

## Interim Report of LCER Systems Working Group – 2020-06-29

Membership: Sandy Martin (Chair); Mary Southcott; Monica Threlfall; Ken Ritchie; Monica Iacovou (last 3 meetings)

The systems working group met on 29/04, 15/05, 29/05, 05/06, and 19/06. We discussed specific systems, but established that we could not agree on any specific system.

### Summary – we have agreed that:

- 1) We will insist any electoral reform must:
  - a) Make the number of seats won by each Party in the House of Commons closer to the proportion of votes cast than it is at present
  - b) Retain a geographic link between MPs and constituencies
  - c) Ensure that both the first-level constituency, and any additional member top-ups areas (where appropriate) should be based on geography that is meaningful to the voters
  - d) Have a systematic block or a deliberate threshold to prevent very small parties (eg Christian People's Alliance) from winning top-up seats in Parliament
  
- 2) We will publicly oppose:
  - a) Retention of First Past the Post as the exclusive method for elections to the House of Commons
  - b) AV or SV within current constituencies without any other change to the electoral system
  - c) Retaining all the Constituencies on their current boundaries, which with PR would mean either MPs being elected with less votes than their rivals in the same constituency or with AMS a significant increase in the number of MPs in the House of Commons
  - d) Election of top-up MPs on a UK-wide basis – top-ups must be based on an electoral area smaller than the whole UK
  
- 3) We are largely in favour, but will not insist on:
  - a) Making the number of seats won under any new system at least as proportional to the vote as in the current Scottish Parliament (not actually 100% deliverable, as level of proportionality will depend partly on distribution of votes)
  - b) Use of exclusively one-MP constituencies, with additional top-ups
  
- 4) We are broadly opposed to, but will not campaign against:
  - a) Setting a specific figure for the minimum level of proportionality
  - b) Increasing the number of MPs in the House of Commons
  - c) Having a mixture of 1-MP, 2-MP and 3-MP constituencies
  - d) Using a “closed” Party List for top-up MPs
  - e) Insisting that constituencies should all be the same size
  - f) Insisting that top-up electoral areas should all be the same size
  - g) Holding a referendum on changing the electoral system
  
- 5) We will respect differences of opinion and remain neutral as an organisation on:
  - a) Retaining the same number of MPs as at present, or reducing the number
  - b) STV with multi-member constituencies
  - c) AMS with constituencies based on Local Authority boundaries
  - d) Electing constituency MPs under AMS by FPTP or AV (plus PR top-ups)
  - e) Electing top-up MPs on a Regional or County basis, or some other area
  - f) Electing top-ups using an “open list” system or on a “best runner-up” basis

- g) Making the actual vote a single cross on a single ballot-paper, or a list of numbered preferences on a single ballot-paper, or two separate votes – one for the constituency and one for the Party
- h) Setting a specific threshold for parties to qualify for top-up seats

Other issues which we could explore through a survey:

AMS or STV - willing to live with both until after the next election.

- Number of constituencies
- Number of MPs
- Lists - open or closed
- Electoral areas for AMS
- How votes are cast (AV, SV, simple cross etc)

A survey:

- Should go to non-members as well as members, but need to identify which respondents are members and which are not
- Should identify “trade-offs” eg preference or cross, bigger AMS electoral areas or smaller
- Should ask WHY people prefer some things – could be combination of tick-box and write-in
- Will go out in early July in mailing and on website
- Object is NOT to determine what our position is, but to understand what and how we need to communicate, and to ensure members know we are interested in their views

Communication of LCER’s position – no “grand statement” required.

- Member mailing (and website) to invite participation in survey and just say we’ve had working group and not give any other indication EXCEPT
  - We are committed to Constituency Link
  - We are committed to ditching First Past the Post
  - We are committed to having a system which broadly reflects the votes cast (a more Proportional system)
- Further decisions eg on literature and website content to be explored after survey complete – Systems Wkg Grp will make final report and then Exec needs to consider

Way forward

Approach to Unions

- need to emphasise Constituency link, and NOT re-run of AV referendum
- Should work with others where possible eg MVM
- We need a strategy – helpful to set up Unions Wkg Gp [after Systems WG and Constitution WG have finished – Ed]

Conference and after – not helpful to try to speculate now.