

Association for a Democratic Socialist Europe

The Argument for Mini-Regions.

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There is an increasing demand in all the countries of the European Community for government to be brought "closer to the people". It was in response to this demand that regional assemblies were set up in France in 1973 and in Italy in 1977, as attempts to decentralise the government of these countries. Similar assemblies are planned for all parts of Belgium and for two parts of the United Kingdom, namely, Scotland and Wales.

The experience of regional assemblies provides an argument against large regions. This is that the administration of a large region is remote from the people. Instead of bringing government closer to the people, such regionalism merely increases bureaucracy by adding another tier of government to the existing ones. In France there are now assemblies for the communes, arrondissements, departments and regions as well as the National Assembly, i.e., a five tier system of government. In Italy there are assemblies for the communes, comprensori, and regions as well as the national parliament, i.e., a four tier system of government added to which are the provinces into which the Italian regions are divided for administrative purposes. In Belgium, regional assemblies will be added to the existing ones for the communes, provinces and nation, i.e., another tier of government will be added to the existing three. If and when a Scottish assembly is set up, it will be added to the existing councils of the Scottish districts and regions so as to provide a fourth tier of government between them and the United Kingdom Parliament. Similarly, if a Welsh assembly is set up, it will provide a fourth tier of government between the Welsh district and County Councils on the one hand and the United Kingdom Parliament on the other.

The West German experience of regionalism is ambiguous, because the sizes of the Lander vary so much. Some Lander are small in area and population and have only one or two tiers of local government below the government of the Land, e.g., Schleswig-Holstein, Saarland, Hamburg and Bremen. The larger Lander, however, have three tiers of Local government below the government of the Land, namely, commune, Kreis and Regierungbezirk.

Every tier of government in the European Community has its own civil servants often duplicating the functions of those working in other tiers. Responsibilities and problems are often passed from one tier of government to another causing administrative delays and incompetence. The electorate does not understand which tier of government is responsible for which government activity and so the whole system falls into disrepute.

There remains the old desire of the British Labour Party for single-tier most-purpose local authorities, as expressed in the Redcliffe-Maud Report on Local Government in England and Wales. This desire is compatible with regionalism if mini-regions are set up. These mini-regions could have an average population of less than a million and could be small in area. They would be based on the existing units of local administration in the European Community. They would accommodate the wish for self-government of small units like Luxembourg

Saarland, Cornwall and Orkney. Such mini-regions would be as follows:

- The 46 English Counties - average population - 1 million
- The 8 Welsh Counties - average population - 330,000
- The 12 Scottish Regions - average population - 500,000

The 6 traditional counties of Northern Ireland
Average population: - 250,000

The 3 United Kingdom Crown Dependencies, i.e.,
Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey
Average population: - 50,000

The 26 Counties of the Republic of Ireland
Average population: - 100,000

The 96 Departments of Metropolitan France
and the 4 Overseas Departments
Average population: - 500,000

The 9 Provinces of Belgium plus the Bruxelles
Region. Average population: - 1 million

The 11 traditional Provinces of The Netherlands
Average population: - 1 million

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Population: - 330,000

The 14 Amter of Denmark, plus Faeroerne.
and Gronland.
Average Population:- 300,000

The 95 Provinces of Italy
Average Population: - 500,000

The 4 Smaller Lander of West Germany,
i.e., Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg,
Bremen and Saarland
Average Population:- 1,500,00

The 30 Regierungsbezirke of the 6 larger
Lander of West Germany
Average Population:- 1,330,000

The map shows that the proposed mini-regions would all be similar in size, i.e., about 3,000 square kilometres. This means that a regional centre would be accessible from all parts of the region within an hour or two's travelling time. This is certainly not the case in the existing and planned large regions. The mini-regions could take over the functions of all the existing multi-tier local, municipal and regional authorities in the European Community, namely, communes, parishes, districts, boroughs, arrondissements, comprensori, Kreise, cities, departments, provinces, Amter, Regierungsbezirke, regions and Lander. Thus mini-regions could become single tier units of administration and planning in the European Community.

These mini-regions would be easily identifiable by their inhabitants. Every person in England knows what county he lives in, even if only from his postal address. However, few English people know what region they live in. Three different sets of regions for England are proposed as alternatives by the 1977 Labour Party Consultation Document on Regional Authorities

In France, some of the regions which have been instituted are artificial creations, e.g., "Centre" and "Rhône-Alpes". Others signify by their hyphenated names that they are forced amalgamations of historic regions, e.g., Languedoc-Roussillon and Champagne-Ardenne. The French departments remain the basic units of administration and postal areas.

Similarly, in Italy, some of the regions are forced amalgamations with hyphenated names, i.e., Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Emilia-Romagna. In spite of these amalgamations the Italian regions vary widely in population. Several have populations of less than a million, e.g., Trentino-Alto Adige, Umbria, Molise, Basilicata and Valle d'Aosta. Others have populations of over 5 million, e.g., Lombardia, Lazio, Campania and Sicilia.

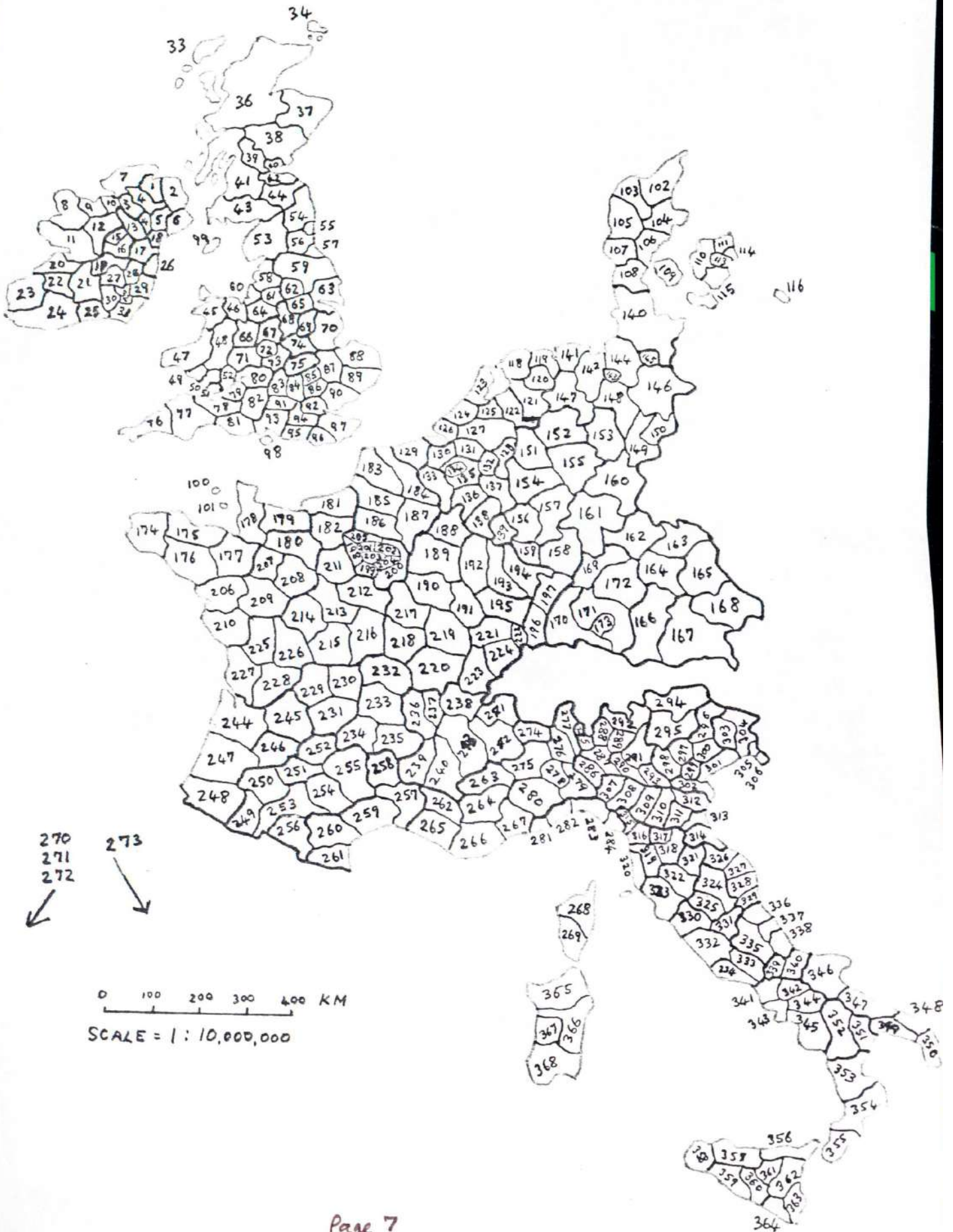
Likewise, in West Germany many of the Lander have hyphenated names being artificial amalgamations of historic regions, e.g., Nordrhein-Westfalen, which consists of the northern part of Rheinland, plus Westfalen. Again, notwithstanding these amalgamations, the Lander vary in population from under a million in Bremen to over 10 million in Bayern and Nordrhein-Westfalen. Thus, the existing and planned regions of the European Community lack the homogeneity in population of the proposed mini-regions.

The existing regions of the European Community are mostly artificial, having been set up by government decisions since the 2nd World War. The proposed mini-regions are based on the historic traditional units of government in Europe. The English counties were instituted over a thousand years ago, the Irish counties and Netherlands' provinces in the 17th Century, the French departments in the 18th century and the Belgian and Italian provinces in the 19th century when Belgium and Italy achieved statehood.

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NORTHERN IRELAND

1. Londonderry
2. Antrim
3. Fermanagh
4. Tyrone
5. Armagh
6. Down

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

7. Donegal
8. Mayo
9. Sligo
10. Leitrim
11. Galway
12. Roscommon
13. Cavan
14. Monaghan
15. Longford
16. Westmeath
17. Meath
18. Louth
19. Offaly
20. Clare
21. Tipperary
22. Limerick
23. Kerry
24. Cork
25. Waterford
26. Dublin
27. Laois
28. Kildare
29. Wicklow
30. Kilkenny
31. Wexford
32. Carlow

SCOTLAND

33. Western Isles
34. Orkney
35. Shetland
36. Highland
37. Grampian
38. Tayside
39. Central
40. Fife
41. Strathclyde
42. Lothian
43. Dumfries & Galloway
44. Borders

WALES

45. Gwynedd
46. Clwyd
47. Dyfed
48. Powys
49. West Glamorgan
50. Mid Glamorgan
51. South Glamorgan
52. Gwent

ENGLAND

53. Cumbria
54. Northumberland
55. Tyne & Wear
56. Durham
57. Cleveland
58. Lancashire
59. North Yorkshire
60. Merseyside
61. Greater Manchester
62. West Yorkshire
63. Humberside
64. Cheshire
65. South Yorkshire
66. Salop
67. Staffordshire
68. Derbyshire
69. Nottinghamshire
70. Lincolnshire
71. Hereford & Worcester
72. West Midlands
73. Warwickshire
74. Leicestershire
75. Northamptonshire
76. Cornwall
77. Devon
78. Somerset
79. Avon
80. Gloucestershire
81. Dorset
82. Wiltshire
83. Oxfordshire
84. Buckinghamshire
85. Bedfordshire
86. Hertfordshire
87. Cambridgeshire
88. Norfolk
89. Suffolk
90. Essex
91. Berkshire
92. Greater London
93. Hampshire
94. Surrey
95. West Sussex
96. East Sussex
97. Kent
98. Isle of Wight

U.K. CROWN DEPENDENCIES

99. Isle of Man
100. Guernsey
101. Jersey

DENMARK

102. Nordjylland
103. Viborg
104. Arhus
105. Ringkobing
106. Vejle
107. Ribe
108. Sonderjylland
109. Fyn
110. Vestsjaelland
111. Frederiksborg
112. Faeroerne (outside scope of application of E.E.C.)
113. Roskilde
114. Kobenhavn
115. Storstrom
116. Bornholm
117. Gronland

NEDERLAND

118. Friesland
119. Groningen
120. Drenthe
121. Overijssel
122. Gelderland
123. Noord-Holland
124. Zuid-Holland
125. Utrecht
126. Zeeland
127. Noordbrabant
128. Limburg

BELGIQUE

129. West-Vlaanderen
130. Oost-Vlaanderen
131. Antwerpen
132. Limburg
133. Hainaut
134. Bruxelles
135. Brabant
136. Namur
137. Liege
138. Luxembourg

GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG

BUNDES REPUBLIC
DEUTSCHLAND

- 140. Schleswig-Holstein
- 141. Aurich
- 142. Oldenburg
- 143. Bremen
- 144. Stade
- 145. Hamburg
- 146. Luneburg
- 147. Osnabruck
- 148. Hannover
- 149. Hildesheim
- 150. Braunschweig
- 151. Dusseldorf
- 152. Munster
- 153. Detmold
- 154. Koln
- 155. Arnsberg
- 156. Trier
- 157. Koblenz
- 158. Rheinhessen-Pfalz
- 159. Saarland
- 160. Kassel
- 161. Darmstadt
- 162. Unterfranken
- 163. Oberfranken
- 164. Mittelfranken
- 165. Oberpfalz
- 166. Schwaben
- 167. Oberbayern
- 168. Niederbayern
- 169. Nordbaden
- 170. Sudbaden
- 171. Sudwurttemberg
- 172. Nordwurttemberg
- 173. Hohenzollern

FRANCE

- 174. Finisterre
- 175. Cotes-du-Nord
- 176. Morbihan
- 177. Ille-et-Vilaine
- 178. Manche
- 179. Calvados
- 180. Orne
- 181. Seine-Maritime
- 182. Eure
- 183. Pas-de-Calais
- 184. Nord
- 185. Somme
- 186. Oise
- 187. Aisne
- 188. Ardennes
- 189. Marne
- 190. Aube
- 191. Haute-Marne
- 192. Meuse
- 193. Meurthe-et-Moselle
- 194. Moselle
- 195. Vosges
- 196. Haute-Rhin
- 197. Bas-Rhin
- 198. Yvelines
- 199. Essone
- 200. Seine-et-Marne
- 201. Hauts-de-Seine
- 202. Seine-Saint-Denis
- 203. Paris
- 204. Val-de-Marne
- 205. Val-d'Oise
- 206. Loire-Atlantique
- 207. Mayenne
- 208. Sarthe
- 209. Marne-et-Loire
- 210. Vendee
- 211. Eur-et-loire
- 212. Loiret
- 213. Loire-et-Cher
- 214. Indre-et-Loire
- 215. Indre
- 216. Cher
- 217. Yonne
- 218. Nièvre
- 219. Cote-d'or
- 220. Soane-et-Loire
- 221. Haute-Soane
- 222. Belfort
- 223. Jura
- 224. Doubs
- 225. Deux-Sevres
- 226. Vienne
- 227. Charente-Maritime
- 228. Charente
- 229. Haute-Vienne
- 230. Creuse
- 231. Correze
- 232. Allier
- 233. Puy-de-Dome
- 234. Cantal
- 235. Haute-Loire
- 236. Loire
- 237. Rhone
- 238. Ain
- 239. Ardeche
- 240. Drome
- 241. Haute-Savoie
- 242. Savoie
- 243. Isere
- 244. Gironde
- 245. Dordogne
- 246. Lot-et-Garonne
- 247. Landes
- 248. Basses-Pyrenees
- 249. Hautes-Pyrenees
- 250. Gers
- 251. Tarn-et-Garonne
- 252. Lot
- 253. Haute-Garonne
- 254. Tarn
- 255. Aveyron
- 256. Ariège
- 257. Gard
- 258. Lozere
- 259. Herault
- 260. Aude
- 261. Pyrenees-Orientales
- 262. Vaucluse
- 263. Hautes-Alpes
- 264. Basses-Alpes
- 265. Bouches-du-Rhone
- 266. Var
- 267. Alpes-Maritimes
- 268. Haute-Corse
- 269. Corse du Sud
- 270. Gaudeloupe
- 271. Martinique
- 272. Guiane
- 273. Reunion

ITALIA

- | | | | |
|------|---------------|------|-----------------|
| 274. | Valle d'Aosta | 333. | Frosinone |
| 275. | Torino | 334. | Latina |
| 276. | Vercelli | 335. | L'Aquila |
| 277. | Novara | 336. | Teramo |
| 278. | Asti | 337. | Pescara |
| 279. | Alessandria | 338. | Chieti |
| 280. | Cuneo | 339. | Isernia |
| 281. | Imperia | 340. | Campobasso |
| 282. | Savona | 341. | Caserta |
| 283. | Genova | 342. | Benevento |
| 284. | La Spezia | 343. | Napoli |
| 285. | Varese | 344. | Avellino |
| 286. | Pavia | 345. | Salerno |
| 287. | Milano | 346. | Foggia |
| 288. | Como | 347. | Bari |
| 289. | Bergamo | 348. | Brindisi |
| 290. | Cremona | 349. | Taranto |
| 291. | Brescia | 350. | Lecce |
| 292. | Sondrio | 351. | Matera |
| 293. | Mantova | 352. | Potenza |
| 294. | Bolzano | 353. | Cosenza |
| 295. | Trento | 354. | Catanzaro |
| 296. | Belluno | 355. | Reggio Calabria |
| 297. | Vicenza | 356. | Messina |
| 298. | Verona | 357. | Palermo |
| 299. | Padova | 358. | Trapani |
| 300. | Treviso | 359. | Agrigento |
| 301. | Venezia | 360. | Caltanissetta |
| 302. | Rovigo | 361. | Enna |
| 303. | Pordenone | 362. | Catania |
| 304. | Udine | 363. | Siracusa |
| 305. | Gorizia | 364. | Ragusa |
| 306. | Trieste | 365. | Sassari |
| 307. | Piacenza | 366. | Nuoro |
| 308. | Parma | 367. | Oristano |
| 309. | Reggio Emilia | 368. | Cagliari |
| 310. | Modena | | |
| 311. | Bologna | | |
| 312. | Ferrara | | |
| 313. | Ravenna | | |
| 314. | Forli | | |
| 315. | Massa Carrara | | |
| 316. | Lucca | | |
| 317. | Pistoia | | |
| 318. | Firenze | | |
| 319. | Pisa | | |
| 320. | Livorno | | |
| 321. | Arezzo | | |
| 322. | Siena | | |
| 323. | Grosseto | | |
| 324. | Perugia | | |
| 325. | Terni | | |
| 326. | Pesaro-Urbino | | |
| 327. | Ancona | | |
| 328. | Macerata | | |
| 329. | Ascoli Piceno | | |
| 330. | Viterbo | | |
| 331. | Rieti | | |
| 332. | Roma | | |

Tawney Society Discussion Paper

Decentralization of Government

The key question regarding decentralization is the unit of administration chosen on which to devolve functions from the centre. England and Wales already have a two-tier system of local government. If regional assemblies were added to this as a third tier, all that in practice would happen would be that administration would become more inefficient. The extra tier would provide further opportunity for buck-passing and expensive duplication of functions. It would also be contrary to the recom^mendations of all the responsible bodies who have investigated the system of local government since the War.

The National Association of Local Government Officers and then the Radcliffe-Maude Royal Commission Report on Local Government came to the conclusion that the most efficient system would be single-tier, with each unit having a population of about 300,000. However the Conservatives rejected this and instead opted for a two-tier scheme. *They nevertheless did* accept the recommendation that a unit of about a quarter of million people was the smallest practical one for local administration.

Therefore, when a new system local government came into force in Greater London in 1965 and then in the rest of England and Wales in 1974, each Metropolitan Borough Council and each "shire" (ie non Metropolitan) County Council was constituted so as to have a population equal or greater to that figure. However these units formed only one of two tiers. The "shire" Counties were divided into Districts and the Metropolitan Boroughs were grouped together into Metropolitan Counties. It would be easy to convert the present two tiers into a viable one-tier system by abolishing the Districts in "shire" Counties and abolishing the Metropolitan Counties (including the Greater London Council).

England and Wales are small in area and densely populated. *There* is therefore no necessity for a multi-tier system of administration to accommodate large and diverse areas. If it is desired to give home rule to Scotland and Wales this should be done. The Royal Commission on the Constitution came to the conclusion that there was no desire for regional

government in England. Therefore de-centralisation of the United Kingdom could and should only take the form of assemblies for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but should not mean setting up an undesired and uncalled-for system of regional authorities in England.

Functions which require a regional rather than a local system of administration, such as police forces, hospitals and water supplies, could be carried out by bodies constituted on a similar basis to the present Police Committees and ^{thus} consisting of members of the County Councils in the region concerned. Co-ordinating committees to carry out regional functions, could be formed in this way, thus avoiding the necessity for regional assemblies with separate directly elected members, separate officials and separate powers. The creation of another expensive layer of local government would thereby be avoided.

The existing two-tier system of local government in this country is neither popular nor understood. ^{often} less than a third of the electorate vote in local elections and most of the representations regarding local government functions are mistakenly made to the wrong authorities. For instance some Members of Parliament have calculated that over 80% of the communications they receive from constituents are nothing to do with central government and therefore have to be passed on ^{to} the appropriate local authorities to whom they should have been made in the first place. Also most of the electorate do not understand which of the two tiers in their locality deals with which function. This confusion is increased by the fact that the higher tier often delegates some of its functions to the lower one. *The Greater London Council for instance* allows the London Boroughs to exercise many of its housing responsibilities.

A one-tier system of local government would mean that there would be no confusion as to the relevant local authority. The population of the units constituting the single tier would be at least 250 thousand. These units would therefore be large enough to efficiently carry out functions such as housing and education. Decentralization could be achieved by transferring to them some functions at present performed by central government.

In addition, if it is desired, other functions could be given to assemblies in Scotland and Wales. In fact the Scottish Nationalist

Party has stated that it desires a single-tier system of local government in Scotland to replace the two-tier system introduced there in 1975. Such a system has been established in Northern Ireland. England, Scotland and Wales have a two-tier system which could easily be converted into a single tier one. The danger which must be avoided is the preservation of the existing two tiers with the addition of a third "provincial" tier, thereby creating a horrendous scheme in which there is central government and also three layers of local government, with the electorate having to pay for all of them and not understanding which one deals with what function.

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