

PRIME MINISTER

SCOTLAND

I saw Michael Forsyth yesterday and he told me of his recent conversation with you. Since then the situation has deteriorated and the latest development is the attached cutting from yesterday's Scotsman.

Michael is extremely depressed and asked me bluntly if I thought he should resign from the Chairmanship and the Government. He believes there is a concerted campaign to remove him and that as long as he remains, stories such as the Scotsman's will continue. This will lead to the Party losing still more ground in Scotland and will jeopardise his own seat. He sees no hope of reconciliation with his opponents (including the Secretary of State) who he sees as against all we are trying to achieve and who privately believe that the only hope for the Party in Scotland is to support some measure of devolution. He has also detected signs that Malcolm Rifkind is intending to force the issue and is likely to say to you in September that either Michael goes or he will resign. He is wondering if it might not be better for him to resign and to concentrate his efforts on his constituency.

I have told him that it is my view that his resignation would be seen as a defeat for you personally and that he should grit his teeth and battle on. He accepted this. However, he and I both think it would be useful for you to have a talk with him, Bill Hughes and Jim Goold as representing the senior Party officials about what can be done.

Would you like me to set this up?

JFW  
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JOHN WHITTINGDALE

26 July 1990

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# THE SCOTSMAN

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WEDNESDAY, 25 July 1990

## Tories fear Rifkind-Forsyth feud will worsen

By PETER JONES  
and EWEN MacASKILL

SCOTTISH Conservative leaders were yesterday expressing fears that party infighting between supporters of the Scottish Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, and the chairman, Michael Forsyth, may increase in coming months.

There had been hopes of a respite with the parliamentary recess starting tomorrow and the divisive Scottish law reform bill ending its committee stage.

Instead, it has emerged that Mrs Thatcher's decision to make no change in the Scottish Office ministerial team was made against a welter of personality battles and ideological conflicts.

The left-right conflict will

focus initially on the future of Bill Walker, Conservative MP for Tayside North and vice-chairman of the Scottish Conservative Party.

Supporters of Mr Rifkind, still furious over Mr Walker's revolt over the Scottish law reform bill and an alleged coup, are insistent that Mr Walker will be forced to resign his vice-chairmanship soon, while supporters of Mr Forsyth are equally determined that he will not.

"Rifkind's achilles heel is that he wants revenge," one Tory said last night.

The final outcome is seen by many as the litmus test of who really runs the Scottish party. MPs and other senior party figures believe that Mr

Walker's dismissal would be seen as a victory for Mr Rifkind, and a failure to take action against him would imply victory for Mr Forsyth.

That and other deepening divisions within the party's upper hierarchies, it is believed, led Mrs Thatcher to conclude that she could make no changes in the Scottish Office ministerial team without causing more uproar in party ranks.

One senior Government source, asked why Mr Forsyth had not been promoted, reflected the view that Scotland had experienced enough turbulence of late. "There is a need to pause for breath," he said.

Yesterday it emerged that

in recent weeks Mrs Thatcher has received a number of letters from experienced party members in Scotland who were extremely critical of the job Mr Forsyth is doing as Scottish party chairman.

At the same time, she was anxiously following the acrimony surrounding the ill-fated law reform bill and the criticism which has been targeted at Mr Rifkind's handling of the bill.

While Downing Street sources have been attempting to shrug off the law reform fiasco as a little local difficulty, Mrs Thatcher was con-

sulting widely, including Mr Rifkind, as to whether there were any changes in the Scottish Office ministerial team she could make which would solve the problems.

One party insider said yesterday: "It became pretty apparent that maintaining the status quo was the only option she had."

Mr Forsyth's lack of promotion has itself become an issue. While supporters of Mr Forsyth say he turned down the chance of promotion, opponents insist he was not offered a job by Mrs Thatcher. They pour scorn on the suggestion that anyone would have refused promotion and tie Mr Forsyth's lack of promotion to the turmoil

One Scottish Tory MP said the relationship between Mr Rifkind and Mr Forsyth was poor and he believed there would be further difficulties ahead.

The identity of those who wrote letters critical of Mr Forsyth to Mrs Thatcher and to other key party leaders at Smith Square, London, was not clear last night. But it is understood that they were claiming that Mr Forsyth's failure to give clear public backing to Mr Rifkind over his law reform bill troubles was divisive and that his chairmanship of the party was proving equally divisive.

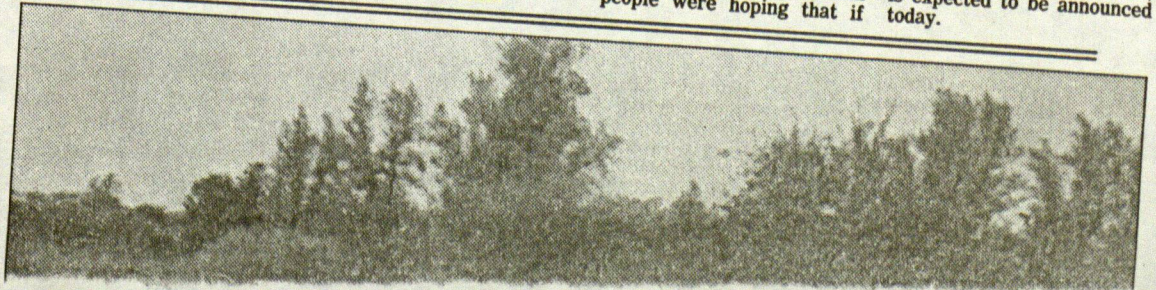
A party veteran commented: "I think certain people were hoping that if

Forsyth was promoted to a UK department like energy, he would have found it impossible to do the chairmanship."

One effect of such a move would have been that Mr Forsyth would have been cut off from access to all Scottish Office papers, a privilege he enjoys courtesy of the controversial note circulated by Mr Rifkind's private office to all Scottish Office departments when Mr Forsyth was appointed chairman.

Meanwhile, the new Scottish whip to replace Michael Fallon, who was promoted to the department of education, is expected to be announced today.

## Nun and RUC men killed in

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