

"For the past 50 years, Labour and Conservative Governments have shared a common agenda - stopping Home Rulers and Scottish Nationalists from breaking up Britain and making Scotland independent.

This programme will show you how both parties have resorted to spying and underhand tactics to discredit the SNP, its members and supporters. We will show you how official documents which supported independence were kept hidden.

Politicians and civil servants tried to obstruct independence and keep the country united."

BBC ALBA X

Diomhair



This document is a transcript, with some screen captures for illustrative purposes, of the Gaelic television programme 'DIOMHAIR' which was produced by the independent company - Caledonia TV.

The transcription was carried out by a team of volunteers who regard the programme's content, which relies heavily on information released under FOI rules, as being of considerable educational value. Especially for those with a new or renewed interest in Scottish politics and its recent history.

While most of the inevitable differences in text production (font type and size, spacings used etc.) stemming from individual preferences of team members have been homogenised by post editing, there is still noticeable variation in the layout, size, quality and frequency of the screen captures used to illustrate the text.

If your interest is sparked by the contents of this document, we advise that you may obtain the original DVD for a more complete experience. It is available from:

Caledonia TV,
147 Bath Street,
Glasgow,
for £10 plus p&p

Some Explanatory Notes

When Derek Mackay, the programme presenter, speaks, his words are in regular text and are not contained within quotation marks. Documents and specified individuals quoted by Derek Mackay are, however, of course in quotation marks. Where it is a quote from a specified individual, the text is also italicised.

When any other voice is heard it is in bold text and within quotations. Again if it is a person speaking directly for themselves or if it is quotation attributed to a specific individual, it is italicised.

When it is not evident from the general commentary, square brackets have been inserted by the transcribers at the start of a new passage of speech to clarify who is being quoted and whether they were speaking directly for themselves or whether an actor's voice was used

DIOMHAIR (secret)

In this programme we reveal how, in the past, civil servants, MI5 and Special Branch were used by Westminster to obstruct, and even sabotage, the Scottish Nationalist movement.

The evidence for this has, until now lain in the National Archives at Kew in London, and in the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh. Many of these files have never been opened – until now.

They raise serious questions.

How did the Government see off a demand for Scottish devolution signed by two million people?

Why was evidence suggesting that an independent Scotland could be amongst the richest countries in Europe stamped 'Secret' and buried in the archives for 30 years?

Did Edinburgh police deliberately encourage young Nationalists to commit bomb outrages and supply them with dummy explosives?

Were MI5 agents and Special Branch officers routinely spying on SNP members?

Did Civil Servants and ministers seek to undermine the economics of Nationalism by depriving Scotland of North Sea oil?



This is the National Archive at Kew in London where literally millions of Government documents are stored. Some are readily available, but others are considered too important and have been hidden away for up to 100 years. Most you can see after 30 years.



This document is a report of an SNP rally at Elderslie in Glasgow in 1947 held to commemorate the anniversary of William Wallace's execution. It appears to have been a fairly routine meeting but this is not a newspaper report. It's a report by the Metropolitan Police Special Branch. Even at the time when the SNP was a small party on the fringes, the Government was sending officers from London to spy on it.

[Dr John MacInnes] "The Government in every country is always on alert waiting for something that's going to threaten or weaken the State and MI5, MI6 and Special Branch are always on the look out. Anything that was going to threaten Britain was seen as dangerous. We don't know what's behind it, we don't know what these particular people could do. It was their opinion that we should keep an eye on everyone as much as possible."





The archives at Kew contain scores of files which prove that, from the 1920s, and right through World War Two and the post-war era, the authorities kept a close but clandestine watch on Scottish Nationalist groups and individuals.



Even the most eccentric manifestations of Nationalism were taken seriously. These Home Office papers show that in 1950, the police received a 'tip-off' that extreme Scottish Nationalists planned to steal, or blow up, the Coronation Stone in Kingston-upon-Thames, where eight Anglo Saxon kings had been crowned. The stone which weighed over a ton was given a police guard. The Home Office memo from 1950 states:

"The Secretary of State is not prepared to disclose the sources or nature of information received by the police."



Derek Mackay showing feigned trepidation.

'Not prepared to disclose the sources or nature of information received' is Civil Service code for 'information supplied by in this case, maybe, MI5 agents. The Home Secretary is after all. MI5's boss. The memo continues:

"The party was not known to have brought explosives with it."

However this Special Branch report does reveal that:

"With two exceptions, all were in Scottish national dress, and several carried bagpipes."

A memo from Labour's Scottish Secretary Arthur Woodburn warned the cabinet of the movement in Scotland for at least a measure of Home Rule.

[Arthur Woodburn (actor's voice)] "Those who are pressing for it are doing Britain a disservice abroad at a time when Britain's united influence is a vital factor in the safeguarding of world democracy. I hope my colleagues will keep this danger in mind and be vigilant when they are dealing with matters affecting Scotland"



Arthur Woodburn

The Cabinet, it seems, took that advice. Clement Atlee's Labour Government remained staunchly Unionist and anti-Devolution.



In 1947 a new group was formed by John MacCormick, a Glasgow lawyer who graduated from the university here. The group, the Scottish Convention, was political but not partisan. They wanted to unite people from all parties who thought Scotland would be better governed as part of Britain but with a degree of Home Rule.

Throughout Scotland MacCormick's idealism struck a chord. On 29th October 1949, twelve hundred people gathered in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall to launch a national campaign to win Home Rule for Scotland. The people gathered here represented churches, Town Councils, Trade Unions, supporters of all political parties and supporters of none.



They all believed that Scotland was ill-governed by Westminster and needed constitutional reform to promote what the Covenant they signed describes as:

“the spiritual and economic welfare of our nation”.

Within a week, half a million of their fellow Scots had signed the Covenant.

[Dr MacInnes] *“I was a young student then and was given papers and took them around the Highlands where people were signing them. I remember an Englishman saying to me, “Tell me about this.” By this time we had at least a million signatures, so I told him and he said, “You make a good case”*

Eventually over two million Scots signed the Covenant. That's a quarter of a million more than voted 'Yes' in the 1979 devolution referendum for a Scottish Parliament. Now surely with that amount of support, the Government had to pay attention! But the minutes of a Cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street on 15th May 1979 shows that ministers agreed that:

[Actor's voice] *“Any concession to a Nationalist movement of this kind was likely to lead merely to further demands both in Scotland and in Wales.”*

The Government did agree to meet a delegation of MacCormick's Home Rulers but only to tell them that:

“the Government was not prepared to 'enter negotiations' with the Covenant Committee which had 'no constitutional standing”.



John MacCormick

Frustrated by lack of progress, MacCormick wrote to the new Scottish Secretary, Hector McNeil:

[Actor's voice] *“It must be supposed that in the case of Scotland, unlike that of any other nation, the wishes of her people are in the Government's view, irrelevant.”*

Knowing that McNeil and Prime Minister Atlee were due to visit Scotland, MacCormick requested a meeting at the Cowal Gathering, only to be brushed off.

[McNeil (Actor's voice)] *“I have consulted the Prime Minister, but I'm afraid that it will not be possible for either him or me to meet you during the short period when Mr Atlee is to be in Scotland.”*

Mr Atlee, filmed here at the Cowal Gathering that year, clearly had more of a taste for Scottish Sports rather than Scottish home-rule.

The Covenant Committee then circulated every Government minister and MP with a note. It asked them:

[Actor's voice] *“Do you agree that if the majority of the electors in Scotland clearly express their desire for a Scottish Parliament within the framework of the United Kingdom, that desire should be favourably met by the United Kingdom parliament?”*





The Government's attitude is summed up in a memo by senior Scottish Office civil servant George Pottinger.

[Actor's voice] *"In the circumstances there would seem to be no need for any other ministers to trouble themselves to reply to the Covenant Committee's latest questionnaire."*

So what happened to the National Covenant that more than two million Scots had signed?

Nothing.

It was delayed, obstacles were put in the way and it was eventually pushed aside. The fact was that the British Government was against devolution. Instead of hope there was despair and instead of enthusiasm, people were frustrated. The files were locked away and consigned to history.

The political impasse frustrated Nationalists, especially the young. But on Christmas day 1950, four young activists pulled off an extraordinary publicity coup.

[Newsreel narration] *"Christmas Day sensation at Westminster Abbey. The Stone of Destiny, which had been there for some six hundred years, was stolen from the Coronation Chair."*



On Christmas Eve the Nationalist students broke into the Abbey and made off with the stone. One of them was Kay Matheson.

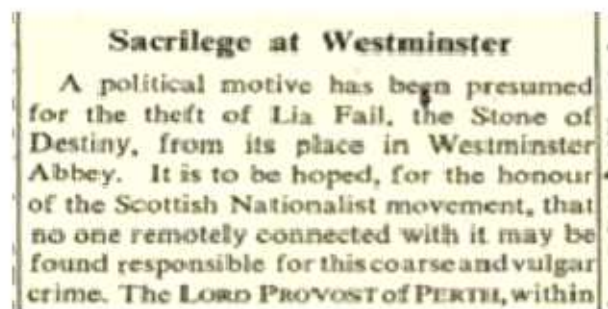


"It didn't bother us. We knew what we were going to do and we did it. It was as simple as that. We knew where it was and how we were going to do it and who'd be there. It was easy enough. They weren't suspicious of a young girl."

Nearly 60 years on, the entire escapade seems like a student prank but that's not how the British Establishment saw it at the time.

The Times' thundered

"Sacrilege at Westminster."



The Scots born Dean of Westminster, Alan Don, broadcast to the nation:

[Radio narration] *"It had been in the Abbey for 600 years: not 'til this week has anyone dared to lay sacrilegious hands upon it.*

His Majesty, as I have reason to know, is greatly distressed... as must be everyone who has any appreciation of the part that Westminster Abbey has played in the long history of our race and I will go to the ends of the earth to fetch it back."



[Dr MacInnes] *"I remember when we heard the news that the Stone had been taken from Westminster Abbey. I think that many of us young people thought that it was a great thing, a bit of fun. But many of the older generation thought it was terrible. As the days passed by, the older people who'd been initially opposed to it, started to say, "Well, wasn't it ours to begin with?"*

Donald MacIntyre, a bard from South Uist, celebrated the incident in song -

***The minister was so sorrowful
When he woke that morning
His eyes were all bleary as he got out of bed.
He walked up and down the floor,
moaning and praying,
And staring at the corner
From which the stone had fled.***

The archives at Kew show the extent of the establishment's shock – and the world's fascination over what the young nationalists had done. A letter to the Foreign Office from the British Embassy in Peru fretted about the coverage in the Peruvian press:

[Actor's voice] "The public is left with the impression that there is a strong dissident minority in Scotland who are ready to claim autonomy."

[Dr MacInnes] *"What did the Government think about the Stone? Maybe, that it was just the tip of the iceberg. That other people were behind it, dangerous people who could endanger the State."*



**[Newsreel narration] *"The Police have issued the description of a man and woman who were seen in a Ford Anglia car near the Abbey in the small hours of Christmas morning.
Orders went out for a strict search on roads, ports and airfields."***

A small squad of officers from London began the hunt for the culprits around Scotland. The Dean of Scotland's Faculty of Advocates was outraged: Apparently, at the time he said:

"It is a sorry episode in which Scotland Yard detectives invaded this country and subjected presumably innocent people to methods which are reminiscent of the third degree."

[Newsreel narration] *"Arbroath Abbey witnessed the signing of the declaration of Scottish independence in 1320, now it's the place chosen for the delivery of the Stone of Destiny."*



After three months 'on the run', the young Nationalists returned the Stone by leaving it on the altar of Arbroath Abbey. It was locked overnight in a police cell in Forfar before being sent back to London.

[Dr MacInnes] *"I remember walking up towards Princes Street and there were the usual newspaper vendors out on the street shouting the name of their newspaper. I came up to this woman selling newspapers who was standing in front of the Balmoral Hotel and as I was approaching, I realised that she wasn't shouting the name of the newspaper, but, "They've taken it from us!""*

While Scotland debated the future of the Stone, the Government debated the future of the four conspirators. The Church of England, who own Westminster Abbey, was demanding prosecution.

[Derek Mackay interviews Kay Matheson]

The Stone – was it a theft or a retrieval?

"A retrieval – returning something that had been stolen from us."

You weren't worried though that you'd be caught and punished?

"No."

But why not? It could have been quite a severe punishment.

"They couldn't – we were in the right and they were in the wrong."

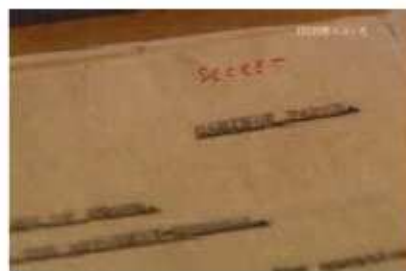
Did you worry that you might hear a prison cell door lock behind you one day?

"If they were going to lock us away then we would have had to accept that."



This is a secret Cabinet paper written by the English Attorney General. He says here:

"I'm satisfied that it would be unwise to prosecute for larceny or for sacrilege."



He concludes with:

"a prosecution would do no good except perhaps to the defendants to whom it would give the opportunity of being regarded as martyrs if they were convicted or as heroes if they were acquitted."



Within months George VI died. Prime Minister Churchill announced that Britain's new Queen would be called Elizabeth II, even though there had never been a Queen called Elizabeth in Scotland.

With the Coronation of the new Queen looming, Churchill acted decisively on the question of the Stone.

[Churchill (Actor's voice)] *"We think it essential to avoid having any controversy about the Stone at or about the time of the Coronation. We therefore propose to advise Her Majesty that the Stone should be replaced at an appropriate date after the funeral of his late Majesty".*

Churchill had decided that the Stone was to return permanently to Westminster Abbey in time for the Coronation that in itself was to be controversial. The Queen's Coronation was a fairy tale event designed to unite Empire and Commonwealth.



But Scotland's ancient regalia, much older than the English crown jewels, made no appearance. James Stuart, the Tory Secretary of State wrote to an official at Buckingham Palace:

[Actor's voice] *"The question of the use of the Scottish regalia was actually considered in 1936 but the ceremony which was then devised was rejected on the grounds that it savoured too much of a second coronation. Of this there can of course be no question."*

Eventually it was agreed that, once crowned in Westminster Abbey, Her Majesty would travel to Scotland to make a Coronation visit. It was to include a service at the High Kirk of St Giles in Edinburgh where she would be presented with the Regalia of Scotland. The symbolism of that event was scrutinised in intense detail. The Prime minister's secretary, Jock Colville, wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland:



[Actor's voice] *"The Prime Minister is inclined to think that there might be no objection to the Scottish Regalia being carried at St Giles in the Queen's presence, provided it is made clear from the start that there is no question of a second coronation or indeed anything in the service suggesting that it has special significance as far as the Queen's constitutional position in Scotland is concerned"*



From Buckingham Palace, a Royal Servant wrote to Jock Colville about a proposal put to the Palace by senior member of the household in Scotland:

[Actor's voice] *"The Dean of the Thistle has approached me regarding the details of this service, and one of the suggestions he makes is that some period of the service the Queen should publicly hold the Scottish Sceptre."*

Colville referred the idea to the Lord Chancellor whose office replied:

[Actor's voice] *"The symbolism might be regarded as implying Scotland was a separate Kingdom. The Lord Chancellor therefore thinks it would not be proper for Her Majesty to hold the Scottish Sceptre on that occasion."*

When Scotland's new Queen first came here to St Giles, she wasn't to wear the crown, hold the orb or even the sceptre. A gift from a Pope to James IV was deemed to be so symbolically powerful that it might tear apart the United Kingdom.



[Dr John MacInnes] *"Many people in Edinburgh who weren't Nationalists at all but who were probably Royalists, were very disappointed. The ancient crown of Scotland was taken out with the sword and all the regalia you see in the castle, and they thought she'd be all dressed up in a special outfit but no, she wore ordinary clothes. There were lots of people in Scotland, not just nats, who regarded this as an insult to Scotland."*



John MacCormick was a key figure in the National Covenant and in this book he reveals how Arthur Woodburn, Labour's Secretary of State for Scotland, accused him of advocating the bombing of Downing Street! In fact as he explains it in the book, MacCormick had said that Scotland might become independent more quickly if someone exploded a bomb in Downing Street. But he felt that Scots:

"preferred the slower and more rational methods of reasoned argument".

Maybe Woodburn's claim was a smear but the image of Scottish Nationalists as wide-eyed bombers was an attractive one for their enemies and was to lead to a notorious trial. The patriotic Post Office celebrated the arrival of a new queen by unveiling boxes carrying the logo "EIR".



One was installed on this corner on the Inch housing estate in Edinburgh. This outraged many Scots who angrily proclaimed that their country couldn't have an Elizabeth II, as it had never had an Elizabeth I. 1953 nearly started with a bang. A postman in Edinburgh found an explosive device in the new post box. The fuse had burned some letters, but hadn't set off a stick of gelignite.

[Dr John MacInnes] *"I was on a bus one night and two young men I knew came on the bus and said, "You didn't see us tonight.". I never questioned it but an hour later a post box was blown up on that bus route."*



[Norman Johnson] *"I was a policeman at the time and we had to look out for anyone damaging the boxes but I think it only happened a few times. It was something that worried the Government in London at the time."*

Wishes and thanks for, as ever
my ever yours !
No longer yours now is not !
Love truly
before a piece of paper
which was found in the
bag hole of P.B. & M.
Brown Rd. N.
and at the bank

A man with short brown hair, wearing a grey suit jacket and a dark and light striped scarf, is standing outdoors. He is looking slightly to his left with a neutral expression. In the background, there is a large, ornate building with many windows and a green metal fence. The scene appears to be in a city park or square.

“any persons who make seditious speeches or threats.”

Celina MacAlister, Raymond Fokier, and

The four men were charged with conspiracy. They were accused of conspiring:

They were also charged with separate firearms and explosives offences.



[Dr John MacInnes] "Cullen was giving evidence in court and trying to evade all the questions. He didn't want to answer them but Daiches made him answer in great detail. He tried to suggest that these were dangerous men and that he and the police had been absolutely right to bring these people to justice. He refused to admit he had deceived them in any way."



The accused had certainly been deceived by John Cullen. The court heard that Cullen had been driven from his home to St David's Street for a meeting with two of the accused. The driver gave his name as Tommy Higgins but the court heard that his real name was Sergeant George Donald Mieras of Edinburgh Special Constabulary. This was a police sting and Mieras' testimony was extraordinary.

[Trial Report 18/11/53 (Actor's voice)] "They came into the car and Cullen, who had a green paper parcel with him containing dummy fuses and detonators handed the parcel to Gillan. Gillan partly opened the parcel and spoke about meeting another man later on. He then remarked they were going to "do" St Andrews House."

The question is – should the police have had anything to do with encouraging young people to commit such an offence?

The court threw out the main charge of conspiracy and the firearms charge, but found the four guilty of offences under the Explosive Substances Act of 1883. For this they were sentenced to a year in prison.



Iain MacDougall, Solicitor

[Iain MacDougall] "If there was any evidence against them they would have been convicted of conspiracy which is easy to prove. All you need is two people coming forward and agreeing to carry out a certain crime. Even if they didn't carry out the crime they would still be guilty of conspiracy."

When chief witness John Cullen left the court he was met by a large, unhappy crowd.

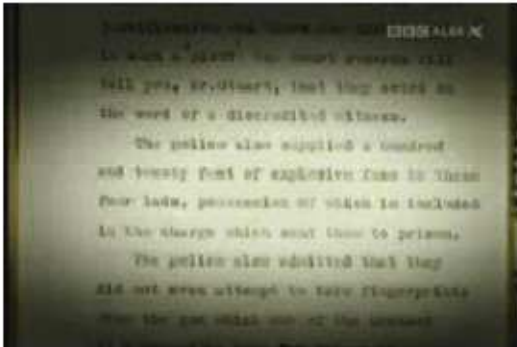
[Dr Ian MacInnes]. "Those around him must have looked really angry because you could see the fear on his face. He was almost crouched trying to get away and he started running and the crowd started to move. No one around me wanted to hurt Cullen but at the same time the crowd all moved in. I noticed that the police took fright and they managed to clear a space for Cullen. He ran away over there to the court door on the other side. You felt that in a few minutes a murder could easily have taken place."



The police portrayed Cullen as someone who was just a concerned citizen trying to stop a crime from happening. But there was another opinion. There is a document here saying that Cullen was rewarded by the police with both cash and a position as a Special Constable in the Edinburgh City Police. This led the Crown Office – Scotland's top prosecutors – to accuse Sir William Morren, the Chief Constable, of a "grave error of judgement".



[Actor's voice] “We have not attempted to defend Mr Cullen as an individual. We understand in strict confidence that Sir William Morren, the Chief Constable gave Mr Cullen a monetary reward,.. a grave error of judgement. Morren's second error was to make Cullen a special constable after the trial.”



This letter is an appeal from the mothers of two of the accused, to the Scottish Secretary. It points out that:

[Actor's voice] *“The police also supplied 120 feet of explosive fuse to those four lads, possession of which is included in the charge which sent them to prison”.*

As the families and friends of the accused protested, Cullen was given the British Empire Medal - a decoration normally awarded for 'meritorious service'.

[Iain MacDougall] *“He was given the award for no other reason than for what he had done in terms of encouraging and inciting these young men. Not only that, but he gave them the explosives for which they were found guilty. If that had happened today it wouldn't have got through the door of the court.”*



It wasn't just young home rulers who were critical of the trial. The following day's Scotsman asked:

[Actor's voice] “Should the police themselves provide young people the means of committing an offence? It is true that they supplied dummy gelignite and dummy detonators. Was it wise of the Lord Advocate to inflate this thing into a conspiracy to overthrow HM's Government in Scotland?”



The editorial added:

[Actor's voice] *“To use a steam hammer to crack this nut is probably politically unwise”*

Was John Cullen used to entrap young men and lead them into activities that would discredit Scottish Nationalism? Scottish Liberal leader Joe Grimmond certainly thought so. He demanded in Parliament that the use of agents provocateurs should no longer be used in Scotland. The four condemned men served their sentences at Saughton Prison.

Norman Johnson was a policeman in the area and remembers meeting a group of prisoners one day:

“They looked up and I recognised Callum MacAlister, one of the prisoners. I waved to him and he waved back. It was a very strange feeling. We were on either side of the fence. He was in prison and I was walking the beat. The worst thing about the case was that Edinburgh Police Force were behind it.”

[Iain MacDougall] “If ever you wanted to give any group a bad reputation you would set somebody amongst them who would encourage the weakest or most wayward of them to cause trouble. You would then inform the police where they could be found. This would result in them being charged and bringing disrepute to their community or group.”



By the mid 60s support for the SNP was increasing. Labour Secretary of State for Scotland Willie Ross wanted to keep them on the fringes. A Scottish Office memo of the time reads:

[Actor's voice] "The Secretary of State is concerned about correspondence with the SNP and has requested that replies to their letters should be as brief as possible. Where appropriate the letter should simply be acknowledged".



[Voice(s) over] "Winifred Margaret Ewing (Scottish National Party) eighteen thousand three hundred and ninety five."

But the Nationalists could not be fobbed off for long. In 1967 SNP's Winnie Ewing won the staunchly Labour Hamilton constituency in a by-election.

Scottish politics were never to be the same again. Labour and Tories both began exploring ways which might satisfy demands for a degree of self-government while maintaining the Union.

Could devolution finally be on the horizon?

1970 was another year of political upheaval. Against almost all predictions, the Tories won the General Election that June and although Winnie Ewing lost Hamilton, Donald Stewart became the first SNP candidate to win in a General Election when he won the Western Isles from Labour.





Devolution was now in the hands of Ted Heath but the issue seriously divided the two main parties. Labour and Conservatives both split into pro and anti-devolution factions. And even if they wanted pro-devolution - devolution of how much power? The political debate was often heated but in 1970 it became oil fired. In October that year, just four months after the Tories won the General Election, BP struck oil in the North Sea, 110 miles east of Aberdeen. It was the giant Forties field.

In September 1972, the SNP launched the 'it's Scotland's Oil' campaign. The party's membership soared. In 1973 a Royal Commission examining the possibility of devolution recommended that Scotland got a directly elected assembly but with limited powers.

A week later, this happened:

Margo MacDonald of the SNP won the staunch Labour seat in Glasgow Govan.

The mixture of Nationalism, devolution and oil worried the Government. Behind the political scenes, senior Department of energy civil servants were busy trying to defend the status quo.



[Actor's voice] "The case for not devolving responsibility seems to me overwhelming. The licensing policy must remain in the hands of central government. We recommend that it would not be consistent with the political and economic unity of the UK at large to devolve legislative responsibility for oil and gas developments to the regions. The exploration and exploitation of our oil and gas resources need to be considered in the light of our national and international policies".



[Professor Gavin McCrone] *"The thing about the civil service is that no department likes giving up its functions. And so in the Scottish Office, I mean, we had frequent meetings with our counterparts in other departments discussing what sort of functions a devolved government in Scotland might have and most departments started from the position that they didn't want to give up any functions."*

In 1974 the wheels of fortune turned again. Ted Heath's Conservatives lost the election to Harold Wilson's Labour Party. Now Wilson was responsible for deciding what share of oil revenue might come to Scotland. One Scottish Office civil servant warned:



[Actor's voice] "It could be argued that so long as Scotland is an integral part of the UK serious damage would be done to the principles of parity of treatment if special expenditures were directed to Scotland only".

The Government feared that devolution for Scotland would mean that not only would there be conflict between the oil companies but also between Scotland and Britain. In July 1974, a Scottish Office official warned:

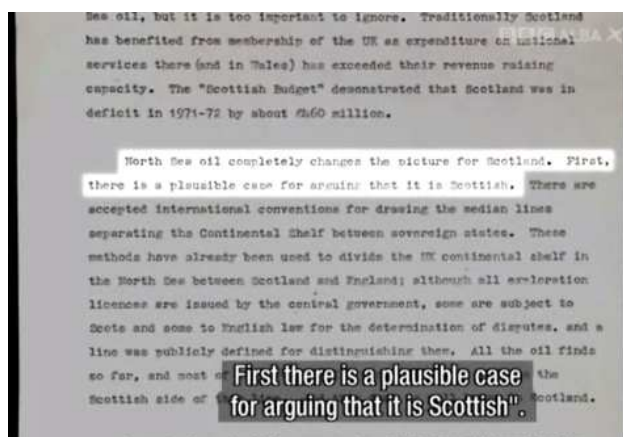
[Actor's voice] "To provide a directly-elected assembly in Scotland with a real or simulated sense of grievance over the handling of oil would provide a focus for national discontent, particularly since oil has now made plausible the possibility of full Scottish independence".

A Treasury report, marked 'Confidential', shows that senior civil servants were beginning to think the unthinkable.

[Actor's voice] "North Sea oil completely changes the picture for Scotland. First there is a plausible case for arguing that it is Scottish".

In October 1974 Labour won another General Election with an increased majority. But the SNP won another five seats bringing their strength up to eleven MPs.

In the face of the growing Nationalist threat, the Queen announced Labour's devolution plans.



[The Queen] "My Government will urgently prepare for the implementation of the decision to set up directly elected assemblies in Scotland and Wales".

[Professor Gavin McCrone] "My impression was that Labour ministers realised because of the greatly increased vote for the SNP, there was a demand for some form of self-government in Scotland and they thought they had to meet that".

But within a week of the Queen's speech, grave doubts about devolution were coming from a senior civil servant in the cabinet Office. What if the Scottish Assembly wanted to take control of the oil?

[Actor] "The Scottish administration might wish deliberately to restrict the programme in order to husband reserves or more generally to frustrate the central government. This could happen if the SNP gained a majority or dominant influence in the assembly. The risk underlies the whole devolution settlement and if it were to materialise it would mark the failure of the Government's devolution strategy."

For the Government this was a serious problem. According to Cabinet Minister Tony Benn's memoirs, Scottish Secretary Willie Ross told a Cabinet committee that Scottish devolution was the most important decision since 1707. Meanwhile it was dawning on the Government that an independent Scotland might be very rich.

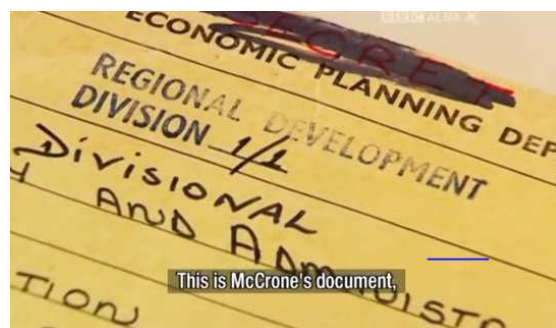
But North Sea oil was increasingly seen as the UK's economic lifeline.

[Professor Gavin McCrone] "It was a very bad time as far as the rest of the economy was concerned. The shipbuilding industry was in pretty dire straits at that time, much of it was disappearing and steel and heavy engineering - these other industries, traditional industries of Scotland were also in decline, so it was a depressing time from the point of view of the economy. And of course the whole of the UK was suffering from tremendously high inflation and unemployment."

Oil devolution was a complex problem but the Government had quite a simple strategy. They wouldn't tell the Scots that North Sea oil riches were vast. Gavin McCrone was Chief Economic Adviser to the Scottish Office at that time. In a paper he wrote early in 1974 he reveals that the Government claimed that oil was worth £100 million a year but the SNP claimed it was worth £800 million a year. McCrone concluded: "All that is wrong with the SNP estimate is that it is far too ... low".

[Professor Gavin McCrone] "I thought folk needed to be woken up a bit. And it was actually a briefing paper for the incoming ministers in the Government in 1974 because I felt up to that time the official estimates of the revenues of North Sea oil grossly under-estimated what it would amount to."

This is McCrone's document, the best informed analysis of the potential of North Sea oil that the Government had.



This must have terrified the Government and the Unionist opposition. For a start, it brushes aside claims that North Sea oil might not legally belong to an independent Scotland.

[Professor Gavin McCrone (Actor's voice)] "It is hard to see any conclusion other than to allow Scotland to have that part of the Continental Shelf which would have been hers if she had been independent all along".

McCrone then turns to the economy of an independent Scotland. On the next page he says:

[Professor Gavin McCrone (Actor's voice)] "It must be concluded, therefore, that large revenues and balance of payment gains would indeed accrue to a Scottish government in the event of independence. The country would tend to be in chronic surplus to a quite embarrassing degree and its currency would become the hardest in Europe. The Scottish pound would be seen as a good hedge against inflation and devaluation and the Scottish banks could expect to find themselves inundated with a speculative inflow of foreign funds."

McCrone then argues that the idea of an independent Scotland being refused EEC membership is a non starter.

[Professor Gavin McCrone (Actor's voice)] *"North Sea Oil could have far reaching consequences for Scottish membership of the EEC because of the tremendously increased political power it would confer. As the major producer of oil in Western Europe, Scotland would be in a key position and other countries would be extremely foolish if they did not seek to do all they could to accommodate Scottish interests."*

The Government-paid civil servant then came to the conclusion that the Government didn't want to hear and certainly didn't want Scotland to hear!

[Professor Gavin McCrone (Actor's voice)] *"This paper had shown that the advent of North Sea oil has completely overturned the traditional arguments used against Scottish nationalism... For the first time since the Act of Union was passed, it can now be credibly argued that Scotland's economic advantage lies in its repeal"*.

So how did the Government deal with this evidence from its distinguished economist?

Simple - they marked it 'Secret' and buried it for 30 years here in the National Archives of Scotland. The truth about the amount of oil that lay in the North Sea and the wealth it could create for an independent Scotland was kept hidden for years.



In 1977 Berwick upon Tweed, a town historically much fought over between Scotland and England, became central to a new campaign by the civil servants of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. They thought they'd found a way of taking the oil away from Scotland altogether!

They wanted to redraw the offshore border between Scotland and England so that it ran North East, not due east from Berwick on Tweed. They also wanted to encourage Shetland and Orkney to opt out of any future independent Scotland. Writing to Prime Minister Callaghan, Foreign Secretary Anthony Crossland claimed that they recognised border due east of Berwick on Tweed would never stand international scrutiny and goes on to

suggest 'seeking to inspire articles' with 'selected public opinion formers' and briefing back bench MPs. Crossland's civil servants advised the Prime Minister:

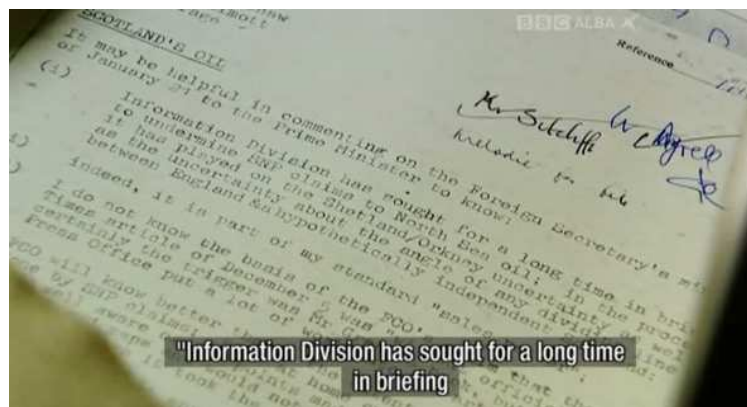
[Actor's voice] *"However the dividing line was drawn it would give England a considerable area of what are now Scottish waters. It might also have the effect of putting into English waters a certain amount, and possibly even a great deal of oil".*

The Foreign office officers go on to urge HMG to play the Shetland/Orkney card, as the islanders were dead set against being run from Edinburgh. They, and their oil would remain British because:

[Actor's voice] *"It seems inconceivable that HMG would exclude the Shetlands from the UK against their will in the event of Scottish independence"*.

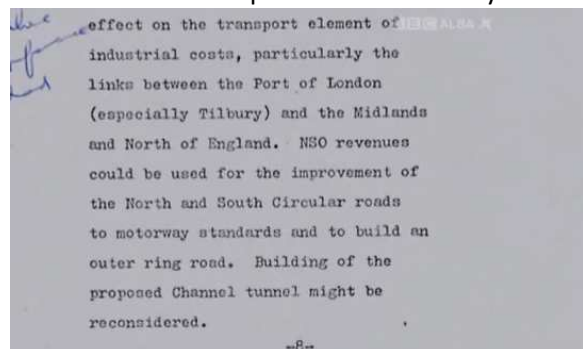
That way Scotland would be left with very little oil. Shetland, Orkney and England would have it all. The Foreign Office plan to draw the border was circulated to ministers and departments. Bernard Ingham, who was then a senior press officer at the Department of Energy, claimed that he and his colleagues had been peddling that line for ages.

"Information Division has sought for a long time in briefing to undermine SNP claims to North Sea Oil; in the process it has played on the Shetland/Orkney uncertainty as well as the uncertainty about the angle of the dividing line between England and a hypothetically independent Scotland... Indeed it is part of my standard sales patter".



[Professor Gavin McCrone] *"I think possibly, looking back on the whole thing, that there were those in the civil service who took a rather different view of this from what they would normally do, of political issues because they felt they had to work for the maintenance of the integrity of the United Kingdom. I think that was seen as an objective by some people."*

Not only did Westminster believe that it was them, and only them, who had the right to North Sea oil and its revenues, they also had definite ideas about how the windfall should be spent. Brian Willott, a senior servant from the Department of Industry wrote to Gavin McCrone:



[Brian Willott (Actor's voice)] *"North Sea oil revenues could be used for the improvement of the north and south circular roads to motorway standards and to build an outer ring road. Building of the proposed Channel Tunnel might be reconsidered".*

[Professor Gavin McCrone (Actor's voice)] *"The notion that North Sea oil revenues could be used for the improvement of the north and south circular roads may well appeal to the commuting civil servant but... it would be political suicide for any Government that was anxious to retain seats in Scotland."*

McCrone may have had right on his side but Willott had might on his. Over the next 30 years the oil flowed and a hugely expensive outer ring road, the M25, was built, as was the equally expensive Channel Tunnel. Scotland meanwhile, saw industry after industry being closed down.

In this film we've revealed how successive governments have used and at times abused their power to keep Scotland in the Union and sabotage the causes of devolution and independence.

We have also discovered Government files that show... how the police were diverted from catching criminals to spy on legal and peaceful SNP demonstrations... how the will of two million Scots was defied, by simply ignoring their demands for devolution... how Edinburgh Police encouraged young Nationalists to commit bomb outrages and supplied them with dummy explosives... and how evidence that an independent Scotland could be among the richest countries in Europe was stamped 'Secret' and buried in the archives.

For anyone who cares about democracy such behind-the-scenes attempts to undermine legitimate political movements, are a cause for concern. However, during this investigation it's been of some comfort that we are now able to access confidential files and documents that some politicians might have preferred to remain secret forever.