

THE CONVERSATION

David Cameron wants you to phone a friend in Scotland, but there's a divorce hotline as well

February 7, 2014 8.45pm GMT

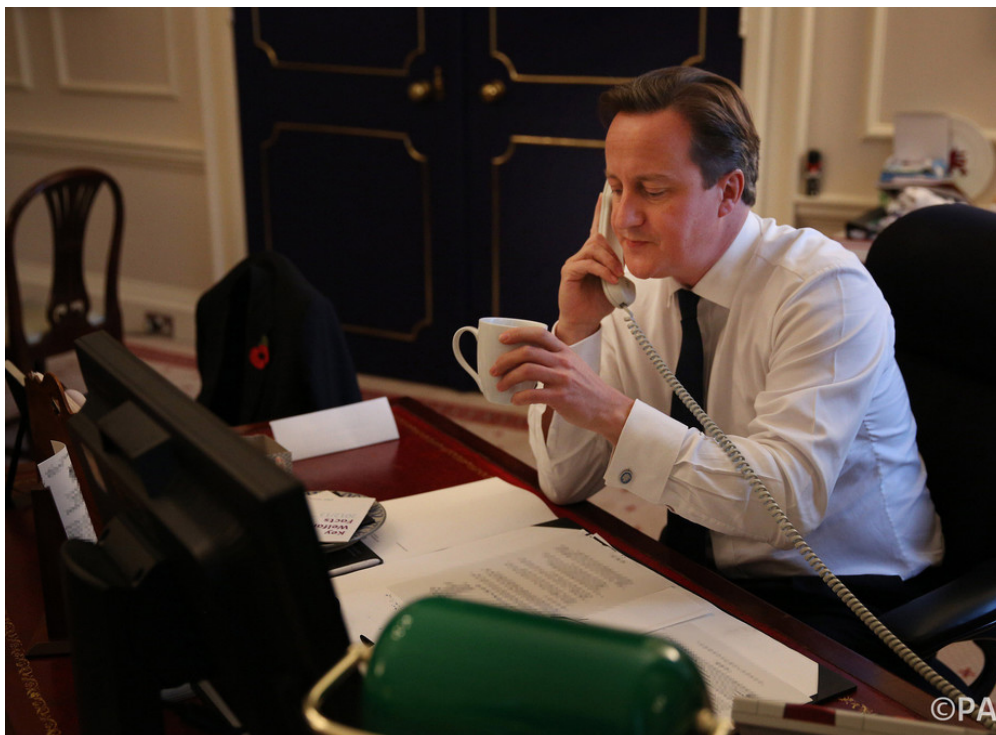
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The Conversation UK receives funding from Hefce, Hefcw, SAGE, SFC, RCUK, The Nuffield Foundation, The Ogden Trust, The Royal Society, The Wellcome Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and The Alliance for Useful Evidence, as well as sixty five university members.

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Hi, it's Dave ... no, don't hang up. Peter Macdiarmid/PA

It is already being dubbed the “phone a friend” speech. David Cameron is encouraging people in the rest of the UK to phone their friends in Scotland to remind them how great it is to be a part of the UK.

He wants you to phone me. He wants you to pretend that you pressed the wrong button, and then say that we may as well have a bit of a catch up since we're on the phone anyway. Then he wants you to ask in a vague way how the family is, say “mmhmm” a few times, act interested, then bring it round to how passionately David Cameron feels about the UK.

He wants you to tell me that David Cameron has some Scottish ancestry and that his name sounds a bit Scottish, so that must count for something, right? He wants you to remind me about the Olympics: how British we all felt as we won all those gold medals and, to a lesser extent, how British we felt when we won silver and bronze.

He wants to get serious for a minute and to be hard headed about it - to agree that the Olympic success is a symbol of the UK as a whole, with friendships, business, politics and our reputation across the globe all better as a United Kingdom rather than as separate countries. We're Better Together, aren't we mate?

Just talk it over

Then he wants us to bring it down and get a bit emotional, to agree that we all love each other too much to let each other go. Then he wants to make it about him again; for you to tell me that he is passionate about Scotland's place in the UK. He loves it. He loves Scotland, Great Britain, Scotland and Britain and Northern Ireland, and the UK best of all. Then he wants you to kick off a vague discussion about British values, as long as you don't get too UKIPy about it and talk about foreigners. Then he wants us to hug, somehow, and tell each other "you're my best mate". Then I think we're supposed to promise to keep in touch much more than we used to; maybe go for a coffee next time you're in Edinburgh or I'm in London.

The only problem is that I'm just off the phone with Alex, who tells me that David Cameron won't answer his calls. He wants me to tell you that he can't understand why Cameron won't come up to Scotland for a coffee and maybe, while he's there, to have a brilliant debate about Scottish independence on their own, just the two of them, except that everybody will be watching (although in the background I could hear Salmond's deputy, Nicola Sturgeon, shouting, "naw, just tell him to tell Cameron to just keep his big nose out of it").

We've grown apart

He's just spent ten minutes taking the piss out of Cameron for being obsessed with London and only talking about the rest of the UK when he remembers for a second and has a bit of a panic about it. Then he wants me to tell you that we've grown apart; that we don't talk as much as we used to (and, when we do, we don't agree as much as we used to) because we've both been too busy and don't have as much time for each other as we used to, when we were better friends.

He wants me to say that it's OK we don't talk much, but that we should stop pretending we'll keep in touch. We'll always have the memories, but it's time to move on. He hopes that we won't get too silly when we talk about dividing up our assets and keeping things we shared, like the pound and the Queen and the BBC, because we'll still be friends after all. Then he wants us to hug and say goodbye.

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