

4.2. Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 2013 – Third Reading approved

Mr Anderson to move:

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

The Speaker: Lastly, we turn to the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, and I call the Member, Mr Anderson.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

This Bill puts into legislative form resolutions made by Tynwald that the 24 seats of the House of Keys be divided into 12 constituencies of two Members each, thereby delivering a quality of voting for and representation in the House of Keys. The new boundaries of the constituencies are set out in the Third Report of the Boundary Review Committee, which was approved by Tynwald.

The Bill also ensures that there will be regular review of the number and boundaries of constituencies in the future, through the appointment from 2021 and every second election thereafter of an Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission will also be able to consider such other matters relating to elections as Tynwald may by resolution direct. This Bill will come into effect in time for the General Election of 2016 and not before.

Hon. Members will excuse me if I do not go on at length in respect of the very significant purpose of this Bill. (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) The extensive and at times passionate debate on equality and fairness that took place in this House last week was, I feel, extremely helpful in highlighting the issues. One amendment has been made, which is under clause... 11A, Constituencies, the entry, which read 'Malew, Arbory and Castletown' has been replaced by 'Arbory, Malew and Castletown' and therefore placed at the head of the alphabetical list of constituencies.

It was also raised last week that there were one or two houses where it was unclear from the boundary maps in which constituencies they fell. If the Hon. Members would also like to provide me with the addresses of the properties, I will undertake to have these looked into and clarified as needed.

Mr Speaker, a lot of time and thought has been invested over the past three years in a sincere attempt to end inequality in elections to the House of Keys and in the levels of representation in the House. I am grateful to Members for the seriousness of and responsibility in which they have addressed this matter, and for their support and conviction in moving forward with the most far-reaching constitutional change our parliamentary system has achieved in decades.

Mr Speaker, therefore I beg to move the Bill be read for a third time.

The Speaker: I call Mr Gawne.

Mr Gawne: Gura mie eu, Loayreyder.

I am happy to second this, because despite what has been alleged by various Members of the House of Keys about my motivations, I have always supported the principle of equalisation. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) (*Interjections*) I just do not agree necessarily that we have been as bold as we should have been. So I am happy to support this.

I am disappointed obviously that the Bill moves forward to Legislative Council in a slightly less perfect way than it would have done had you listened to me last week, but I am more than happy to offer my support and I look forward to the 2016 election.

The Speaker: Before we proceed with the debate, Hon. Members, the mover, Mr Anderson, when referring to the amendment that was made under clause 3, 11A, said that the amended

version agreed was 'Arbory, Malew and Castletown'. The version I have printed is 'Arbory, Castletown and Malew'. Would the Member, for the record, agree with that?

Mr Anderson: For the record, Mr Speaker, I am happy to agree with that.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.
Now, the floor is open. Mr Quirk.

Mr Quirk: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Once again, I put on record that I have no animosity to the Member in moving this. I know when I first came into politics, he was the... well, yes, he was the first Minister that I was under, I suppose, if that is a technical term. So I am now holding nothing against him (*Interjections*) but still, at this eleventh hour, there is still an opportunity there.

I was hoping, and maybe still seeking assurance from the Member moving this, that a definitive map, especially of the Onchan areas which will be sliced away, and if I am seeking it right that he has actually given assurance that there is, I think, only one anomaly in Onchan where one property (*Laughter*) –

Mr Anderson: There is more than one! (*Laughter*)

Mr Bell: There are at least three!

Mr Quirk: – is one constituency or another, and I do not know whether we toss a coin or what happens, but it may be nice to give some clear guidance to that particular area.

I was disappointed really that Members of the House did not take the opportunity to support my colleague from Onchan, Mr Karran, to give that reassurance for the local authority areas, because only time will tell and history will come about when maybe we are not here, which will... maybe the warning that we gave that it may come about... that it will be just a snatch for convenience purposes for money or a particular boundary area and those persons who have enjoyed living in a constituency which has been progressive towards the future and provided facilities, homes, businesses and made the community of Onchan a lively place to live in and which people have enjoyed, by giving it the Third Reading here today.

Mr Anderson: We are not knocking it down.

Mr Quirk: My stance is going to be, Minister, as you always know... sorry, Member, backbencher... fellow backbencher now –

Mrs Cannell: Mr Speaker –

Mr Quirk: – that I still will be voting against it. (*Interjection by Mrs Cannell*)

As I say, it is nothing personal to the Member moving this, but I have to put on record that I was against it when it was first originally done. I do believe and support some of our colleagues from Rushen regarding, did the people who it has affected the second time round when a decision was made after the boundary review had another little cherry pick at it... were they given enough time to consult on that? The jury is definitely in for me: no, they did not.

Sorry, I am voting against.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I wonder if the hon. mover could advise the House on who he anticipates taking the Bill in the Legislative Council, because I think whoever takes it is largely dependent on the strength of the character of that individual, I think (*Interjection*) going by what the various Members have said through the reading of this Bill?

And further, whether the mover can advise that with a fair wind and the Bill receiving all of its approvals in another place and becoming law, when he would anticipate it coming into law? I know that it is very hard to judge, I expect, when he would expect Royal Assent, but how soon after Royal Assent would he anticipate the maps being available to indicate where the boundaries are of the new constituencies?

And finally, Mr Speaker, can I just offer my praise to the Hon. Member for the determined manner in which he has read and taken this Bill through all its stages. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) Praise to him for moving this, which is quite significant in moving forward in the history of the Isle of Man and its political structure.

Thank you.

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

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, we in the Liberal party support the principle of equality of representation as far as this is concerned. I believe that it has been a missed opportunity today as we did not follow the amendments I put down. I think it would have added to democracy, either to the structure as far as the parliamentary process is concerned, to have seen six four-seat constituencies. I am disappointed that the personalities got in the way, as far as many outside this Hon. House is concerned, giving the declaration that parliamentary seats are nothing to do with local authority seats. I think that amendment was a home goal to Government by not supporting it.

I also would like to put on record that whilst personally I supported the principles of electoral reform, and I know that many of my constituents are very, very disappointed with a two-seat constituency, I do believe that it is right that there should be the equalisation as far as representation is concerned.

When coming into this seat, we had the absurdity of where we had a Labour stronghold, namely, North Douglas, with 1,000 votes more than Ayre, and Ayre had two representatives to the Labour stronghold having one representative with 1,000 more voters to do the job. We have come a long way and I appreciate that.

I was somewhat disappointed with the way my amendments, as far as this Bill is concerned, were trying to be blackguarded as a way of delaying tactics. (**Mr Watterson:** Hear, hear.) (**Mr Gawne:** Shameful.) I did not put anything in the way as far as trying to sending it back to consultation, send it to commissions, and I just think it is just another appalling example of the press, once again, not giving a balanced opinion of some of us that have been in this House for maybe too long in many people's eyes, and not long enough as far as some other people are concerned.

Hon. Members, I hope that we can develop that national strategy, that national Government with two-seat constituencies. I am really pleased that we have hopefully killed off, once and for all, 24 single-seat constituencies, which would have left us no more than state representatives.

I think the decision has been made today, and obviously I will support, on the binding principle of the issue of equality of representation, something that we have always wanted to see, where many people have fought in the urban areas against the farming areas in the past to get equal representation, and I believe that this is a step in the right direction.

I just would like to say to the mover that I find it really quite a waste of resource, with the amendment that has been accepted, why there was a need for reprinting the Bill. I really do think that that was just a waste of paper, timber and resources, and I just would be either bemused to know why anybody wasted their time reprinting the Bill as it is not going to be... when it becomes an Act, it becomes a matter of law.

Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Mr Thomas.

Mr Thomas: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

A very short question: is the mover of this Bill, on behalf of Tynwald, happy to confirm that he expects the Representation of the People No. 2 to come back shortly; and, if so, given the high praise he has had from colleagues, would he perhaps consider bringing it back in the short future? *(Laughter)* I think he mentioned April at one point.

The Speaker: I call on the mover to reply, Mr Anderson.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank Hon. Members for their contributions.

As we have said before, this is a journey. We are not getting to the end destination maybe, but we are certainly going a long way down the road of equality and I welcome Mr Gawne's... who has acknowledged before that we are stepping out on a journey and acknowledging that it is a bit of a Damascus Road for Mr Gawne because he has now got up and seconded the Bill.

I do acknowledge the 'misreference' I made in my introductory remarks, Mr Speaker.

In relation to Mr Quirk, Mr Quirk has been consistent. He has been consistent in his remarks and we just have to agree to differ on this occasion I think. This is a significant change. It is a significant progress that we are going to these 12 two-seat constituencies. I think people have made their contributions and made their points well known and we will never all agree. We will all have an ideal within our own heads. This is a compromise, if you like, and who knows... Mr Karran was disappointed that some of his amendments had not been taken on board, but can I assure him that this is just for House of Keys constituencies; it has nothing to do with local authorities. We did not want that to be confused and that is why we rejected his amendment last time. I acknowledge that his party does agree with equal representation and that is why they supported the Bill thus far.

In relation to the Appointed Day Order, that will be in place, Mrs Cannell, for 2016, and that is when it comes into force. I suspect it will get approval very shortly, but the Appointed Day Order will be in time and that is the important thing.

In relation to the maps, they are already available in the Tynwald Library. If there is any confusion on individual areas, the Chief Secretary's Office will be quite happy to clarify any of that and make sure that if there are any changes needed, they will be made within a matter of weeks so that people know exactly where they stand on constituency boundaries.

In relation to Mr Karran's comment about this being a waste of paper, being reprinted, it is out of our control. That is something that is dealt with by the Clerk of Tynwald's Office and so he is gladly taking responsibility for that. *(Laughter)*

In relation to the No. 2 Bill, which the Chief Minister has given a reassurance only last week that it will come forward in a matter of haste, Hon. Members, that will be a CoMin Bill and therefore I look forward to somebody else taking that. *(Laughter)*

Mr Speaker, I beg to move the Third Reading of the Bill.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, I put the question that the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill be read for the third time. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. **(A Member:** Divide.) Division called.

Hon. Members, I must advise the voting system *is* working. There is a malfunction with the main screen, but the screen on the Clerk's desk is clearly working and is visible and the Clerk will read out the result.

Please vote, Hon. Members.

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 Teare
Mr Cannan
Mr Cregeen
Mrs Beecroft
Mrs Cannell
Mr Robertshaw
Mr Shimmin
Mr Thomas
Mr Skelly
Mr Gawne
The Speaker

AGAINST

Mr Quirk
Mr Hall
Mr Houghton
Mr Henderson
Mr Watterson

The Speaker: With 18 votes for, 5 votes against... would the Clerk read out the voting numbers, please?

The Secretary: Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill etc, Third Reading: 18 votes for, 5 against.

A Member: Could you call the names?

The Speaker: Could you announce the names of the Members voting accordingly?

The Secretary: Those who voted for: Mr Karran, Mr Ronan, Mr Crookall, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Mr Singer, Mr Quayle, Mr Teare, Mr Cannan, Mr Cregeen, Mrs Beecroft, Mrs Cannell, Mr Robertshaw, Mr Shimmin, Mr Thomas, Mr Skelly, Mr Gawne and Mr Speaker.

Those who voted against: Mr Quirk, Mr Hall, Mr Houghton, Mr Henderson, Mr Watterson.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members.

That concludes the business of the House today. The House will now stand adjourned until the next sitting, which will take place at 10 o'clock on 11th March in this Chamber.