

## **Hear no EVEL; speak no EVEL**

The moment David Cameron walked out of 10 Downing Street the morning after the Scottish Independence Referendum he unequivocally promised to grant English Votes for English Laws, or EVEL as it is known, and to the same timetable as increased devolution for Scotland.

I think most of us knew at the time that this was another promise that was not going to be kept. How gullible does he think we are?

The only way it had a chance of becoming law was if such provisions had been included in the bill to grant Scotland their extra powers. Then Scottish MPs would have either had to concede, or vote down Scotland's extra devolution and look like traitors.

For whatever reason, the government decided not to do this. The result is that, not only is EVEL not going to become law to the same timetable as extra devolution, it is not going to happen at all. William Hague has offered us a botch as transparent as the seventh veil on a Baghdad *hourri*; the sop of a watered-down version of EVEL in the next parliament, but only if the Tory party is elected.

Haig proposes that English MPs would have a veto on English-only matters but that all MPs including the Scots will be able to debate them – what an abortion. Is the Tory party now claiming that debate cannot influence an outcome? If it can, then Scots MPs should play no part in it. This must mean that English laws when promulgated by English MPs, can still be voted down by Scottish MPs sitting in a full session of the Commons. What happens when parliament votes to pass a budget and the majority of English MPs veto parts of it – we will have a budget that doesn't balance? Oh, I'm sorry, I forgot; the budget hasn't balanced for years.

I think MPs are starting to appreciate that Devolution was a crazy idea and cannot work without separate parliaments for each of the constituent parts of UK not just three out of four. EVEL can never work; it will precipitate chaos whenever there is an English majority in Parliament that differs from a UK majority. Given the likelihood at the next election of a Labour government being kept in power by Scottish MPs it seems that the Conservative Party are doing all they can to ensure that, even if they become a majority in England, we will be governed by Labour. The greater the devolution without an English parliament, the greater the sense of outrage and injustice the English are bound to feel. The result must be the eventual break-up of the UK, so let's get on with it and end this farce.

It is probable that the Barnett Formula bribed the Scots into voting for the Union. The pro-unionists included a pledge that this bribery would continue if the Scots voted "No". The amount spent per capita on identifiable national expenditure in 2012-13 was £8,529 in England but £10,152 in Scotland (Source: HM Treasury). Under this strange formula, every Scot receives a subsidy of £1,623 pa paid by English taxpayers. This has enabled the Scottish Nationalists to gain popularity with such measures as granting free university education north of the border.

The problem with extortion is that it is never enough. The Scots will probably require ever-larger dollops of cash to continue supporting the Union.

Let's look at some other numbers. Scotland has a population of 5.29 million out of a total UK population of 64.1 million equal to 8.26%. The Scots have 59 MPs out of a total of 650 or 9.08%. They should have only 54 MPs if the system was equitable. They are over-represented by 5 MPs or 9%. If democracy has a meaning it is that each vote should be of equal value – tell that to the citizens of the Isle of Wight where it takes 112,000 votes to elect their one MP. (Was it the Liberals that made sure the 6th Boundary Commission review cancelled leaving Scotland so over-represented?)

One has to wonder why David Cameron is so keen on preserving a Union that gives England nothing and costs his own party dear – can it be just some atavistic longing for Imperial glory or the sentiment embodied in the Scottish regiments? Or could the clue be in his name or perhaps the fact that his father-in-law has a large sporting estate on the island of Jura and that many of his circle of friends have similar estates?

Would the Scots be content with the powers over their own affairs proposed for us, the English? And what about Welsh or Northern Irish members voting on English matters where they have their own devolved powers?

We entered into the Union on the understanding that it would be the English who ruled the Scots and now it is the other way around. Come back Hadrian – all is forgiven.

c) Jeremy Norman – Feb 2015

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