

Debate Night: the aftermath

Published: January 13, 2026, 2:26 pm

I spent a long day yesterday getting back from Edinburgh. Storms blew train timetables asunder, but in fairness to the rail system, I got here, and I am grateful for that. The sea north of Berwick-on-Tweed was quite a sight.

The whole process reminded me of how disruptive of work travel really is. I travelled extensively from 2005 to 2019. I am glad that I do not do it anymore. For most purposes, Zoom does very well. There will be no more Taxing Wealth Report 2024 contributions this week because of that disruption.

These were not, however, the only lessons learned from Wednesday night's outing.

The Twitter trolling was pretty significant. I am not a woman, and so at least I avoided all the added abuse that would have happened if I was, but it makes me appreciate just how large the sad population of those who get their kicks from being anonymously rude from their phones really is. If they really think that this is what politics is all about, we are in trouble.

And then there was the [Scottish Daily Express](#). It reported:



The image is a screenshot of the Scottish Daily Express website. The header features the 'SCOTTISH DAILY EXPRESS' logo with a small flag icon. Below the header, there is a dark bar with the text 'Get more of the stories that matter to you. Check out our email selection >' and a search icon. The main navigation bar includes 'CONTACT US' and 'NEWSLETTERS SIGNUP'. The main content area has a large image of a landscape. Below the image, the headline reads: 'Scexit-supporting economist labelled 'deeply offensive' after claiming Scotland is a 'colony''. A small 'MORE' button is to the right of the headline. At the bottom of the page, there is a small note: 'Economist Richard Murphy has been roundly criticised by even those within the SNP for claiming on BBC Scotland's Debate Night that Scotland is a 'colony' of the United Kingdom'.

Amusingly it noted:

Mr Murphy, ... received applause from the audience when he made the comments. He

said: "Let's be realistic, independence isn't going to happen yet because Labour and the Tories are united in their desire to retain Scotland as a colony, the same as they are united in their desire to keep Wales under London control."

I note they decided not to refer to me as Prof. It's usually women that they fail to acknowledge in this way, but what the quote made clear was that in front of a politically representative audience I won applause for my comments, in Edinburgh at that.

Despite that, they went on to make wild claims about my being wrong, including because the SNP lost a Supreme Court hearing last year and because I had apparently not shown respect for the term colony during Black Lives Matter month, which I found quite surprising as arguments go.

For the record, an [Oxford dictionary](#) defines a colony as:

A country or an area that is governed by people from another, more powerful, country

You will find something very similar in many other dictionaries.

Examples given include Australia, Canada, the thirteen former British colonies that founded the USA and of course many former British territories. I would add Ireland to the list, pre-1922.

So, Scotland is a colony on this basis. It is a country and Westminster most definitely wants to rule it, and does so because it is more powerful. I do not regret what I said. It was factually accurate.

One thing I did note though was a comment suggesting that I would never be back on Debate Night. For the record, I have been asked if I would do it again, and have agreed. So, 'see you soon' is my response to that suggestion.