

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales

Attached is the report of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales together with a minute by the Home Secretary proposing:-

- i. to accept the report in its entirety
- ii. to lay the draft order before the House on Monday 7 February
- iii. as discussed in Cabinet, to arrange a debate on the Welsh, Scottish and, if possible, English reports before 16 March, the date of the Privy Council meeting.

At Flag A is a brief summary of the report. Broadly, the Commission proposes an increase in the number of seats in Wales from 36 to 38. At the last election the 36 were divided 21 Labour (3 of them now Social Democrat), 11 Conservative, 2 Plaid Cymru, 1 Liberal and the Speaker. The Commission's proposals were highly controversial, leaving only 3 constituencies unchanged. This was the product of the local government reorganisation of Wales. Particular casualties of the revision of constituencies are Michael Foot's seat at Ebbw Vale and Neil Kinnock's seat at Bedwellty.

Do you agree to the Home Secretary's proposals for the handling of the report?

28 January 1983

Yes mb

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PRIME MINISTER

THIRD PERIODICAL REPORT OF THE
PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

report in folder attached to file
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I have now received the Third Periodical Report of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales containing its recommendations for constituencies in Wales. Attached as an Annex to this minute is an analysis of the recommendations.

The House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act 1949 requires me to lay a report of a Parliamentary Boundary Commission before Parliament as soon as may be after receiving it, together with the draft of an Order giving effect, with or without modifications, to the report's recommendations. H Committee agreed on 1 November 1982 that only one draft Order should be laid for each part of the United Kingdom and that as little time as possible should elapse between receipt of a report and the laying of the relevant draft Order (H(82)18th). It falls to me to decide whether to make any modifications to the Commission's proposals, and how quickly to lay the draft Order and when to arrange the ensuing debates.

Possible modifications to the Commission's recommendations are set out in paragraph 7 of the attached Annex. I propose to make no modifications, for the following reasons:-

- (a) Parliament should have the opportunity to discuss the Commission's recommendations as submitted to me;
- (b) however strong the case, any proposed modifications should in fairness be published and representations invited; to do this will delay implementation of all the other recommendations;
- (c) the points made in the representations about Clwyd and Dyfed were considered by the Welsh Commission before making final recommendations for those areas.

As to timing, I would propose to lay the draft Order on Monday, 7 February. This will cut down the scope for legal challenge and for making representations. The draft Order will then have to be approved by both Houses and made by Her Majesty in Council. There is a Privy Council meeting on 16 March. The timing of the debates on the Welsh draft Constituencies Order must depend in part on when we receive the English and Scottish Reports. I understand that the Scottish Commission is unlikely

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to report before mid-February. I would recommend, therefore, that we try to arrange for all three draft Constituencies Orders to be debated in both Houses before the Privy Council meeting on 16 March. If the English Report is delayed beyond the end of February I would further recommend that we arrange to debate the Welsh and Scottish draft Constituencies Orders together before the Privy Council meeting on 16 March.

Unless I hear to the contrary from colleagues before mid-day on 2 February I shall assume I have agreement to proceed as proposed.

I am copying this minute and enclosure to all members of Cabinet, the Attorney General, the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

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January 1983

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PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES: ANALYSIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales has recommended 38 constituencies, 2 more than at present.

Background

2. The Commission deferred the start of its review until 1981, when it decided that it could wait no longer for the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales to re-ward all the districts in the principality if it was to report by 1984.

Overall view

3. The Welsh Commission's proposals for new constituencies are radical: only 3 constituencies remain unchanged in either electorate size or area. The main reason is the change in local authority areas following the Local Government Act 1972, which mean that 12 of the existing 36 constituencies cross county boundaries. Population shifts have also led to electoral disparities: nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ of existing constituencies have electorates more than 15% higher or lower than the electoral quota. As a result, some of the well-known South Wales valley constituencies, for example, will disappear under the Commission's proposals to be replaced by constituencies more closely linked to the new districts and contained within the new county boundaries.

4. The Commission used district wards as its building blocks, but because of the slow progress of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales in completing its special community reviews and its district electoral reviews, most of the wards used are those created provisionally in 1973. This means that when new wards are, in time, created some are bound to cross the new constituency boundaries.

5. The chief gainers in Wales are the Counties of Gwynedd and Powys. Each was allocated one more seat than it was strictly entitled to following a local inquiry: in the first case, in order to avoid creating a constituency which contained Bangor and the Isle of Anglesey and in the second, because of the large sparsely populated area of the county. No county has lost seats.

Contentious areas

6. The inevitably radical re-drawing of constituencies made the Welsh Commission's review highly contentious. However, the final recommendations in many cases take account of points made at local inquiries and the allocation of extra seats to Gwynedd and Powys, in particular, should mean that some parts of the report will find acceptance. Contentious issues remaining are likely to be: in Mid-Glamorgan and Gwent, the disappearance of such well-known constituencies as Ebbw Vale and Bedwellty (which cross county boundaries); in Dyfed, the disappearance of the boundary between the old (pre-1972) counties of Pembroke and Cardigan as the boundary between the constituencies of those names; in Clwyd, the placing of Rhyl and Prestatyn in two separate constituencies; and, in South Glamorgan, the splitting of the Vale of Glamorgan into 2 constituencies.

MODIFICATIONS

7. Representations seeking modifications have been received in respect of:
- a. Clwyd: the Rhyl Ratepayers & Tenants Association objects to the placing of Rhyl and Prestatyn in two separate constituencies. This point has been considered by the Commission and rejected (paras 47 and 54-57).
 - b. Dyfed: Preseli District Council have asked for a meeting with the Home Secretary to discuss objections to the division of the present Pembroke constituency and the proposed inclusion of part of that seat (and Preseli District) in the Ceredigion and Pembroke North constituency. This point has been considered by the Commission and rejected (paras 68-71).

Parliament



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

31 January 1983

Dear Lesley,

The Prime Minister has now seen the Home Secretary's minute of 27 January about the arrangements for the handling of the report of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales. Mrs. Thatcher has, subject to the views of colleagues, agreed to the arrangements set out in the Home Secretary's minute.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of Cabinet, and to the Attorney General, the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever,

Tim Flesher

TIM FLESHER

Mrs Lesley Pallett
Home Office