

CHAPTER 10

NATIONAL FEELING

325. In the last chapter we discussed the dissatisfaction with government which is common to the people of Great Britain as a whole. We now consider how, in some parts of the country, the nature and extent of that dissatisfaction are influenced by national feeling and by the existence of national institutions. We start with a brief enquiry into the nature of national feeling and the different forms that it may take. We then trace the development of the Scottish and Welsh nationalist movements in favour of political separation from the rest of the United Kingdom and assess their significance. Finally, we consider the ways in which less extreme forms of national feeling affect people's attitudes to the present system of government.

THE NATURE OF NATIONAL FEELING

National identity

326. It is possible to argue endlessly about the meaning of the word "nation" and whether a particular group of people do or do not have a separate national identity. The factors which have to be taken into account include geography, history, race, language and culture. But these, whether looked at singly or in combination, do not provide a conclusive answer. Some of our witnesses considered that the best judges were the people themselves; and that if a group of people think of themselves as a separate nation then nothing more is needed to demonstrate the existence of that nation. The claim clearly has greater validity if it secures a measure of recognition by others.

327. Our terms of reference refer to the several countries, nations and regions of the United Kingdom, and thus appear to accept the claims to separate national identity made on behalf of the Scottish and Welsh peoples. The many discussions we have had with the Scots and the Welsh have given ample evidence of the existence of this sense of nationhood, often strongly felt even by those who have no desire to see much change in the existing arrangements for the government of Scotland and Wales and who are proud also of their British nationality. The fact is that the word "nation" is used to mean very many different things. To some people it has an intensely political significance, while by others it is regarded as relating more to cultural matters.

328. If the peoples of Scotland and Wales have separate national identities, then so also have the English. But although English people value their own particular heritage, they readily identify themselves for the purposes of government with the United Kingdom as a whole, and their complaints against government do not have a particularly English flavour. English nationalism therefore poses no problems for us.

329. Within England there is in Cornwall a very small minority which claims a separate national identity for the Cornish people and considers that this should be acknowledged and recognised by separate arrangements for their government. The early inhabitants of Cornwall were of Celtic origin. The Anglo-Saxon settlement of England did not extend to their territory, and the people of Cornwall continued to be Celtic. Cornwall has, however, been governed as part of England for a thousand years and, despite its individual character and strong sense of regional identity, there is no evidence that its people generally have a wish to see it separated for the purposes of government from the rest of England. What they do want is recognition of the fact that Cornwall has a separate identity and that its traditional boundaries shall be respected. While we studied with interest evidence presented to us¹, we have not been able to identify ways in which this demand could be met within any framework of constitutional change that we would consider appropriate. We have noted that in the current local government reorganisation Cornwall is to retain its county status within its historic boundaries. That decision may be expected to reassure those who feared for Cornwall's survival as a unit of government. More might, however, be done on the question of status. Just as the people of Scotland and Wales tend to resent the description of their countries as regions of the United Kingdom, so the people of Cornwall regard their part of the United Kingdom as not just another English county. The creation of the

¹ See Written Evidence, Vol. 8.

Duchy of Cornwall in the fourteenth century may have been in some respects a mark of English overlordship, but it established a special and enduring relationship between Cornwall and the Crown. Use of the designation on all appropriate occasions would serve to recognise both this special relationship and the territorial integrity of Cornwall, on which our witnesses laid great stress.

330. The only two claims to separate national identity with which we deal, therefore, are those of the Scots and the Welsh, and the question for us is whether in these cases the existence of national feeling gives rise to a need for change in political institutions. In answering this question we have no rules to guide us. There are many examples of multi-nation states throughout the world, and just as many different systems of government trying to cater for the particular problems which such states present. Each state must fashion a system which fits its own peculiar history and conditions. For Scotland and Wales we have received suggestions ranging from complete political separation to the retention with little change of the existing arrangements.

331. We have been impressed by the number of people in both Scotland and Wales who see little need for change but who nevertheless show a keen awareness of a separate national identity and a firm resolve to preserve it. Most Englishmen would probably be surprised to hear the United Kingdom spoken of as a multi-nation state. What many Scots and Welshmen consider a partnership of nations, the average Englishman tends to regard as one nation comprising different kinds of people. For him, the United Kingdom is a whole patchwork of communities. Thus, a person brought up in Brighton recognises that the Scots and Welsh are different from himself, but so too are people born and bred in Yorkshire or Tyneside, or for that matter in Birmingham. And though he may regard the Scots and the Welsh as rather more different in degree than the others, it probably does not occur to him that there is any difference in kind. All have British nationality, and he will not think of a separate Scottish or Welsh nationality except as something belonging to history and having no present-day political significance.

332. Although there is no ill-will or intended discourtesy in this attitude of the English, people in Scotland and Wales are much irritated by it. It fails to recognise the special character of their separate identity, of which they themselves are keenly conscious and proud; and at the same time it implies that the resentment which they feel arises only because they are living in the past and getting agitated about something which is no longer important.

National feeling in Scotland

333. Feeling on this issue is perhaps particularly strong in Scotland, for which the present system of government is rightly seen as being based historically on a union freely negotiated between two nations of equal status, and people very much resent the tendency in England to regard Scotland as just another province. Throughout our discussions in Scotland there was an assumption by witnesses that in any new constitutional arrangements Scotland should be equated with England as a whole, and not with individual regions of England. This view is held so strongly that some people in Scotland who want a Scottish assembly think that there should be an assembly for England also, even though there may be no demand for it. The underlying feeling is that, whatever is done, Scotland should be placed on a par with England.

334. This Scottish view of the status of Scotland in relation to that of England is not generally appreciated by English people, and the issue is not one which is much brought to their notice. Expatriate Scots do not usually flaunt their Scottishness before the people in England with whom they live and work. These Scots are the ones who are prepared, if only temporarily, to leave Scotland behind. Many become anglicised, and especially among the more successful of them there is a tendency to develop a cosmopolitan outlook in which there is little room for Scottish nationalism. The Englishman sees few home-based Scots. He is not exposed to the full flavour of Scottish life north of the border, and consequently does not appreciate the strength of national feeling which still exists there.

National feeling in Wales

335. National feeling in Wales differs to some extent from that in Scotland. In Scotland the emphasis is placed largely, though by no means exclusively, on economic considerations. There is a sense of grievance that the contract made in 1707 between two partners of equal status seems to have turned out better for

England than for Scotland, and there is a demand by Scots to manage their own economy. In Wales, while the economic factor is also important in nationalist thinking, it is closely associated with a desire to preserve and foster the Welsh language and culture. We have formed the impression that even among Welsh people with extreme nationalist sympathies there is not so strong a desire for a complete break with England as there is among nationalists in Scotland. Welsh people with nationalist leanings seem more prepared to contemplate the continuance of some kind of unity with England. They insist, however, that this must be in such a form as will ensure the preservation of their national identity, which they believe to be at risk, and which indeed, because of the closer connexions with England, is more vulnerable than that of Scotland. Scottish nationalists appear rather to feel that the achievement of political independence would make possible the independent management of the economy to the marked advantage of Scotland, and that this in turn would bring those cultural and other advances needed to maintain the Scottish traditions and way of life.

The effect of economic conditions

336. Although considerations of economics may not be the main driving force of Welsh nationalism, they are still an important element in it. It is interesting to note that the stirrings of Welsh national consciousness under Owain Glyn Dr at the end of the fourteenth century have been attributed mainly to the disastrous economic consequences of the Black Death. In modern times also, there is probably some relationship between adverse economic conditions and the growth of nationalist movements. In periods of prosperity for Scotland and Wales, wounds to national pride can be more easily tolerated; but when these countries suffer economic depression, even if only by comparison with the more prosperous parts of England, public discussion in Scotland and Wales mounts, the sense of community is heightened and more people are drawn to nationalist policies, either as a long-term solution to their problems or as a means of bringing pressure to bear on the government to do more for them immediately within the existing system. We have no doubt that dissatisfaction with economic conditions in both Scotland and Wales was one of the main causes of the increase in support given to the nationalist parties in the period leading up to our appointment.

337. One view is that material well-being is the beginning and the end of the problem, and that if it were possible to ensure reasonable prosperity in Scotland and Wales, nationalism would never be heard of again except from a few extremists. This view appears too simple. It is true that the claims of nationalism were subordinated to other demands in Scotland and Wales when heavy industry flourished there in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and all parts of the United Kingdom shared the fruits of imperial success. But political nationalism made little headway during the inter-war depression. This may have been due to a realisation that a revival of the Scottish and Welsh economies inevitably depended on a revival of the United Kingdom economy as a whole, and a belief that alternative and untried policies were available through which this revival might be achieved. The post-war period has seen a quite different situation. New political initiatives, including the adoption of strong regional policies, have been taken, but have not succeeded in raising the prosperity of Scotland and Wales to the level of that of the Midlands and South East of England. In these circumstances political nationalism has grown and put down stronger roots. As economic prosperity can never be absolutely assured, the possibility of a nationalist revival in times of economic adversity will thus always be present.

Communities within Scotland and Wales

338. Acknowledgement of the separate national identities of the Scots and the Welsh should not be allowed to obscure the fact that different communities exist within both Scotland and Wales. The attitude survey indicates that there is a substantial minority of people in Wales who tend to identify themselves with North or South Wales rather than with Wales as a whole, and there is a clear linguistic division between the western and eastern parts of the country.

In Scotland there are distinctive traditions in the Highlands and the Islands, and a greater tendency than elsewhere in Britain to think in terms of a town or county. It cannot be assumed that all people living in North Wales or in the Highlands of Scotland would view with equanimity the prospect of government from Cardiff or Edinburgh; there may even be some who would regard rule from London as a lesser evil. Nevertheless it seems likely that for most people loyalties to communities within Scotland and Wales exist

side by side with and are subordinated to a larger loyalty to Scotland or Wales as a whole. Certainly the concept of smaller communities within Scotland and Wales is no part of the present nationalist platform in either country; both the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru are concerned to secure the separation of their countries from the United Kingdom as single independent nations. We have not thought it useful to consider any scheme of reform which did not treat each of these countries as a whole.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCOTTISH NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

339. Modern Scottish nationalism might be said to have started in 1853, with the setting up, with a considerable measure of support from the Scottish local authorities, of the National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights. Since then the fortunes of the nationalist movement have fluctuated, and it has been subject to a number of splits and re-groupings. But the basic idea of the resumption of self-government by Scotland has continued to receive some kind of support throughout, and in more recent years the movement, while still commanding only minority support, has become a well established feature of Scottish life.

The earlier history of the Scottish nationalist movement

340. During the second half of the nineteenth century, as government activity increased and became more complex, there were complaints that Scottish business was neglected in Parliament and that the arrangements for governing Scotland were inadequate. Interest in constitutional change was stimulated by the Liberal Party's policy of home rule for Ireland, and in 1886 the Scottish Home Rule Association was founded with the object of winning a similar measure of independence for Scotland. Scottish Home Rule Bills were introduced in Parliament in the 1920s. In the meantime a separate body, the Scots National League, had been advocating an independent Scotland which would determine its relationship with England on a basis of mutual agreement and equal rights. In 1928 there was formed a new National Party of Scotland, which effectively absorbed both the Scots National League and the Scottish Home Rule Association. The new party's policy, which perhaps attempted to reconcile the independence and home rule elements, was stated to be "self-government for Scotland with independent national status within the British group of nations, together with reconstruction of Scottish national life".

341. In 1932 the more moderate Scottish Party was founded, with a policy of home rule rather than complete independence. In 1934 it joined forces with the National Party of Scotland to form the Scottish National Party (S.N.P.). The original programme of the S.N.P. was "self-government for Scotland on a basis which will enable Scotland as a partner in the British Empire with the same status as England to develop its national life to the fullest advantage". To achieve this objective a Parliament was to be established in Scotland as the final authority on all Scottish affairs, and Scotland and England were jointly to exercise their rights and responsibilities as mother nations of the British Empire. Under the influence of the moderate element, derived mainly from the Scottish Party, the S.N.P. at first pursued a policy which was in effect one of home rule. But dissensions gradually developed between those who wished in this way to attract the maximum support and those who wished to pursue a more extreme policy of complete independence, and in 1942 the moderates broke away to form the Scottish Union, later renamed the Scottish Convention, a movement aiming at home rule. The Convention secured a wide measure of popular support by using the device of the Covenant, which committed its signatories to do everything in their power "to secure for Scotland a Parliament with adequate legislative authority in Scottish affairs". In a short space of time about half the adult population of Scotland signed this document, and this popular agitation during the 1940s was an important element in the appointment in 1952 of the Royal Commission on Scottish Affairs, whose recommendations we noted on page 28.

342. Meanwhile the S.N.P. adhered to its more extreme goal of complete independence, and the policies which it formulated during the 1940s still constitute the basis of its platform today. The main plank in this platform is full political independence for Scotland within the Commonwealth. It is envisaged that close economic relations would continue to be maintained with England, but on the basis of negotiations between partners of equal status. There would be no customs or other barriers to trade between the two countries, and the free movement of labour, goods and capital would continue.

The nationalist revival in recent times

343. In the late 1940s the S.N.P. was eclipsed for a time by the superior popular appeal of the Scottish Convention, which is now defunct. But in more recent years its fortunes have revived, and during the 1960s it developed and expanded to a point at which the nationalist movement could be said to have become for the first time a substantial force in Parliamentary and local government elections. Some isolated successes had been achieved in earlier years, in the form of substantial minority votes in Parliamentary bye-elections, and for a short period in 1945 the party had a representative in Parliament; but it was not until the 1960s that it developed sufficient political and organisational strength to make a real showing at general elections. Nationalist candidates stood in fifteen of the seventy-one Scottish constituencies in 1964 and in twenty-three in 1966. No seats were won, but the party's share of the vote in the constituencies contested in 1966 averaged over 14 per cent., and its total vote exceeded 5 per cent. of all the votes cast in Scotland. By a growing minority of voters the S.N.P. came to be accepted as an alternative to the three old-established parties. In 1967, a period of general discontent in Scotland, the party proved to be an attractive vehicle for protest votes. In March of that year over 10,000 people voted for the S.N.P. candidate in a Parliamentary bye-election at Pollok, Glasgow; and in November the party again secured representation in Parliament through a bye-election victory at Hamilton. Further evidence of this nationalist upsurge was shown a few months later, in May 1968, when the S.N.P. gained over a hundred seats in the Scottish municipal elections.

344. Thereafter the party appeared to lose some of its appeal, and it seemed that the fortunes of the nationalists were once again on the wane. In May 1970 the gain of municipal seats in 1968 was largely wiped out. But at the general election in June 1970, although Hamilton was lost, the party retained representation in Parliament by the election of its candidate in the Western Isles constituency; this was the first victory by a nationalist party at a general election. The party put up candidates in sixty-five constituencies, and secured about 300,000 votes, over 11 per cent. of all those cast and a quarter of the number given to the Labour Party, which in recent years has enjoyed majority support in Scotland. The S.N.P.'s support was not uniform throughout Scotland, tending to be greatest outside the industrial areas. It is interesting to note that the Liberal Party, campaigning for home rule but not independence, secured another 5 per cent. of the total vote; concentrating its effort in twenty-seven constituencies it captured three seats with only half the number of votes given to the S.N.P. More recently, the results of bye-elections at Stirling in September 1971 and Dundee East in March 1973, where in each case the S.N.P. candidate came second, have shown that the nationalists are still capable of making a considerable impact at the polls.

Our assessment of Scottish nationalism

345. We are not concerned here with whether Scotland should or should not have independence, as the nationalists claim. That is discussed later. Our task now, following this brief survey, is to gauge the nature and strength of Scottish nationalism. There is no scientific way of doing this. It must necessarily remain a matter of judgement, based on all the available evidence. Our view is that on any impartial assessment the S.N.P. must still be accounted a small minority party which has so far failed to consolidate its political position; and on present evidence it seems unlikely that the party will gain the support of a majority of the Scottish people for its policy of complete independence. There is, and probably always will be, a core of Scottish nationalists who feel strongly that Scotland will achieve contentment only if it becomes completely independent and is left to work out its own destiny; but the nationalist movement throughout its history has depended fairly heavily on the general support and sympathy of people who would prefer something less than complete independence, perhaps some version of home rule which would give the people of Scotland a Parliament or assembly of their own. Furthermore, at its peaks of success the movement has attracted other supporters with little, if any, interest in independence for Scotland or anything approaching it but who, keenly aware of their Scottishness and dissatisfied with conditions in Scotland, have wanted to register a protest.

346. Perhaps the greatest significance of the Scottish nationalist movement lies not in its advocacy of separatism, but in the means which it has provided for the people of Scotland to register their feeling of national identity and political importance. Nationalist voters, and the obvious sympathy which they have attracted from a good many others who would not themselves be prepared by their votes to endorse a separatist policy, have drawn attention to an intensity of national feeling in Scotland which people outside that country were not generally aware of. While Scottish nationalism provides no evidence that the Scottish

people as a whole wish to be separated from the rest of the United Kingdom, the nature and strength of the support it has attracted over the years suggest that a substantial body of people in Scotland would be likely to take a favourable view of a change to a system of government which did more than the present system to recognise their separate Scottish identity. What that support does not measure is the strength of the body of opinion which favours continuation of the present system and rejects further measures of devolution (other than administrative devolution). The advocates of change tend always to be more vociferous and those interested in constitutional change in Scotland are no exception to the rule. As is brought out later in this chapter, the full flavour of political life and feeling in Scotland can be assessed only after consideration of the opposing point of view.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WELSH NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

347. Political nationalism emerged in Wales at about the same time as it did in Scotland. A year after the formation of the Scottish Home Rule Association in 1886, a similar movement, Cymru Fydd (New Wales), was founded in Wales. It rapidly won support throughout Wales and in Parliament, where Welsh Members joined Scottish Liberals in pressing the case for home rule for their countries and in 1914 introduced a Government of Wales Bill of their own. The Welsh Nationalist Party, Plaid Cymru, was founded in 1925, but by this time popular interest in devolution had declined and the party's policies did not attract much support from the public at large until after the Second World War. Since then, however, much fortified by a revival of interest in the Welsh language and culture, the Welsh nationalist movement has become at least as important an influence in Wales as its counterpart in Scotland.

The earlier years of the Welsh nationalist movement

348. Plaid Cymru was formed by a small group of people, mostly from the academic world, who were concerned at the effects on Welsh life of what they saw as a serious decline in national consciousness. The party's original aims were threefold: to establish a Welsh Parliament in Wales, to ensure the separate representation of Wales at the League of Nations and to have the Welsh language recognised as the official language of Wales. "Our immediate ambition" said a contemporary pamphlet "is a government for Wales which shall be for the good of Wales", and it went on to list a number of fields which were considered to need separate Welsh administration, including education, transport, health, housing and the economy.

349. The early electoral efforts of Plaid Cymru were not attended by much success. Even during the severe depression of the 1920s and 1930s the party's candidates gained very little support. The unemployed continued to look fixedly, if resentfully, to the government in London, apparently seeing no prospect of salvation under a separate system of government in Wales.

The post-war growth of Welsh nationalism

350. Plaid Cymru received its first real electoral encouragement in Parliamentary bye-elections in 1945, when its candidates in Caernarvonshire and Neath each obtained over 6,000 votes; and in 1949 a Plaid Cymru candidate was elected a member of Carmarthenshire County Council. The growth of Welsh national feeling at about that time also found expression in the activities of the New Wales Union (Undeb Cymru Fydd), which carried on a campaign during the 1950s to assess the extent of Welsh support for a Parliament in Wales. By 1956 some 250,000 people had put their names to a petition in favour of a Welsh Parliament, and it was reported that eight out of every ten people approached had agreed to sign.

351. In the general elections of 1959, 1964 and 1966, Plaid Cymru put up around a score of candidates in the thirty-six Welsh constituencies, and attracted as much as 5 per cent. of the total Welsh vote; but it was not until the 1966 Carmarthenshire bye-election that the party's first Member of Parliament was elected. Other Plaid Cymru candidates did well at bye-elections in the industrial constituencies of Rhondda West and Caerphilly in 1967 and 1968 and, as in Scotland at about the same time, the party of nationalism came to be accepted as a respectable alternative to the older parties. In the process of expansion its policies have naturally undergone some change compared with the original aims of 1925. The revised policy is full self-government for Wales as a member of the Commonwealth, but within the economic framework of a British Common Market; and the party envisages that Wales will officially become a bilingual nation.

352. The general election of June 1970 brought the nationalist movement a reverse, in that the Carmarthenshire seat was lost, and the loss was not offset by the gain of another, as it was for the S.N.P. in Scotland. But the general impact of Plaid Cymru at the 1970 General Election was by no means negligible. It had candidates in all thirty-six Welsh constituencies, and captured 175,000 votes-like the S.N.P., rather more than 11 per cent, of the total poli. Its strength was apparent in both rural and industrial constituencies. The average vote for each candidate in 1970 was over 4,800, some 60 per cent, larger than in 1966. Although twenty-five of the candidates lost their deposits, the 1970 results on the whole provided evidence of an increase in the party's following.

353. Apart from Plaid Cymru, other Welsh movements and societies have sought to foster the Welsh language and culture. Prominent among these have been the long-established Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, the Welsh League of Youth (Urdd Gobaith Cymru) and the New Wales Union (Undeb Cymru Fydd), now dissolved. Also, since 1962, a vigorous and not always peaceful campaign of protest against the alleged official neglect of the Welsh language has been waged by the Welsh Language Society.

Our assessment of Welsh nationalism

354. In electoral terms the relative strengths of the Scottish and Welsh nationalist movements are strikingly similar, but in Wales the general sympathy for nationalist ideas seems to be more widespread, even among leading figures in Welsh public life. This sympathy appears to be vested, however, in a desire not so much for independence or home rule as for a recognition of the need to foster Welsh economic and cultural interests and for a greater say in the way in which Wales is governed.

355. Voting in the 1970 general election showed the highest and most consistent level of support for the nationalist movement to lie, not surprisingly, among the population in the western half of the country. That is the area where Welsh is commonly spoken and which, largely through its relative geographical remoteness, has been least influenced by the English. The industrialised south and the border counties, closely connected economically and in other ways with the adjacent counties of England, are the parts of Wales which are most anglicised and least convinced of the need for constitutional change. However, both in the 1970 election and in bye-elections of recent years, Plaid Cyniru established substantial pockets of support among the industrial towns of South Wales, usually presenting a strong challenge to the successful Labour candidates. The attitude survey suggests that, although there is a notable degree of sympathy among non-Welsh speakers for the idea of preserving and teaching the Welsh language, there is also a feeling that those who speak Welsh would be the ones to gain most from devolution; and we have noted from our other enquiries some anxiety among non-Welsh speakers that the fostering of the Welsh language could lead to a form of discrimination against those who do not speak it.

356. In Wales, as in Scotland, support for the nationalist cause is not, in our view, anything like sufficient to constitute a general vote for independence. The attitude survey indicates that in matters of government and the provision of public services the spirit of independence in Wales may be less strong than in some regions of England. But Welsh nationalism has served to focus attention on the strong desire which the people of Wales have to preserve and foster their own identity and special interests, and this desire seems to evoke considerable sympathy even among Welshmen in the industrial and border areas, whose general attitudes otherwise tend to be more akin to those of English people. It seems that, for a good many people in Wales, the distinctive Welsh culture and language has come to assume the degree of importance which is attached to the idea of Scottish sovereignty in the minds of people in Scotland. It is interesting to speculate how far this recent revival of interest in Welsh culture is the answer of a sensitive people to the pressures and disappointments of modern society. Whatever its inspiration, it is an important present-day phenomenon which must be taken into account in any consideration of government reform in Wales.

SCOTTISH AND WELSH VIEWS ON CENTRALISATION

357. We have traced the development of the movements in favour of the political separation of Scotland and Wales from England, and have attempted to assess their significance. We have noted that they have only a small minority support and that much larger numbers of the people in both countries who advocate change wish their distinctive national identities to be recognised in a system of government in some way falling short of political separation. We now go on to consider, under the two headings of centralisation and the

weakening of democracy, how in Scotland and Wales the existence of these less extreme forms of national feeling colours the nature of dissatisfaction with government which is felt by the people of Great Britain as a whole.

358. The centralisation of government in London appears to be more resented in Scotland and Wales than it is in England. This is not simply because Scotland and Wales are more geographically remote. Some regions of England are further away from London than is Wales. The greater resentment is due rather to the effect which centralisation has of devaluing the Scottish and Welsh ways of life. For people in Scotland and Wales centralisation also means anglicisation; the ways of the United Kingdom Government are regarded as English ways.

359. In Scotland particularly, with its earlier history as a separate sovereign state, there is a feeling that government from London does not sufficiently recognise Scotland's place as an equal, if smaller, partner. For this reason many people in Scotland probably feel more strongly about centralisation than they do about other threats to democracy. People in Wales, on the other hand, although they feel the effects of centralisation more keenly than most people in England, do not seem to resent it quite so much as people in Scotland. They fear its effect on their way of life, and are anxious to find some means of increasing Welsh influence in the discussion of Welsh problems; but they seem rather more prepared than people in Scotland to accept that the United Kingdom Government must play the dominant role. This difference of attitude may be accounted for by the closer geographical, political and economic links with England.

The allocation of public expenditure

360. In the allocation of public expenditure there is already a considerable measure of Scottish and Welsh influence. The Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales are responsible for the make-up of the annual budgets covering the services for which they are responsible. And, as is shown by the figures given later in paragraphs 589 to 593, public expenditure per head in these two countries is substantially higher by comparison with England than is generally recognised. Witnesses in both Scotland and Wales have attached great importance to having a Secretary of State to represent them in the Cabinet, for reasons which have almost always included the advantages secured in the allocation of additional public expenditure. It seems that in informed circles in Scotland and Wales the political stock of a Secretary of State is largely measured by the degree of success he has in persuading his Cabinet colleagues to give something extra to his country.

361. The influence of the Secretaries of State and their departments nevertheless falls short of what many Scots and Welshmen would like to see. The Scottish and Welsh Offices are departments of the central government. Their budgets are subject to detailed Treasury scrutiny, and the policies on which they are based deviate from the policies applied to England only to an extent acceptable to Treasury and other Ministers. The expenditure administered by the Scottish Office does not extend to all Scottish services, and the scope of the Welsh Office budget is even more limited. The office of the Secretary of State for Wales dates only from 1964, and as yet the pattern of public expenditure in Wales, compared with that in Great Britain as a whole, shows deviations which are for the most part only marginal. In the Scottish Office, which has a rather wider range of functions and is much longer established, the influence brought to bear on the allocation of public expenditure appears to have a greater coherence about it; but only to a limited extent does it result in a comprehensive set of separate Scottish policies. In some cases the Scottish Office takes the lead, but in general it adopts, without substantial variation, the policies worked out by the larger functional departments in England and applies much of its energies to securing the additional funds needed to meet the special Scottish conditions. Any concessions secured in this way are entirely within the framework of the policies of the United Kingdom Government, of which the Secretary of State for Scotland is a member.

362. In short, although the existence of the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office has enabled Scotland and Wales to secure a greater allocation of public expenditure than they might otherwise have done, many people remain dissatisfied because they think that the present system does not enable the best use to be made of the funds provided. Scotland and Wales do not have global allocations which they can deploy among the various services in accordance with their own preferences. In Scotland particularly, where the Scottish Office is responsible for a wide range of services, and where there has been time for the Secretary of State system to be criticised for its defects as well as praised for its virtues, there is a feeling that, even if Scotland

received no more in total than it does at present, there would be advantage in being able to use that total allocation in different ways.

Political life in Scotland and Wales

363. The existence in Scotland of national feeling and of old-established national institutions makes it harder for the Scottish people to tolerate the concentration of politics in London. This is particularly so during periods when the United Kingdom Government does not seem to be successful in overcoming Scotland's economic difficulties. At such times there is a feeling that Scotland should be given a chance to solve its own problems, perhaps by pursuing policies which might not be appropriate for the United Kingdom as a whole. It is felt that for this purpose there is a ready-made capital city in Edinburgh, the nucleus of Scottish government machinery in the Scottish Office and abundant political and administrative talent which is now either untapped or diverted to England. People who take this view feel that there is a political void in Scotland. The more the Secretary of State's responsibilities are widened, the more evident it appears to informed people that a great deal of specifically Scottish administration is going on in Scotland over which the Scottish people have no direct influence. There is a desire to see established in Scotland a forum for discussion of all this government activity, in which the Secretary of State can be called to account. At present the democratic channel to the Secretary of State is through Scottish Members of Parliament at Westminster. The variety of the functions administered by his departments, and the practical necessity for him to administer them very largely on United Kingdom lines, inevitably make him a somewhat unsatisfying political target. The impression is easily given that he is reluctant to take a separate Scottish initiative in any matter of real importance, and that his hands are tied by his colleagues in the United Kingdom Government. Among hostile critics the opinion has developed that the post of Secretary of State is one for a sound party stalwart who, when convenient for the government, is prepared to forget that he is a Scot. That is not the sort of champion which the people of Scotland would most like to have.

364. That is one side of the coin. But note must also be taken of those who support the present system. It was brought out in evidence that the overwhelming opinion among those involved in public life in Scotland was in favour of preserving the status quo. Their opinion did not seem to be based on a desire to protect their own positions; indeed, many of them might well gain personally from the setting up of a Scottish assembly or government. They believe that, despite all that remains to be done, Scotland has benefited considerably from the present system and that the best way of helping Scotland is to keep that system and try to increase Scottish influence within it. In reply

to the demand for a new focus of political power in Scotland, they point to the important part which their countrymen already play in the government of both the United Kingdom and of Scotland, and it is a fact that there is a relatively high proportion of Scots in the government and in the civil service, with the Scottish Office itself being largely staffed by Scots.

365. The supporters of the present system consider that the continued existence of the Secretary of State for Scotland with a seat in the United Kingdom Cabinet, and the consequential right of his officials to a place on interdepartmental committees where United Kingdom policy options are worked out, is of fundamental importance to Scottish interests. They point out that the present system secures not only open access to United Kingdom funds, but also a bonus in the form of a Cabinet Minister who can use political arguments to secure special treatment for Scotland. In their view, any system which tended to restrict Scotland to certain revenues or to a block allocation would not serve Scotland so well, even if it brought political power to Edinburgh. They consider that under such a system Scotland would in practice have little option but to accept the English lead in most fields of administration, and yet would lose its automatic right to United Kingdom standards, service by service, and presumably be without a Cabinet Minister in London to bargain for the extras.

366. Opinion in Wales is not so divided. Although there is, particularly among those involved in local government, appreciation of the benefits which have accrued from the establishment of the Welsh Office, there is a widely held feeling that there should be some kind of elected Welsh assembly. In this respect Wales is distinguishable from Scotland, where although some people would very much like an elected assembly others would equally strongly oppose it.

367. We have already indicated that the majority of people in Wales, although anxious to preserve their own way of life, seem prepared to accept that in most matters of government Wales will continue to take its lead from Westminster and Whitehall; but many do seem to feel very strongly that there should be a national forum for debating Welsh affairs, and for bringing the influence of the Welsh people more directly to bear on Welsh problems. Indeed, many of our Welsh witnesses were prepared to assert that there should be an elected assembly while having no clear idea of what it would do. The important thing for them seemed to be the opportunity for democratically elected representatives of the Welsh people to have their say about what the government is doing in Wales, though we have noted a tendency during the time we have been sitting for opinion in Wales to move more in favour of an assembly with specific functions.

368. In both Scotland and Wales the pressure for an elected assembly owes something to the revival of nationalism, but a contributory cause in Scotland has been the fairly widespread feeling that the Scottish Office has now acquired in relation to the government of Scotland too much power to be exercised without closer democratic oversight in Scotland itself. In Wales, where the office of Secretary of State is much newer, this feeling has not yet developed to the same extent; but indications of it are already present, and much comment has centred around the fact that the Welsh Council, despite its increasing influence, is appointed and not elected. Opinion in Wales in favour of a national assembly seems to have grown quickly, and to be more widespread than in Scotland; but whereas most of those who argue in favour of a Scottish assembly would like to see it take over substantial powers from the United Kingdom Government, most of those who gave evidence in Wales saw a Welsh assembly more as a Welsh dimension of United Kingdom politics than as a body with power to rival Westminster.

Attitudes to government and devolution

369. The fact that in most ways Wales has closer connexions with England than Scotland has, and is not quite so resentful of centralisation, is reflected in the findings of the attitude survey. People were asked how they thought the Government's understanding of the needs of their particular part of Britain compared with its understanding of the needs of other parts. In Britain as a whole 10 per cent. thought that the needs of their part of the country were better understood than those of other parts; 61 per cent. thought that their needs were understood to about the same extent as those of other parts, while 21 per cent. thought that their needs were less well understood. Within this general pattern the answers given in Scotland and Wales reflected an above average level of discontent, particularly in Scotland. In Wales 39 per cent. thought that their needs were less well understood, about the same percentage as in the South West and the North, which had much the highest figures of any of the English regions. In Scotland, however, the figure was 49 per cent., easily the highest in Britain. The significance of this figure can be appreciated when it is compared with that for, say, the West Midlands, where only 11 per cent. thought that the needs of the region were less well understood than those of other regions; in the East Midlands and the South East the percentages were even lower. The South East of England was in fact the only part of the country where any substantial body of people felt that their needs were better understood than those of other parts.

370. Differences between Scotland and Wales also came out in the answers to questions designed to test people's general reactions to the idea of devolution². Of all the people in Great Britain, those in Scotland appeared most favourably disposed to devolution, whereas the general body of favourable opinion in Wales was no greater than the average for all the regions of England.

371. It appeared, moreover, that there was some doubt in Wales about the benefits of devolution. In the minds of a good many Welsh people the maintenance of United Kingdom standards in Wales may be rather more important than devolution. Even so, the Welsh are second only to the Scots in having prominently in mind the idea of self-determination. When asked what improvements they themselves would like to see, 20 per cent. of those questioned in Scotland and 9 per cent. of those questioned in Wales spontaneously suggested more self-government or home rule, compared with only 1 per cent. in the English regions. Although the response in Scotland and Wales can no doubt be attributed partly to frequent public discussion of the concept, which is seldom raised in the English regions, the findings are significant in assessing attitudes to devolution.

² For the detailed figures and their interpretation see Research Paper 7, Table 45

372. Even in Scotland, however, where on any basis of assessment support for devolution is greatest, concern for the preservation of existing standards weighs heavily; only one-sixth of the 73 per cent in Scotland who favoured either more decision making there or the transfer of complete responsibility said that they would still take that view if it meant that people in Scotland would actually be worse off than they are now. Support for devolution in Scotland appears to be associated with an assumption (held by many even in the days before the discovery of North Sea oil) that it would bring about an improvement in the material welfare of the people. The possible effect of devolution on standards of provision, which we have already discussed in the previous chapter, is just as important for Scotland as it is for the rest of Great Britain. Even though Scots appear to favour devolution in principle more than other people do, there are few Scots who are so dissatisfied with the present centralised system of government that they would support devolution even if it made them worse off.

Scottish legislation

373. In discussing Great Britain as a whole we have referred to the complaint that over-centralisation has produced congestion in Parliament. In Scotland the existence of a separate system of domestic law has introduced additional complications and grounds for complaint. It has been put to us that there is insufficient understanding of Scots law in London, and that its peculiarities are not sufficiently catered for by United Kingdom legislation. It is said that legislation is often applied to Scotland by the inclusion of Scottish application clauses in a Great Britain Bill when what is really needed is a separate Scottish Bill drafted in the idiom of the Scottish legal system. This method of drafting causes difficulties for Scottish lawyers and hampers the preservation and development of Scottish legal concepts. It is contended also that the existence of an "absentee" legislature in London, remote from Scottish public opinion, results in pressure for Scots law to be changed in conformity with English law rather than on merits.

374. Problems of distance make it difficult for Scottish lawyers to pursue their profession, which must necessarily be carried on in Scotland, and at the same time engage in United Kingdom politics. As a result, very few Scottish lawyers are elected to Parliament, and the expert influence which is exerted on legislation for England and Wales by the many Members of Parliament who are qualified in English law is almost totally lacking in relation to legislation for Scotland. This in turn means that too much reliance has to be placed on a small number of Parliamentary draftsmen working in London.

SCOTTISH AND WELSH VIEWS ON THE WEAKENING OF DEMOCRACY

375. Most of the complaints about the weakening of democracy in Scotland and Wales are essentially the same as those made in England, but there are some additional points which are worth mentioning.

The concern for democracy

376. The concern for democracy seems to be particularly strong in Wales. This strength of feeling shows itself in the widespread demand for an elected Welsh assembly, and in the vigorous criticism of appointed ad hoc bodies. Such bodies have proliferated in Wales perhaps only a little more than elsewhere in Britain, but they appear to attract far more resentment. The most common proposal for equipping an elected Welsh assembly with functions is to make it responsible for all or most of the functions now exercised in Wales by ad hoc bodies. It is usually suggested that the activities of these bodies should either be carried out by the assembly itself, working through expert committees, or be made the subject of annual reports which can be questioned and debated by the assembly.

377. As we have already indicated, the Welsh Council appointed by the Secretary of State for Wales has been the subject of criticism of this kind. Within a matter of a few years it has come to seem natural to many Welsh people that such a body should be elected and not appointed. Criticism of the Scottish Economic Council, its counterpart in Scotland, has been directed less against its constitution than against the way it operates. It seems that in Scotland the idea of appointed advisers is not generally objected to, but it is felt that in practice there is too much control by the Secretary of State over what they are doing and insufficient scope for them to recommend independent policies for Scotland.

The impact of the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office

378. We have described the gap in communication which seems to exist between government and people throughout Great Britain. Additional evidence of this is provided in Scotland and Wales by questions in the attitude survey designed to test people's knowledge of the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office.

379. More than half those questioned in Scotland had evidently not heard of the Scottish Office-34 per cent, thought that there was no such office and 18 per cent, did not know of it. The remaining 48 per cent, knew that the Scottish Office existed, but were largely ignorant of its responsibilities. Knowledge of the Welsh Office in Wales was not much greater-56 per cent. knew of it, 30 per cent. did not think it existed, and 14 per cent. had no opinion. Again, very few people had much idea of the responsibilities involved.

380. It appears that, whatever other achievements may be credited to the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office, neither has made a clear impression on the public at large. This finding is significant in two ways. In the first place it provides corroboration in Scotland and Wales of the general conclusion that government is out of touch with the people. This corroboration must be accounted particularly strong in Scotland, where the Scottish Office has been established in its present form since 1939 and is now responsible for administering a wide range of domestic services. Secondly, the general ignorance of the government responsibilities already exercised in Scotland and Wales tends to cast doubt on the quality of the support shown in the attitude survey for further devolution. What value should be placed on favourable responses to the idea of greater devolution if they come from people who do not know how much devolution exists already?

381. In our early discussions, before the attitude survey was carried out, it was suggested to us that, but for a failure of communication on the part of the Scottish Office, the popular support attracted by the Scottish National Party in the years leading up to our appointment would not have been forthcoming. The suggestion was that if the activities of the Scottish Office had received more publicity, and steps had been taken to see that people in Scotland knew and understood what was already being done for them, then much less sympathy would have been developed for the nationalist cause. There is some support for this view in the attitude survey, which indicates that those who opted for the greatest degree of devolution tended to have least knowledge of the present system. On the other hand, those respondents who wanted to keep the present system were also generally among those who knew least about it. The people in between, who favoured a moderate degree of devolution, were on the whole the most knowledgeable.

382. These results of the attitude survey are not of course in the same category as the evidence which we have received from informed witnesses, and it would be unwise to read too much into them, but they do perhaps raise a presumption that many of the people who favour the more extreme kinds of devolution do not really understand the issues involved and are simply expressing a general feeling of dissatisfaction and an interest in change. And although respondents in the survey who favoured more moderate forms of devolution tended to be more knowledgeable, it seems that their knowledge was still very scanty. Those who conducted the survey think that the answers given by many people to questions about the existing system were based on common sense guesswork rather than on known facts.

383. In general our comments about the impact of the Scottish Office in Scotland apply also to the impact of the Welsh Office in Wales. It has to be remembered that the establishment of the Welsh Office is much more recent than that of the Scottish Office, and its responsibilities are more restricted. Anyone concerned to defend the record of the Welsh Office might argue that despite its short life it has already apparently made a slightly greater impression on the public than the Scottish Office, and that given more time it could do better. It is difficult however to get round the fact that in 1970, after six years of activity, and the publicity attendant on its creation, 44 per cent, of the people questioned in Wales did not even know that the Welsh Office existed, much less what it did.

SUMMARY

384. Most Scottish and Welsh people have a particular allegiance to their own countries which they find no difficulty in reconciling with their loyalty to the United Kingdom as a whole. The nationalist policy of complete independence is not supported by anything like a majority of people in either Scotland or Wales. But the nationalist cause has attracted a good deal of general sympathy and has focused attention on the

strength of national feeling which exists in both countries. The question for us is whether this feeling gives rise to a need for a change in political institutions.

385. Complaints about centralisation and the weakening of democracy arise in Scotland and Wales, as they do in England. In Scotland particularly, centralisation is resented rather more than it is in England; and its effects are complicated in both Scotland and Wales by the existence of the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office as outposts of central government. These offices, under their Secretaries of State, have undoubtedly been effective in securing additional benefits for Scotland and Wales; but they appear to have made no very clear impression on the public at large, and the present system is criticised as not enabling them to develop a distinctively coherent set of policies for their respective countries and lacking in democratic accountability.

386. There is a good deal of popular support in Scotland for an elected Scottish assembly, but there is also a strong opposing body of opinion which includes many people experienced in government. Support for an elected assembly in Wales is more widespread, although at least until recently most people have tended to see it as a forum for the effective expression of Welsh opinion and as a democratic check rather than as a body with wide executive powers.

387. Dissatisfaction with government and support for the devolution of power from London are both probably greater in Scotland than in any other part of Britain. But, as in Wales, many people who favour more devolution apparently do not realise the extent of administrative devolution which already exists, and they appear to have little idea of the complicated issues which would be involved in further devolutionary reform. Discontent with government in Wales is less than in Scotland, but still above the average for Britain as a whole, and among an active and generally well informed minority there is a close interest in some kind of devolution. The interest in devolution of the Welsh people at large, however, may be no greater than it is on average in England. Even in Scotland, where interest in devolution is greatest of all, few people are so dissatisfied with the present centralised system of government that they would support devolution even if it was likely to lower their living standards.