



UFR des Langues Vivantes Etrangères
Département des Langues Etrangères
Appliquées

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Read the text below and answer the following questions:

- I. Introduce the document: sum up the main ideas, pay attention to the context, and outline the structure (7)
- II. Comment on the argument developed in §5-7, 1.39-70 (5)
- III. Define the underlined words (8)

THE CHIMERA OF AN ENGLISH PARLIAMENT

This nationalist fantasy is the last thing our democracy needs: a costly, pointless talking shop

§1 After a week where uncertainty reigned with an unforeseeable volcanic ash cloud¹ and the volatility of the post-debate² general election polls hogging³ the headlines, today one fixed point in the calendar takes place: St George's Day.

§2 The event has always been totemic for Little Englanders⁴, but in recent years, the perceived panacea⁵ of an introducing an English parliament has become a new cause to rally around for those feeling a sense of injustice at being English.

§3 Last weekend, under the heat of TV lights, I was charged with defending the union in a Kilroy-style setting, with one-time Wheel of Fortune host Nicky Campbell chairing.

25 §4 On our side was the director of the Eurosceptic thinkthank⁶, the Bruges Group – the first person I can ever remember to hand me a business card with Baroness Thatcher on it (she's their patron). The opposition were a guy from the English Democrat party, which had just launched their manifesto to zero attention amid Cleggmania⁷, and the amiable Andy Newman aka⁸ the blogger Socialistunity. 30 The topic generated a lively debate on the programme's website supplementing the faux indignation among the panellists. 35

40 §5 Hot air⁹ aside, I genuinely believe that we are stronger together and that an English parliament would be the beginning of the end for the union. "It's Scotland's oil" was the nationalist slogan of the 80s, but even that wouldn't have saved an independent Scotland from the recent credit crunch. Alex Salmund's fabled arc of prosperity stretching up to Iceland would have been an arc of insolvency¹⁰. 45

50 §6 Our constitutional arrangements have proved remarkably sturdy¹¹, yet adaptable, from the Magna Carta of 1215 to devolution a decade ago. Their future should not be dictated by fringe¹² organisations, which frequently have an anti-immigration strand¹³ at their core¹⁴. Outfits¹⁵ such as the English Defence League with their inflammatory marches through areas with heavily ethnic populations have a misguided persecution complex. Quite often, the politics of English nationalism are dogwhistle calls to latent racists.

65 §7 In reality, there has been devolved power for England in the London Assembly and Regional Development Assemblies. Decisions are best taken at the most local level possible: we need a lumbering¹⁶ beast of an English parliament like we need a hole in the head.

75 §8 Predictably raised on the show was the "West Lothian question" – of whether it is fair that Scottish MPs can vote on English issues. Yet this makes very little material difference to people's lives in reality. It is a constitutional anomaly agonised over by sixth-form politics students and constitutional geeks¹⁷. Real people on real doorsteps care about their public services, feeling safer on the streets, and also vote with their pockets – I say this as a current election candidate. No system is perfect, but ours is not broke to the extent that a clunky¹⁸ measure like an English parliament is

needed to fix it. I'm all for more regionalism, but I may myself be out-of-step on this one: when the North East was offered a referendum on the issue, they blew it a big fat raspberry¹⁹, scuppering²⁰ the chances of other votes around the country.

90 §9 At a time when the standing of politics is at an all-time low, given the expenses scandal, and as political parties scabble around to find "efficiency savings", it seems madness to opt for another layer of politicians with their massively bureaucratic attendant hangers-on²¹, secretariats and general jobs-for-the-boys culture dictated from the centre by the big political parties. England, with 83% of the British Isles' population, already dominates. Scottish and Welsh devolution was a bold, decentralising move away from London by New Labour.

105 §10 There is no public appetite, clamour²² or need for an English parliament, however. If there was, it would have been addressed in this election campaign's manifestos and the leaders' debate. But no serious political party wants to touch this dud²³ of an issue.

110 §11 Yes, we need to reform politics in the UK and puncture the Westminster bubble, in which too many of our decision-makers are trapped, but an English parliament is not the way to do it. Happy St George's Day, still.

Rupa HUQ, *The Guardian*, 23 April 2010

¹ volcanic ash cloud: ash cloud from a volcanic eruption in Iceland in April 2010

² post-debate: allusion to the first general election debate that took place on 15 April 2010 on the subject of domestic policy

³ to hog: take all of or an unfair share of

⁴ Little Englanders: term used to describe English people who are particularly xenophobic or nationalistic

⁵ panacea: something that people think will solve all their problems

⁶ thinktank: a group of people who work together to produce new ideas on a particular subject

⁷ Cleggmania: strong enthusiasm for Nick Clegg during the last general election

⁸ aka: also known as

⁹ hot air: impressive but confused talk

¹⁰ insolvency: the lack of financial resources

¹¹ sturdy: strong

¹² fringe: people or activities that are considered strange or extreme

¹³ strand: aspect

¹⁴ core: centre

¹⁵ outfit: organization

¹⁶ lumbering: walking slowly because of being large and heavy

¹⁷ geek: a boring person

¹⁸ clunky: not modern or advanced enough to be useful

¹⁹ raspberry: a rude sound made by sticking the tongue out and blowing

²⁰ to scupper: to spoil

²¹ hanger-on: someone who spends time with a powerful, rich, or famous person in order to get some personal advantage

²² clamour: urgent request

²³ dud: something that is very disappointing