

PR on the never, never, as ever from Labour

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In 1988, I joined an organisation called Charter 88. It demanded reform to the UK political system, and in particular supported proportional representation as the basis for electing governments, local authorities and all other forms of administration in the UK.

My belief in the need for a single transferable vote electoral system in this country, based upon multi-member constituencies returning up to 10 MPs each, has never wavered ever since. I have always believed that the Parliament that we now have mocks the idea of democracy because it fails to represent the interests of the people of this country.

Insult was added to injury when the Parliaments in Scotland, and now in Wales, were elected on a proportional representation basis, and when the same system came into use for other elections, such as those for mayors and local authorities in Scotland. The idea that people in the UK could not understand proportional representation became a mockery as a result, because the claim could only have been made of England at best, and I am reluctant to suggest that people in England are any less politically able when it comes to making a choice at the ballot box than the people of Wales, Scotland and, of course, Northern Ireland.

As a result, I was pleased to [note Andy Burnham's suggestion](#) that a commitment to proportional representation would be included in the next Labour Party manifesto, but at the same time deeply disappointed at his, as ever, inability to get on and deal with a problem.

The basis of electoral reform in this country could be agreed in no more than a year. If the Labour Party is committed to this process, then it can be sure that the Liberal Democrats, the Greens, the SNP, Plaid Cymru and parties in Northern Ireland will be as well. Reform has said they are in the past. The Tories may not be, but although they are the supposed official opposition in Parliament at present, no one thinks that they hold any significant clout in politics at present, and if a multiparty agreement for reform amongst all the other major parties represented in Westminster could be reached, and quickly, then there is no reason whatsoever why the next general election could not be

held on a proportional representation basis, and no referendum is required. Law is made in this country by Westminster, and not through referenda.

Burnham has, then, failed us and, in the process, except for the indications that have been provided in polling data which I refer to in a separate post this morning, we could as a result be given a significant far-right, neo-fascist presence in Parliament.

I do, then, celebrate a move which is long overdue, and which I do sincerely hope will come to fruition for Westminster elections. I do, however, regret and condemn Labour's dithering, which has been during this Parliament, and during too many of its previous administrations, its defining characteristic, and which, on the basis of his announcements yesterday, Burnham appears determined to take with it into oblivion.