

Referendum Debate

Published on *Holyrood's Referendum Debate* (<http://referendum.holyrood.com>)

[Home](#) > Mountain climbing and campaign litter

Mountain climbing and campaign litter

Written by Liam Kirkaldy on 4 September 2014



Eberhard Schaaf, a physician from Aachen, Germany, was 61 when he died trying to do a clean-up on Mount Everest.

The routes up the world's most famous mountain are strewn with rubbish, the mementos left to freeze over decades of extreme tourism.

Oxygen and gas canisters, packaging, human waste and corpses have been left by 3,500 climbers over 60 years. In sub-zero temperatures the waste can remain preserved for decades.

Schaaf's aim had been to remove it.

Those present with him speculate that he died from exhaustion after rushing to make the summit.

The Financial Times reported his Sherpa as saying: "If the family wants the body to be brought down we will try, but it is very difficult to do so from that altitude."

So it was left there, frozen in time.

The story has a cruel irony - in his efforts to remove litter, Schaaf's corpse added to it.

Like the road to Everest – [through egg throwing](#) [1] and TV debates – the route toward the ballot box has become increasingly messy.

A YouGov poll came out earlier this week, showing Yes support at 47 per cent (excluding undecideds), leaving just six points between Yes and No.

Proof that the race is tightening will motivate No supporters. Indeed some would suggest that is the reason the Daily Mail chose to commission Survation (which tends towards higher Yes support) for its poll earlier this week.

That was then followed by political chatter – denied by Yes – that the campaign has a Panelbase poll showing majority support for independence, which it is sitting on until the point when its release will have maximum effect.

The rumour has been denied but given that YouGov tends towards the lower end of support for independence and Panelbase towards the higher, it would be no big surprise if it was true.

A TNS poll is expected midway through next week and it will be interesting to see the numbers.

Throughout the campaign there has been a sense that the No camp's messaging has not been quite right – that it is not doing enough to bolster polls for the union.

From the farce around the Treasury's Lego figures to the mockery over the Patronising BT Lady, at times the [campaign's efforts have seemed counterproductive](#) [2].

And there has been a change in the air over the last couple of weeks. You can almost feel it.

After two years of debate the prospect of crossing a ballot to make the most important decision in Scotland's political history now seems very, very real.

For the rapidly evaporating pool of undecided, almost painfully so.

This is not the time for missteps or gaffes. Things are still speeding up, campaign messages are still proliferating, and there are more chances than ever to make a fatal blunder.

Better Together will be nervous. It must be tempting to do something rash. But launching a major attack on Yes may not kill off support, but add to it.

Symptoms of severe altitude sickness include nausea, breathlessness, irrational behaviour and confusion.

No is still ahead in the race. But looking over its shoulder it can see Yes climbing closer and closer. It must proceed very carefully.

The danger is that Better Together loses its head and makes things worse.

Like Schaaf the campaign may not clean up the mess, but add to it. If it does then the evidence will be left for a long, long time.

[Government and politics](#) [3]

Liam Kirkaldy

Links

[1] <http://referendum.holyrood.com.vlpweb11.production.parlicom.local/blog/eggs>

[2]

<http://referendum.holyrood.com.vlpweb11.production.parlicom.local/us-political-campaigners-question-better-together%E2%80%99s-strategy>

[3] <http://referendum.holyrood.com/categories/government-and-politics>