

# ELECTORAL REFORM SOCIETY



6 Chancel Street, Blackfriars, London SE1 0UU  
Tel: 0171-928 1622 Fax: 0171-401 7789  
email: ers@reform.demon.co.uk.

President: Rt Hon Baroness Seear, PC  
Immediate Past President:  
Lord Blake, FBA

To David Ford,

Thought these would  
be useful for party.

(3 copies encl.)

Amended ref. Italy page 21.

D. Cheyne Esq.,  
30, Railway Street,  
LISBURN,  
Co. Antrim.  
Northern Ireland.  
BT28 1XG

8th. March 1996

Dear Mr Cheyne,

Please find enclosed the requested 5 copies of 12 Democracies. As I am sure you know, the Italians have now changed their electoral system to a system under which 75% of the MPs are elected from single member constituencies and 25% from national lists. They are however elected separately, there is no attempt to elect list MPs so as to offset any disproportionality arising from the use of first-past-the-post.

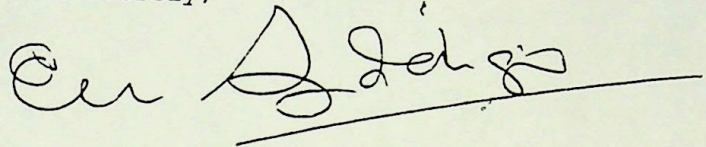
As I understand the position, election by Party List PR has been suggested by John Hume and Ian Paisley. The reason for suggesting it be used being to ensure that the fringe Unionist parties which are linked to the para-military groups obtain representation. However as John Hume does not want 90 elected, I am puzzled as to how these fringe groups would be elected except by a reserved place. The other rumoured reason for John Hume and Ian Paisley's support for party lists, is that they both poll better than their normal party support at the Euro-elections, and therefore under a list system their parties would poll better if the election was to be province wide.

However its introduction does require primary legislation and would require the training of staff and the education of the voters. The form which Hume/Paisley want would be an ordered list, (like the German Second Vote), the voter only being able to vote for the list as decided by the political party. There would be no vote for an individual candidate as in some of the systems described in 12 Democracies. Thus those elected would not be directly answerable and accountable to the voters, but only through the political party. Also very small parties that do not win any seats will find that their supporters cannot transfer their votes to candidates they can help, as can be done under STV. Another problem is the definition of what constitutes a political party. In most countries there is a formal

registration procedure. This takes the form in some places of a claim to be registered, which has to be supported by a defined number of people whose names appear on the electoral register. Earlier this week the Danish electoral law was sent to us in an English translation, and applying it to Northern Ireland would mean that the claim would have to be signed by 7,036 registered voters. These would, of course, have to be checked by the electoral registration department to ensure they were all on the Electoral register. It could be quite a hurdle for a small political party with a limited access to volunteer workers.

I hope this gives you some idea of the kind of difficulties which would have to be addressed before a list PR system was introduced.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'E.M. Syddique', written over a horizontal line.

E.M. Syddique (Chief Executive)