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Dear Margaret:

I hope I may be forgiven if I put down my thoughts on the subject which we began to discuss last night — our action in the Commons when the Devolution Bill comes up for second reading.

There will be much that we will wish to criticise about the Bill, that it is one Bill not two, that it has a built in tendency to promote conflict between Westminster and error — and therefore a step towards separation, (and, maybe, many other arguments wh: will only become apparent when the Bill is seen in detail. Nevertheless I believe it will be a disaster both for the party and the country if we are seen to vote against it on second reading.



My first reason for saying this depends on an unponderable about which we must all make up our minds one way or the other. Do the Scots really want it? And if they do and do not get violence and/or it with the dynamism of such movements drive them into separation?

My answer to both of these questions, though I fully recognize I may be wrong is, I fear, yes. The fact that the Nats have largely won seats from us is, I fear, symptomatic. The Scottish middle class cannot fail to know that if devolution comes they will be dominated by the industrial belt plus Western Isles which, combined, yield an almost inbuilt Socialist majority. If, in spite of this, they are prepared to vote against us who command a larger preponderance in England at any given time than in G^o Britain, I regard this as evidence that we have here



Something more than a sentimental and passing whim. Of those of our supporters in Scotland who prefer the status quo, how many are in favour of it because they are afraid ^{we} ~~we~~ ^{can} look to us to save them from it? devolution and how many because they are against Socialism? I do not know, but there are some at least of whom the latter is true.

My second reason is that we are committed to devolution in some form and it would be regarded as a breach of faith on our part if we were to vote against the Bill on second reading.

I am sure that the Labour Party are bringing the Bill forward because their own Scottish supporters have warned them that not to do so is an election loser. In other words, they have formed the same appreciation of



Scottish opinion as I, as Alec (who now goes further than
 he did when he chaired ^{our} his committee) and many members
 of the Scottish nobility with whom I have spoken in our
 House. It is worth pointing out that the same appreciation
 has been made by the Liberals. I am aware, of course,
 that those of our Scottish supporters who oppose the thing
 claim that a stance on our part ^{in favour of the status quo} would collect all the votes
 of those who do not wish to alter the status quo ^{on the ground} ~~as being~~
^{that we wd be} the only party ^{to retain the Union} pledged. I believe this is a fallacy. If
 Labour supporters in Scotland vote Conservative next time, it
 will be because they dislike the consequences of Socialist
 Government; and some of these wd: be deterred from
 taking this step if the Conservative Party was considered
 to be anti-Scots.



I also think that the party in the Commons has got to get down to the hard work of putting constructive safeguards into the Bill and I do not believe they will do this so long as the Shadow Cabinet encourages them to believe that it is OK to resist the Bill and try to wreck it. I want to see clear demarcation of function between Westminster, and Edinburgh. I want proper policing by the Courts at all levels, — the ordinary courts. I want to see the Courts and the Court system and appointments firmly in Westminster. I want to see the Assembly debarred by law from breaching the European Convention on human rights even on devolved topics. I want to see provision for a referendum, either as a preliminary to vesting the new powers or as a prohibition against any further move towards



separation. Our stance on fiscal measures must be carefully worked out. I do not believe that any of these subjects will be adequately studied so long as we are messing about with the idea that we can successfully oppose the whole thing.

I also want to see a proper appreciation of the feasibility of reducing Scottish representation at Westminster, by reducing some of the smaller urban constituencies.

Yours:

P.S. I hope we shall also avoid inconsistent attitudes. As an example of the sort of thing I ate Moonman (a Lab: anti devolutionist) on radio this morning. He argued (1) that devolution was a means of discriminating in favour of Scotland by giving it a separate assembly and (2) that it was an additional tier of Govt & therefore an unjust burden on the Scottish people. Either might be true, but both can't.