

Mr Luke Binney – written evidence (FGU0001)

House of Lords Constitution Committee Inquiry into the Future Governance of the UK

Introduction:

1. I am Luke Binney and I am entering this evidence in a personal capacity. I am submitting this evidence due to my interest in this area and my desire to partake in the inquiry which the Committee is carrying out.

Evidence:

2. It is a fact that the United Kingdom has been a largely centralised nation for centuries, with Westminster often holding a great deal of sway over the entire country. Looking to the future and considering the separatist threat I believe that the UK would be better suited through a decentralisation in the future, preferably a federal structure along the lines of Canada.
3. Through federalisation the UK would see a number of powers moved from Whitehall and Westminster to the newly established Provinces (the constituent federal units within the country) would be better able to be exercised at a Provincial or local level. There are a number of different policy areas which could be placed under Provincial jurisdiction including:
 - Education.
 - Health.
 - Local Transport.
 - Drugs Policy.
4. There would also be areas which are under a shared jurisdiction, with this being seen in other federally organised countries. Examples of possible shared powers include:
 - Taxation.
 - Transport.
 - Culture.
 - Agriculture and Farming.
 - Industrial Policy.
 - Business Policy.
5. Ultimately there are some areas of national importance which must be, as can be assessed from the name, controlled at the national level. They include:
 - Defence.
 - Foreign Affairs – Although para-diplomacy would aid the Provinces (see Québec in Canada).
6. This federalisation would require a series of other reforms to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. They include a reformed Upper Chamber which involves a Canadian Senate-style regional/provincial organisational structure. This will bring the federalised system into Westminster and ensure that it moves to the heart of British politics.
7. Similarly, it would reduce the level of bureaucracy at the national level, for obvious reasons.

8. An important aspect to consider the status of England within the new constitutional arrangement, termed the "Question of England". Should England exist as a single Province or be divided into multiple different Provinces. For a more balanced federation the latter solution would be preferable, allowing for powers to be exercised at a level closer to the areas they would affect but also allowing for greater economic balance within the UK. However, there are a great number of people who identify with England and this latter option may make such people feel disenfranchised with the project, possibly with them equating the new Provinces to successor states and the abolition of England. A possible mitigation could be a pan-English council for the leadership of Provinces to meet at to coordinate English policies or issues which effect England as a whole. In addition to this the millennium old English identity would be difficult to damage or undo.
9. When considering the British Overseas Territories there are two possible outcomes which could be taken; they become Provinces or they maintain the status quo. A deciding factor could be referendums held in each of the BOTs, between the Status Quo and Provincehood. There may also be a need or desire to create a Netherlands Antilles style Province, collecting a number together for a better economic performance and federal balance. Ultimately it would be to the people of these territories to decide.
10. In order to address potential discrepancies between the Provinces in terms of payment and income, a system of "balance payments" such as those seen in Canada and Australia, could be introduced to replace the Barnett Formula, allowing for Provinces which need it to access federal funds to rebalance their books.
11. Provinces could include:
 1. Yorkshire – With traditional (pre-1974) borders.
 2. Lancashire – With traditional (pre-1974) borders and including Cheshire.
 3. Northumbria.
 4. Mercia.
 5. East Anglia.
 6. Home Counties.
 7. Greater London Area.
 8. East Wessex.
 9. Wessex.
 10. Cornwall.
 11. Wales.
 12. Northern Ireland.
 13. Scotland.
12. Beyond this other BOTs could be added but this is merely a suggestion.
13. Ultimately, there are a number of potential benefits, from prospects of improved economic development to protecting the Union and I believe that this course of action is one to consider.

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