

#### 4.1. Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 2013 – Second Reading approved

Mr Anderson to move:

*That the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 2013 be read a second time.*

**The Speaker:** Item 4, Bills for Second Reading. The first is the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 2013, and I call on the mover, the Hon. Member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson.

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am pleased to be able to move the Second Reading of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill on behalf Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers is simply the vehicle for this parliamentary issue.

Although this is only a small Bill, it takes a big step forward in developing democracy in the Isle of Man. At its heart are the fundamental principles of equality and fairness in voting and political representation. The Bill equalises House of Keys' constituencies so that each one has the same number of Members representing broadly the same number of people.

Regardless of where they live, all electors will have the same number of votes in elections to the House of Keys and the same level of representation in this House. For the first time in the history of Manx politics, everyone will have equal status at the ballot box and equal weight and influence in the democratic process. That is not the case at the moment. Some individuals enjoy the privilege of having three votes at each election and three MHKs representing them. Others have two votes and two MHKs, and some have one vote and one MHK.

This legislation is the end product of an independent review carried out over a period of three years by the Boundary Review Committee. The exercise involved no fewer than three public consultations resulting in three reports to Tynwald, all approved, which agreed the principles and specific proposals reflected in this Bill.

The rebalancing of our democracy is long overdue, but has been much resisted in the past, more by politicians than by the public itself. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) Redrawing of boundaries can be a disruptive experience for Members who have become established within particular constituencies, and previous debates have sometimes lost sight of the higher principles at stake.

However, the Bill now before this House offers us a historic opportunity to finally deliver equal and fair voting for all our constituents, wherever they happen to live, and to do so in time for the next General Election in 2016. The Bill legislates for two of the recommendations of the Boundary Review Committee, which, as I have just noted, have already been approved by Tynwald. The first of these deals with the process of reviewing boundaries. Boundary review committees are appointed by the Governor in Council following a resolution of Tynwald. There is currently no requirement in legislation for any regular review of the constituencies' boundaries to take place.

This Bill provides for the Governor in Council to establish an Electoral Commission within 12 months of the general election of 2021, and thereafter following every second general election. This timetable to ensure that a regular review of boundaries is undertaken was agreed at the December 2011 sitting of Tynwald.

There is also a provision in the Bill for the appointment of an Electoral Commission at other times, if Tynwald so resolves.

The primary purpose of the Electoral Commission will be to review the number of boundaries/constituencies. However, there is also provision made for the Electoral Commission to consider other electoral matters, if so directed by a resolution of Tynwald. This will allow to be appointed as and when Tynwald sees fit a body which can examine boundaries, boundary matters, or indeed any other matters that Tynwald considers relevant to the House of Keys elections and to report accordingly.

It became apparent during the three-year consultation process from discussions with the public and with Hon. Members that many took the view that the remit of the Boundary Committee should have been wider, that there were other issues central to the democratic process that would benefit from the scrutiny of this Committee. This was not part of the remit, however, and may in any case have proved a distraction from the much-needed boundary review.

Moving forward, the provisions set out in the Bill give parliament an option to appoint this body to undertake such work in future, if so decided.

The title 'Electoral Commission' has been used to reflect this more regular review process and the potential for this body to have a wider remit. The Electoral Commission is required to report to Tynwald within 18 months of its appointment and to submit such other reports as Tynwald may direct. On submission of its final report to Tynwald, the Electoral Commission is taken to have been dissolved.

The second element of the Bill is the provision for the Island to be divided into 12 constituencies, each returning two Members to the House of Keys. At its sitting in June 2013, Tynwald resolved to approve the constituency boundaries which are set out at appendices C1 to C12 of the Third Report of the Boundary Review Committee.

Tynwald also resolved that the Representation of the People Act 1995, and other legislation relevant to these changes, should be amended accordingly, in time for the 2016 general election. Hon. Members will forgive me if I briefly recall background to this provision, but after more than three years of research and deliberation, extensive political and public consultation, the three Tynwald reports I have referred to earlier, and some lively political and media debate, it would be understandable if we need to be reminded about the evolution of this Bill.

The overriding principle governing the recommendations that were approved by Tynwald arise out of the First Report of the Boundary Review Committee that there must be equality of representation so that all constituencies each return an equal number of Members to the House of Keys and that there must be equivalency of size of population across the constituencies.

The Second Report of the Boundary Review Committee sought agreement that the House of Keys be divided into 12 constituencies of two Members each. This too was approved.

The Third Report to the Committee in June 2013 presented to Tynwald, after considerable consultation, redrawn boundaries for these 12 two-seat constituencies, which were then also approved.

The parameters of all the work undertaken by the Boundary Review Committee were set out by Tynwald, and in that place the appended recommendations were approved. The Bill before us today seeks to legislate for those approved recommendations.

Hon. Members, this Bill is timely. The last significant boundary change took place nearly 30 years ago. That is a long time. This Bill chimes with the ongoing modernisation agenda that was supported so strongly in another place only last week. As we look to restructure and make fit for purpose the machinery of our Government, so should we also look to make reforms to legislature and reflect the fundamental principle that every voter in this Island should have equality of representation in this House.

Mr Speaker, I beg to move the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill be read for a second time.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Ramsey, Chief Minister.

**The Chief Minister:** I beg to second, Mr Speaker, and reserve my remarks.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mr Gawne.

**Mr Gawne:** Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

I think we have heard a very interesting – dare I say it, charming – introductory speech by the Hon. Member for Glenfaba in relation to this Bill and in principle, this Bill delivers something which is fairer. Hon. Members are fully aware of my views about this Bill. They will be aware that I supported the principle of fairness and equal sizes of constituencies, so I am not opposed in principle to that by any means.

But what concerns me is the whole way in which this has been done. It is clear – *absolutely* clear – from the comments of the Committee who drew this up, and indeed from what we have ended up with, that there was... I will use the word ‘gerrymandering’, but perhaps that is pushing it a bit. Constituencies have been arranged so that it least inconveniences the people in Douglas. (*Interjections*) It is clear, from most people’s rational and reasonable assessments of electoral rolls, that Douglas actually needs to lose a seat. That is not going to happen; Rushen is going to lose a seat, and I reckon the reason Rushen is losing a seat rather than Douglas is there are eight Members in Douglas and there are three in Rushen.

So, the Hon. Member talks about fairness. I do not actually believe that it is as fair as it could have been. That said, I will be supporting the Second Reading.

The concern, though, that I have is that a variety of options... It is a bit like going to buy a car and we were given options of three or four different colours – a blue car, a red car, a green car – and most of those options, when you actually looked at the consultation, were supported. Then the Committee came back and said, ‘But we have decided you are going to have a blue car. We are not going to explain why we have discounted the need or the possibility of a red car or a green car. You are having the blue car, and that’s it.’ That was the concern that I have. The Committee has not given us an explanation why, other than it is going to be the most convenient because it is not going to upset the Douglas Members.

That seems to be the only reason that we have ended up with the system we have got. I think there are lots and lots of opportunities to amend this Bill, and certainly, I and I know others will be coming forward at clauses stage with a variety of amendments, which hopefully will improve on this Bill, and perhaps we will have made... if not a red car, maybe we will have a purple car, which will be a mix of the blue and the red. (*Interjection and laughter*)

But in principle, this is the right way to go. We do need to have a fairer system and I certainly agree with that. It is just, the fair system that we have ended up with has been devised primarily to keep Douglas happy.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Malew and Santon, Mr Cregeen.

**Mr Cregeen:** Thank you, , Mr Speaker.

I agree with the comments of the Member for Rushen, Mr Gawne.

When you look at the boundary review, and when the Committee came forward, it was the path of least resistance. When you look at the layout, how could you get something like this through? By making sure that you would have the majority of people who would be least affected supporting it – ‘Never mind whether it is the right places, but let’s try and keep as many people happy as possible.’

I concur with the Member for Rushen: there would have been a better way of doing it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mrs Beecroft.

**Mrs Beecroft:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

You cannot disagree with the sentiment behind it, that it is fair, everybody has equal representation. But as a Douglas Member, it might surprise the previous speakers that I actually think there are better ways of doing it. I have always been in favour more of three-seat constituencies or even four-seat constituencies, because we are often accused of parish pump politics, and just looking after potholes and things within our own constituencies. I do think that the larger constituencies would have focused minds more on the national issues which are supposed to

be the highest priority (**Mr Gawne:** Hear, hear.) for this House and Tynwald Court. I think it would have taken away hopefully from the personality, because of having such a wider area to cover, and would have focused minds more on national policy when voting came round.

That would be contribution to it, Mr Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Douglas West, Mr Thomas.

**Mr Thomas:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I think, factually, three out of the eight Douglas MHKs voted against this in Tynwald, (**Mr Henderson:** Hear, hear.) so it is hard to make the point that has been made by the Hon. Member for Rushen.

Secondly, I also would have preferred six four-seat constituencies, with the old constituency names of the Douglas North and Douglas South divide. But so be it, we have resolved in Tynwald and the rest is history. (**Mrs Beecroft:** Yes, good.)

I just wanted to congratulate the Minister moving this, and to say it is excellent that we are just focusing on this issue of revising the constituency boundaries. But at this point, I just wanted to ask a question about other electoral reform issues, to see where we are with some of the other issues. It is clearly best to focus just on this very important one, but there are other issues in the background.

For a start, back in 2011, there was a Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, which was going to look at donations received by candidates in the House of Keys election. There was another notion about expenses of the candidate, and I just wondered whether the intention was to have another Bill coming back in the next parliament or later on in this one.

Secondly, Mr Bercow, the Speaker in the Parliament across, has initiated a debate on e-democracy and e-voting, online voting and all those issues. I wondered whether there was any intention to bring those back, perhaps in conjunction with the Bill.

Of course, as well, we have some issues to do with registration under the Registration of Electors Act. So if I may be so bold, perhaps we need a second Representation of the People Reform Bill, which can also look at the registration of Electors Act sometime in coming years, to address these other issues.

**A Member:** That is very bold.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Quirk.

**Mr Quirk:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Okay, I welcome the particular issue, and I will not take any offence to the Minister, Mr Anderson, because he is doing his job.

But the concern I do have, as regarding the consistency of Onchan, and the three Members that are in it, is the way in which it was developed from the Committee. We did have the scenario at the beginning which he actually missed out, where they were splitting the backbone Onchan, right down through Birch Hill, and actually peeling it literally apart and just throwing an element of that into Garff. It is not anything against the people who live in Garff, Laxey and Lonan – because you never know where Members are going to stand in the future!

So, it was a difficult at the time. There were a lot of people who said, 'Oh, it will never happen.' There was a load who did write in to the Committee. I felt – and I was ashamed of them, really, and I will put that on record – they did not even have the wherewithal to hold a meeting in the constituency of Onchan, which obviously was going to be one of the ones that was going to change. They decided to hold it in Douglas – and I have nothing against the majority of Douglas Members, at all – (*Interjections and laughter*)

But I had concern, when I listened to the Members here today, where they had the... And I wonder if there is going to be the 'Super-Douglas', the super-ship or the super-local authority. So I

do hope that whatever happens in the future, when we are not there, that that does not happen, and we will still consider the whole of the Island. (**Mr Gawne:** Hear, hear.)

But when the Committee did see sense, when they were splitting the real heart of Onchan right out of it and just casting the other half to one side, they came up with another solution. I agree with the Members who have recently spoken: it was not for political purposes; it was just for numbers. I would not say it was gerrymandering – I know we are covered – but there was a manipulation of... because, I believe that Onchan has bitten the bullet, put people in there, had houses on land which has been developed, and here we go, because we have *done* something for the future for the constituency, there we are as a rebalancing exercise, you are going to take a part of our community and take it away.

But hey-ho, it comes back again when we have a local authority election – whatever the number of local authorities are going to be in the future. So we have a division now, right down through the centre of Onchan there. There are a couple of churches which are not in Onchan; a couple of churches which are in Onchan; one side of the road is in Onchan and the other side of the road is not in Onchan any more. (*Interjections*)

**Mr Houghton:** Across the road from the Commissioners' offices.

**Mr Quirk:** Yes, but the Commissioners' office is still in Onchan. I was just really disappointed that they never gave us an opportunity for the local authority and the community to get together to discuss those issues, for the people who live in their part that is getting hived off or cut away. Just like we are a piece of meat – Mr Crookall, looking at me like that! – a piece of meat just carved off the side of a carcass and then thrown to somebody else to feed off.

Well, I am holding to my promise that I gave ages ago. I will not be supporting it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Mr Karran:** Vainstyr Loayreyder, I think it is wrong to say that there has not been any public interest. I know in Onchan there has been great, great controversy over this proposal. The fact that the proposal that has come about today, where we change from Birch Hill going out to Howstrake going out, I know there are people claiming they will never vote again.

I hope that we will safeguard the Howstrake being able to vote in the location of Onchan and not having to go out to Baldrine or Laxey in order to do so and that these issues will be taken on board.

My problem is today that obviously this is yet another electoral calamity, as far as I am concerned, in my constituency, because Howstrake is one of my... well, is more likely one the strongest parts of my constituency, the Onchan constituency. So, yes, it does surprise Hon. Members, but the fact is that, believe it or not, an awful lot of the support that I have got over the last 15 or 20 years actually does not just come from council houses, but actually comes from the likes of Howstrake, and more than likely, with the exception of the late Member for Onchan, Mr Leventhorpe, I do not think any other Member could actually beat me, as far as getting votes in the Howstrake area.

But I understand that one fundamental principle is the equality of representation. We have come a long way from when I first started out in politics and we ended up with a situation where we had a Labour safe seat in North Douglas, where it had 1,000 votes more than Ayre with a 1,000 less, but North Douglas only had one representative and the people and the farmers of Ayre had two representatives for having a 1,000 seats. So we understand about having to try and force the changes that need to come about in order to get people to represent and reflect on the numbers of people in a constituency and not the number of sheep.

But the situation is that I have gone through this process before when we had the 1986 election, when my constituency was absolutely decimated and in fact there were lots, as far as... not who was

the first one to go out, because that was a foregone conclusion as far as that issue was concerned with a majority of 6 and 11 in my own Middle constituency, losing my seat being split.

I think the principle that we should have equal representation is important. I think it is important and I think it would have been a step too far if it had gone down to single seat constituencies because then you end up with the Member for Birch Hill trying to deal with whether to deal with the economy or to deal with one of the arterial roads, either Highfield Crescent or the Birch Hill Crescent entrances, as far as repairing the roads instead of repairing the economy.

I feel that the problem that has been with this Bill is the fact that it has not looked at the needs. There has never been a more important need to try and get this assembly actually holding Government to account. It is going to have to nowadays because we are not going to be in the boom years any longer, but I feel that we have missed an opportunity by not putting it up to four-seat constituencies. In my opinion, I wondered not on the basis of the fact that, 'Oh, well, it saves my seat', but on the basis that four-seat constituencies, as my hon. colleague, who has not been here very long has pointed out, is getting national politics, and not dog dirt and pot holes. I felt that that has been far too often the position and I do feel that the opportunity should have been erased to create the seats being of a more realistic representation of being more four-seat constituencies than three, but some would argue that we have a vested interest because one in Onchan is going out at the next election, if not all three of us! *(Laughter and interjections)* **(Two Members:** Hear, hear.)

The situation is I want some assurances, also for my constituents, that we need to clarify that the House of Keys is not a glorified local authority. **(Two Members:** Hear, hear.) and I believe that the thing is that because of these boundary changes, my constituents, who I will lose at the boundaries, will not find themselves in a situation in Howstrake being dragged off to Lonan, which I am sure will not be the case. **(A Member:** No.) But the point is I am more concerned about my constituents in my constituency in Carrs Lane, down on Larch Hill Grove, not many voters where they are going into Doolish Twoaie, Douglas North, that that will not reflect on them being taken over by Douglas as an excuse on the backdoor of this representation, because I do feel national politicians should be elected on a national constituency and not on a local authority constituency basis and that is why I have some sympathy: at least it will get away from two or three tiny parish constituency representation with this.

I feel that we have not gone far enough. I will support the principle. It is Liberal Vannin policy for equality of representation as far as constituencies are concerned, even allowing for the fact that it will have a severe effect on my position as far as the next House of Keys Election in 2016, but I do feel that the Member needs to make it clear that these boundaries are boundaries for national constituencies and are not an excuse for Douglas to take over the few constituents that are in my parish and –

**Mr Henderson:** We don't want it, Peter. *(Laughter)* I can assure you.

**Mr Karran:** Well, you might not want it, but your Corporation definitely want to try and keep their incompetent ways going, as far as Douglas Corporation is concerned. **(Several Members:** Ooh!) *(Interjections)*

So I think, Hon. Members, the other thing that needs to be addressed, and it is about the maturity of how we have got to come on, that people today from 30 years ago have aspirations. It will not be like it used to be 30 or 40 years ago of the old ways and that is why this Chamber has got to change and that is why I am saddened that we have not managed to get the boundaries at four, like I originally proposed. I think that the issue of a single transferable vote should have been addressed, as far as this issue is concerned, because I think that would have guaranteed that different sections of the community **(A Member:** Hear, hear.) would have representation in this House and it would make it – *(Interjection)* Well, I think many people outside this Hon. House think that is not the case and they think the situation that some of them get in and then just bed into the environment.

**Mr Henderson:** That is rich coming from you! (*Laughter and interjection*)

**Mr Karran:** But the situation is that I do feel that the STV-type of voting would have been far better with a four-seat constituency because we do need to change it, and all I would say, Vainstyr Loayreyder, is I think some Members need to read their *Hansard* and see who said what, where it is said and how it has been proven right to be the case.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Rushen, Mr Skelly.

**Mr Skelly:** Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

First of all, thinking of my hon. colleague from Rushen's comments with regard to cars and the colour of the car, I would just like to say, I think it is definitely time for a car *wash*, (**Mr Gawne:** Hear, hear.) – so time for a change.

I guess, picking up from the Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Karran's comments with regard to bigger constituencies, I would 100% concur with that. I have said it before, I will say it again: the bigger the constituency, the bigger the politics. (**Mr Henderson:** Hear, hear.) When you have bigger constituencies – and we only have the biggest constituencies of three in Onchan, three in Rushen – you have a wide diversification of the population that you represent, and I have to say, it does work.

I would fully agree that four seats... I would take *six* seats over reducing the number, quite frankly! (*Laughter*) I really would, as a preference.

I would also say, we have had a missed opportunity – that was my point here: we also have local government reform. The Hon. Member for Castletown is passionate about this issue and this is around the corner, local government reform. We missed an opportunity with this Committee to give them that remit to fit the boundaries with local government reform.

The other big issue, which a lot of people have not picked up on, is voter apathy. I actually applaud the mover, because I know Glenfaba always has one of the highest turnouts, and I think that is fantastic, but we do have a problem across the Isle of Man with regard to voter apathy. It is an issue that we do need to think about, and we do need to understand what that concern is.

So, I think there are two missed opportunities with regard to the bigger constituencies, the bigger politics; and local government reform should have been part of the remit, as well as voter apathy.

I just would like to finish on the statement that I fully agree with voter equalisation (**Mr Cretney:** Hear, hear.) and on that basis, I will be supporting this.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Middle, Mr Quayle.

**Mr Quayle:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I felt need to rise my feet to congratulate the mover of this motion. Having listened to some of the other comments from Members, I think the analogy from Mr Gawne about the cars and the different colours, after listening to him on *Sunday Opinion*, he might have chosen a bus as an example, instead of a car!

Mr Karran: it is disappointing that people feel they will not vote because their area has been moved slightly. At the end of the day, you are voting for someone on national politics, not on what side of the street. So maybe they were saying they will not vote for you again, rather than they will not vote again – I do not know!

But on a more serious note, I think it is fair that everybody gets two votes. As Minister Anderson quite rightly pointed out, some people have had three votes and three MHKs and some one vote, one MHK to represent them. (*Interjections*) But also circa 4,000 voters in Middle had one vote, whilst in Douglas East and Douglas West, circa 4,000 voters had two votes and two MHKs. This proposal makes it fair and that is what politics should always be about.

**Mr Anderson:** Hear, hear.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Castletown, Mr Ronan.

**Mr Ronan:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Being new to this House, I suppose I am naive in the politics of how things work and how I suppose the obstacles are put in ways to trip things up and to slow things down, but I think, too, we have got to be careful here that we do not nit-pick to get where we need to be. I see this as a journey (**Mr Anderson:** Yes.) – a long journey to where we need to be.

It is pretty clear, my policies and one of my main issues in here is that on 14th February, Valentine's Day 2011, I resigned from local politics in Castletown Commissioners – a *very* difficult decision for me. I did so on the basis that I could not do my job because of the crossover between national and local politics.

Mr Quirk, I have listened to you in here now for two and half years: you are a good man, hardworking MHK, but I would say largely represent your constituents. We have to have the separation to become national politicians in here, (**Mr Gawne:** Hear, hear.) and if we do not make this bold move, whether it should be six, three or two... I will tell Hon. Members, I wanted six. (**Mr Gawne:** Hear, hear.) I did, because I thought... But at the day, we have got to start this journey to get to where we need to be. Is it perfect? I do not know. Is six perfect? But it is *equal*. Mr Skelly has said it: it is equal. And I would urge Members to support this Bill and, may I say, this journey to where we need to be to become solid national politicians.

I was at the Museum last night to listen to my Minister for Economic Development, the Chief Minister and the Treasury Minister, about making the fundamental changes to where we need to be. Well, we need to look at ourselves first and foremost. If we are going to make these bold steps, we need to be thinking nationally and internationally.

It is the one thing and the biggest frustration I have had since I have been in here, Mr Speaker: still the amount of detail and the amount of local stuff which, may I say, if we had proper, structured local authority beneath us would take away this *nonsense* which happens on a day-to-day basis, when we should be letting the Chief Minister and others deal with Health, ourselves dealing with China or whatever it may be.

We have to create the separation and I would urge Members and I would urge the public more than anybody to be aware of the smoke and mirrors which may come with any amendments and of the personal interests that would stop this going through.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mr Anderson to reply.

**Mr Anderson:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I thank Hon. Members for their contributions. It has been quite an interesting and at times (**A Member:** Predictable.) predictable debate, but I think the general consensus that is coming through is that people recognise this is, as Hon. Member, Mr Ronan says, a journey and we are taking a step on that journey. (**Mr Ronan:** Hear, hear.) It is not everything everybody wants, but we have to take one step at a time.

I will just go through, Hon. Members' comments, just to make a slight comment on those.

I was pleased that Minister Gawne found my contribution interesting and *charming*. (**Mr Gawne:** Yes!) (*Laughter*) He did acknowledge that it is fairer, and I think that is a consensus view in this House, that it is fairer. He did have issues with the Committee and the way they have come up with their proposals, but I think we have to recognise the Committee were taking a vast range of views on board and they had to come with up with a compromise that actually encompassed the resolutions that we passed in Tynwald about fairness and about equality. They were in a no-win situation and I believe they did a very good job in difficult circumstances.

Obviously, he did say... I think he said at the end that he would actually support the Bill, but he would be coming forward with some interesting amendments later on, so we look forward to seeing what those might be.

Minister Cregeen also could not understand the logic of the Committee's views, but as I have said, the Committee had come to a consensus view to move something forward. It has been nearly 30 years since we have had any changes to boundaries. We have had significant growth of population in different areas and things are really completely out of sync in some constituencies. Other people like Mrs Beecroft mentioned larger constituencies and some of us can acknowledge that might be the way in the future, but let's get the fairness into the system to start with and then maybe move forward.

I thank Mr Thomas for his contribution and his support. He did have one or two questions, and wondering if we are going to have a further Bill. We will have a further Bill, my understanding is, within the House of this parliament, that will actually address some of the areas of concern that he has raised, but I think it is important that we actually get this through to start with. Let's get equality across the board to start with and then not muddy the waters by two or three other issues being lumped in with the Bill, and risk the failure of the Bill itself. So that will be within the next Bill, as I understand it.

I would like also to thank Mr Quirk for his contribution. I know Mr Quirk has had serious concerns about the way that Onchan has been split up, but inevitably with a big constituency like Onchan, whatever the Boundary Commission would have recommended, it would have upset somebody. I believe they have recognised concerns raised and have made a compromise in their proposals.

I would also just say that, in relation to the issue that Mr Karran raised about voters of Onchan having to travel out into the countryside to vote, I am sure that will be taken into consideration and the polling stations will be in the appropriate places. That is something that will be looked at later on.

However, he did accept the principle of equality within his contribution and that is what is at the heart of this Bill. Put everything else to one side, put all our preferences to one side: this is what it is about. It is about equality and I think he can accept that principle.

It is nothing to do with local authority boundaries. That is completely a red herring. Do not let that get in the way of this debate. We have to move on, put that to one side.

So I would like to thank all Hon. Members for their contributions. I would like to thank particularly Mr Ronan in the way he summed it up there at the end, that we are on a journey and this is a step on that journey, if you like. We are talking about national politics and by actually having equality, we are actually moving in the right direction.

I acknowledge what Hon. Members are saying that we should have bigger constituencies so we are more national and we do not come down to the pot-hole sort of scenario, but that I think is something for the future.

I would like to recognise Mr Skelly's contribution. He recognised that it was a time for change and believes in equality and he too thought there should be bigger constituencies, but we have to recognise, it is a compromise at the end of the day.

Finally, I would just like to mention Mr Quayle. He is obviously in a constituency that is well out of sync. This puts a lot more emphasis into the equality situation, as far as Middle is concerned.

Therefore, I thank Hon. Members for their support and I beg to move.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, the motion before the House is that the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill be read for the second time. Those in favour say aye; against no. The ayes have it.

*A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:*

**FOR**

Mr Karran  
Mr Ronan  
Mr Crookall  
Mr Anderson  
Mr Bell  
Mr Singer  
Mr Quayle  
Mr Cannan  
Mrs Beecroft  
Mrs Cannel  
Mr Robertshaw  
Mr Shimmin  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Cretney  
Mr Skelly  
Mr Gawne  
The Speaker

**AGAINST**

Mr Quirk  
Mr Hall  
Mr Cregeen  
Mr Houghton  
Mr Henderson

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, 17 votes for, 5 votes against. The motion therefore carries.