

MR. INGHAM - on return

cc Mr. Sherbourne
Professor Griffiths

When the Prime Minister had dinner with Scottish Office Ministers, it was suggested that one way the Government might "take notice" of Scotland would be to have a regular Cabinet meeting in Edinburgh (less the Welsh felt left out, I presume we would have to have a similar one in Cardiff!).

Most of the Scottish Office Ministers believed that such an initiative would be well received in Scotland. The Prime Minister undertook to reflect. She believes that it would need much preparation if it was to avoid the impression of gimmickry, condescension and running after Scotland.

I must say that I am not enthusiastic about this idea. It seems to me that it would tend to emphasise the separateness of Scotland from England. After all, we are a United Kingdom whose capital and seat of Government is in London. To hold the Cabinet in Edinburgh for no good practical reason, would look like a stunt.

I should be grateful for your views and those of Stephen Sherbourne and Brian Griffiths to whom I am copying this minute.

N. L. W.

(N.L. WICKS)

3 August 1987

PMMAFI

MR. WICKS

cc. Mr. Ingham
Professor Griffiths

I am commenting on your note of 3rd August about the possibility of holding a Cabinet meeting in Scotland and presumably therefore also in Wales.

My view is quite clear. I think this would be so gimmicky as to be damaging. The essential question that the press and commentators in Scotland and Wales would ask is - "how will things affecting Scotland and Wales be decided differently as a result of holding the meeting away from London?". Indeed, they will probe to find out if there were any item on the agenda of a specifically Scottish or Welsh nature; and if there weren't, they would ask why hold the meeting there rather than London.

Finally, they would also ask when the next meeting was going to be held in Scotland because if it were only a rare occurrence it would tend to confirm the gimmicky nature of the exercise.

S.S.

STEPHEN SHERBOURNE

5.8.87