

Prejudiced and inept

The Electoral Commission, long accused of bias, now looks simply ridiculous for having levelled a £20,000 penalty against a 25-year-old man who says he just ticked the wrong box on a complicated application form during the EU referendum. Darren Grimes, who founded a pro-Leave organisation, appealed against the commission's decision and, last week, the High Court found in his favour. Judge Marc Dight said Mr Grimes had done his best to comply; he added that even if an offence had been committed, it would not have warranted the maximum fine.

Mr Grimes' life has been turned upside down. The uglier end of the Remain movement made him into a scapegoat for its referendum loss: he was subjected to online abuse that could be very unpleasant, even homophobic. By applying an exorbitant fine to an innocent young man the Commission made itself look like part of the mob, a quango out of control that isn't policing elections so much as punishing Leavers who have the temerity to win them.

The Sunday Telegraph has been at the forefront of exposing the Commission's shocking faults. We reported that it gave inaccurate advice to Vote Leave. We exposed nearly half its board members for criticising the pro-Brexit campaign or backing calls for the result to be overturned. The commission denies allegations of bias – but after it spent hundreds of thousands to defend its silly decision to fine Mr Grimes, many will conclude it is both prejudiced and dangerously inept.

The commission hasn't done enough to tackle actual voting fraud and needs to be scrapped, or at least its entire board and management replaced. Voters must be served by institutions they can trust.