



Not By the People

The Launch of the Commission on Fair Access to Political Influence

Summary Report

To find out if the people who called to advise the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government are representative of the Scottish population as a whole, the Jimmy Reid Foundation (with support from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust) looked at all appointments to public bodies in Scotland and everyone who gave evidence to one of nine Committees of the Scottish Parliament over the last five years. All 3,000 individuals were then put into groups according to their income. No proper income data is collected so a methodology was created which looked at declared interests, published pay scales where available and worked from job titles to estimate salary where other methods were not available. The proportions in each group were then compared to the proportion of the entire Scottish population in the same income band to see how closely the 'political insiders' reflect the Scottish people.

	Income less than £24k (%)	Income between £24k and £34k (%)	Income over £34k (%)
Proportion giving evidence to Committees	3	21	67
Proportion appointed to public bodies	11.0	21	71
Proportion of in-work population	69.5	17.5	13.0

These results underestimate the problem. In fact, the vast majority of the people in the 'over £34k' bracket will in fact earn much more than this - it is likely that they mostly come from the top five per cent of society, but lack of adequate data makes this impossible to examine. The public appointments from those with income under £24k are mainly elected Councillors; if those are

removed the number is about the same as those giving evidence to committees. Where in doubt we put people in a lower bracket - for example, the middle group will contain people who are 'retired' but may still have a high income.

But even from these underestimated figures we can see that the income group from which about 70 per cent of the 'insiders' come from represents only 13 per cent of the population and the 70 per cent of the population earning on or below average salary make up only about three per cent of the 'insiders'. The people who advise government and parliament in no way reflect the economic position of the Scottish population.

We also put organisations into categories to see who is invited to give committee evidence most often. About half come from public sector organisations (which is to be expected as committees will review their performance etc.). Of the rest, we can see that business and professional or commercial interests are almost three times more likely to be invited to give evidence as broad-based member organisations or civil society bodies.

Breakdown of Representative Groups Giving Evidence to Parliamentary Committees		
	Occasions	Percentage
Commercial/Business Interest	171	28
Other interest or lobby groups	31	5
Professional groups	244	39
Broader civil society	171	28

Professor Steve Richter is a psychologist with expertise in leadership. He points out that defending this imbalance purely on the basis that people have 'expertise' is a mistake. He writes: "For many years now, I and colleagues have been working on the issue of leadership and social influence. Perhaps the most important lesson we have learnt is that leadership effectiveness does not derive from certain fixed qualities ('the right stuff') which a few possess but most people do not. Rather, the key to effectiveness is to be seen as 'one of us'. That is, the effective leader must be seen to share the perspective, the values and the priorities of his or her constituency." This is clearly not the case in the data above - the report does not suggest that these individuals are anything other than well-meaning in their advice but that collectively they are unrepresentative.

This report is to launch a **Commission on Fair Access to Political Influence**, which is Chaired by Larry Flanagan. The Commission is seeking ideas from the public and from organisations (particularly those who do not have large lobbying budgets) on how this can be fixed. Among the sorts of ideas that might be submitted are:

- Means of participative democracy such as Citizens' Juries.
- Charters and codes of practice
- Data gathering and monitoring

Submissions can be in any form and should be emailed to influence@reidfoundation.org before **Friday 19 April 2013**.