

Report of the Independent Commission on the Voting System: Volume 2

Submissions and correspondence from Members of Parliament

Gareth Thomas MP

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Our ref: GT/2021/GW

25th June 1998

The Rt Hon Lord Jenkins of Hillhead OM
Chairman
The Independent Commission On The Voting System
6th Floor
Clive House
Petty France
London SW1H 9HD

Dear Lord Jenkins

Thank you for your letter dated 17th June 1998 in relation to a meeting you will be chairing to hear views from Members of Parliament on electoral reform which is to be held in the House of Commons on 30th June 1998. Regrettably, I am unable to attend this particular function due to other commitments.

I would like to make some representations about electoral reform for consideration by your committee:-

1. I am not an expert on the subject but speak as a newly elected Labour Member of Parliament and a lawyer who represented Labour at a number of Parliamentary Boundary Review enquiries.
2. The latter can be a very artificial exercise in which the political parties use sometimes disingenuous arguments to persuade the boundary commission to create constituencies which suit their political advantage.
3. My own constituency is an artificial creation (expected to be a Tory seat) which encompasses two unitary authorities, a large geographic area and very diverse communities which have little affinity. I am constantly crossing into neighbouring constituencies in order to deal with regional agencies: county councils, Police, the Welsh Development Agency

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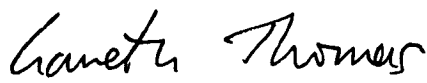
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4. I am in favour of a move towards larger multi-member constituencies elected by single transferable vote, I would also like to see MPs concentrating on the more strategic issues and leaving the more local issues which form such a large part of our post bag to councillors elected under a reformed local government system. I see no reason why the number of MPs should not be reduced to somewhere in the region of 400-500. I appreciate this is a rather radical proposition, but in the light of devolution to Wales and Scotland, and hopefully in the future to the English regions, it should be given consideration.
5. Although many newly elected MPs like myself see the strength of the constituency system, I would ask you to stick to your guns and to recommend a more proportional system in the interest of the UK as a whole.

I wish you and your committee well as you continue your vital work.

Yours sincerely



Gareth Thomas MP
Clwyd West