

Funding the Future

Labour's contempt for Scotland

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In an extraordinary interview yesterday, Wes Streeting MP, the UK health secretary in the Labour government, told Lewis Goodall on LBC that there was absolutely no way in which Labour would permit another referendum in Scotland on independence, however big the majority of MSPs elected to the Holyrood Parliament who supported the call for this to happen might be.

As far as I can see, the interview is [only available on Twitter](#):

LBC @LBC

"The country has had enough of chaos!"

Wes Streeting rules out Scottish independence, telling @Lewis_Goodall that there will be no fresh referendum even if the SNP get a majority.

WESTMINSTER

0:28

Wes Streeting rules out Scottish independence

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The significance cannot be avoided.

Streeting's claim was that the UK cannot afford the chaos that a Scottish referendum campaign might create. His suggestion was that after the global financial crisis, Brexit and Covid, the idea of Scottish Independence was unaffordable, whatever the people of Scotland might desire.

Labour is, of course, performing very badly [in Scottish opinion polls](#) at present and is expected to come third in the Holyrood elections next month, when only two years ago it was thought they had a prospect of winning. Now, the expectation is that they will be marginally beaten by Reform, with both trailing massively behind the SNP, who are expected to get a majority, with the Scottish Greens adding to the largest pro-Independence block likely to have ever been seen inside this parliament since it was created.

So, let me be clear about what is really going on here. Streeting is going full-blown Orban in his approach, adopting the style of authoritarian contempt towards democracy and the will of the people of the country previously associated with the [now departed neofascist Hungarian Prime Minister](#).

It is impossible to describe the language that Streeting used as anything but contemptuous of Scotland. The attitude he revealed was deeply colonial, and his responses made clear that he has no regard for whatever Scotland may desire.

Streeting needs to be a little more considered. The greater the contempt that is shown, the more the anger in Scotland at colonial neoliberal role from Westminster will be, and the greater will be the desire to depart. If Streeting is unable to work that out, he places himself in [the same league as Donald Trump when it comes to strategic thinking](#), but there again, that might be true.

What he also revealed, as Trump did yesterday, is that Labour is out of ideas when it comes to excuses for denying Scotland what it wants. Saying that Scotland may not be independent because England cannot afford chaos on the scale of the global financial Crisis, Brexit, and Covid again is utterly absurd, is an excuse obviously without foundation, because an orderly separation would create no chaos at all. Perhaps, then, what Streeting really revealed was that Labour would fight a rear-guard action against Scottish Independence even if it won support in a referendum. In the process, what Streeting made clear is how far down the path from democracy Labour has travelled.