

Gordon Brown accuses Boris Johnson of undermining Scottish Parliament with 'muscular unionism'

Gordon Brown has accused Boris Johnson of undermining the Scottish Parliament and urged him to ditch his “muscular unionism”.

In a scathing attack, the former Labour prime minister criticised the Tory PM for dismissing devolution as a disaster and for his strategy of “putting up more Union Jacks”.

5 Brown’s comments came as a think tank he founded released a poll showing that people across the UK had shared values.

“Our Scottish Future found that citizens in Scotland, England and Wales are united in their belief that equality, tolerance, liberty and diversity are important to making them proud of their nation. The poll also showed people are largely agreed on questions like immigration limits, British history, as well as
10 the balance between equality and opportunity.”

Brown, Prime Minister between 2007 and 2010, wants the SNP and Tory Governments to stop fighting and cooperate on areas of joint concern.

He singled out Johnson, whose Government has been accused of trying to subvert devolution by funding devolved areas directly, for criticism.

15 He said: “The problem about muscular unionism, which is the policy of Boris Johnson, is that he wants to bypass cooperation, and he wants to impose his view on Scotland.”

He continued: “You’ve got to drop muscular unionism - it won’t work. Conservative muscular unionism will fail, it cannot succeed. You can’t ignore the need for partnership between Scotland and the UK. You can’t call devolution a disaster because that alienates the whole of Scottish opinion that supports
20 devolution. And you can’t solve this problem by putting up more Union Jacks or labelling bridges as British and bypassing the other democratic institutions that exist.”

SNP MSP Rona Mackay said: "Boris Johnson’s Tories are engaged in a sustained attack on Scottish devolution. To think an appeal to Boris Johnson to be reasonable will work is, quite frankly, ludicrous. And far from providing answers, Gordon Brown's party remains a significant part of the problem.
25 Scottish Labour's constant denial of Scotland's democratic right to choose an independent future in a post-pandemic referendum serves only to enable Johnson and his hard Brexit zealots to continue inflicting damage on the people of this country.”

"If Gordon Brown wishes to contribute to the debate, he should start by upholding democracy not damaging it."

30 A No 10 spokesperson said: “Ministers and officials at all levels of government work closely with the devolved Scottish Government and the other devolved administrations. The Prime Minister has always fully supported devolution. As Minister for the Union he consistently makes the case for a strong United Kingdom and sets out that we are at our best when we can work together towards a common goal, as shown during the pandemic. The UK Government is fully committed to levelling up all parts of the
35 United Kingdom to ensure that no community is left behind, particularly as we recover from covid 19.”