



## Hair dressers of the world Unite

Back before 1960s when Billy Connolly was a born the Clyde was full of the sound of shipbuilding, all for the Commonwealth and a host of nations across the world. The Clyde prided itself on being able to build and fit a ship more efficiently than anywhere in the world. However by 1960 all the major economies were subsidising ship building and so the 25,000 ship builders and the associated workers started to lose out. The UK Government did not have a policy to subsidise national industries and so this great industry was lost. This was due to a lack of Government foresight into the value of such jobs and the productivity of the industry. Billy Connolly instead learned another trade and thanks to the banter he learned in the shipyards with all the dockworkers he grew his unique comedy and so a hero was forged from the decline of one industry.

Glasgow humour is now legendary and so are its warm hearted people. I came to realise that myself when hard pressed myself after a terrible abusive period in my work and home life I was spotted by a wonderful lady at Queens street newsagents in December 2019. Down on my luck and finding it difficult to make decisions due to the abuse and stress and the challenge of working with solicitors she offered me a free sausage roll to try. It really lifted my spirits that there was still a spirit of human kindness and so the next month I took her a bunch of flowers (you can find the story if you look back in my posts <https://www.facebook.com/jonathan.proctor.7773> )

Since that time we have faced two lockdowns and I have seen suffering which no doubt will remind some of the suffering of the Clyde before in the 1960's. Of course our living standards are all much improved but we have seen the erosion and loss of community and the isolation of businesses and the favouring of the state and public authorities rather than the proper support for the productive and creative economy.

What galls me most is that all these public servants endure their furloughs or their homeworking empathising and yet I have seen no efforts to suspend their pensions and yet in contrast the self employed have no pensions, or have had to cash them in, no final salaries and yet are required to pay the taxes for the public servants who are supposed to serve them.



In this I take the issue of the hairdressing community in Scotland. Now I don't go to hair dressers very much but I do know how important a haircut is for someone's self esteem, to bond socially and for wellbeing. However during lockdown hairdressers were not even allowed to do home visits. Why couldn't these great self employed girls (and boys) wear the safety equipment and go and cut peoples hair at home. I was able to get plumbers, contractors and even my sky box serviced and upgraded whilst these predominantly self employed people were left to suffer.

It is now only 1 month since the salons were allowed to re-open and at first we are grateful but after a little while I think we reflect on an poor management process and possibly even signs of preferential treatment for some industries against others.

No doubt the men in Whitehall don't recognise the value of a hairdresser but surely Nicola Sturgeon would. Sadly not because Nicola and her team had the ability to make different choices for Scotland and yet in this the great self employed women of this country who are often managing on minimum wages etc were abandoned.

You may wonder why hairdressing concerns me, well its not so much that it's the realisation that much of the Covid strategy seems to be to destroy the entrepreneurial economy in favour of state and big business. The big wake up call for me was visiting my local garden centre.

I arrived looking for some bulbs and maybe a tree for my garden as an uplift on an otherwise hard year. What I found was that the garden centre couldn't sell me plants but I could buy food instead. The centre had invested heavily in grocery supplies and food while the planting beds were full but cordoned off, even the houseplants were not available. This is madness as I had just been to Screwfix for a shower fitting and noted they had loads of imported plants from Holland all looking very unsuitable for our Scottish climate.

"But Screwfix are selling plants why not Dobbies", sadly that's the rules I was told. But speaking to relatives in England the garden centres were open, even their cafes and actually a lifeline for people trying to get through this pandemic at home able to buy plants and work in their gardens while we in Scotland were not allowed out despite our lower incidence of the virus.

This increased my concern when speaking to others about how many garden centres and nurseries had been forced to close, another part of our productive economy lost.

My own industry the tourism sector has probably been hardest hit and even with the roll out comes the strangest rules. You can get alcohol at a wedding where no doubt there will be more close interaction, but if you go for a candle lit dinner or other table service you can only get a soft drink.

Whoever rules this economy is mad, stupid or plan malicious and so I have reflected on a recent history of Scotland.

I first met the great Donald Dewar before the parliament and I witnessed its building and since then the building of the tram system and the new road bridge. All major projects all Edinburgh based and all massively over budget or unsupportive of the Scottish or British economy.

Many years ago I wrote this poem on the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of William Wallace

### How Wallace died

*Did he die by fighting English foes  
Or did his heart break because of his nations woes  
I see this beautiful country and I would fight for him  
But see so many people so negatively thin  
They want it all, to own us all, they are a simple selfist  
They talk of freedom but take control such futile fatalists  
They kill the dream before its born it seems so clear to me  
The parliament a building and our great testimony  
An Iconic building beset by its own irony  
Where Good Scots sunk so much of their hard won money  
Is apathy our epitaph, failure our flagship then,  
Is our nations, station to tread our talent down  
Forced on its knees, go overseas, and claim later on  
Belongs to us, this braveheart slave is mine  
Stern father, claims, cruelty was a necessary fine.  
You make us what we are  
a tough and fine vase  
Crystal clear and sharp and hard  
Made for your measure a vassal and a vessel  
for a worthy bard*