

# The jailing of CEO Peter Murrell exposes the true character of the Scottish National Party

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Former chief executive of the Scottish National Party (SNP), Peter Murrell, was sentenced to five years and three months in prison on Tuesday for embezzling party funds. In a case postponed until after the recent Scottish general election, Murrell pled guilty in May to robbing £400,310 from the SNP between August 2010 and October 2022.

Married until January 2025 to former Scottish First Minister and then SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon, Murrell admitted fraudulently acquiring over 600 items ranging from DVD box sets to luxury watches, Lalique salt and pepper grinders priced at £2,618, a £4,225 James Bond fountain pen, two cars and a £140,000 Niesmann+Bischoff motorhome. Sturgeon denied all knowledge of the illegal behaviour patterns of the magpie she was living with, arguing that his annual salary as SNP CEO, around £100,000, was high enough for her not to suspect anything amiss. Sturgeon's own salary in 2023 was over £165,000.

During her period in office Sturgeon repeatedly suppressed internal SNP concerns over the party's finances. She resigned as first minister February 2023, weeks before her then husband was first arrested as part of Police Scotland's Operation Branchform into the SNP's finances. Sturgeon was arrested June 2023 but released the same day without charge. Murrell was formally charged with embezzlement in April 2024.

The police operation came about because of complaints from individuals and groups concerned that funds raised to campaign for another independence referendum were being misappropriated. After an extended investigation, rather than face a trial, Murrell's lawyers began exploring a plea deal with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) earlier this year which resulted in some £60,000 worth of items being removed from the indictment.

Nationalist campaigner Sean Clerkin, a former election candidate for the pseudo-left Scottish Socialist Party, latterly associated with groups such as Scottish Resistance, was one of those behind the original police complaints. He wrote to COPFS earlier this month to ask, "Is it the case that the £59,735 worth of goods was also removed from the charge

sheet to spare Nicola Sturgeon any embarrassment?"

Among the items reportedly removed were a number of presents apparently intended for Sturgeon.

Murrell's downfall followed the May 7 election which, despite a substantial fall in support, the SNP won comfortably. The nationalists retained 58 seats in the 129-seat devolved Scottish parliament, against Labour with 17, Reform UK (17), the Greens (15), Conservatives (12) and Liberal Democrats (10). The SNP and Labour lost ground to the Greens, who presented themselves marginally to the left of the SNP, while the far-right Reform UK won large numbers of votes from the Tories. Turnout was down by 10.3 percentage points, with post-election analysis suggesting much of the decline came from SNP voters alienated by the party's austerity policies.

The result means the SNP no longer has a working majority but remains by some distance the largest party. Long time Sturgeon acolyte John Swinney was re-elected as first minister. The new government's first, performative, move was, with the support of the Greens, to demand a Section 30 order from Westminster authorising a new independence poll. This was, as anticipated, immediately rejected by Westminster. The last one 12 years ago ended with voters backing Scotland remaining in the UK.

Despite having lost support, the SNP is set to continue its offensive against jobs and living standards. At the start of the year, the government announced some 11,000 public sector job losses, at a cost of £1.5 billion. With the election out of the way, the figure has risen, according to deputy First Minister Jenny Gilruth, to £5 billion. A minister for public sector "reform", Ivan McKee, has been appointed. Talks will need to be held in the weeks and months ahead to establish working relations between the SNP and the smaller parties to push through its agenda.

It is a testimony to the rotten and corrupt character of Scottish politics, and the right-wing character of its opponents, that the SNP have been able to survive a crisis that has cost them two first ministers, Sturgeon (who led the party for over eight years) and her brief successor, Humza

Yousaf, and sent their one time leading official to jail.

When the Murrell scandal first blew up, in 2023, the SNP appeared to be in terminal decline. Party membership was collapsing as SNP policies in power proved little different from the then Tory administration in Westminster. A bitter feud and split had erupted with former leader, the late Alex Salmond—who wanted a more hardline commitment to gaining independence—accused and eventually acquitted of sex charges that originated from a narrow circle of Sturgeon supporters.

The leading party of Scottish nationalism, whose long-term goal is the creation of an independent Scottish capitalist state, has been exposed as a corrupt, anti-democratic, and right-wing instrument of an aspiring and grasping clique of the Scottish bourgeoisie and upper middle class. Murrell's excesses, and eagerness to fleece supporters of his own party, personify the SNP's attempts to facilitate the operations of the global financial aristocracy and super rich in pursuit of international investment in Scottish resources, while offering several million workers up as cheap labour.

The SNP was only able to sustain a veneer of representing some form of alternative to the Tories and Labour Party because of the role of the pseudo-left.

For decades, a bewildering collection of parties, and party factions—claiming some allegiance to socialism—think-tanks, and campaigns, newspapers, reviews and blogs sought to portray Scottish independence as something other than a reactionary and dangerous dead end. Scottish nationalism was hailed as a means to challenge British imperialism, reversing right-wing policies in Westminster, advancing democratic rights being imperilled in London, and taking steps towards socialism. This deceit saw the pro-independence pseudo-left continually deepening and maintaining national divisions in the working class across Britain.

In its only recent comment on the matter, the Socialist Party Scotland argued that Murrell's activities showed the SNP's true pro-business character. But in the very next paragraphs it wrote approvingly of the SNP government's move towards a new referendum and demands for "devolution of powers on a range of other issues, including energy, amid rising household costs."

The Revolutionary Communist Party do not mention Murrell's name at all, while claiming there is an "unresolved national question" in Scotland.

Scotland is not an historically oppressed nation. Scottish national development was not retarded by its collusion with a major power, rather it was tremendously accelerated.

Scotland and England voluntarily united over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, thereby creating a broader platform for the huge expansion of capitalism, the

emergence of the first industrial working class in the world and the rise of British imperialism, of which Scotland was a crucial component. Thereafter only the struggle for the abolition of capitalism, for socialism and workers' government in Britain and internationally represented and represents a way forward. This is what the pseudo-left promotion of Scottish, and Welsh, nationalism, rejects.

The pseudo-left groups across Britain promoted the Labour leadership of Jeremy Corbyn (2015-2020), presenting this as a means of reviving national reformism but still argued for Scottish separatism which Corbyn did not. In the years immediately following, Labour in Scotland—one of the party's most right-wing outposts—recovered some of the support lost to it during the period of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's Thatcherite leadership.

When Corbyn allowed his supporters and then himself to be driven out under Keir Starmer's leadership of the party—despite the hundreds of thousands who joined Labour to back Corbyn—the pseudo-left turned to promoting Corbyn's Your Party, and a Your Party Scotland, as the next vehicle for the same reformist aspirations. Both have now collapsed, due to the impossibility of reviving national reformism under conditions of globalised production.

It took Your Party Scotland all of two months to split from Your Party on the basis of Scottish separatism—with its entire 12-member Interim Scottish Executive Committee declaring the project "over".

In consequence, beneficiaries of the successive pseudo-left debacles have been albeit much discredited SNP, the Greens who also support Scottish independence and Reform UK which had never before held seats in the Scottish parliament. The Tories were also able to win a recent by-election from the SNP in Aberdeen South, exploiting concerns among those dependent on the rapidly declining oil industry.

Workers and young people seeking a genuine socialist party, opposed to all forms of nationalism and seeking an end to militarism, social inequality and war should attend next month's SEP public meeting in Glasgow—"Your Party's collapse – time to build the Socialist Equality Party".



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