



Murdoch back among the 'great Scottish people' as tongues wag over a move

Mogul makes dramatic visit – amid more talk that 'The Sun' will support Yes vote – and strengthens his bond with Salmond. By **Gideon Spanier**

The dramatic arrival of Rupert Murdoch in Scotland yesterday showed that the magnate has lost none of his love for backing winners. It seems the octogenarian wants to take the pulse of the land of his forefathers for himself before the Scottish edition of his flagship newspaper, *The Sun*, advises its readers how to vote in Thursday's independence referendum.

First Minister Alex Salmond's aides say they had no idea Murdoch, whose grandfather was a Presbyterian minister from Aberdeenshire, was coming, but his increasingly feverish tweeting recently suggests an enduring enthusiasm for Salmond and disdain for Westminster. The visit seems likely to amplify voices, circulating high in the Murdoch ranks, which claim that he is still toying with moving the domicile of his newspaper company News Corp from the United States to an independent Scotland. Mr Murdoch could be attracted by a low rate of corporation tax – up to 3 per cent lower than the rump of the United Kingdom. The Westminster Government plans to cut its corporation tax rate from the current 20 per cent, but Mr Salmond, like Ireland, could go lower still.

"If Murdoch could convince shareholders that moving to Scotland will make their shares go up, they will be fine with it," claimed one source. Such a move would be a coup for Mr Salmond, as leading firms last week warned they could move operations to London.

City experts said it would be relatively straightforward for News Corp to move its domicile, which is in the American state of Delaware, outside the US while continuing to keep its shares listed on the stock exchange in New York. Mr Murdoch and his family control about 40 per cent of the voting shares in News Corp. Many of those assets are not susceptible to being



Rupert Murdoch, whose grandfather emigrated from Scotland to Australia, is known to be an admirer of First Minister Alex Salmond (right) PA

uprooted, and the company has just signed a 30-year lease on space in The News Building in London.

But the rumours emanate from those immersed in economic realities rather than mischief-making. Several City insiders said they had not heard of any plan by News Corp to move its domicile but it was plausible. One person who has worked with Mr Murdoch said: "There are some things that would surprise me. This wouldn't."

A London banker said: "I would put the odds at 50:50. The family did go from Scotland to Australia, so he would get to go full circle."

News Corp said: "We don't comment on rumours and speculation." But a person close to the company said there are no plans.

A spokesman for Mr Salmond said he has not talked with Mr Murdoch, or his executives, about moving his business interests to an independent Scotland.

"Where businesses are located is a matter for them, but of course we have plans to make an independent Scotland competitive vis-à-vis the rest of the UK," said a spokesman for

the First Minister. BSkyB said this weekend that it will not move to Scotland. Mr Murdoch's film and TV business, 21st Century Fox, has a 39 per cent stake in BSkyB. It is thought Mr Murdoch would not consider moving Fox's domicile outside America because of its US broadcasting licences.

Claire Enders, who heads Enders Analysis in London, was doubtful about a move.

"I'm not privy to their thinking but it is really unlikely," she said. "It's probably Rupert has made a mischievous comment in passing that shouldn't be taken seriously." Ms Enders warned it was "far too early" for such talk, as it would take years to set up legal, political and taxation systems. Mr Murdoch doesn't know what Mr Salmond is offering, and vice versa.

One source said senior figures around Mr Murdoch were "wavering" about his plan for the Scottish *Sun* to endorse independence. "There is a lot of doubt in that camp about the competency of Salmond's team in business matters. Regardless of heart, the head would rule for Rupert."

The Yes campaign claims an independent Scotland would have a renaissance in manufacturing, growing the sector by 30 per cent within 16 years, and No voter JK Rowling is trolled on Twitter.

Campaigns lull during Commonwealth Games, while Alistair Carmichael, Secretary of State for Scotland, tells *The Independent on Sunday* that the UK is "greater than the sum of its constituent parts".

Mr Salmond and Better Together leader Alistair Darling square off in two television debates. Honours are even after the second.



A shock YouGov poll puts Yes in the lead for the first time. The Queen refuses to intervene as more than four million Scots prepare to vote.



Mohammad Sarwar is urging former constituents to vote No RODDY SCOTT

Pakistani politician woos Asian 'No' vote

By Omar Waraich

The battle for Scotland's Asian voters has intensified in the final week of campaigning as the "No" campaign has enlisted the support of the Governor of Pakistan's Punjab province, in a move the "Yes" campaign has denounced as "foreign interference".

Mohammad Sarwar, a former Glasgow MP who surrendered his British nationality last year to become the Governor of Pakistan's Punjab province, has returned to Scotland to persuade his former constituents to vote against an independent Scotland.

"The vote is too close to call," Mr Sarwar told *The Independent on Sunday* from Glasgow. "So the ethnic minority vote has become crucial." Ethnic minorities represent more than 4 per cent of Scotland's total population, with about 140,000 people who class themselves as Asian Scots.

This sizeable minority will be courted more than ever this week as the tight electoral race concludes. While younger ethnic minority voters seem to be siding with the Yes campaign, many of the older generation feel strong ties to Britain because of the historic links between the UK and the Indian subcontinent.

Naranjan Singh Benning, 63, a retired businessman and committed No voter said: "I've lived in Scotland for 18 years. I was born in India and I was in London for 35 years before coming to Glasgow. I definitely feel British rather Scottish. We

are all one country; it doesn't matter where you live."

Research by the Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity recently found that minority groups in Scotland are more likely to claim a Scottish identity compared to those in England choosing to an English identity, however. Overall 94 per cent of those from ethnic communities born in Scotland identify as being Scottish rather than British – a majority likely to boost the Yes vote.

Voters of Pakistani origin form the largest ethnic minority group in Scotland. Over the course of the final few days of campaigning, Mr Sarwar will be addressing several public meetings organised by the No campaign.

"The union has served us well," the former Labour MP for Glasgow Govan and Glasgow Central said. "Scotland benefited, England benefited. I think it's not just that the people of Scotland will suffer [from a break-up], but the people of England, too."

Mr Sarwar's high-profile intervention has, however, been met with disapproval from Yes campaigners, who say that a foreign politician's campaigning goes against the spirit of the Edinburgh Agreement.

Humza Yousaf, Scotland's Minister for External Affairs and International Development, said: "If he is here to campaign for the No camp, we would look at that unfavourably. This isn't an issue for foreign governments to interfere in."

After two years of proxy campaigning, the Yes and No camps formally start 16 weeks of electioneering.

2014
May

June

July

August

September

June 2014, an Englishwoman in Scotland

"The more I listen to the Yes campaign, the more I worry about its minimisation and even denial of risks."

JK ROWLING, 'HARRY POTTER' AUTHOR



August 2014, the celeb plea

"What unites us is much greater than what divides us. Let's stay together."

SIR PAUL MCCARTNEY

