

Dewar.
Duke of Buccleuch

13th December 1976

Thank you for your letter on the subject of the Scotland and Wales Bill.

After the regular Wednesday meeting on December 8th the Shadow Cabinet issued the following statement:

'The position of the Shadow Cabinet of the Conservative Party remains the same as that stated at Perth in May to the Scottish Conservative Party Conference when Mrs Thatcher gave the following two pledges:

"We will, therefore, as Willie Whitelaw has made clear, oppose any Bill based on their (The Government's) White Paper or which goes further than their White Paper.

At the same time, it remains our policy, which the conference supported yesterday, that there should be a directly elected Scottish Assembly".

The Government's Bill does not depart materially from its White Paper. Therefore, we shall carry out our first pledge by voting against it. We do so because we oppose the method of devolution proposed in it. Our belief in the principle of devolution and the need for a directly elected Assembly for Scotland, as expressed in our second pledge remains unaltered'.

The release of this statement co-incided with the resignation of Mr Alick Buchanan-Smith as the Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland. Mrs said that I regretted having to accept his resignation and went on to point out that he had given:

"Dedicated service to the Conservative Party in Scotland for many years. Since I became Leader, he has been a valued member of my Shadow Cabinet, and I am sorry that he has resigned.

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Whilst understanding his decision, I trust that it will not be long before he is able to play his part in a Conservative Government".

As you know Mr Teddy Taylor has accepted my invitation to be the new Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland and following his appointment he issued a Statement on the evening of Wednesday December 8th explaining that his first task would be:

"The battle against the Government's devolution Bill which we regard as costly, bureaucratic and containing the danger of a break up of Britain. While fighting the Bill vigorously we will reaffirm absolutely and without hesitation the Party's support for a directly elected Assembly in Scotland. In the longer term, I would hope to concentrate our Party's activities in seeking a solution to the problems of rates, employment, industrial prosperity as well as the upsurge in violence and vandalism."

From these statements, we think you will agree that there can be no doubt where the Shadow Cabinet stands in its commitment both to the principle of devolution and to a directly elected Assembly. I hope that we can now be united in explaining the facts and in removing any misunderstanding which has arisen in recent days.

I am very glad that you should have given me your views.

Duke of Buccleach and Queensberry