

cc Mr Sherbourne
Professor Griffiths

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MR WICKS

CABINET - SCOTLAND

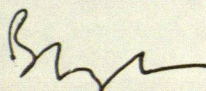
I am appalled at the idea that the Cabinet should meet in Scotland (and presumably Wales and Northern Ireland). The whole idea would be seen for what it is - a presentational gimmick without substance.

There is no virtue in simply holding a Cabinet meeting (which could just as well - and probably better - be held in Downing Street) in Scotland or elsewhere. Nor is there anything to be said for creating such a precedent.

Moreover, since Cabinets are supposed to be bound by confidentiality there would be precious little to say about the occasion. In short there would be nothing tangible, other than the pictures of Ministers arriving and departing, to back up the "initiative". Nothing would seem likely to flow to Scotland from such deliberations - and if there did there could well be a strong backlash from more deserving English regions who already pay enough of their hard earned cash to keep the Celts in the manner of subsidised grandeur to which they have become accustomed.

The objective of Government policy should surely be to encourage Scotland and Wales to stand more on their own two feet, and depend less on subsidy, to be more Thatcherite than Butskellite. Taking a Cabinet meeting to Scotland would run entirely counter to such an objective.

Having said that I do believe there is a need for more Cabinet Ministers to be seen out and about in Scotland preaching the Thatcherite creed (which I suspect is not preached by Scottish Office who have a vested interest in prolonging dependence on the English). There could also be a case - though it would have to be carefully considered - for a Cabinet Committee meeting in Scotland (or elsewhere) on a specifically Scottish issue for which a visit to Scotland could be justified by lending the deliberations more information through visits, meetings or discussions with those involved in the point for decision.



BERNARD INGHAM
1 September 1987

MR WICKS

cc Mr Ingham
Mr Sherbourne ✓

1 September 1987

Like you and Stephen Sherbourne I am strongly opposed to the idea of the Cabinet meeting in Scotland. It would be symbolic of the disunity of the UK, would be an appalling precedent (first Scotland, then Wales, Northern Ireland, Liverpool, Cornwall would make similar demands), would positively foster regionalism and would as a Cabinet meeting achieve no good purpose at all. To the extent that it took place and that at it the Cabinet discussed Scottish affairs, it would make Anglo-Scottish relations even worse.

More than all of these I suspect it is based on a fundamentally incorrect diagnosis of the problem.

Brian Griffiths

BRIAN GRIFFITHS