

We'll block powers for Scotland unless we get English home rule: Warning from Heseltine as he demands 'equality'

- **Comes as William Hague outlines options for constitutional change**
- **Reforms could make it hard for future Labour government to pass budgets**
- **Labour has long relied on Scottish MPs to pass legislation in Westminster**

By [James Chapman, Political Editor for the Daily Mail](#)

Published: 00:12, 17 December 2014 | Updated: 00:12, 17 December 2014

English MPs will refuse to back further devolution to Scotland unless their 'second class' status is addressed by a system of 'English votes for English laws', a Tory grandee warned yesterday.

Lord Heseltine predicted a revolt against giving Holyrood the right to determine tax and welfare policy unless Scottish MPs are barred from voting on such issues only affecting the rest of the UK.

'Let's be frank about it: English MPs are not going to implement that [Scottish devolution] unless they get a degree of equality for England,' said the former deputy prime minister.



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Decision time: MPs crowd into the Commons for a crucial vote. English MPs will refuse to back further devolution to Scotland without a system of 'English votes for English laws', a Tory grandee warned yesterday

Yesterday Commons Leader William Hague incurred Labour's fury by setting out options for how to give English MPs the final say over laws affecting only England.

Senior ministers are understood to believe that this must include rates of income tax and benefit payments, a reform which would make it difficult for a future Labour government to pass Budgets.

It would also raise questions over whether a Scottish MP could ever again be Prime Minister or Chancellor, given that they would not be able to vote on key areas of Government policy.

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Mr Hague told MPs: ‘The injustice for the voters of England is now sufficiently great to be considered more than an anomaly.

‘When it comes to deciding who votes on matters in other parts of the United Kingdom, it is English MPs who feel that they are second class. That is why we must deal with the issue. Otherwise, it will damage this Parliament and the United Kingdom.’



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Lord Heseltine predicted a revolt against giving Holyrood the right to determine tax and welfare policy unless Scottish MPs are barred from voting on such issues only affecting the rest of the UK

Labour has long relied on the support of its power base of Scottish MPs to pass legislation in Westminster.

But since the creation of the Scottish Parliament, critics have questioned how it can be right for Scots MPs to determine issues such as tuition fees and foundation hospitals which no longer affect their constituents.

Decisions on health and education policies have already been devolved to Holyrood.

After Scotland's rejection of independence in September, the main parties signed up to a 'vow' to hand the Scottish Parliament yet more power. This included control of income tax and welfare payments.

Mr Hague said the scale of devolution meant the question of the status of Scottish MPs at Westminster was unavoidable.

'It is an issue that too many people have avoided for too long and that can no longer be put aside,' he insisted.

Mr Hague published three options: an outright ban on Scottish MPs from having any role on English and Welsh Bills; giving English MPs a 'decisive' role by allowing only them to amend English-only laws; or giving English MPs a veto over such laws.

The Tory leadership is understood to favour the last option. A Government paper has suggested the principle of a veto 'could be applied to levels of tax and benefits where the equivalent rates have been devolved to Scotland or elsewhere'.

The Lib Dems back the idea of a veto to be decided by a committee of MPs.

They want it to be appointed by the share of the vote for each party at the last election rather than the make-up of the Commons. Currently, that would significantly favour the Lib Dems.

Mr Hague confirmed he wanted to press the issue to a vote in the New Year although the Liberal Democrats could thwart this.

Shadow justice secretary Sadiq Khan agreed English MPs needed a greater say over English laws but said any decisions should not be rushed before the election.

Later Mr Hague admitted disputes among the parties meant it was unlikely the subject would be settled before May's poll.

Lord Heseltine also told the BBC's Daily Politics show Labour was in 'deep trouble' on the issue and 'coming up with every explanation as to why it should be kicked into the long grass'.

What are the options? Analysis by JAMES CHAPMAN, political editor



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BAN SCOTTISH MPs VOTING

The most hardline option. It would mean Scottish MPs being barred from voting at any stage of legislation deemed by the Commons Speaker to apply only to England or England and Wales. Such legislation would be considered throughout by a so-called grand committee of English MPs or, where appropriate, English and Welsh MPs.

‘DECISIVE SAY’ FOR ENGLISH MPs

Bills deemed to apply only to England, or England and Wales, would be considered and voted on as normal by all Westminster MPs at their second reading – the first full debate and vote on any legislation.

But the committee stage, where a Bill is considered line by line by a small group of MPs for revision or amendment, would only involve English (or English and Welsh) MPs, appointed depending on their party representation in the Commons. Only English MPs would vote at the report stage, when the committee reports back to the whole House on its changes.

At third reading – the final hurdle that has to be cleared by legislation and no further changes are allowed – all MPs, including Scots, would be allowed to vote.

The Commons as a whole would have to either accept changes agreed by English MPs or reject the entire Bill.

AN ENGLISH VETO

A formal veto for English MPs over laws only applying in their constituencies. This appears to be the preferred Conservative option. Again, second reading would proceed as normal, involving all MPs. The committee stage would involve only English MPs appointed on the basis of their respective parties' strengths in the Commons.

The report stage would involve all MPs, including from Scotland.

But then crucially, English-only legislation would have to clear a new Parliamentary hurdle prior to a third reading.

It would need to win a 'consent motion' based on the votes of only English or English and Welsh MPs who would make up the grand committee. They could grant their consent or veto a Bill or part of a Bill. This would include issues like income tax or benefit rates, once these are devolved to Holyrood.

AND WHAT THE LIB DEMS WANT

The Lib Dems back the Conservatives on the principle of an 'English veto'. But they favour a smaller version of the grand committee, that is not all those in the Commons, of English or English and Welsh MPs to grant or withhold consent for any English-only laws.

They argue that this panel should be composed of MPs on the basis of proportional representation – in other words, the percentages of votes cast in England at the previous general election.

Currently, this would mean the Lib Dems getting many more MPs on the committee – 23 per cent – than they would if appointments were on the basis of the parties' relative strengths in the Commons.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2876833/We-ll-block-powers-Scotland-unless-English-home-rule-WARNING-Heseltine-demands-equality.html#ixzz3Mb4FmHPj>

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