

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE EVIDENCE SESSION

The reform of the Office of Lord Chancellor: ecclesiastical patronage

Submission from Church Society Trust

Church Society Trust is an independent patronage trust established just over a century ago.

The Trust is keen to promote private patronage.

Private Patronage has been one feature of the Church of England which has kept it from congregationalism (too much dependence on the local church) and centralism (too much power in the hands of Bishops). We believe that this balance is important and would wish this to be reflected in the decision made regarding the patronage of the Lord Chancellor.

We note that three options have been considered however **we would ask that serious consideration be given to further options.**

Placing the Lord Chancellor's patronage with another minister or with the Crown does not lose anything from the present situation but it also does not gain anything.

Giving the patronage to Bishops is to be avoided because it will contribute to the growing and regrettable centralising tendency in the Church of England.

There are many benefits of independent patronage not just in terms of appointment but in fostering broader links and in the expertise and support patrons can bring in many other areas.

We would ask that in each case the individual Parish be given the choice as to what should happen to their patronage.

It would be possible for patronage to pass to the Parochial Church Council but in our experience this does not work well.

Therefore we suggest three options that might be given to parishes.

- 1) To pass the patronage to the Diocesan Board of Patronage. This is a reasonable option but does not bring most of the benefits of independent patronage.
- 2) To pass the patronage to an independent patronage body, of which there are many.
- 3) To create a patronage board for the parish, usually of about 5 members with at least some not being members of the parish concerned.

We trust that these observations will prove helpful.

8 January 2004