

5 minute address to the Public Petitions Committee 12 Nov

“I’d begin by asking the Committee to take the SPICe, briefing paper with a pinch of salt

Because, it’s misleading and doesn’t tell half the story. And this may not be the fault of those who compiled it. Because the parliament’s archives aren’t very helpful to researchers.

For a start, The Speculative Society of Edinburgh was reported here in 2002 and not brought to the public’s attention by Robbie the Pict in **2003**.

The all-male Spec’s domination of the judiciary was raised by **me** in **this** parliament, by way of written submission in 2002. Though you wouldn’t know that from the parliament’s summary of petition 306.

However the official transcript of the Justice Committee’s meeting of 30 October 2002 records this, and you can see it on my Tom Minogue blog.

And it’s a sad fact that I can follow public petitions in the year 1817, but not in 2003 And this, in the internet age, is ridiculous.

At the click of a mouse I can access every issue of the Scotsman and the Glasgow Herald newspapers back to March 1817 and read, for example, about a petition by the Borough of Rutherglen to the Westminster parliament. The petition proposed electoral reforms and opposed the government’s

suspension of Habeas Corpus. But I can't readily find out what happened to my own petition on the 4th March 2003.

And on the 4th March 2003 Jim Wallace killed off my petition when he gave evidence to the Justice 2 Committee. He told them that Tom Minogue was “**almost unique**”, being the only one with a concern about **undeclared** freemasonry in the judiciary.

That was an astonishing claim, given that it was made at a time when the UK government, as a condition of employment, insisted on knowing the Masonic membership status of new judges in England and Wales. And when Norway had similar rules.

In effect the Justice Minister was saying that public concern regarding judges' Masonic membership hit the buffers at Berwick on Tweed, and East Coast ports.

The SPICe briefing paper isn't even-handed, featuring two cases which UGLE threatened to cite for Judicial Review of the judge's Masonic registration regulation in England and Wales.

But the two Italian cases were never tested in a UK court and are **not relevant** to my petition, yet SPICe feature **them** while ignoring and omitting to show a **Scottish case that is absolutely relevant** to my petition.

A case where a Social Security Commissioner upheld the appeal of a Dundee claimant, who demanded the right to know if he was being assessed by Masonic Decision Makers.

The Commissioner decided that under Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights he had the right to ask.

So two spurious Italian cases **featured** by Spice, one highly relevant Scottish case **suppressed**. I say suppressed because SPICe allude to it, albeit obliquely, as “additional evidence the parliament declined to publish.”

You might ask why was publishing censored? The Dundee case is a publicly reported one, and it was discussed with the Justice Minister on 4th March 2003 **in connection with my petition**, but you would need a super sleuth, a modern day Sherlock Holmes, to find it in the parliament’s archives.

So to Conclude I would ask the committee to look at my petition afresh and judge it on its merits.

In my opinion, this should be done by way of forensic research and examination involving academics and shouldn’t rely solely on those with vested interests; judges and politicians, who, for whatever reason might want to gloss over this issue.

Jack Straw was such a politician He promised a register of freemason judges in an election manifesto. Was instrumental in introducing it, and then, as Home Secretary in 2009 (not

2007 as Spice report), but in 2009 he did a U-turn and scrapped it, when, with an election looming, and his party trailing in the polls, he sought to gain ground by bribing the Masonic voter.

Rather, I would ask the committee to follow the example of a Scottish politician, John MacAllion, the first Petitions Committee convener, who boasted that his committee never met in private. That's as it should be. True to the promise that this Scottish Parliament would be open and accountable.

Too often I've watched video coverage of committee meetings where the members sit down and rubber stamp Briefing Papers prepared by bureaucrats or arrive at conclusions that are the result of private meetings.

Some committees remind me of TV cookery programmes, where celebrity chefs produce a perfectly cooked dish with the comment: "Here's one I prepared earlier."

Fait Accompli's appearing, where the public see no due process.

That's simply wrong. Future generations should be able to examine every step of **this** petitions process, just as I can read the Scotsman archives and follow those petitions in 1817 which supported the Blanketeers and the Hampden Clubs."