

COMMENT ON THE NEWS 2 – 6 MAY 2005

Hard Thinking Needed

So Labour wins a third term with only 36 per cent of the votes cast, not to mention the votes that for one reason or another were not cast. Only about a quarter of the electorate voted for them, yet they continue in power. Surely something wrong? But just what is wrong? That is not easy to identify.

It doesn't happen in elections for the Scottish Parliament. There, they have a system of proportional representation. Out of a total of 129 MSPs, fifty Labour MSP's have joined with seventeen Liberal Democrat SMPs to form a coalition government. Would it be better if we adopted that system?

I don't think so. There are grave disadvantages to coalition government, which is inseparable from proportional representation.. No elector gets the manifesto he or she voted for. Deals over policy are done in air-conditioned rooms (they used to be smoke-filled).

So what is the answer? I am writing this at 9 am on the morning after the British general election, after staying up till 2.30 last night to watch the results (when I might have been satisfied with the exit poll, which was spot on). I will brood on this conundrum, and perhaps come up with an answer in a later comment.

Meanwhile yet another cup of coffee is called for.