

Parliamentary Debate on Proportional Representation 30th October - parliamentary petition debate 168657

Dear Mr Drax

I very much hope you will attend the above debate. It is just a debate; no Bill is involved. I know that up to now you have strongly supported the retention of First Past the Post (FPTP) for Westminster, but in view of recent events I urge you to think again.

As I recall it your reasons for supporting FPTP have been:

- a. It is decisive
- b. It is simple and
- c. We exported it to half the world: I think that's how you worded it.

I will deal with these in reverse order.

If we did export FPTP to half the world (I have not checked) it would be an historical accident. We used it in the days of Empire and many countries copied it with out thought. This is hardly an argument for its retention. If we look at the G8, just three members use FPTP, the USA, the UK and Canada. The Liberal Party under Trudeau won the general election on the promise of introducing Proportional Representation. The fact that the Liberals have failed so far to honour their promise is due to pure party advantage; FPTP had worked well for them for once. In both the USA and the UK democracy is in crisis, albeit for slightly different reasons.

'It is simple': This is surely a bit of an insult to the English outside London. All other parts of the UK use other systems without trouble.

'It is decisive': Presumably this means that it tends to produce a single party majority in the House on what is normally a minority of the vote. This is assumed to produce strong and stable government. This was not the case in 2010, and since June's election Mrs May has been struggling; she has not been blessed with a secure majority.

FPTP can be very fickle. In the USA there has been a strong reaction against the big money Washington 'establishment'. It is this that got Trump elected. However if Bernie Sanders had achieved his breakthrough a couple of weeks earlier he would have secured the Democratic nomination and hence the presidency. There would have been a socialist president.

Here in Britain, if the June election had been just a couple of weeks later we would now have a socialist government for the first time since 1979. Blair was not a socialist.

Proceedings in the House of Commons now seem often to resemble a cock fight rather than a serious attempt to debate issues. Corbynite Labour members regard the current government as an unmitigated disaster whereas Conservatives believe the same of a socialist government. This is hardly a recipe for solving long term problems such as providing adequate housing or addressing climate change.

Brexit has been a massive distraction diverting attention from other issues which may be more important in the long term. When in 2013 Mr Cameron announced that there would be a referendum three years later he

had plenty of time to work with civil servants to plan for the possibility of a Leave vote. Instead his hubris led him to think it would be a walk in the park. Negotiations would now be much further forward and Britain's reputation would not be so damaged. The rabble rousing style of the debate did much to encourage hatred. I am convinced that FPTP encourages hubris in our leaders. We need a leader who can re-unite us; we need another 'mutti'. Unfortunately Merkel would never have risen to prominence under the Westminster system as it is. She emerged from a totally different system in which the constitution requires strict proportionality. You cannot accuse Germany of being unstable or unsuccessful in spite of the fact they have often have coalitions.

As noted in today's Echo (22nd Sept) you have been working very hard with the Local Enterprise Partnership to secure funding to build up Weymouth's sea defences to cope with global warming. You will be competing with many other demands for funding. Ironically your bargaining position is weakened by the fact that Dorset South under you is a safe seat.

On the subject of climate change, we in Transition Town Weymouth and Portland invited you to attend our Climate Change Conference at St Aldhelms Church, Weymouth on Saturday 21st October. We were disappointed you cannot make that date. You would have had an opportunity to describe your practical experience of this area. Sadly Simon Hoare who had promised to speak for the Conservatives has also had to drop out.

You came late to politics; you clearly have independent means; and in the run up to the 2010 election Mike Goodman explained that you had been selected precisely because you would speak your mind. I am encouraged therefore to hope that in this matter you will put loyalty to country and to your constituents ahead of blind party loyalty.

yours sincerely

David Smith, Weymouth