

## Gordon Brown takes Labour back to a broken model for the UK

It was Gordon Brown who told us once devolution was granted to Scotland Scottish nationalism would melt away. As some of us feared, instead it gave the SNP a bigger platform and more resentments to work on. They proved masterful at governing badly whilst blaming the constitutional settlement and Whitehall for all their woes. Labour failed to put devolution in during the 1970s, used their big majority to do it after 1997, and later lost countless seats in Scotland as payment for their pains.

Gordon is back again setting Labour policy on this most vexatious of political insider questions. He wants more devolved powers for Scotland. He wishes to ignore England and make the devolution within our Union all the more lopsided. Just as the EU wiped England of their maps and tried to balkanise England into a set of unloved regions, so Gordon Brown wishes to do the same. He accepts that Labour lost the crucial referendum to set up an elected regional government in the North East and did not try again. So this time he wants to build regions up from so called partnerships between local Councils aggregating to a new region.

There is no strong regional identity in most parts of England. Exeter does not want to be governed from Bristol, Liverpool does not want to be managed by Manchester. Wokingham is variously bundled into the South East, Rest of the South East (x London), Wessex, Thames Valley, Berks, Bucks and Oxon. None of these regional groupings command our loyalty or consent. We would not vote for any of them to have governments.

People in my area belong to Wokingham Borough or to West Berks. We belong to the county of Berkshire in the country of England. We identify with Berkshire and with England without either having a government. Lop sided devolution has gone too far. Ignoring England's views and needs is wrong. Those who say they want power devolved should listen to people's own perceptions of their identities. The best devolution of power is not to new layers of government but to individuals and businesses to make more of our own decisions.