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Dear Sir,

Time to right a long-ago wrong

The Revolution of 1688 – the replacement of James II of England and VII of Scotland by his daughter Mary II and her husband William of Orange – was very far from glorious for some. Especially those whose loyalty to the Anointed King prevented them from recognising the new monarchs. These included numerous clergy of the Established church who refused to swear allegiance to William and Mary and many other staunch Stuart supporters.

Many were tried for treason, executed and “attainted”. Many more went into hiding or into exile, and were punished without trial by Parliament passing Acts of Attainder, severe punishment which condemned them, I repeat without trial, attaindre being Anglo-Norman for convict. They lost all civil rights; their property; and, because their blood was held to be `corrupted', their descendants were disinherited. This applied to all ranks from peers and lairds to clerks in government offices, even none other than Rob Roy himself. Many were transported or fled into exile in the American colonies, including Bonnie Prince Charlie’s rescuer, Flora Macdonald and her husband, who settled in North Carolina.

The intention had been that all of this would be relaxed on the death of the sons of the “Old Pretender” – when Bonnie Prince Charlie’s younger brother and heir – Henry, Cardinal Duke of York – died in 1807 and every British citizen could acknowledge the House of Hanover, the attainders passed on Stuart supporters would be reversed, but it never happened. King George IV came to Edinburgh in 1822 and undertook to have the attainders reversed for anyone who so petitioned, but only a handful of peers could afford the procedure of a Private Bill in Parliament to achieve this. New attainders were abolished by the Forfeiture Act in 1870, but this did not remove the stigma of corrupted or tainted blood and dishonour which remains on the descendants of those like Rob Roy and his followers who fought for the Stuarts.

Jamie McGrigor, MSP, has tabled a motion in the Scottish Parliament welcoming the Petition. Other members have supported this. However it is a subject reserved to the Westminster Parliament, which is the reason for the petition.

2009, the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet, has been declared Scotland's "Homecoming" year, and especially the weekend of 25th-26th July. The Queen is welcoming back to Scotland the descendants of those who were exiled for their loyalty to the Stuarts. There will be a great Gathering of the Clans in the park of Holyrood Palace and they will march up the Royal Mile to the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle in their thousands from all over the world.

So: what better time to petition the Queen to ask Parliament to reverse the remaining attainders? This would in no way overturn anyone's claim, property or title to anyone's detriment, but would remove a "corruption of blood" or taint and dishonour on the genealogy of their descendants, something that must be an anomaly in the world of DNA and Human Rights.

If you would like to support redressing this wrong; and reviving a key part of Scotland's heritage; please sign and return the enclosed form to the above address. Your support will reinforce the petition to be submitted to Her Majesty.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Drummond-Murray

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See:

www.homecomingscotland2009.com

www.homecomingscotland2009.com/whats-on/events/the-gathering-2009-4710.html

<http://clangathering.org>