

My speech during the debate on English Votes for English Laws

England deserves better. England expects better. It is a sad occasion that this Government should wish to dismiss the only modest devolution ever offered to England, with nothing to put in its place. They leave instead Labour's lopsided and unfair devolution, a devolution proposed and forced through a previous Parliament, on a large majority, by a Labour party that said it would settle the constitution and unite the country behind the Union once and for all. It did nothing of the sort.

Surely this Government can now see that if they carry on, as Labour did, appeasing the forces that would pull the Union asunder, they will not bring the Union together but give those forces greater strength and a better platform. Instead of Scottish electors welcoming their devolved powers and deciding to continue in the traditional mould of two United Kingdom parties contesting power, they chose a party that wishes to pull the Union apart. Some of them chose that party because they thought the Government would give in to it, and so get a better deal for Scotland; and some of them chose that party because they genuinely wanted to pull the Union apart, although they were, of course, in a minority.

The Government and I treasure our United Kingdom. We wish this Union to work for everyone, but it has to be a fair Union. It will not be held together better by appeasing the SNP or by appeasing the EU over Northern Ireland. We above all in this House should be speaking up for all the millions of Unionists in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and throughout England and Wales, who expect better and expect fairness.

One of the crucial values that our United Kingdom shares is that idea of fairness. How is it fair to have these totally different categories of MP, with different powers, different responsibilities and different opportunities to influence how they are governed in their parts of the United Kingdom? Why is it that England, the home of many more millions of Unionists and more loyal to our country than anyone else in our Union, is the one part of the Union that gets no justice and no fairness from this Government or their predecessors?

Labour introduced policies that sought to break the Union in the name of keeping the Union. I want this Government to mend the Union, and that means standing behind all those people throughout the United Kingdom who believe in the Union, and to stop appeasing those who would pull it apart.