

## Written evidence from Colette Cross (CDR 42)

### Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee The Government's Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission

As a citizen of this nation I wish to engage with the process you are undertaking.

I won't waste time on government's proscriptions in this matter with which they seek as ever to carve up the issues in the manner most beneficial to their party. But, sidestepping their false prospectus, I will address the matter in its totality as it seems to me.

#### 1) The Democratic Deficit

Our system of government is an artifact of a bygone era.

With few tweaks and adjustments in over 200 years, which I have not the learning to detail, it is an 18th century "fossil".

Elections in this country actively disenfranchise voters. In safe seats those who vote for parties other than the dominant one know they may as well not bother. Everyone knows this.

Parliament is described as having "*sovereignty*". This sentence has little real meaning though as our "heritage" government system preserves more than just the quaint arcane pageantry of kings, conferring as it does the powers of royal prerogative on the sitting government who may largely rule by edict subject to enforcing party discipline. Parliamentary accountability is a mere formality when the executive usually have the numbers to swing every vote.

Elective dictatorship at national level has permitted the gradual denuding by stealth of local government and an ever increasing concentration of power in Whitehall and Downing St. The direction of travel is such that a violent reaction from the hitherto acquiescent populace will become inevitable at some point.

#### 2) A "Deaf" System

For most people healthy engagement with our democratic process simply does not exist. They feel alienated and their concerns excluded. This is in no small part, but not solely, due to the first past the post electoral system.

The system as a whole is impervious to people's realworld concerns, having no intake valve for rising tides of feeling about anything save what political parties have filtered through party machinery and consider electorally valuable to them. Parliament acts as a kind of museum of outdated ideas curated by enthusiasts for political badinage enjoying endless debating tournaments where they rerun old arguments and settle old scores.

## **2) The Obstacles to reform**

There is nothing which runs in our society so untrammelled by the needs of the modern age save the confected shambles of our so called government system, whose preservation in a kind of procedural aspic is guaranteed by those who do not wish to see any meaningful change precisely so they may continue to wield the unlimited power which victors in our general elections enjoy, however small their share of the popular vote may be.

Your committee can listen, interrogate, research and report, recommending a,b,c,d,and e as critical changes which must be made to overcome the damaging democratic deficit that exists here. Then government can opt to implement an alternative random selection of reforms which they prefer whilst praising your great work and agreeing wholeheartedly with your indications that reform is much needed.

The critical prerequisite to successful reform of the system is to (finally) correctly assign the seat of power to the people, not parliament. As it stands our system cannot be reformed as those who get into parliament in either of the 2 governing parties are trained and whipped to oppose reform. It's as simple as that.

A way must be found around the politics. It is the king refusing to cede ground by exercise of autocratic power. Nothing meaningful can arise in such a context.

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