

the worst place in Britain to be bright and poor.

On the relatively rare occasions when the SNP reform, two tendencies are striking, both exemplified in last year's 'named person' legislation. The SNP's illiberality should not, perhaps, surprise us — nationalism in Europe all too often having sacrificed individual freedoms on the altar of national self-determination. The party's centralising tendencies, however, are remarkable given the SNP's vocal opposition to rule from London.

Under the SNP, Scotland's eight regional police constabularies were merged into a single force. While Theresa May was creating locally elected police and crime commissioners in England and Wales, increasing the accountability of the police to local voters, the SNP was doing the opposite. The chief constable of Police Scotland is accountable to a single police authority whose members are appointed by Scottish ministers. The one force now polices both the UK's third-largest city and its most remote communities, notwithstanding the obvious and huge diversity of policing needs.

Recorded crime is falling the world over — and Scotland, happily, is no exception.

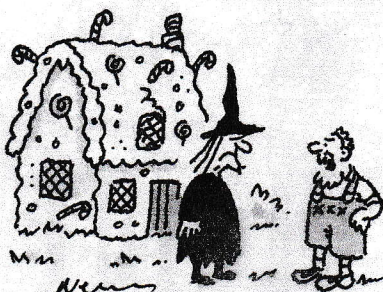
*SNP activists love to invoke the concept of freedom, but they support a party that brings no such thing*

Despite having fewer offences to investigate, however, Police Scotland manages to clear up 50,000 fewer crimes each year than the eight old constabularies did a decade ago. Basic policing mistakes that just were not made in the old days now fill the newspapers: in July a woman was left lying next to her dead boyfriend in a car in Bannockburn for three days after the crash was reported to police; she later died. A few weeks ago an elderly disabled woman died when police waited 20 hours after a call from a concerned family member before forcing entry to her home, where she lay collapsed next to her dead husband. A recent survey found that a third of Police Scotland's staff planned to leave the force within three years: the merger, as Theresa May put it, is a case study in what not to do.

This is why it suits the SNP to talk about independence: any other conversation would be about how they have betrayed the country they purport to champion. Having lost last year's referendum, Ms Sturgeon immediately demanded more powers for the Scottish Parliament. These are being delivered in a Scotland Bill nearing the end of its passage through the House of Commons. But while the SNP make a lot of noise about devolution to Scotland, they are silent when it comes to devolution within Scotland.

Scotland returns to the polls yet again next spring, when a new Scottish Parliament will be elected. The shell-shocked state of Scottish Labour and the Scottish Lib-

eral Democrats means the SNP will probably do well. Increasingly, the strongest voice of opposition is that of Ruth Davidson, the leader of the Scottish Conservatives, whom



*'I won't believe you're innocent until you've been accused by Tom Watson.'*

## Dementia Love

You lie so quiet on your bed,  
You hear the sound and turn your head.  
I wait and hope, perhaps a chance,  
The faintest smile — I hold your glance  
But no — no hint of recognition.  
I press your lips and take your hand  
And move aside a greying strand —  
You seem surprised — there's no embrace.  
The smallest incline of your head  
I close, my tears upon your face.  
'Who are you?' 'A friend' I said.

You lie so quiet on your bed,  
I enter soft, you turn your head.  
Your arms reach up and clasp and hold  
And in a trice the years unfold  
A tenderness of memory.  
A union of heart and mind  
The rapture when our bodies bind —  
You slump and break — the thoughts are gone  
Back with the demons in your head.  
But I know you know that we were one —  
I heard the word — 'Darling' you said.

You lie so quiet on your bed,  
I pause — you do not turn your head.  
I brush your lips, my fingers trace  
The smoothest contours of your face  
As pale as alabaster.  
You look so young as when we met  
Our love was pure without regret.  
Your eyes are closed, your spirit fled.  
My last caress, my tears are shed.  
And I will take my leave, my love  
So still and silent on your bed.

— Tony Kennerley

I hope to serve in the next parliament. Her principles are those of the Scottish Enlightenment: that countries do best when the public stand tall and the power of government is kept in check.

SNP activists love to invoke the concept of freedom, but they support a party that brings no such thing. For those who believe in liberty, competition, diversity, localism and accountability, there is no point in voting for Ms Sturgeon. Fundamentally, her party places its trust in the state, rather than in the people. It's an odd kind of patriotism, one which makes Scotland poorer and less free. It's time for the rebellion to begin.

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