

From: J Hamill
Date: 29.8.95

PS/Secretary of State

Copy to: PS/US of S (on return)
Mr Essery

STONE OF DESTINY

1. Before he went on leave, US of S had considered your minute of 26 July conveying the Secretary of State's request for background information on the debates which have taken place on the subject of whether or not the Stone of Destiny could be returned to Scotland. This minute provides background information (which US of S had seen). He would be happy to discuss the pros and cons of re-opening the issue if the Secretary of State wishes to explore matters further.
2. A group of Scottish Nationalists stole the Stone from Westminster Abbey on Christmas morning 1950. It was recovered in Arbroath Abbey in April 1951. At that time, there was considerable popular clamour within Scotland for the Stone to be returned to Scotland; and this was reflected (for example), in a House of Lords Debate on 11 March 1952 - Hansard attached. The approach of the Labour Government at the time - after examination of the legal and constitutional ramifications - was to leave the matter to die down quietly before taking a decision. (The Stone was not returned immediately to the Coronation Chair but was kept elsewhere within Westminster Abbey.)
3. Two events undermined the strategy of delay. King George VI died at the beginning of 1952, shortly after the change of Government following the General Election. The new Conservative administration under Sir Winston Churchill decided quite swiftly, with the Coronation looming, to return the Stone to the Coronation Chair. It appears that there was no dissension in Cabinet about this decision: the new Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr James Stuart) took the view that the Stone was an integral part of the Coronation equipment housed in the Abbey. A decision was announced in a statement to Parliament by the Prime Minister on 26 February 1952:-

"For over 650 years the Stone has been in Westminster Abbey and, from its use at successive Coronations, it has a historic significance for all countries in the Commonwealth. With the approval of Her Majesty's Government, the Stone has been restored to its traditional place."

The Prime Minister was challenged three times by Mr Hector McNeil, the previous Labour Secretary of State, about the extent of consultations with Scottish public opinion which had preceded this decision, but he received only the most general of replies. (Hector McNeil's own view, apparently, was that the Stone should be returned to Scotland - but this may reflect the fact,

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as recorded in John Gibson's history of The Scottish Office, that "a major preoccupation of [McNeil's] 18 months in office was the rise of the Scottish Covenant Movement" which claimed substantial popular support for the establishment of a Scottish Assembly.

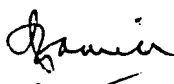
4. There were occasional Parliamentary flurries, initiated by the Opposition, over the period up to the Coronation, but thereafter the issue has been largely dormant. When representations have occasionally been made (eg, in 1957 on the 250th anniversary of the Treaty of Union) correspondents have been told by successive Secretaries of State or, on their behalf, that:-

"The crowning of the Monarch of the United Kingdom upon the Coronation Stone of the ancient Kings of Scots is a powerful symbol of the status of Scotland within the United Kingdom. The presence of the Stone of Destiny at Westminster is indeed a potent and continuing reminder of Scotland's distinctive place within the United Kingdom."

5. In 1984, a body known as the Scotland-UN Group, comprising mainly of Nationalists, made representations to the UNESCO Inter-Governmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Country of Origin, but were told that the Committee could not intervene in cases which exist within national entities.

6. In recent years there appear to have been **very few** inquiries indeed about the future of the Stone, though some more interest may be prompted by the release of some papers on the Stone by the Scottish Record Office at the turn of the year. (This will be the subject of a separate minute nearer the time.) Among papers which could be released - though not yet due for release - is a file which offers conclusive evidence that the Stone returned to the Abbey was the one which was removed from it.

7. Agreement to the return of the Stone of Destiny to Scotland might be popular with a section of Scottish public opinion. Many might even be content with an arrangement which returned the Stone temporarily to Westminster for Coronation purposes: but, equally, there might be those who would argue that, if the Stone were normally kept in Scotland, there should be separate Coronation ceremonies here, directly involving the Stone. Whether the return of the Stone would be acceptable to English public opinion is, however, an entirely different matter - not least given the view which emerged in 1951-52 that the Stone had been in England longer than in Scotland and was, by virtue of its long use, an integral part of **England's** heritage.



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in a particular case of a particular ship, without necessarily assigning any reasons, say: "Well, the regulations which apply to all your brother ship-owners and to all ships of this class shall not apply to you." I think I am right in saying that.

I believe that to be, from the public point of view, a most undesirable state of affairs. Quite frankly, as I said, I do not think it would matter if we could be sure that the noble Lord, Lord Leathers, would always occupy his present position. I think it is a dangerous thing to say that a Minister of the Crown may in a particular case, without assigning any reason, dispense with requirements which apply to everybody else. I should have hoped that there might be some safeguard about this power. That is the general question of principle which I desire to put forward. I cannot resist pointing out that I was accused, not so long ago, of bringing all sorts of irregular things into the law. I never did anything so bad as that. If I had proposed that a Minister of the Crown, if he thought fit, might, without assigning any reason, without going before any body, dispense with statutory requirements in the case of one man whilst adhering to those statutory requirements in all other like cases. I am certain that I should never have heard the last of it.

Therefore, although I should be quite happy about the noble Lord doing this (for I am certain that, if he does dispense with certain requirements, it will be for very good reasons) I must register my protest. I think this is a bad principle. If this principle once became extended, it might lead to corruption in our public life. There is no question of that sort here but there is that underlying danger, and that is the reason why this sort of thing is undesirable. There is nothing that can be done about the matter now. The Bill is obviously a good Bill and must be carried through. But I desire to say that I think this principle is an undesirable one, and I hope that in future it will not be extended.

LORD LEATHERS: I am much impressed by the trust which the noble and learned Earl places in me in this matter, but in introducing this Bill I made it quite clear that the variation, the exemption, would be given in only a very few cases, and then only after consultation with the whole of the industry—that is,

the owners, the officers and the men, all being in full agreement. Perhaps that is some measure of safeguard that will relieve the anxiety felt by the noble and learned Earl.

EARL JOWITT: Yes, but in the old days noble Lords opposite would have said: "Put it in the Bill." That is what I always used to hear. The noble Viscount, Lord Swinton, used to make himself hoarse sometimes telling me to "Put it in the Bill." I do not distrust the noble Lord or his discretion, but this is not in the Bill. Goodness knows what his successors in years to come may do!

Clause 1 agreed to.

Remaining clause agreed to.

House resumed:

Bill reported without Amendment.

CINEMATOGRAPH BILL [H.L.]

3.26 p.m.

Read 3^a (according to Order), and passed, and sent to the Commons.

JUDICIAL OFFICES (SALARIES, &c.) BILL

Read 3^a (according to Order), and passed.

THE CORONATION STONE

3.28 p.m.

VISCOUNT ELIBANK rose to ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will consider the advisability of arranging for the Coronation Stone to be delivered—after the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II—under escort and with fitting ceremony, to the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to be handed over by him to the Dean of the Thistle and Chapel Royal of Scotland for custody in St. Giles' Church in Scotland's capital; the Stone to be delivered, on the occasion of a future Coronation—again with fitting ceremony—to the Dean of Westminster, to be returned by him to the Dean of the Thistle after fulfilling its royal purpose in Westminster Abbey. The noble Viscount said: My Lords, in ordinary circumstances I should ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper

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and hope for a favourable reply from Her Majesty's Government, but as I understand that a debate will arise after I have asked the Question, it seems to me to be eminently necessary that I should first state my reasons for putting down the Question in the form that I have and establishing the case for the request which I make in the Question to Her Majesty's Government. I was asked, when coming to your Lordships' House this afternoon, "Why your sudden interest in the Coronation Stone?" "Sudden interest?", I replied. "Why, in the year 1296 my direct ancestor was one of the signatories to the Ragman Roll and, as one of the signatories, was "double-crossed" by Edward I, a fact to which I drew attention in a book which I published twenty years ago.

May I now come to the present day? In May last year, not then being a member of your Lordships' House, I mooted the suggestion which is contained in my Question in a letter to *The Times*. An hiatus then took place, and I did not proceed with the matter owing to the illness of His late Majesty, our great and beloved King. But when His late Majesty recovered early this year, I put this Question down upon the Order Paper, where it has been since January 31. I may say, in parenthesis, that I put it down to be answered to-day in order to give the Government adequate and ample time to consider the Answer, and it is not my fault that, as it happens, matters of great importance are taking place in another place coincident with my asking this Question.

My Lords, I desire to pass as rapidly as I can over the substance of my case for putting this Question on the Order Paper. The first thing I ought to deal with, in order that it may be on record in your Lordships' House, is the origin of the Coronation Stone. Various authorities have written on that subject, one of the most eminent being the late Dr. W. F. Skene, the Historiographer Royal of Scotland, who came to the conclusion (for which he produced a mass of evidence) that some of the legends connected with the Stone had no foundation in fact. He said there was no foundation for the legend that the Stone was Jacob's pillow, but that there was foundation for the story that it was the pillow of St. Columba in Iona in the sixth century. He said that there was no reason that he

could see for supposing that it was the *lia fail* of Tara. He came to the conclusion that for ceremonial purposes it had never been in any other place than at the Scone Abbey in Perthshire.

I have had a very interesting letter on this subject which, if I may, I propose to read to your Lordships, in order that it may be on record. It is from a gentleman whom some of your Lordships will know, General Sir Philip Christison, a distinguished soldier, upon some of whose plans the Japanese were driven out of Burma. He is a noted Gaelic scholar and a well-known authority on Celtic folk-lore and legend. This is what he writes—and I suggest that it is a very interesting contribution on this subject:

"As regards the origin of the Coronation Stone, I ask myself this question: Why should Kings be proclaimed over a piece of stone? Surely, the custom arose in pre-Christian and Druidical times. If so, the legend of the Stone being first at Dunadd where the early Scotie Kings were proclaimed in Argyll (Dalriada) is surely not far-fetched. The more I study folk-lore and legend, the more I believe that, in an age of illiteracy, tradition was handed down by trained men, bards and seannachies—bards among the Scottish Highlanders who recited the traditions of a clan—and these were professional historians who were not likely to be wrong over so important an article as the Stone.

"I personally believe that the Stone came from Ireland to Dalriada with the early Scotie settlers, and was moved to Scone shortly after the union with the Picts. It is a perfectly logical, and indeed likely, happening, as the early Scotie invaders were worshippers of wood and stone. That they held this particular Stone in high veneration probably points to an even remoter post of fame; but that takes us back to early Milesian history."

I think that that is a very interesting contribution to the discussion which has proceeded around the origin of the Coronation Stone.

The next point I desire to discuss is a very important point indeed—namely, the ownership of the Coronation Stone. Here I will cite my authority, in this case a distinguished Scottish writer on subjects of this kind—Dr. Mary Ramsay. She speaks of Lord Hailes, who was Sir David Dalrymple. He was a distinguished Scottish judge, who was promoted to the court of session and wrote the most learned treatise on all subjects connected with early Scottish history. In the view of Lord Hailes, the Coronation Stone was a national treasure the ownership of which was vested in the Scottish people and not in the Scottish Crown. That is a point

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which I wish to emphasize and stress. The Scottish kingship in early days was essentially democratic and the ceremony of coronation was secular and civil. It was essentially democratic in that the right of succession was by the due and loyal consent of all the people, different from the ordinary English coronation. The point I want to make here is that if, as Lord Hailes held, the Coronation Stone was the property of the Scottish people, and not of the Scottish Crown, in the early days before it was looted by Edward I and taken to Westminster, nothing has happened since—neither the Union of the Crowns in 1603, the Union of the Parliaments in 1707, nor anything else—to cause the Coronation Stone to become the property of the Crown. As to the authority of Lord Hailes, one would have to sit up for many nights with many wet towels round one's head—and the price of towels will probably be increased by something which is happening in another place to-day—before being able to demolish the argument which has been advanced by this eminent Scottish authority.

To cover my case—and I will do so as quickly as possible—I wish to come to the circumstances in which the Coronation Stone was looted (I used that word "looted" just now, and I use it again) by Edward I, and brought to England. This part of the story is material to my whole case. In the year 1286, there was a failure of the issue of Alexander III of Scotland. Many claimants to the Scottish Throne appeared, but the claimants were unable to settle the problem amongst themselves, and there were, naturally, at the time no body or bodies in Scotland able to decide between the rival claims. So an approach was made to Edward I of England, and a request was made to him to settle the claims between the various Scottish disputants. Finally, he agreed to do so, but only on one condition—that the claimants should acknowledge him as their overlord.

It was in those circumstances that the Ragman Roll, to which I have just referred, was signed in 1296, when some 2,000 Scottish lairds, ecclesiastics and others, of whom my ancestor was one, signed the Roll and acknowledged the overlordship. The moment the Roll was signed, Edward threw off his guise of a disinterested person seeking merely to

adjudge the claims of various claimants to the Scottish Throne, and he appeared in his true colours as an English King determined to subjugate Scotland and to annexe that country to the English Crown as a province of England. Of course, the result was inevitable. The Scots at once made an alliance with France, and threw off the English yoke. A series of Scotto-Anglo wars ensued, in which first one side and then the other had the better. The Scots fought under William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, and, as I say, for a time first one side and then the other were the victors. Those wars ended in the defeat of the Army of Edward II—who by that time had succeeded to the Throne—at Bannockburn on June 24, 1314, which put an end to the English attempts to dominate the fair land of Scotland.

Subsequent to the battle of Bannockburn, the two sides came together in order to endeavour to formulate a Peace Treaty, and the dates which I wish to establish now are important to my whole case. Negotiations—which, of course, took a considerable period of time—were entered into, and in March, 1328, conventions were held in Edinburgh at which delegates representing the Scottish Crown and the English Crown were present. An agreement was drawn up which was transformed into a treaty, and that treaty was ratified at Northampton in May, 1328. It is true—and this is one of the arguments which is being advanced in the contrary sense—that no specific mention was made in the Treaty of Northampton, in 1328, of the return of the Stone to Scotland. But, seeing that other symbols of the Scottish Royal dignity were due to be returned under the Treaty, and that under the Treaty the complete independence of Scotland was acknowledged, it seems to me quite impossible to imagine that there was no mention of the Stone at the conventions which took place in Edinburgh in March, 1328. It is impossible to imagine that on both sides of the Border it was not understood by the Crowns and the entourages of both sides that the Coronation Stone would be returned. To my mind, that is borne out by the terms of the writ which Edward III issued to the Abbot of Westminster in the month of July, 1328. In

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that writ it was stated that his council, King Edward's council, had

"in his Parliament held at Northampton agreed that the Stone whereupon the Kings of Scotland used to sit at the time of their Coronation . . . should be returned to Scotland."

In my view—and I shall be interested if it is contested—it is quite clear that by the words of the writ Edward III conceded that the Stone was Scottish property and ought to be returned to Scotland. We know that the reason why it was not returned to Scotland then was that there happened to be an obstreperous Abbot of Westminster who refused to hand it over. A writ was issued and the Sheriffs of London were empowered to take the Stone under the terms of the writ from the Abbot and hand it over to Queen Isabella, who was about to depart for Berwick in connection with the marriage of her daughter. There was no doubt that it was thought at the time that the Queen's escort would provide a guard for the Stone on its way north and, secondly, that the Queen's arrival with the Stone would help to propitiate the Scots in certain very difficult negotiations which were about to take place.

That was not, so far as the Scots were concerned, the last of the attempts to get the Stone back to Scotland. Some thirty years later David II returned to the charge when drawing up a treaty in the year 1363 with Edward III, and it was made a condition under that treaty that if Edward III entered upon the heritable succession to the Throne of Scotland the Stone should be returned. He never entered upon that succession, and the Stone remained at Westminster until the end of the year 1550. My Lords, I have endeavoured to establish, first, that the Stone was the property of the Scottish people; secondly (a fact which needed no establishment), that it was looted treacherously by Edward I about the year 1296; and, thirdly, that Edward III, knowing it to be Scottish property, knowing it to be one of the foremost symbols of the royal dignity of Scotland, did his very best to return it, but was foiled by the Abbot of Westminster. There is no doubt at all in my mind that the Sheriffs of London probably did not do very much to help the Abbot to hand it over; they probably

had the same opinion of the northern barbarians as had the Abbot.

Now we come right down to the present, and I have not very much more to say. On this question of the return of the Stone, and a favourable reply by the Government to the request which I am making to them, of course the question of public opinion enters, and must enter into the discussion. I have read very carefully what has been said in another place, and at Press conferences and in discussions between this person and that. I may say *en passant*, since I have been—I will not say accused, but as I have been told that I was taking a very sudden interest in this question, that not only have I ancestral connections but I have written about the Stone in a book, a copy of which is in the library of the noble Earl, Lord Home—I do not suppose that he has ever read it, but I gave it to his well-beloved and popular father at the time I wrote it. If there has been any appearance of suddenness about my interest, it was due to the suddenness with which on February 26 the Prime Minister came down to the House and suddenly announced that the Stone at the time of Evensong on the previous day had been taken up from the vaults and placed within the grille which surrounds the Henry VII tomb. I want to say only one thing on that matter. First, of course, the Prime Minister's statement led at once to questions. My right honourable friend Mr. Walter Elliot (who, as it appeared to me, had an "impromptu" supplementary question in his pocket) said that the statement would give great pleasure to the people of Scotland. I hope that I shall be in order in referring to what Colonel Gomme-Duncan said—at any rate, I quote from the *Scotsman* of the following day. The *Scotsman*, one of our leading Scottish newspapers, said:

"Colonel Gomme-Duncan was unquestionably right in declaring, after the Prime Minister's announcement, that, 'among a very considerable body of Her Majesty's most loyal Scottish subjects there will be profound disappointment at the decision'."

I mooted this question of mine in *The Times* nearly a year ago, and since that date, and particularly since I put this Question on the Order Paper of your Lordships' House on January 31, I have received messages from Scots of every walk of life, of every state of society, of every sort and kind in Scotland. I

have just had a telegram from Scots in the United States, and I have had letters from Canada and Australia. I know—because, after all, I do not sit still, I travel all over Scotland—what they are saying in Scotland; I know that if you go out into the highways and byways you can tell what they are feeling. That surely must be taken into account. I see that the Secretary of State for Scotland made a very interesting remark. I do not want to make a controversial and I hope that I am not making a controversial speech, but the Secretary of State did say:

“I would think, speaking for myself, that the return of the Stone to the Abbey was in accordance with the wishes of the Scottish people.”

He is perfectly entitled to think so, and I leave it at that. But I take exception to one thing which was said by the right honourable gentleman the Prime Minister. In the statement which he made on February 26, he said,

“With the approval of Her Majesty’s Government the Stone has been restored to its traditional place.”

To use the word “traditional” in a case of this sort would surely seem to indicate that the matter goes back almost to time immemorial, and at least to a time when the origin of the subject under discussion—in this case the Coronation Stone—is lost in the dim ages of antiquity. That is not the case with the Coronation Stone. It was well known in Scotland years before it was removed to Westminster. Whilst I will not say that I take strong exception to the use of the word, I will at least say that the word “traditional,” as applied to Westminster Abbey in connection with the Coronation Stone, is not a word which has any meaning—certainly not to me, nor, I think, to most folk in Scotland.

My Lords, I do not want to say any more except that it might be said “What about England?” I am not a judge of what England as a whole thinks, but I do know that I have a number of English friends who support the very reasonable (as most of them say) suggestion that I have put down in this Question to-day for ending this incident—as I suggest we might call it. I hope that I shall receive support from English noble Lords in this House to-day. At any rate, I do feel that, in view of the feeling in Scotland, which cannot be disputed, this has become a pre-eminently Scottish matter. So as long as

it is not doing anything that would be harmful to England or to English people—and I cannot believe that it would be harmful to either of those—I am sure that, if my suggestion were adopted, and the ceremony attached to the coming and going of the Coronation Stone from Scotland were to be put into force, that would be something, done by a Government, of which, of course, the majority are Englishmen, which would redound to their credit and would wipe out an injustice of long and deep interest to Scotland.

4.0 p.m.

LORD MORRISON: My Lords, I regret that I do not possess the vast historical knowledge of this subject which the noble Viscount, Lord Elibank, has just shown to the House, but I should be grateful if your Lordships would allow me briefly to express my opinion about it. The noble Viscount said that he did not want to be controversial. For my part, I do not want to be controversial, but I am afraid I can hardly avoid it. I am sure your Lordships will appreciate that Scotsmen have a right to differ in the House of Lords, and we may as well do so. I believe that when the public read the report of this debate in the Press tomorrow—if it should receive any space in the Press—they will be astonished that, in the midst of a violent economic blizzard, your Lordships’ House can find nothing better to do than to revive an unreal controversy, about which I should have thought most people, except Dr. John MacCormick, the editor of the *Sunday Express* and, of course, the noble Viscount who has just spoken, have already had more than enough.

We hear a lot in these days about public opinion ballots, or, as one paper calls them, straw ballots. I like to be in the fashion, and during the last few days I have been taking a straw ballot amongst my friends. I have a large variety of friends, ranging from Lords and Ladies to navvies and charwomen, and they include all the Scotsmen I can find. The question I put to them, in accordance with the best methods of the people who hold these ballots, was: “Do you consider the destination of the Coronation Stone a matter of sufficient importance for a House of Lords’ debate?” In my view, that was a fair question. Not one said “Yes”; some refused to take me

[Lord Morrison.] seriously; and others replied in unprintable language. The summary was: "Have we not got enough trouble on our plate without stirring all this up again!" That is all I want to say, except this. The noble Viscount made no reference, so far as I can gather, to a speech delivered last week-end by Dr. John MacCormick. I have here a newspaper cutting which says:

"Dr. John MacCormick, convener of the Scottish Covenant Association, said in Edinburgh last night that unless the Stone of Destiny were returned to Scotland then it might be removed again by force. . . ."

VISCOUNT ELIBANK: Did the noble Lord associate me just now with that speech of Dr. MacCormick? I never heard it, I have never seen it, and I do not even know Dr. MacCormick.

LORD MORRISON: The noble Viscount has shown this afternoon that he is intensely interested in this topic, and I do not think he should take umbrage if I bring him right up to date by reading something which was said by Dr. John MacCormick.

VISCOUNT ELIBANK: I beg the noble Lord's pardon. I thought he associated me with what Dr. John MacCormick said.

LORD MORRISON: No. What Dr. John MacCormick is reported to have said is that

"unless the Stone of Destiny were returned to Scotland then it might be removed again by force. . . ."

I might well say, "So what?" Personally—and I am sure I can carry the noble Viscount with me in this—I do not like this kind of talk, whether it comes from Dr. John MacCormick or anyone else.

VISCOUNT ELIBANK: I agree.

LORD MORRISON: However strongly he feels about the destiny of the Stone, this mysterious threat to steal it again from a holy place is not very helpful towards a peaceful and friendly solution of the difficulty. It seems to me that Dr. MacCormick has made it impossible for the time being to settle this matter on the lines the noble Viscount suggested in his speech. Therefore, speaking for myself—and this is not a matter of Party politics—I believe the Government ought

to postpone further consideration of this question until after the Coronation. In the meantime Dr. MacCormick's threat to repeat the schoolboy escapade should receive the contempt it deserves. Finally, as a postscript, if the Editor of the *Sunday Express*, who devoted several columns last Sunday to this issue, would like to print these remarks of mine, I am certain that he will find his readers will be overwhelmingly on my side.

4.7 p.m.

LORD TEVIOT: My Lords, I am most grateful to the noble Viscount, Lord Elibank, for giving us such an interesting historical lecture. I would tell him that I meet a great many Scots people; I did so during the last Election, and this question was never mentioned at any meeting which I attended—in fact, I never heard anybody in Scotland mention the subject at all. That will show how some people have one experience and others have different experiences. My feeling is this. To those like the noble Viscount, here is a great opportunity. The Coronation Stone has rested in Westminster Abbey for 650 years, and it is used for the coronation of the Kings and Queens of the whole of the British Isles, with the exception now, of course, of Eire. Is it not proper that that Stone should rest where it is used on these great occasions? I believe that no serious-minded person—I do not say that in any disrespect to the noble Viscount—would really want to take that Stone to Scotland and bring it back again. With the great bereavement we have all recently suffered, is not this the moment to bury the hatchet and leave the Stone where it is used? My countrymen and countrywomen are so patriotic that I am sure they would agree with that sentiment. That is all I have to say, except that I agree entirely with what my noble friend Lord Morrison said. I hope the noble Viscount, Lord Elibank, will think a little on what the noble Lord, Lord Morrison, and I have said, and perhaps "wash out" the whole thing.

4.10 p.m.

LORD SALTOUN: My Lords, my private belief is that, by long prescription, the Coronation Stone is the property either of Her Majesty or the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, and in either case your Lordships' House has no *locus* to discuss the matter. It is private

property which does not concern us. If it be not the case, I should like to discuss this. The function of the Stone is in the Coronation of our Sovereigns, and, therefore, it seems to me proper that it should be kept in Westminster Abbey. In the second place, and in reply to a great deal of what the noble Viscount said, may I say that I have not the slightest shame about all the events which brought the Stone to Westminster; therefore, I have no wish that history should be rewritten in that respect. I look upon the Stone as one looks upon hours dedicated in a cathedral or church, and to me it would be a wrong to try and take them back. In conclusion, I will say that I entirely agree with the last words spoken by my noble friend Lord Teviot. If the matter comes on a later and perhaps a more proper occasion I may have a great deal more to say about it, but at this time I think I have said enough.

2 p.m.

LORD SEMPILL: My Lords, I am deeply grateful to my noble friend Lord Elibank for giving another Scots Peer the opportunity of joining with him and sitting in your Lordships' House what has been in our hearts for all time touching the Sacred Stone of Destiny—the "Lia Fail." As your Lordships have heard, the Stone was brought to Scotland some centuries before the Birth of Christ. For over 400 years before its removal by Edward I it rested in the Church of Scone which was raised to an Abbey in 1115 by Alexander I. Had this Abbey not been destroyed by the rioters in 1559, I should have liked to see the Stone returned thence since it came. This not being possible, might not St. Margaret's Chapel in Edinburgh Castle be an appropriate resting place, seeing that one of Queen Margaret's sons, Alexander I, had erected an Abbey at Scone to enshrine it? For well over 600 years the life of Scotland has been connected with the Stone of Destiny. Its removal by force of arms was the greatest blow to the honour of Scotland that she has suffered, and the failure to return it, in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Northampton of 1325, made permanent in the minds of Scots a feeling of unfairness, the effects of which are only felt throughout Scotland to this day. Her Majesty's Government now have the opportunity of making for the past

the *amende honorable*, as suggested by the noble Viscount, which will bring great joy to all Scots, within the British family and without.

As your Lordships know, many prophecies are attached to the Stone. The Latin inscription which was once on the Stone—

*"Ni fallat fatam, Scoti, quocunque locatum,
Inventum lapidem, regnare tenentur
ibidem"*—

bears witness to one fulfilled, since Her most Gracious Majesty comes to the Throne in virtue of descent from James VI, King of Scots. There are legends, too, and one has it that the Stone voices in deep tones its pleasure when the rightful ruler sits upon it, but assumes a "stony silence" towards a usurper. I venture to suggest, therefore, that there should be no reason given for the voice of the Stone to be muted *piano*, rather than *forte*, at the Coronation next year. This could be, my Lords, were we Scots to be asked to hail the gracious Lady who, by the will of God, rules over us, other than as Elizabeth "Queen of Scots."

4.15 p.m.

LORD CALVERLEY: My Lords, I intervene for a few moments in order to support the noble Viscount, Lord Elibank. It was a delight to listen to him, and he reminded me of his illustrious brother. This is a question for Englishmen, and I say that in all seriousness. For some reason or other, I have been reproached, and Lord Elibank has been reproached, by Lord Saltoun for daring to raise the question in a free House where we have freedom of speech, and I hope the noble Viscount will return to the attack.

LORD SALTOUN: I beg the noble Lord's pardon, I reproached nobody. I merely gave my opinion as a Peer.

LORD CALVERLEY: The noble Lord, as a Representative Peer of Scotland is entitled to give his opinion, but, he is not entitled to deny the right of any other Peer to express his opinion when it comes in the order of debate, and without saying anything which is distasteful. To an Englishman it is not a question of straw voters or any other form of ballot, and there I disagree with my noble friend Lord Morrison. This is a question of plain right or wrong.

[Lord Calverley.]

A noble Lord opposite—I do not know whether it was Lord Teviot or Lord Saltoun—reproached me because I have not given a dissertation on Scottish history. The less said about some of the phases of Scottish history the better it will be for some of the people concerned. But this is the point: this Stone was looted. That is the proper word for it, and it was used by the noble Viscount, Lord Elibank. We English, with our great capacity for under-statements, and sometimes for no statements at all, have accepted and become receivers of stolen goods. I am not concerned with Dr. John MacCormick—I do not know the gentleman, although I have been invited to address a meeting at St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, by the Chancellor of Glasgow University. I have myself received many letters from Scotland, as this has now become a live issue. It is offensive to decent Englishmen that we should be classed either as fences or as receivers of stolen goods. I am glad that the spirit of sweet reasonableness went through every word the noble Viscount said. I impress upon your Lordships that this is becoming a live issue in Scotland. I do not want a policy of appeasement with regard to Scotland, but when the Prime Minister said that he had consulted public opinion I am wondering whether he confined it to an Anglicised Scotsman—that is, Lord Saltoun. I say no more about that. If the Prime Minister had consulted not the Editor of the *Scotsman* but his staff, and said: "What is the public feeling so far as you know it?" he would have received a better opinion than he would from some of the "stooges" he has consulted.

I am glad that the noble Viscount, Lord Elibank, suggested that for the time being this Stone, hallowed as it is, should rest where it is, until the Coronation of Her gracious Majesty takes place and—but we will not look too much into the future. Without being at all sentimental—and I cannot speak, either, as one of the sixteen Representative Peers of Scotland—I say to your Lordships that that Stone ought to be regarded as a symbol of our unity. Great Britain is disunited enough. If the Stone were taken back, with due ceremony, after the Coronation to the Cathedral Church of St. Giles, I think it would be a gracious act on the part of the English people. All Englishmen should feel that the possession of

this Stone offends their conscience and that they ought not to be the receivers of something that was shamefully looted 650 or so years ago. Whether one thinks of a thief having been at work 650 years ago or at the present day it equally insults the moral conscience of this country.

4.21 p.m.

THE MINISTER OF STATE, SCOT- TISH OFFICE (THE EARL OF HOME): My Lords, I am a little sorry for the noble Viscount, Lord Elibank this afternoon; it is rather bad luck that this Motion should come after the Prime Minister had announced the Government's decision on this matter in another place a week ago. The Prime Minister's announcement was made after very careful consideration had been given to the matter. As your Lordships are aware, the Coronation Stone has rested in Westminster Abbey for more than 600 years. I do not wish to become involved in a detailed historical discussion with Lord Elibank; but I must say that if we should be able to snatch and grab back everything that belonged to us in the thirteenth century, it would suit me very well; and if we were to go back to the methods of that time I should be adopting in dealing with the noble Viscount a different technique from that which I am obliged to use this afternoon.

But there have been several occasions since the year 1363—Lord Elibank agrees that that was the last mention of public negotiations concerning this Stone—on which Scottish representatives might have used arguments designed to bring the Stone back to Scotland. The most notable of these occasions arose in negotiating the Treaty of Union in 1706 and 1707. The atmosphere at that time was extremely propitious: the English were very anxious to come to an agreement with the Scots and to get their signatures to the Treaty; and, in fact, they agreed to all the amendments which the Scottish negotiators put forward. There is no reason to suppose that if the Scottish negotiators had put forward an amendment asking that the Stone should be returned to Scotland it would not have been accepted.

VISCOUNT ELIBANK: The noble Earl will agree that it would have been difficult at the time of the Union to get agreement to a proposal like this.

THE EARL OF HOME: That would seem to reinforce my argument. The English, as I say, agreed to every amendment put forward; and I should have thought, knowing my fellow countrymen as I do, that they would not have hesitated to put forward arguments for the return of the Stone if they really felt strongly on the matter. The noble Lord asked whether these matters were discussed in the negotiations for the Treaty of Union. They were discussed; and it was agreed that the Crown, the Sceptre and the Sword should be the symbolic articles which might be permitted to remain in Scotland. They were named as the honours chosen by Scotland to remain in Scotland, and the Stone was not mentioned at all at that time. I do not wish to make too much of this historical argument. People can change their minds. There may be changes in other ways. But I must say that if there has been strong feeling on this matter, the Scottish people have been very successful in concealing their sentiments for the last 700 years.

The Stone is a relic of great interest and sentiment, but it is one of the relics which, as I say, can be left outside the Scottish Border. There is no doubt that there is a large body of opinion which would feel that the most appropriate place to keep the Stone would be the place where it has its sole significance, and that is in the Throne and in the Shrine where the Royal Sovereign of the United Kingdom is crowned. There would seem to be a substantial body of opinion which feels that way. I feel that that opinion is forced by the fact that as we have built up the British Commonwealth throughout the ages this Stone in Westminster Abbey has become an object of historical significance for the whole of the British Commonwealth. Therefore, as I say, this decision, which was taken by Her Majesty's Government so recently, was taken after the most careful consideration. I am glad that the noble Lord, Lord Morrison, has expressed the view of, I think, the majority of noble Lords here this afternoon, that this present moment, with a Coronation pending, is not the time at which it is appropriate to reopen this question.

VISCOUNT ELIBANK: Could the noble Earl make some pronouncement as to the ownership of the Stone?

THE EARL OF HOME: My Lords, I would not venture to make any pronouncement on the question of the ownership of the Stone. As the noble Viscount knows, this matter has been hotly debated by many, and, as I said at the beginning, if we are to resume the principle of snatching and grabbing we shall get into difficulties. I do not think I can answer that question this afternoon.

CARGO HANDLING IN THE DOCKS

4.28 p.m.

LORD WINSTER rose to call attention to the situation in the docks in relation to cargo handling; and to move for Papers. The noble Lord said: My Lords, I am sure the minds of most of us are occupied at this moment with the great events which are taking place in another place, and no doubt very soon we shall all be wiser but much sadder men. Nevertheless, I think that the Motion which I rise to move has a very intimate connection with the subjects now being discussed in connection with the Budget. It deals with matters which affect our economy, our industrial life, our trade, our commerce, our shipping, our industry, our Merchant Navy and, not least, our cost of living. Therefore I feel it is a matter well worthy of your Lordships' attention.

There is one matter which I should like to make clear at the outset, and that is that I have no intention in this Motion of making any general charge against the whole body of dockers. There are some 80,000 of them and I imagine that, like any other large section of the population, there are good, bad and indifferent men. My guess would be that probably the good men are in the majority. If I have any complaint to make this afternoon against what is happening in the docks at the present moment, it is an indictment of a small minority of these men who are letting down their mates and also their trade union leaders. I am perfectly sure that those trade union leaders give the right advice in this matter, and try to guide and lead the dockers on the right lines. The largest union concerned is the Transport and General Workers' Union. Anyone who has read the speeches which Mr. Arthur Deakin has