

From Clan MacLeod Society South Australia Newsletter May 2009

THE NEXT EPISODE

Scotland and the Nation's search for a new identity.

Last newsletter we read the account, by Tacitus, of the speech by Calgacus of the Caledonians 84 AD. It was an early expression of nationhood or National identity of Scots.

Centuries later, upon the death of Alexander 111, 1296, and with no clear succession to the throne, Edward 1 of England took opportunity to fill the void and with ruthless invasion, imposed cruel Governors. Scotland's nobles had capitulated. (Meanwhile The Highlanders of the Western Isles remained in the Norse tradition of the Lords of the Isles, and local Clan supremacy).

From the struggle of the Scots' subjection, a tall man of iron strength suddenly appears on the pages of history. William Wallace, with his Scots, was victorious over the English at Stirling Bridge, broke south and lit a fire which has not been put out. Edward-1 had unwittingly forged a popular determination to resist foreign aggression upon a land, which had self governed through 113 kings¹ (Declaration of Arbroath).

We now call it 'Nationalism', or 'Democratic patriotism'; but at the time of c1300 it was unprecedented in Europe, and in rage, a people gave it reality. They transformed a generic tiered Feudal strata into a pillar of nationhood.

Robert Bruce was crowned King of Scots in 1314, and the Wars of Independence refined the attitude of Scots in of the Declaration of Arbroath 1320.

This petition to Pope John XXII, is eloquent and persuasive in the case to resist English Rule; however it is notable for 2 other things.

One, that, although Bruce was a popular and successful King, should "he give up what he has begun", there would be an undertaking to expel him. At a time when Kings ruled absolutely, this was a revolutionary idea, that a King should carry out the wishes of the people, or be dismissed.

Secondly, and a very modern concept in our world, is that powerful rulers should not make war on smaller neighbours.

Just think on these 2 principles. The Declaration of Arbroath forms the foundation of Scottish political thought.

From 1488 James IV was a Renaissance Ruler, a Patron of the Arts, Sciences, responsive to new ideas and affairs of Europe. Universities opened in St. Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen. Scottish Parliament passed an Education Act 1496, said to be the first of its kind. Applicable to the eldest sons of Barons and Freeholders, that they should compulsorily attend school and University to become qualified to discharge their offices as Sheriffs and Judges for the people.

Further laws spread education throughout the community. In 1695 an Act passed [that every Parish in the realm should provide a commodious schoolhouse.. (with) schoolmaster. ...before one generation had passed, the common people of Scotland were superior in intelligence to those of any other country. A Scotsman in the world, with the advantage from his training, raised him above his competitors. Scotland made such progress in agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, law and science, that all in the Old World and New World had never equalled and scarcely surpassed. It is to be attributed to the national system of education.]

(T.MacAulay *The History of England*. 1915),

From 1485 to 1603 the rule of the Tudors in England was tyrannical, and few prominent Englishmen lived to see their natural days out, while Scotland's "Maiden" dispatched few gentleman dissenters, for here men were at liberty to form political parties and lobby the Government.

Another great development in Scotland in the 16th C was the Reformation of the Church. The Protestant revolution was accomplished in Scotland without an execution on the grounds of religion (*perhaps treason if not religion - Ed*) The reformed Kirk had distrust of trappings, frivolity, arts and music. It emphasised equality, education, thought, and debate on metaphysical and moral issues.

"The Scotch, it is well known, are more remarkable for exercise of their intellectual powers, than for the keenest of their feelings; they are, therefore more moved by logic than rhetoric, and more attracted by acute and argumentative reasoning...than by appeals to the heart and passions. (W.Scott. *Rob Roy*.)

It was one of the fundamental reasons for the great outburst of new ideas in the Scottish Enlightenment of the 18th C.

With the death of Elizabeth Tudor, James VI (of Scotland) came to England as James I and the consequence was the Union of the thrones. As realised earlier by Henry VIII, it was that the greater nation would dominate the smaller nation. It became more exacerbated with James' successors. Scots gravitated to London, Englishmen profited in Scotland. Because of religious and political views, James II abdicated,

and was dismissed in 1689. In 1710, upon the death of Anne, the English were free to appoint the Hanovers from Europe, as a single monarchy.

The material and cultural enslavement policy described by Tacitus in 84AD, in subverting the Caledonians was coming back under the the English.

The issue of the Treaty of Union now was a major crisis for the Scots Parliament. To sign up to the Parliament of Great Britain was to neglect the interests of Scotland. Why did a country which had aroused the idea of national freedom and defended itself with such fervent determination for 300 years apparently meekly surrender its independence in 1707 ?

There was significant coercion in sanctions. The Scots would otherwise be treated as aliens, not inherit property, and a ban put on main imports from Scotland. The Scots of means, had drunk from the English cup and now here was the threat to deny them. It forecast disaster for Scottish industries and agriculture.

There were other possible reasons, the main one, bribery of the Scottish parliamentarians. A very large sum of "compensation" to Scotland was consumed by the parliamentarians. W.Scott said "Scotland herself was made to pay the price given to her legislators for the sacrifice of her independence". The future terms of Union could not be negotiated well for Scotland because the particular gentlemen involved now carried no respect or constituency.

Robbie Burns was accusing, and wrote this Poem.

SUCH A PARCEL OF ROGUES IN A NATION

Fareweel to a' our Scottish fame,
Fareweel our ancient glory!
Fareweel ev'n to the Scottish name.
Sae famed in martial story!
Now Sark rins over Salway sands,
An' Tweed rins to the ocean,
To mark where England's province stands --
Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

What force or guile could not subdue
Thro' many warlike ages
Is wrought now by a coward few
For hireling traitor's wages.
The English steel we could disdain,
Secure in valour's station;
But English gold has been our bane --
Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

O, would, or I had seen the day
That Treason thus could sell us,
My auld grey head had lien in clay
Wi' Bruce and loyal Wallace!
But pith and power, till my last hour
I'll mak this declaration :-
'We're bought and sold for English gold'--
Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

“Prosperity to Scotland and No to the Union” is the favoured inscription on Scottish Swords 1707 -1746. Three rebellions followed. The Union tore Scotland’s social and industrial fabric with the loss of markets in favour of English producers. There was shame and distrust of leaders. The Stewarts gained a host of new support out of hate of the Union. A tumultuous Century in summary:-
Union - Scot civil fragmentation - Stewarts - Culloden ’45 - destruction of Highland Society - The Clearances - emergence of Scottish Enlightenment.
HOW DID THIS CRUCIBLE REFINE A NATION’S IDENTITY ? Get the next quarterly installment from your SA. Clan MacLeod agency...here.

fin.