

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.

My votes yesterday

During a busy day in the Commons I voted against the SI requiring mandatory vaccination for anyone involved with a Care Home, and with the government on overseas aid. There was no vote taken on the English laws issue as the entire Opposition supported the government.

Who speaks for England

Yesterday in the debate on English votes for English laws I asked the Leader of the House who in the government speaks for England. When the Union government consults the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and NI over an important issue who do they turn to for an English view?

There was no clear answer. The Minister seemed to think devolution of power to Councils and grand Mayors for city regions in England was the way to go. This is just a variant of the EU wish to balkanise and break up England into Euro regions. Labour's lop sided devolution gave most to Scotland and nothing to England. the government needs to think again. England deserves a voice. I will post my Commons speech this morning.

Shinfield lunch

It was good to join the Shinfield Conservatives branch for a garden lunch on Sunday at the Elm Tree in Beech Hill. The roast beef Sunday lunch was great, with members enjoying getting out and seeing each other again after lockdown. There was much discussion of how to handle the virus from here, as well as talk about the football final.

The Northern Ireland Protocol

The Protocol was cobbled together at speed to get Brexit done, on the understanding that it would need clarifying and improving and was temporary. The EU is now seeking to take the agreed proposition that the UK would work

to ensure no goods that failed to conform to EU rules would find their way to the Republic from NI and turn it into the EU's wish to make NI a full and permanent member of the EU single market to the exclusion of parts of its GB/NI trade. This was not agreed, and the loose language of the Protocol allows different interpretations. Some at the time said NI would "get the best of both worlds" being both a member of the UK's internal market and of the EU's single market.

Let us take this to a practical level. It is for example about the sausage. Let us suppose the UK comes to have different rules about sausages from EU rules, though for the time being the UK is still using the EU rules it has rolled over into UK law anyway. A British standard banger should be able to move freely from GB to NI to be sold in an NI shop to an NI customer without hindrance. Similarly the UK would be happy for an EU standard sausage to be imported from the Republic and sold in an NI shop.

If a reseller of sausages started to buy sausages from the NI shop with a view to reselling them in a Republic of Ireland shop, the UK authorities would take action to stop such a movement, as that would be a violation of the EU's single market rules. Were any to get through the UK authorities would notify the EU authorities to take action at the second retailer in the Republic. One way or another the EU's single market would be safeguarded against the wandering sausage. The way the EU is wanting to act, it is seeking to stop a UK supermarket chain simply routing high quality UK food from GB to NI for sale in an NI shop. The EU always said it accepted that the UK had every right to its own internal market and understood that included NI.

The UK government has been all too tolerant of the extreme interpretations the EU is trying to impose on the situation. The UK has put various ways of proceeding by agreement to the EU, always offering complete support for their stated aim of keeping certain non EU produce out of the EU. The EU has also said it is concerned about relations between the communities of NI, yet its actions are designed to antagonise the Unionists by seeking to break some of their legitimate links to GB. It is time for the UK to make a further move to resolve the impasse by enforcing our internal market movements.