

From: John Stanley, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Boundary Commission

Political

Office

The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Mrs Margaret CONFIDENTIAL

As you asked, I am writing to you about the reasons why the inner city areas are almost certainly bound to be over represented under the present Rules for the Redistribution of Seats. In case you want to refer to it again, I have given to David Wolfson the paper I wrote in 1976 called "The Parliamentary Boundary Commissions and the Agenda for the Proposed Speakers Conference - The bias in the electoral system against the Conservative Party" in which the whole problem of bias is spelt out in some detail.

As far as the over-representation of the inner-city areas is concerned, this is caused by the conjunction of 2 factors:

1. that the Commission is obliged by the Rules for the Redistribution of Seats, Rule 7 in this case, to use figures for the sizes of electorates that are applicable when the review starts. The present boundaries are in fact based on 1965 electorates. Plus:
2. that there is no provision in the Rules for the Redistribution of Parliamentary Boundaries, unlike in those for Local Government Boundaries, for taking into account clear trends in population movement.

The net effect of using historic electorate sizes and of largely ignoring future trends is that there is a substantial time-lag in the population decline of the inner city areas being reflected in the parliamentary boundaries. This, on balance, clearly works to the advantage of the Labour Party.

The judgement that has to be made is whether the Rules for Redistribution can be considered by a Speakers Conference and amended quickly enough to allow the Commission's Report under the amended Rules to be implemented before the next General Election.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours ever,
John