on, put food on the dinner table. Disappointingly, parliament, this

is another area where the record of the Westminster government just does not add up. They have been circling Basic Income, threateningly, like some great white sharks, since they day they first walked down Downing Street.

I'll remind you again, this is a Government which lost the last general election in Scotland, and that therefore damaging proposals such as removing basic income for 16 and 17 year olds therefore has no mandate here in Scotland. My government was elected to fight this, and fight it is exactly what we will do.

It is my government's belief that Basic Income is best protected here in parliament, not down in London, and therefore allowing this parliament to make a real difference to the lives of the people living here in Scotland.

I am therefore announcing that I will be making further contact with the government in London, on this issue in the same meeting later this week. My government will be seeking to commence negotiations that will ultimately end in the devolution of Basic Income back here, to parliament. The negotiations, will determine the exact manner in which this devolution occurs.

My government will stand up for Scotland, and everyone who lives here in our beautiful nation. It's time that we made a real difference to people's lives, and that is exactly what I intend to do whilst in residence at Bute House.

You may say that these aims are ambitious, and yes, there are limits, in this age, to what governments can achieve. However, parliament, Scotland has a long history of achieving her seemingly impossible ambitions.

I'll take this opportunity to remind parliament of the late Bashir Ahmed, he came to Glasgow, in 1961, to drive busses. Within half a century he was representing his home city in a parliament that then didn't exist. How many glass ceilings were broken? Doubters defied? Ambitions realised?

One thing I will never lack for my government, my nation, is ambition. These are the two things I am most proud to lead, in committing myself to them, I pledge all my skill, vigour and determination. Here, in Scotland, and now, more than ever, the seemingly impossible shall be made possible.

Thank you, Presiding Officer.