

Dear Mr Miliband,

On Labour Space, in a comment to "[A National Conversation for England](#)", you kindly offered us the following:

"I believe that devolution has made us stronger as a United Kingdom and given democratic accountability for decisions in Scotland and Wales that used to be made centrally. Across the country, we need to see whether there are further ways of devolving power. However, I do not see a new parliament for England as the answer. The vast majority of the UK parliament is comprised of English MPs, and so there is no reason to believe an English Parliament would enhance accountability. I would encourage all of you with concerns about issues within England to tell us specifically what you care about and see what we can do to help."

I have a number of suggestions that I would like you to consider.

1. The Government should address the West Lothian Question.

Andrew MacKinlay (Thurrock, Labour) recently stated that the Labour Party did not want to discuss the West Lothian Question (Hansard; 2nd February 2009). The reason for this reluctance, he suggested, was because "*my colleagues present arguments about needing votes from Scotland*". In other words, don't ask it.

The 2008 Hansard Audit of Political Engagement (figure 1) found that the constitutional issue that most people were dissatisfied with was "*Scottish MPs being able to vote on English issues in the House of Commons*", yet this most salient of constitutional issues is precisely the issue that Labour fails to address or even discuss. The West Lothian Question and the voting privileges of Scottish MPs were not mentioned once in the recent Governance of Britain green paper 'Rights and Responsibilities: developing our constitutional framework'. Not once in 64 pages.

2. The Government should consult the people of England on how they wish to be governed.

You state that you "*do not see a new parliament for England as the answer*". Jack Straw has outlined his opposition by stating that "*I am wholly opposed to an English parliament. If you went down that route, there would be little advantage seen by those in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for maintaining the Union, because the argument would be, what exactly is in it for us?*" (Western Mail, May 2008). Not only opposed to an English parliament, but *wholly opposed* because there would be nothing in it for the Scots, Welsh and Irish. Fair enough, they're the views of you and Jack Straw, but what about the views of the other 50M people in England; are the views of the people of England as important as those of the Government and the people of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

Former Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs, Charles Falconer, went a step further than Jack Straw and yourself; he stated that "*there is no demand at all for devolution to England or the English MPs only being able to vote on English issues.*" (Today Programme, March 2006) and further declared "*So the idea of an English Parliament, we say: not today, not tomorrow, not in any kind of future we can see.*" (speech to the ESRC Devolution and Constitutional Change Programme, March 2006).

But what are the facts? The Department for Constitutional Affairs (now the Ministry of Justice), of which Lord Falconer was head, has never commissioned any research into the level of support for an English parliament or English votes on English Laws. And by never, I mean never; not once, not ever. All the following polls have found a majority in favour of an English dimension to government, whether it is an English Parliament, English Votes on English Laws, English independence or a combination of the three.

ICM for the Telegraph | December 2007

ICM for the Campaign for an English Parliament | April 2007

YouGov for the Sunday Times | April 2007

BBC Newsnight Poll | January 2007

Daily Mail / ICM Poll | January 2007

ICM for the Sunday Telegraph | November 2006

IPSOS MORI for the English Constitutional Convention | June 2006

YouGov for the English Democrats | Feb 2004

Only one commercial poll in the last ten years (pictured below) has even found a plurality in favour of the Status Quo, let alone a majority.

WHICH WOULD YOU PREFER FOR ENGLAND?	
Laws made by Commons with all MPs voting	32%
Laws made by Commons but only English MPs voting	25%
English Parliament within the Union	20%
Independence from Scotland and Wales	15%

ICM for the Telegraph | December 2007

The one poll which does find a majority in favour of the Status Quo, and from which Lord Falconer takes his lead, is the British Social Attitudes survey which does not measure support for English Votes on English Laws and asks the English to choose between “a new English parliament” and Westminster, which has been the seat of English government for hundreds of years. This presumes that an English parliament must be “new”, which it need not be, obviously

3. Speak of England and speak for England: Say England!

The government may wish to deny fair representative government to the nation of England but that does not mean that the Government should deny mention of England. In a recent Labour press release “[NHS achieves lowest waiting times since records began](#)” (Figure 2) the Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson, never mentioned the fact that the figures quoted related to England. When Mr Johnson says “*the NHS*” what he perhaps means to say, but neglects to say, is “the NHS in England”

Gordon Brown, when he talks about devolved areas such as Health and Education, never makes any reference to England. Instead he uses phrases such as 'this country', 'our schools' or 'the country's hospitals'. My country has a name. It's name is England. Why not say “England” when it is England's schools and hospitals that are being discussed?

Recently the Government announced “Working Together” which would allow people in England to leave feedback on GPs, police, childcare and councils. In his forward to “[Working Together: Public Services on Your Side](#)” the Scottish Prime Minister doesn't mention England once, nor did he even intimate that this initiative might only apply to England and not the country in which he was elected. Are we expected to believe that this is an oversight? Would the Scottish Government neglect to mention the words 'Scotland' or 'Scottish' in a similar press release? No, of course not. In an important sense all politicians in Scotland are nationalists – just take a look at the [Scottish Labour website](#) for confirmation of this. Now ask yourself where you last saw the Labour Party displaying the flag of England on its literature or websites.

To prevent this continual obfuscation and conflation of England and the United Kingdom, and also to encourage Labour politicians to respectfully refer to England when it is England of which they speak, I propose three things.

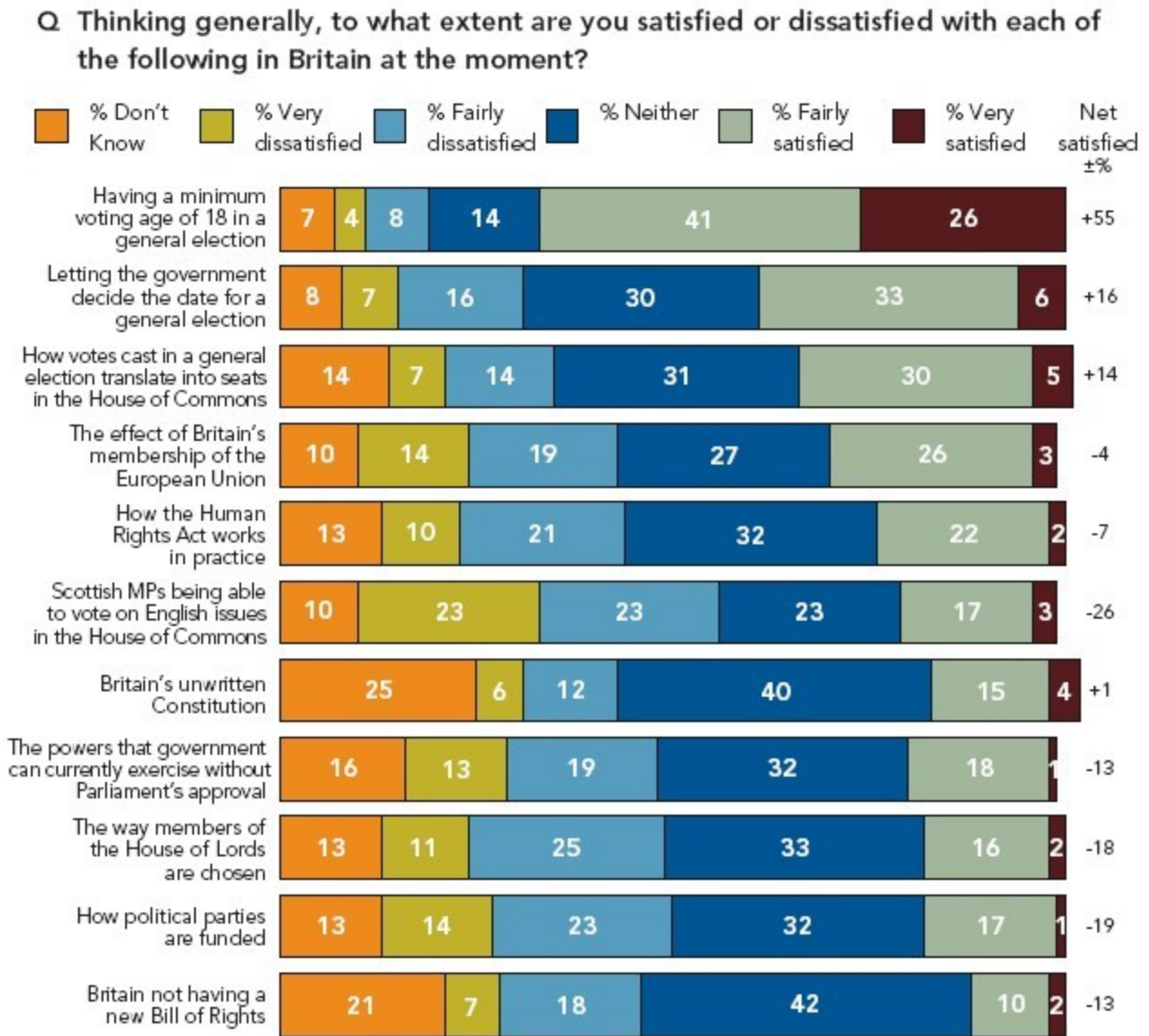
- a. The Labour Party should release a manifesto specifically for England rather than issuing a UK manifesto and encouraging Scottish and Welsh voters to take English issues into consideration when they cast their vote in a General Election.
- b. The Labour Party should federalise and set up an English Labour Party. Under the present Labour Party Constitution the Scottish Labour manifesto can pledge to build for Scotland “the best education system in the world” whilst Gordon Brown is responsible for the education system in England and leader of the Labour National Executive for both Scotland and the UK. Little wonder he doesn't pledge to build the best education system in the world for England, he cannot pledge both.
- c. For the Labour Government to amend the job descriptions of ministers to indicate that they are responsible for English ministries. Alan Johnson would become the 'Secretary of State for Health in England', thereby indicating that he was in charge of the English NHS and speaking about English health policy.

4. Speak positively about England and articulate a positive vision of England.

Over the years Labour Party politicians haven't done a great deal to promote an inclusive and positive national identity for England. David Blunkett, Frank Field and Roy Hattersley are honourable exceptions but generally Labour politicians bang on relentlessly about Britishness, or eulogise Scotland and Wales, but never have a good word about England. Jack Straw has said that "the English are potentially very aggressive, very violent" and that "we have used this propensity to violence to subjugate Ireland, Wales and Scotland" and "then we used it in Europe and with our empire" (Independent, 10 January 2000); whilst Labour Party Communications Officer, Terry White, informs us that "England, as opposed to Britain, has an unfortunate history around the world" and that Englishness is "a threat to democracy" (Sun, 30 Nov 2005). Liam Byrne, Gordon Brown, Michael Wills, Tony Blair... They all tell us how proud they are to be British. Scottish and Welsh Labour leaders, Jack McConnell and Rhodri Morgan, not only proclaim their pride in Scotland and Wales, respectively, but also publicly proclaim their support for England's sporting opponents, whoever they may be.

But which Labour politicians express their pride in England? I think it's about time that some did.

Figure 1. 2008 Hansard Audit of Political Engagement (Satisfaction with Constitutional Issues)



Base: 1,073 GB adults 18+. Fieldwork dates: 29 November – 7 December 2007 Source: Ipsos MORI

Figure 2. Labour press release, March 2009

NHS ACHIEVES LOWEST WAITING TIMES SINCE RECORDS BEGAN

Alan Johnson, Labour's Health Secretary, has joined NHS staff in celebrating waiting times reaching their lowest level since records began

New data shows that the NHS has met its target to treat patients within a maximum of 18 weeks from referral by their GP - an achievement which was unimaginable 12 years ago.

In 1997, Labour inherited an NHS ignored and starved of funds. The investment and reform since then has built towards an NHS we can all be proud of and made a real difference to the lives of people across the country.

Labour's Health Secretary, Alan Johnson, said:

"Twelve years ago it was not uncommon for patients to have to wait well over 18 months for an operation. Achieving the shortest waits since NHS records began is a tremendous achievement for staff and I congratulate them for all their hard work. Meeting the standard nationally five months before it came into effect, shows the commitment of the whole health service to improving patients' experiences.

"This has improved the lives of millions of people. Every year the NHS carries out 60,000 hip operations, in the last two years the waiting time for this procedure has fallen from around 30 weeks to 12 weeks. It's not just patients that benefit from this, clinicians also value the difference it makes to the quality of care they provide."

