'OFFENSIVE SPIRIT' in the defence of hunting

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Anyone who thinks that we are not several decades into an ideological war against our way of life or who thinks that politics is not intrinsically linked with war, as much as hunting is with farming, must have been rocking themselves gently back and forward in a dark room with their fingers in their ears.

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So, in order to talk about the subject of defence, it might be worth understanding its core principles, from a military perspective. Alongside depth, all-round defence, mutual support, reserves, deception, is 'offensive spirit'

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The position of 'don't do anything, you'll only make it worse' or 'just get the best days we can have before we're finished' is not particularly helpful for the next generation. That stance lacks conviction and will not achieve a successful outcome.

If all that one thinks is politically achievable is flushing to Guns with two hounds and a licence to do

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So, with our sense of conviction leading us towards acting with 'offensive spirit' what could that actually mean? You only need look over the border into Scotland to see prejudice and wilful ignorance staring you in the face. So, we challenge it because we know that all scientific researched evidence was deliberately ignored to suit the agenda of Mairi McAllan and the SNP-Green Party alliance.

Submissions from the Veterinary Association for Wildlife

Management were ignored proving that the Bill had no shred of animal welfare consideration at its root; consultations were not published, the list goes on. As opposed to Environment Minister Mairi McAllan's start point of 'The Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill would ensure there was no place for hunting with dogs north of the border.' Any evidence to support that? Maybe it should read: "A judicial review might conclude that there should be no place for politicians who are prejudiced and wilfully ignore evidence north of the border."

When it is very likely that the passing of the *Hunting Act 2004* will soon be evidenced as exceptionally bad law that has had a detrimental impact on the species it pretended to protect, now is possibly the time to put a cold towel around the political head and take a proper, evidence-based view on these matters and leave prejudice to one side. The only 'smokescreen' at play here, is the eradication of a rural minority way of life under the smokescreen of animal welfare.

Sir Tony Blair is on record as saying that the *Hunting Act 2004* was his biggest single political regret. Daniel Greenberg KC, who drafted the legislation for it, admits to a deep sense of moral unease that it was 'legislating against a minority on a moral issue' and that 'Instead of an effective measure, therefore, the *Act* and the Bills for it were largely an exercise in what it has now become fashionable to describe as 'virtue signalling"

Dennis Skinner put it more bluntly by saying that it was 'revenge for the miners'.

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example in Holyrood? Scotland should have done better than that and have been the first government to actually confront such a contentious issue and produce a measured and balanced outcome, devoid of prejudice and based on evidence, not misguided opinion. It has lost that opportunity.

What is the animal welfare basis for proposing such an unworkable dictat? In 2002, the League Against Cruel Sports had admitted the flaw years previously when its then chief executive, Douglas Batchelor, had said in a leaked memo: "Pairs of

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other types of predator or pest control" The rural affairs, islands and natural environment committee, the government and the entire process would have had much more credibility and have been more likely to produce an accepted and workable outcome, if it had recommended commissioning studies to gain evidence on the following points, based on welfare aspects, effectiveness, practicality, and necessity:

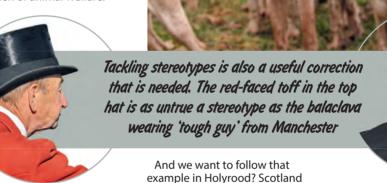
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Due to seasonal variations in weather and wildlife populations, a realistic view on the timeframe required to conduct such research must be taken, somewhere not less than 5-10 years to achieve that task properly and enable effective comparisons. The legal process to then decide whether 30,000 years of wildlife management using dogs should be amended based on someone's misguided political opinion today, might then receive widespread support from both sides of the argument.

As Jim Fairlie MSP revealed during one of the evidence sessions, 'Let's be honest, banning mounted hunting is really what this is all about!

Is that yet another serving of bad law that we're expected to swallow? Let's get forward, 'raft up and act' with conviction now. People follow people who demonstrate conviction.

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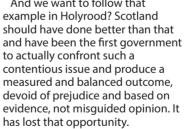
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