

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

Submissions and correspondence from Members of Parliament

Phyllis Starkey MP

DR PHYLLIS STARKEY

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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

please reply to:  
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Rt Hon Lord Jenkins of Hillhead  
Independent Commission on the Voting System  
6<sup>th</sup> floor, Clive House  
Petty France  
London SW1H 9HD

22 June, 1998

Dear Lord Jenkins,

**Electoral Reform**

As I will be unable to attend the meeting you are planning to hold in the House of Commons on 30 June, I hope you will permit me to express my views by way of this letter.

Whilst I do believe that we should move towards a system of voting for Members of Parliament that is more proportional than the present system, I also believe that it is absolutely crucial that we retain the current link between an MP and their constituency. It is one of the strengths of our system, and my experience is that constituents and indeed organisations and businesses in my constituency value very strongly the fact of having an MP who they can ask to represent them regardless of whether they voted for them or their opponent. The constituency link also gives MPs the ability to use their position to intervene in their constituency and I have used this to help to energise the various NHS trusts in my constituency to getting together to co-ordinate the local implementation of the new NHS structures.

It follows from this that I am a firm supporter of the Alternative Vote system with single member constituencies. I would not support however the variant of AV that would top up a number of constituency MPs with additional MPs from Party lists. The dynamics of a House of Commons containing two different types of MPs, one group with constituency links that would keep them grounded in the real life issues of the voters, and a second group with a much lighter workload, and no direct electoral accountability, seems unacceptable. Apart from anything else, the temptation for Governments to parachute in their particular friends as the additional members seems to me an unfortunate extension of personal patronage and an encouragement to reduce still further the role of the House of Commons in scrutiny of the Government. Additional members whose places effectively depended on the patronage of the

**DR PHYLLIS STARKEY**

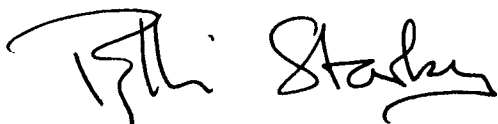
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leaders of the major parties, and who had no real accountability to voters, would be unlikely to be very independent.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phyllis Starkey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**DR PHYLLIS STARKEY MP**