

FROM Bruce A. Knox, FRHistS

This submission conveys an opinion adverse to the purpose of the Republic Plebiscite bill. The exercise which the bill is designed to expedite seems to me to be neither necessary nor desirable, irrespective of the merits or otherwise of abolishing the monarchy and instituting some form of republic, and whether or not it might be held concurrently with a federal election.

The republic question is unquestionably alive, the 1999 referendum having been inconclusive except in the clear rejection of the particular "model". It is not surprising therefore that republican enthusiasts wish to continue their campaign. Ordinary, self-generated, public discussion is a different matter however from an officially organised and funded opinion poll - i.e., the intended plebiscite - the result of which of course would be no guide to the fate of an actual and specific proposal for constitutional change submitted to referendum.

We can reasonably assume that any question put in a plebiscite would be designed to encourage a vote in favour of change even, perhaps, amongst people who otherwise might have no particular views one way or the other: the probable outcome is, in effect, already known. This alone renders the proposal (and therefore the bill) unnecessary to say the least. In addition, parliament ought to consider the cost of the exercise, its diversion of physical and mental energies, especially at a time when we are beset by a host of serious problems, and - most compelling of all - the angry feelings which would be stirred by rival campaigns. In short, a plebiscite as proposed is wholly without justification.

BAK

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