



House of Lords

12 Dec 76.

My dear Angus.

Not Seen

Thank you for your letter. I can only apologise for not making myself plain. My primary objection was the seemingly blithe way in which the Shadow Cab. was willing to sacrifice the standing of the party as a National Party by imposing an entirely unnecessary three-line whip - with I believe - catastrophic effects on the rank and file in Scotland. The fact that they did not realise the full implication only shocked me more since it meant either (i) that my own assessment of the effect in Scotland was wholly mistaken ~ (ii) that they neither knew nor cared what the effect would be. I was particularly struck by Biffen's apparent acceptance of the break up of the UK, and Heseltine's apparently cynical belief that because he was prepared to sacrifice his own objections to devolution in principle I should sacrifice my own belief that it was right.

On every occasion (I think) when Home's plan for a directly



elected assembly has come up for discussion (he has now abandoned it) I
This was so true under Heath as well as under Margaret,
 have described it as fatuous and unworkable. When I am told that this is
 to be offered to me as a sop to satisfy my requirement for a
 properly workable devolutionary plan ~~which~~ of the necessity for which
 I had been hoping in due course to persuade colleagues, I almost
 despair.

As for resignation, I am under very heavy pressure from
 Peter Carrington not to go ahead with it. I do not find the answer easy.
 Oddly enough, I believe my continued presence ^{on the front bench} in the Lords is still
 desirable. If I can find any way of reconciling my credibility as
 a man of principle with my continued presence on the Front Bench,
 I shall stay if I am still wanted. But I must have a day or
 two to think things out.

The appointment of Teddy Taylor who is a convinced antagonist
 of even the miserable Home proposals does not make my position any easier.
 My short visit to Scotland has not led me to change my views about the



effect there of our action, and I gather from Mansfield that the Scottish Peers are restless or extremely angry.

When will we realise that it is not necessary in

- opposition to strain consciences by imposing three line whips on subjects on which the party is not united. *

Yes.

- * I note yr belief that a free vote might lead to a worse split later on. This may well be true. I have always seen this issue as potentially explosive, which is why, ever since 1962 I have been trying to educate my English colleagues, with an almost total want of success. They are always polite, sometimes even flattering, but never, alas, comprehending. The real trouble with me at the moment is that I feel myself more & more out of sympathy with the party. We must broaden our base. All the time we are in process of narrowing it.