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Anwyll Dafydd,

Re: White Paper on Legislative Powers For the National Assembly

Following the above proposals I wonder if I might share with you and your committee some considerations regarding the impact of further legislative powers upon the Assembly.

Having been privileged to join the recent visit to the Edinburgh Parliament I spoke particularly to Murray Tosh and to Bill Aitken who gave me their impressions of the enormous pressure of dealing with legislation which the members of the Scottish Parliament are coping with and no doubt you will have the statistical information regarding frequency of sittings from APS.

I have spoken to a Convener and Committee members of some of the smaller subject Committees dealing with this rather frequent legislation and they impressed upon me the enormous commitment in terms of time which often prevented attendance at other committees or the Plenary Session.

The very much reduced number of our members will probably increase this pressure further and I am very keen that your committee should try and find a solution which would probably entail APS finding a much different method of scrutiny.

You will know that for many years Public Works Bills have been often put out to public enquiry and I wonder whether this could not be one avenue of approach even for relatively uncontroversial matters of legislation. A hybrid of this form could be entrusted to suitably qualified officials who would make representation to Committee at an early stage in the development of the particular bill.

Selection of appropriate amendments should be more closely examined particularly with regard to the necessary time element under which such scrutiny will take place.

I hope that you will agree the re-routine guillotining of amendments in Parliament is not ideal and that the Scottish system is an improvement. Any attempt at live by live scrutiny should surely be resisted.

The National Assembly has a Nascent Institution has developed a relatively unique committee structure enabling both adequate scrutiny of party executive and being able to devote time to policy formation.

The taking of evidence in a general fashion could certainly be refined by the use of working parties so that more evidence could be obtained from representative groups and private individuals. Some of these suggestions were given during the last Assembly review but did not find favour with the majority.

If greater legislative competence is to be granted to the Assembly even in the hybrid form as presently proposed, members will be very reliant upon APS and no doubt your committee are already considering employment descriptions for the very necessary skilled staff we will require.

I trust that the above will be of some assistance to you and your committee if only to initiate further discussion and consideration of a point you have already observed.

Your ever,
William.

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