

The government of England

When I took the unfairness of UK devolution to David Cameron as Prime Minister he agreed something needed to be done. The original idea of EVEN, English votes for English needs, was watered down by William Hague and called English votes for English laws. I always assumed choosing EVEL not EVEN as the shorthand was deliberate to portray a good cause in a not so good light. Instead of England emerging with the right to initiate our own laws in devolved areas of activity, and to veto any move by the Union Parliament to override English decisions on devolved matters, we only kept the right to a veto.

I always argued that English devolution could best be done at Westminster, with a Grand Committee of all English MPs elected to the Commons debating and deciding on English laws where they were needed for devolved matters like Health and Education, and supervising the English budgets. I saw no need for a separate and expensive English Parliament to mirror the Scottish one, though some in England wrote to me requesting one.

This week-end I call on the government to preserve our right of veto, not to strike it down. Surely on this week-end of all week=ends, when English people are united and purposeful behind our football team and proud of their achievement so far, we do not deserve negative treatment. I urge the government to adopt EVEN, a very modest proposal to give to England some of the devolved power the Scottish Parliament enjoys. I would welcome your views.