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Cybernats call for Barrhead Travel boycott over SNP independence 'lies' claim

Nationalists attack the founder of Scotland's largest independent travel company after he emails staff warning independence would be a 'complete disaster'



The founder of Barrhead Travel has warned staff about the damage Scottish independence would cause the business

By **Simon Johnson**, Scottish Political Editor

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 **464 Comments**

Angry nationalists have called for a boycott of Scotland's largest independent travel agent after its founder urged staff to disregard the SNP's "lies" about leaving the UK.

Scores of separatists took to the Internet to castigate Bill Munro, who has built Barrhead Travel into one of the UK's most successful travel companies, even comparing the entrepreneur to Robert Mugabe.

They unleashed the volley of abuse after it emerged that Mr Munro sent an email to most of his employees warning that a Yes vote in September would be a "complete disaster" for the travel industry.

He said he was determined to set out "the facts, not the lies being put out by the SNP" after being asked by many of his staff for his views about the ramifications of independence.

Among the concerns he raised were a separate Scotland's debt levels, currency, EU membership, North Sea oil revenues, interest rates, public spending levels and the cost of leaving the UK.

The nationalists responded by urging Scots to boycott the firm, which employs more than 800 people, and arguing that Mr Munro's intervention amounted to bullying his staff.

The tirade of abuse, which also included threats that the firm would go bankrupt, emerged amid renewed criticism of the pro-UK Better Together campaign for employing negative tactics.

But major employers have delivered the most prominent warnings about a separate Scotland over recent weeks, with Caledonian Trust, an Edinburgh-based property investment firm, predicting that it would be "an expensive club to join with a continuing high subscription."

Mr Munro, who started the travel company in 1975 in the East Renfrewshire town of Barrhead and built it up to become one of the UK's largest, issued a defiant statement saying he had the "right to express my own opinion."

He said: "In response to an increasing number of questions from Barrhead Travel employees regarding my views on the referendum, I decided to share my opinion which is that independence would not be good for Scotland, its business or customers."

His email to 697 staff, sent on February 24 and made public yesterday, said: "For Barrhead Travel and most, if not all travel companies, it will be a complete disaster, especially with branches in England and Ireland.

"Thirty-seven per cent of our business comes from England and we would not be able to trade outwith Scotland due to Scotland being outwith the EU and English regulations for at least three years."

Mr Munro, who is now a non-executive director, concluded: "The devil is in the detail and as the weeks pass and more is discovered the magnitude of the impending disaster should there be a Yes vote becomes ever more apparent."

His email cited an analysis by Robert Lyddon, an international banking consultant, which concluded the remainder of the UK could not agree a currency union with a separate Scotland.

The report also warned of **savage cuts to public spending to bring down a separate Scotland's debt levels and "damagingly high" interest levels.**

But hundreds of nationalists took to the social networking sites Twitter and Facebook to state they were boycotting the company and attack Mr Munro.

"Will never use you again. I will be urging ALL my friends and family to do the same," one posted. Another described the email as "shocking" and concluded: "Boycott them now".

"So many comments were just plain lies it cannot be taken seriously. Mugabe-like behaviour," one nationalist said, comparing Mr Munro to the Zimbabwean tyrant.

A fourth separatist listed companies such as Woolworths that have gone under in recent years and predicted that Barrhead Travel "will be the next big name to liquidate after today's Vote No Lies".

But Jim Murphy, the Labour MP for East Renfrewshire, tweeted: "Nationalists' attempt to bully Barrhead Travel, a great Scottish company, are totally out of order and won't work. They have a right to say No."

He added: "This is the worst type of negative politics from Yes campaigners."

Gordon MacIntyre-Kemp, chief executive of pro-independence group Business for Scotland, said: "The idea that in the event of a Yes vote, for example, there would be restrictions on trade, as outlined in the memo, doesn't make any sense.

"Day in, day out there is free trading taking place between independent countries."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scotland/10735256/Cybernats-call-for-Barrhead-Travel-boycott-over-SNP-independence-lies-claim.html>