Twitter Thread by George Peretz QC

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This article by Jim Spellar for @LabourList misses the point about why Labour needs to think seriously about constitutional reform - and have a programme for it ready for government.

> "Voters don\u2019t care about how the D\u2019Hondt system works or about how you\u2019d geographically carve up a regional assembly... They want results.\u2070"@spellar on why Labour should stop obsessing over constitutional issues: https://t.co/W0zsire5xI
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> — LabourList (@LabourList) February 11, 2021

The state of our constitution is a bit like the state of the neglected electric wiring in an old house. If you are moving into the house, sorting it out is a bit tedious. Couldn't you spend the time and money on a new sound system?

But if you ignore the wiring, you'll find that you can't safely install the new sound system. And your house may well catch fire.

Any programme for social democratic government requires a state with capacity, and a state that has clear mechanisms of accountability, for all the big and all the small decisions that in takes, in which people have confidence.

That is not a description of the modern UK state.

Spellar even acknowledges the problem of over-centralised, distant government. But he has no explanation of why we have it, or proposal as to how it could be put right. "Put a Labour cabinet in charge of it" is not a solution, in itself.

The creation of a robust local government structure, with real power and resources behind it, is part of the answer to over-centralisation. But that is constitutional reform.

And even more so if you want to tackle the causes of over-centralisation by entrenching local government against the tendency of all governments to take power to themselves - a tendency that is entirely unchecked by our current constitutional arrangements.

So Spellar's claim that Labour shouldn't think about constitutional reform but should concentrate on bread and butter issues is as foolish as claiming that someone planning to buy an old house shouldn't worry about the wiring but should just get on with planning that cinema room.