



## Political and Constitutional Reform Committee

### Oral evidence: [What next on the redrawing of Parliamentary boundaries?](#) HC 600

Thursday 23 October 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Professor Ron Johnston](#)

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Members present: Mr Graham Allen (Chair); Fabian Hamilton, Mr Andrew Turner

Questions 1 – 16

*Witnesses:* **Professor Ron Johnston**, School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol, and **David Rossiter**, Former Research Fellow, Universities of Bristol, Leeds, Oxford and Sheffield, gave evidence.

**Q1 Chair:** Thank you. Please sit down, Ron and David. I just need to wait for my colleague to return so we are quorate. I think we can probably conclude relatively quickly, and I say that because I intend to speak in the next debate, which is about a five-year Parliament. There is a little bit of a reaction going on, so I need to tell people how wonderful a five-year Parliament is and could be, since that is the view of my Committee. All right, Fabian.

**Fabian Hamilton:** Welcome, gentlemen. It is nice to see you and thank you very much for coming today. The sixth general review of parliamentary constituency boundaries has been postponed now until after the 2015 general election; huge relief all around from all Members here, I am sure. But before it was halted, the Boundary Commissions produced initial and revised sets of recommendations for the distribution of parliamentary constituencies in those huge books that we were given with all the tracing paper and the maps and everything. What is your opinion or opinions of the recommendations that were made by those Boundary Commissions, because they were interesting?

**Professor Johnston:** Point number one was a substantial difference across the four commissions, not unexpected in large part because we had known beforehand that in many ways the Scottish Commission was better resourced and set up to do the task than the others, certainly the English one. I am not surprised at the amount of disruption, although many were. I think we could see it coming. I am surprised to some extent at some of the things that the Boundary Commission for England came up with, in that after the public consultation they were able to go back and make

quite a bit of change, which did improve things. I think in large part it was that they had to do the whole country in six months and, as a consequence of that, some things were overlooked. I suppose the best way of putting it is that with more time they could have come up with better solutions in some places and saved a bit of the hassle that then went on in the hearings and so forth.

Consequent perhaps on my first point is the variation in the degree to which it raised interest, even among the political class. The Scotland Commission had virtually nothing. There were a few areas that were under contention, particularly around the edge of Glasgow and the Dundee area, but in the rest of the country basically there was very little concern at all. The Scottish National Party in fact made no representations whatsoever. They just said, "Thank you very much. You have given us six seats and we will go ahead". Even more so was the total lack of interest in Northern Ireland. Dave went over to the public hearings and basically wasted his time. I think that reflects in part that Northern Ireland is possibly a special case, but even within England there are massive variations in the degree to which it raised interest among the political parties, let alone the general public. We did not go over. Our colleague, Charles Pattie, went to the hearings in Yorkshire, and they basically sat all day in Sheffield and three people turned up and one was a lady getting out of the rain. That may reflect simply that there was nothing worth debating or it may reflect other things.

**Q2 Fabian Hamilton:** I have been a public representative, both as a city councillor and an MP, for the last 27 and a half years. In all my time of standing for election for office, I have never seen anything as bizarre as some of the things put forward. I always thought that the Boundary Commission's remit was to deliver not just a fair distribution, which was obviously important, but to take account of local authority boundaries, communities, natural boundaries, manmade boundaries, motorways, railways, canals, rivers and so on, and not to cross into different counties. Yet when I looked in my own parliamentary constituency, there were parts of inner city Leeds combined with outer areas of Pateley Bridge in North Yorkshire, which was so completely bizarre and we were all thrown by it. I am just amazed that nobody in Sheffield turned up, because there was outrage in Leeds at the way all the seats had been divided up and then you were dividing parts of West Leeds with bits of Bradford. It was a nonsense and it did not make any sense, because the only criterion seemed to be equalising the numbers, plus or minus 5%. I know we are going to go on to talk about that. Sorry, David.

**David Rossiter:** I think the easiest way to describe the proposals across the board was that they were unsatisfactory. I spent some time this week rereading the reports of various assistant commissioners. There was something in the report on North-West England where they had obviously been frustrated by trying to deal with the arithmetic in the Warrington area and they put it in their report—and it struck me as the type of language I would not have expected to see in there—"Once again, we are compelled to seek the least worst option". It seemed to be a theme of the review that the commissions had not been used to trying to deal with this type of situation with this great strictness.

If you look at the outcomes from a sort of arithmetic point of view, it is quite clear that the continuity is significant and most seats would be experiencing major change. That is again virtually unprecedented, if not unprecedented. The crossing of county and London borough boundaries is something like five or six times as common as it was in any previous review. It is a point you referred to: the Boundary Commission was unable to find satisfactory answers for the thing that tends to generate the greatest concern from the public, the conjoining of urban and rural communities in particular. In England that was partly because they adopted a policy of not splitting wards, but I think even beyond that, you would have to say that if you look at it in the round, it was not simply that. The real culprit—if I can use that word—is the 5% targets.

**Q3 Fabian Hamilton:** Let me come on to that, if I may. The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 made provision for the vast majority of constituencies to be within 5% of

the average size of a constituency, which was called the electoral quota. Your research has found that a rather more relaxed variance from the electoral quota would have substantially reduced the disadvantages of the arrangements that were set out in the legislation. Have you set a figure on this and what do you think the allowable deviation from the electoral quota should have been or should indeed be in the future? Your report for the McDougall Trust on the rules for constituency redistributions stated that, “The arithmetical gains were achieved at the expense of continuity and geography”, something we have already touched on, “in the sixth general review”. Do you think the costs to continuity and geography too high to justify in terms of the arithmetical gains?

**David Rossiter:** In part, you are asking me to comment on what has to be a philosophical point, which I am not going to do. If you look at it from a pragmatic point of view, the work we did was we looked at variations from 12% down to 5% to see what impact each of the integer values would have. I think what is notable in that is that the closer you get to zero, the faster the disadvantages accrue. In going from 12% to 8%, there is a certain amount of disruption that you would not have had had you stayed at 12%, but in going from 8% down to 5%, you get more than twice as many of the disadvantages accruing in that three-point reduction as you had in the previous four-point reduction.

Some of those are effectively insurmountable for the commissions, in that they are going to have to join local authority areas that they would not ordinarily have done, they are going to have to change boundaries on constituencies that would have been perfectly admissible under previous arrangements and in fact are within quota themselves. We had the experience in that review of a large number of seats that were within quota having to have quite serious alterations to their boundaries simply to allow for the knock-on effects from the changes that needed to be introduced elsewhere. If I was simply giving a pragmatic answer to it, I would say at least 8%. That would be my view.

**Professor Johnston:** Mine entirely as well. The point David just made there, and you have already referred to, North Yorkshire: all the eight constituencies in North Yorkshire were within quota but in the Boundary Commission’s first recommendations all but one of them was to be changed, because of that thing in Nidderdale that fortunately, after the public consultation, they changed back. But quite simply, with 8% you would create a few problems around, which a little bit of ward-splitting would then resolve. It is just that 5% was very tight, particularly given the policy that the Boundary Commission for England took.

**Q4 Fabian Hamilton:** The whole issue caused quite a lot of grief certainly in the Labour Party in Leeds, and I am sure in the other parties in Leeds, because they just did not seem to make any sense. Two very brief points. One is that the Boundary Commission, in its rushed attempt to try to make sense of the legislation and produce something within the deadlines they were given, never took account of the contiguity of communities. I will give you an example. The reason my constituency is the shape it is is because a lot of people who live in the now wealthier outer areas grew up in the inner areas and they have a deep connection down those sort of strips of road and communities that link them. If you were then linking them to another part of the city on a sort of horizontal basis, there is absolutely no contiguity or connection whatsoever, but you could never have taken account of that. That is just an observation.

The other is that for decades, if not longer, the Boundary Commission has always been seen to be completely apart from politics and political policy, in other words it is there to give fair constituencies that reflect those communities. I think for the first time that consensus was broken, and it was an attempt to gerrymander constituencies. That is a rather extreme view.

**Professor Johnston:** I do not think the Boundary Commission attempted to gerrymander. I used to live in Far Headingley—

**Fabian Hamilton:** No, the instructions given to them had that effect. I do not think they were gerrymandering.

**Professor Johnston:** They may have had that effect. I think the argument to make is twofold: first, that in the past they could take into account continuity because the rules were relatively vague and so, although constituencies changed around the edge, over a long period of time the core of a constituency stayed the same. With the new rules, that became a much more difficult formula. This was particularly a problem in England, because it is a much bigger place. The commissioners and their staff do not know the detail of the geography of Leeds or the geography of most other places, so—

**Fabian Hamilton:** But it is the perimeters as well, Professor.

**Professor Johnston:** But you see, then the public consultation puts them right. When they were doing previous reviews, all they were doing, except in a few places usually, was changes around the edge to get things about equal but to keep things going as they had been in the past. The 1958 amendments to the 1944 Act were specific. We assumed no change unless it is absolutely necessary. The new rules make change absolutely necessary and they did not know the geography in great detail. The Scottish Commission did, because it is a smaller country; they are also involved in other things. The English Commission was given an incredibly difficult task to change half of the constituency map, not knowing the detail of the local geography.

**Q5 Fabian Hamilton:** But the point I was trying to make was that—sorry to talk about my own communities—

**Professor Johnston:** No, that is fine.

**Fabian Hamilton:** —people in Chapeltown do not move to Cookridge, they move to Moortown or around there, and yet they were being disconnected and thrown into four other constituencies and it just did not make sense. Obviously most people do not think in constituencies.

**Professor Johnston:** No, I think the fair thing to say is that that would have not been known in the commission.

**Q6 Fabian Hamilton:** Exactly. Yes, of course. Your written evidence highlights some of the disadvantages of using census data rather than electoral registration data for boundary reviews, including obviously that it is only available every 10 years and is not in itself complete. On balance, do you think boundary reviews should continue on the basis of the registered electorate, especially with individual voter registration?

**Professor Johnston:** I am on the fence on it. If they are to be every five years and if we are to keep the Fixed-term Parliaments Act, then I think using the electorate has a stronger case. If they were to be every 10 years and they were to be in synch with the census, I think it is the philosophical case that MPs represent everybody and therefore you should put everybody in, and there is a strong case for the census. The pragmatics say you cannot do that if you are doing it every five years, because you cannot get very good census population estimates for small areas halfway between censuses. The intriguing thing is even for local authorities, where the ONS produce their mid-year estimates, they use the electoral roll, which gets us into vicious a circle, doesn't it?

**Fabian Hamilton:** Exactly. Yes, you are right.

**Professor Johnston:** There is the philosophical issue of whether it is equal votes and who is on the electoral roll or whether an MP represents everybody, so everybody should be counted, which is what happens in the United States and other places, but there are other pragmatic things as well. You cannot use the census for the small changes you want to make every five years, and of course we have no guarantee of a census after 2021.

**Fabian Hamilton:** Yes, that is true. David, any thoughts on that?

**David Rossiter:** Nothing particular to add. I was in the past a census district manager, so I have had involvement with the census, and to me the difficulty would always be the interval between, the 10

years, and also the fact that even when a census is taken, you seem to be waiting ages before you get the results of the census. I think they are practical issues that are the problem, which if you could avoid them, then you get into the philosophical question about it.

**Q7 Mr Turner:** You have been fairly explicit in stating the Boundary Commission for England should have been more open to splitting wards, and I must say that sounds sensible to me. Why were the Boundary Commissions so difficult about these things? Just looking at Burnham, which I do not know much about, they have wards of the size of about 20,000, whereas in my ward they have them about 2,000. The difference is huge and yet there do exist smaller areas, even in my wards, which are called—EROs? I cannot remember what they are called.

**Professor Johnston:** OAs.

**Mr Turner:** OAs, yes. What is it that makes it so impossible or so nearly impossible that the Boundary Commission is forced to—

**Professor Johnston:** They gave three sets of reasons. One is they said—and I think I quote them—“There are no robust data below ward level”. That is not the case. Electoral rolls are compiled by polling districts and even by postcode. There is a problem with mapping. The OS do not map polling districts, but that is not insuperable by any means. There are great problems with the mapping in general in the Boundary Commission. That was their first case, the problems in data that do not exist because, as we have put in our report, we did this big experiment on London and the six metropolitan counties that involved Dave’s point—readily getting the maps and the data from every authority with no problem at all.

The second case was that wards are natural communities and we should not be breaking them up. When we come to the Isle of Wight, where many wards are one parish or one village, fair enough. A ward in Birmingham of 20,000 is not a natural community. I was thinking about this earlier this morning as I was rereading our evidence on the train. I do not know, I realised, the name of the ward I live in or its full extent. I know it represents more than one community. I live in the Close in Salisbury, which is very obviously a defined community. The ward is much bigger and I know that the council estate next door is part of it, but I am sure if you talked to virtually all of my neighbours they would not know which ward we are in. They know that we are all together in one ward and they will all know who represents us on the county council and district council, because he is a very good councillor. This issue about whether wards are natural communities I think holds some sway in rural areas in England. It does not hold sway in big cities, as I am sure those of you who represent big city constituencies know.

The third one was understandable, I think. It was the Boundary Commissioners saying, “If we started to split wards, the political parties would come along and try to split wards everywhere to get their own way and it would just make our task intolerable”. In part, they may have had some case, but I think in general what we have found is that there were some specific cases. I remember sitting through the public hearings in Portsmouth where they were working very hard, one party, to split a ward and the other two parties were working very hard to stop them. But I think the political parties themselves realise that unless it was necessary to split a ward, they were not going to push it unless they had a case so to do.

We had the oddities like Gloucester, which I am sure you are aware of, like Mersey Banks, which was two wards on the opposite side of the Mersey in Lancashire being put in a Cheshire constituency, and some that did not go after the public consultation. A good one is the orphan ward of Radley. If you know, Radley is a village with a public school on the edge of Abingdon, and has for years, through many reviews, been in with Abingdon and therefore in with Oxford West. The numbers did not work, so the Boundary Commission put Radley in the Henley constituency. You cannot get from Radley into the Henley constituency without going to Oxford first, because there is the River Thames in the way. Splitting wards or something would have easily resolved that issue, but the Boundary Commission for England said, “No, we are not going to do it for those three sets of reasons”. The Boundary

Commission for Scotland said, “We did it when we created the Scottish constituencies in 2009 for the Scottish Parliament and we did not have any problems and nobody complained”.

**David Rossiter:** To add to that, I think the reason the English Commission did not do it— and obviously they are best-placed to answer the question—was just the scale of what they were being asked to do and the timescale in particular they had to face this year. I think they almost certainly took a pragmatic decision that if they were to allow this to happen, they could be creating all sorts of difficulties for themselves in what was already an extremely tight timetable. I know from the evidence they have sent to you that the phrase they are using now is, “Although strong general preference will continue to be to keep wards whole unless it is unreasonable to do so”, they will set the bar somewhat lower in the future, so I think that may be their answer.

**Q8 Mr Turner:** I think I am right in saying that even the evidence from the Conservative Party recognised the need to split wards in some cases, so that is a good thing.

The second thing that I was concerned about is the possibility of the number of electors in Northern Ireland justifying an extra Member, which means the whole map. It seems to me that one could say, “We will look at constituencies every five years, but we will not change the number in each region. We will not look at it again for, say, 15 years”. Is that possible?

**Professor Johnston:** It is possible. You would then get variations between in the average size, but I guess they would not become particularly great unless suddenly the population of Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales either boomed or collapsed. You would get maybe an 8%, 9%, 10% variation between one country and another. If you said the number of constituencies per the four countries is fixed for, as I think somebody suggested, 20 years, then you would get slight variations.

The fear of that in the past would have been that this created parts of the country with small average sizes that favoured one party rather than another. The probability of that I think is pretty small now, given you have the uniform code that allocates them in the first place, and then the variance, whether it is 5% or 8%. You are right, the minute you make a change in one country, you have to make a lot of change. Dave did the simulations. If the aborted review had started a year later, Scotland would have had one more seat and the south-west of England would have had one less seat. To put another seat in Scotland, we worked out you would have to change at least 15. To take a seat out of the south-west of England, you had to change every constituency in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset.

**Q9 Mr Turner:** The question is which is the worst? Is it worse to change the 5%? One of the things that is being proposed is having it at 5% or having it at 8%, so which is more important? I suppose I am asking that.

**Professor Johnston:** I think the answer to that question is to a large extent which is more important to all the—to use the terrible term—stakeholders, both the electorate and the parties and Members. I did not go to all the public hearings by any means, Dave went to a lot more, but I read all the transcripts and I read all the representations written and made by Members of Parliament, apart from a large number of others. I think the general thing that comes through is that continuity is what you mostly prefer. You see several MPs who would say, “I wish my constituency stayed more or less the same. I realise the numbers mean they have to change slightly, but please change it as little as possible because I want to go on representing the same people, the same places for as long as possible”. It seems to me that if continuity is your major goal you structure your rules accordingly, which is to give the Boundary Commissions a bit more flexibility than they had in the 2011 Act. That is why we think moving towards 8% with a bit of ward-splitting would do that.

But our point is, and we make the conclusion very clear, simply because of the uniform quota and the changes you are going to get every five years, you are going to get changes whether Scotland has one more seat and so forth. Secondly, you are going to get population movements—certainly Oxfordshire has grown and so forth—and then thirdly is re-warding. A lot of England is being re-warded at the moment; Scotland is being totally re-warded at the moment; Wales is done as a

whole as well. It means that every five years, the Boundary Commissions are facing a different geography. The outlines are the same, but there is enough movement in those three things to mean, as we showed by all our simulations, that probably a third of constituencies were going to have major change every five years, despite giving them the greater flexibility. Is that the conclusion?

**David Rossiter:** Yes, and that two-thirds of constituencies will be changing their boundaries every five years. It is not what we have been used to.

**Q10 Mr Turner:** No, but just saying what you have said suggests two-thirds of them will be major changes.

**Professor Johnston:** No, a third would be major.

**David Rossiter:** A third would be major.

**Q11 Mr Turner:** All right. The split wards, would that reduce that by 10% or 50% or what?

**David Rossiter:** It would reduce it. Can I come back to you on that one? I will just have a quick look. It is somewhere in here.

**Q12 Mr Turner:** One of the things that worries us—by that I mean the Conservative Party, because that is where I have grown up and so on—is that our constituencies are larger than Labour, and I believe in the 1950s it was the other way around, but how much of this would lead to that idea that smaller wards would be a Labour issue?

**Professor Johnston:** It will go. The degree to which the Conservatives have been, if you like, unfairly treated in the translation of votes into seats has in part been due to what you say, the Conservative constituencies tended to be larger than Labour constituencies over the last 30 years. Part of that is simply because of the over-representation of Wales and Scotland. In the last general election, the average constituency in Wales had 56,000; the average in Scotland had 65,000; the average in England had 72,000. That goes, because you have the uniform quota. Half of the disadvantage that your party suffered over a series of elections will go by having a uniform UK quota.

The other part, the rest of it, is in two parts. First, it is because the Boundary Commissions, for adjacent local authorities even, would allocate differently to fit within the boundaries. We give the example in our evidence of an instance in Croydon, which I think at the moment has an average constituency of 77,000, and Sutton, which is 67,000, simply because of the way the seats are allocated and in the past they did not cross the boundary.

The third reason is that over time, in the past, Labour constituencies have tended to lose population and Conservative constituencies have grown. Mostly that happened in the inner cities because of slum clearance, urban redevelopment and so forth. That is not over, but it is much less prominent now. After all, I think the two biggest constituencies, apart from your own at the moment, are Holborn and St Pancras and Manchester Central because of the repopulation of the cities, so the disadvantage that you suffered because of change is going first, because we are not emptying the cities out any more, with the exception of Liverpool, but, secondly, because you are going to five-year reviews, so it does not get the chance to build in. In a sense you are right, the Conservatives have been disadvantaged, but these rules, whether it is 5% or 8%, would not make any difference. These rules have removed that element of the disadvantage. There are other elements of that disadvantage, but that is not a function of how the constituency boundaries are drawn.

**David Rossiter:** I will come back. The figure is not a third. A third would have to have major change without ward-splitting, 19% if ward-splitting were allowed. That is our best estimate of it, so an appreciable reduction by introducing ward-splitting.

**Q13 Mr Turner:** If it were kept at 650, how much less of a change would that be on a five-yearly—

**David Rossiter:** It makes very little difference indeed. In all of this debate, that is the red herring; the size of the House is not an important factor in the degree of disruption or fitting into local government boundaries. The Boundary Commission was not making all of these changes because it was going to 600 seats; the Boundary Commissions were making these changes because they were fitting into a 5% tolerance.

**Q14 Mr Turner:** I have probably asked this question: if you have a constituency with 67,000 population, that is jolly good, but if you create a constituency with 78,000, which is at the top end and then you grow by 10,000, you cannot do anything with those people except put them outside now and they would be able to stay in—

**David Rossiter:** Some of them would, yes.

**Mr Turner:** Some of them would, yes.

**Professor Johnston:** The thing to notice is that you do not need a lot of ward-splitting. The experiment we did on London plus all the six metropolitan counties, which is 177 I think, is we split 64 wards. We only needed to split 64 wards, and by doing that we halved the disruption. We did the reverse in Scotland by creating constituencies, all of which had no split wards, which was extremely difficult in Glasgow, and it is exactly the same way round. A small amount of ward-splitting can make the difference. It is not splitting every other ward by any means. In that case, in our experiment, it was one ward per local authority.

**Q15 Chair:** You talk in your written evidence about, “Abolition of public hearings and a procedure comprising representations alone would be both more efficient than, and at least as effective as, that introduced late to the 2011 legislation”. What is it about the new process of public hearings that makes you think that having no hearings would be preferable? Do you favour moving to a system where representations are made solely in writing or should the earlier provisions for local inquiries be reinstated?

**Professor Johnston:** I think one of the biggest problems with the thing that was introduced was that the hearings were held during the period in which written representations were going in, which made for immense complications: “What is your evidence now? What was your evidence three weeks later?” I think the more general argument though is that just like the inquiries beforehand, these hearings were dominated by the political parties. If you went to the lead hearing in, say, the south-east the spokesperson for the Conservative Party was given 40 minutes. He had a sheaf of papers and he gave a copy to the Labour Party, a copy to the Lib Dems and a copy to the secretary, and he stood up and spoke with some slides that did not have good mapping on and nobody really knew what was being talked about. I remember going to one in Birmingham, and there was a long discussion about the Golden Valley, and I thought the Golden Valley was in Stroud, and it turns out there is another one somewhere.

Basically, they were totally uninformative to those who were in the audience. I am not sure how informative they were to the assistant commissioners. I sat through two days at Portsmouth and the assistant commissioner chairing it merely said, “Thank you very much, very interesting. Any questions? No. Move on”, and they came in no order at all. You would have somebody discussing splitting a ward in Portsmouth, then you would have Mr Hewin about splitting a couple of wards in Eastleigh, then suddenly the Member of Parliament for Oxford West turns up, and there is no coherence to them at all.

The evidence that they are putting forward in the current rules cannot be tested, because you are not allowed to cross-examine them as you were under the previous inquiries, which although they were lengthier and occasionally boring—or often boring—at least what people said could be put to the

test. I recall going to some of those things in the past where the political parties would employ barristers who would cross-examine people. I was cross-examined for a couple of hours once in Essex, but at least the assistant commissioner was having what was presented to him tested. That does not happen under these hearings; people just get up and say their say and go off. I remember your colleague, Anne McIntosh, saying to me, "I went along and gave my evidence and nobody asked me any questions, then I wondered why I bothered. I could have put a letter in and presumably it would have the same impact".

Chairman, I think that is the bulk of it. I do not think there is a great deal of value added from these local hearings. Added to that, of course now you have the tight constraint, the tolerance. In the past, and I remember it happening in the Salisbury area, people would go along and say, "You have put us in the Warminster constituency. All our ties are to Salisbury" and the commissioner would say, "Yes, you are right. We can make that change, make Salisbury a bit bigger, but so what? We are reflecting communities". They cannot do that now. If you want to go along and make a case for change and you are not a political party, you do not have all the resources, you are just a local group, unless you have a geographical information system and you can produce another set of constituencies, because remember the knock-ons are amazing.

In the Boundary Commission for England's provisional recommendations, they proposed splitting Beverley in half, which did not go down very well in that part of East Riding, but in other parts they proposed no change and so the locals thought, "Oh well, we are okay". But the noise was made about Beverley and when the Boundary Commission came out with their revised recommendations, they said, "Okay, we will put Beverley back together again, but we will have to split Great Grimsby", which did not please Austin Mitchell, who in fact had a Westminster Hall debate about it. That is the problem, because of the tight tolerance, once you make one change, you have to make lots of changes elsewhere. People other than the political parties do not have the resources to go along and make those cases.

**Q16 Chair:** Professor Johnston and Mr Rossiter, thank you very much for your evidence this morning. I am sorry it is a little truncated.

**Professor Johnston:** That is fine.

**Chair:** It is very selfish of me. I need to get to the debate in Parliament and we will lose the quorum if I leave, but I think we probably have one last thing on the record.

**Professor Johnston:** Can I make one brief point? Something has occurred to us late on that I think is of minor importance. Can we put in a note to you?

**Chair:** Please do, and my apologies. I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the frequency of boundary reviews and, on the question of the size of the House, if we are to become a federal Parliament, maybe a stronger argument for reducing the size and whether we need a ceiling that cannot be exceeded by any boundary review, so you will always have a downward pressure that becomes the new ceiling after each review, which would get us down towards the number. But if you would be kind enough to comment about those two ideas and anything else that you wish, we would be most grateful. As always, Ron and David, thank you very much for your time this morning. It was as illuminating as ever. Thank you.