

**2.14 Deputy M.R. Higgins of the Chairman of Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding the Venice Commission's guidelines on voter equity:**

Does the Chairman agree that while the inclusion of Constables in the States Assembly is not a prerequisite for democracy, that voter equity is? What advice, if any, has been taken regarding the likely consequences of not meeting the Venice Commission's guidelines on voter equity, if either option B or C is selected as a basis for the States Assembly after 2014?

**The Connétable of St. Helier (Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee):**

The importance of voter equity and the effect on it of the inclusion of the Constables in the States Assembly is fully explained in the report by the Electoral Commission to which I refer the Deputy. As for the Venice Commission and the taking of advice, I have previously indicated in answer to a question that I do not believe the States instructed or otherwise expected Privileges and Procedures Committee to peer review the work of the Electoral Commission. P.P.C. received the Electoral Commission's final report and the recommendations on 10th January this year and lodged P.5 as soon as possible thereafter as per the Commission's terms of reference.

**2.14.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Will the Chairman accept that the Electoral Commission stated that anything other than option A would not give voter equity, and therefore if the public do adopt B and C we are going to have more inequity in this Island in terms of representation than before?

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

I think the Deputy has merely stated what is explicit in the report of the Electoral Commission.

**Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

Sir, you never look in this direction. It is as bad as cutting off the Connétable of St. John's knees.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

I shall try and look at you more often.

**2.14.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

That is nice. Will the Privileges and Procedures Committee be asking the Electoral Commission to give thought as to what happens to voter equity if there is a large housing development in a Parish? Will P.P.C. be asking for a procedure for boundary changes to be instigated?

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

The simple answer to that question is no, because the Electoral Commission has finished its work.

**2.14.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

But is this not an area that thought should be given to because if there is a large housing development in a Parish then the whole voter equity, the numbers, will be up in the air again and will have to be recalculated. Does the Chairman not agree?

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

I do agree with the Senator that the number of people in each constituency is a matter of importance, and depending on what option is preferred by the public on referendum day, on 24th April, and depending on what the States do with that favoured option, clearly P.P.C. may have to go back and revisit the matter.

**2.14.4 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:**

The question indicates that B does not meet the Venice Commission requirements. Could the Connétable give his view as to whether or not B, in his reading of the Venice Commission, does meet its requirements because of the historic boundary issues?

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

I must say I am uncomfortable in answering that question, given the fact that I have made my support for reform option A known. I cannot therefore speak on the Committee's behalf regarding the relative merits of the referendum options. As far as I am aware, only option A meets the Venice Commission's guidelines, but I do understand that they are best practice and they do not carry the force of law.