



PRESS NOTICE

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Ken Clarke proposals neither new nor workable

The proposals for a limited form of English votes on English laws which were outlined today by Kenneth Clarke MP are not new, says the Constitution Unit. Similar proposals were made by the Procedure Committee in 1999, the Norton Commission on Strengthening Parliament in 2000, and by Sir Malcolm Rifkind in 2007. All recommended excluding Scottish MPs from voting at one or more stages during the passage of 'English' bills through the House of Commons.

"From the little we have heard so far, Ken Clarke's plan is no more feasible than previous proposals to limit the voting rights of Scottish MPs", said the Unit's director Prof Robert Hazell. "No one has yet satisfactorily defined how you identify an 'English law'. The territorial extent of most bills varies in different parts of the bill. Either bills will have to be drafted in a completely different way; or you will have legislative hokey cokey, with MPs being allowed to vote on some amendments but not on others".

The other doubt raised by the Unit is whether the Conservatives would try to implement English votes on English laws if they were in government. "I would be surprised if the Conservatives acted on this" said Robert Hazell. "The political and technical difficulties are formidable. And by definition, if the Conservatives are in government, they won't need any form of English votes on English laws to get their legislation through."

Notes for Editors

- The Constitution Unit is an independent and non-partisan research Centre based at University College London
- Prof Robert Hazell is editor of *The English Question* (Manchester Univ Press 2006), the product of an exhaustive five year examination of all possible solutions to the English Question.
- Kenneth Clarke MP is chairman of the Conservative Democracy Task Force.
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