

Westminster announces plans on devolution



The Secretary of State for Scotland, Alistair Carmichael MP, announced today plans for increased devolution in Scotland following the No vote in the Scottish Independence Referendum.

You can read these in full below.

Following the referendum on independence the UK Government set up the Smith Commission chaired by Lord Smith of Kelvin which is an independent body to facilitate talks on the possible further powers to be granted to Holyrood.

Following the Secretary of State's announcement he was asked if this meant that the Barnett formula for awarding funding to Scotland would now be scrapped. The Minister sounded sure of his ground: "It was part of the vow that there would be no change to the Barnett formula and that remains the case." The three main Westminster parties used the front page of the Daily Record in the days before September 18th to deliver their pledge to the Scottish people on what they would do for them.

Mike Crockart MP mentioned that 65% of his Edinburgh West constituents voted No, and he asked for all of Scotland to set aside all differences and party affiliations to make sure that 'the will of the Scottish people is delivered'. The Secretary of State told The Edinburgh Reporter on the night after the Referendum that he was very pleased that his own constituents voted so decisively against independence.

He also anticipated that there would be many round the table discussions to determine the settled view of the Scottish people in the event of their voting against independence:

Jim McGovern Labour MP for Dundee West questioned whether the MPs in Westminster were actually best placed to deliver a plan for Scotland given that there were so few MPs in the Chamber.

But Mr Carmichael made clear to those who were in the Commons that the new commitment made in the latter stages of the Independence Referendum only related to the timetable rather than the details of the powers themselves which will be the responsibility of the Smith Commission to deliver.

He replied to a query about plans for increased devolution in other parts of the UK to be run in tandem with these: "It is apparent to me that there is an increased appetite for debate of devolution for cities in England and elsewhere."

Gordon Brown MP and former Prime Minister challenged the Tories in Westminster to 'get more radical' on the powers which will be devolved to Scotland and he also called into question the suggestion that Scottish MPs might not vote on purely English matters: "It does not make sense to do what David Cameron suggested the day after the independence referendum – to treat the Scottish MPs as second class citizens."

Scottish Greens say the publication by the UK Government of a "command paper" on devolution confirms that there is a gulf in public expectation that the three UK parties must close.

Patrick Harvie MSP, Co-convener of the Scottish Greens, said:

"This so-called command paper is a damp squib. It simply repackages what the three UK parties put forward in the spring, since when public debate has moved on considerably and public expectations have been built up.

"The three parties must show willingness to catch up to meet the shared aspirations of Yes and No voters. In the closing stages of the referendum campaign promises were made about deep devolution and near-federalism, way beyond what the

parties originally proposed. That gulf must be closed, and Scottish Greens will continue to argue for meaningful public involvement in agreeing a package of powers that will give Scotland real autonomy.”

http://www.theedinburghreporter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Command_paper.pdf