

**Monday 29th August 2011
FOR IMMEDIATE USE**

JAMES ROBERTSON AIRS MEGRAHI CONSPIRACY AT BOOK FESTIVAL AND OUTLINES FAILURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY FROM HOLYROOD

Scottish author James Robertson last night delivered a lecture to a sold out audience at the Edinburgh International Book Festival titled, 'THE LOCKERBIE AFFAIR AND SCOTTISH SOCIETY', in which he described a 'malaise in the Scottish body politic' and the need for Scotland as a nation to confront the difficult issues arising out of the decision to imprison and later release the Lockerbie bomber.

Robertson said, "If we cannot feel confident that the biggest criminal trial in Scottish history achieved a just, and convincingly just, outcome, then not only do those whose loved ones were murdered go on suffering, but Scotland as a whole suffers."

On the issue of an inquiry in to the Lockerbie case, Robertson said, "There is no prospect of the British authorities addressing the outstanding issues surrounding Lockerbie – it is not in their interests to do so. But it is in the interests of Scotland to address them. What is the point of a Scottish government if it *will* not, or the point of the Scottish Parliament if it *cannot*, engage with legitimate concerns raised over a judgment made by a Scottish court about an event that took place in Scotland? We are not talking about local planning regulations here. We are talking about the biggest criminal case in Scottish history."

Mr Robertson then outlined six key reasons that pointed towards a conspiracy theory for the wrongful imprisonment of Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed Al-Megrahi, saying, "In forming a view on the Lockerbie affair, I have always tried to keep at a distance anything that has the whiff of a conspiracy theory. The thing about conspiracy theories, though, is that they rush to fill an information vacuum. The more I look, the more I am forced to the conclusion that if there is a conspiracy around Lockerbie, it is not one concocted by those who doubt the guilt of Mr Megrahi but a conspiracy of silence in which the US, UK and Scottish Governments are all, though not from shared motives, implicated."

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Mr Robertson pointed towards a void of evidence and uncertainty about the route of the suitcase which contained the bomb and how it was ingested in to the Pan Am baggage holding area, where, 16 hours before Pan Am Flight 103 took off, a padlock was cut through giving free access to the Pan Am baggage holding area. The author also raised doubts over the whereabouts of Mr Megrahi in the days leading up to the tragedy, saying, “it is hard not to be struck by the number of gaping chasms in the chain of evidence, and the impressive leaps across those chasms that the judgment manages to perform.”

Mr Robertson concluded, “I believe that a failure to deal for so long with what are very legitimate concerns in the Lockerbie case is symptomatic of a malaise in the Scottish body politic, a failure of accountability. This malaise has been in part exposed by the re-establishment of a Parliament in Edinburgh, and indeed through that Parliament’s existence huge strides to cure it have been taken in the last dozen years. But devolution has also in part exacerbated the malaise, because sometimes political accountability falls conveniently somewhere between London and Edinburgh. It could be argued that this is a straightforward constitutional matter that will be resolved if and when Scotland becomes fully independent, but that I think would be naïve and wrong-headed: about as wrong-headed as the old Unionist canard that the Scots are somehow uniquely incapable of running their own affairs, and for the same reason – because it is not a uniquely Scottish problem. The implications of the Lockerbie affair have particular application to Scotland but are relevant to all democratic societies trying to balance freedom of information and open justice with issues of confidentiality and security. What kind of trust is there to be between the governed and those who govern? Can a culture of trust be built, or should we, the governed, trust only in the natural tendency of governments, of whatever complexion, to withhold information from us?”

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