

'Expert Exposes the Danger of AV'

by Francis Bennion

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Text of YouTube video published only on this website

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Second talk by Francis Bennion, retired parliamentary draftsman.

[The first talk can be accessed on YouTube.]

One of the main things that is wrong with AV is that it rejects the natural way of voting. The natural way is to choose the person you favour from the list of candidates and reject the rest. The AV way is to number the entire list in the order of your preferences. This goes against your likely feeling, which is to reject every candidate but the one you favour. If you are a lifelong Labour supporter you don't have much time for Conservatives or LibDems. Similarly in other cases.

Another thing that is wrong is that the AV preferences system chiefly works by using second preferences and treating them as equivalent in value to first preferences. They are not really equivalent. In my first video talk entitled 'Dishonesty of the alternative vote system' I demonstrated that to treat second preferences as having the same value as first preferences, as AV does, is dishonest because their values are not the same. Every one of the electors whose second preferences are counted in really wanted some other candidate to be elected rather than their second preference choice.

This dishonesty exposes the important fact that underlying the controversy about whether we should or should not adopt AV there lies a basic question. Are the differences between political parties fundamental and crucial or are they largely cosmetic and relatively unimportant?

The point is this. You could honestly give the first and second preferences an equal value only if you believed there was no really important difference between the various political parties. If that were true it wouldn't very much matter which candidate people voted for. But we don't believe it is true, do we? It would mean the death of parliamentary democracy.

We don't believe it is true even in the case of a Coalition such as the one that is governing us now. The present Coalition consists of members of the Conservative Party and members of the Liberal Democratic Party, but it has one set of policies. So it may carry the impression that each of the two parties that compose it has the same policy, so that it doesn't matter whether in a by-election you vote for the Libdem or the Conservative candidate. But that is not really so. At by-elections each Coalition party fights on its own, advocating its own distinctive set of policies. At the next general election the Coalition will come to an end.

What I have said in this talk might encourage you to vote No in the referendum on 5 May. Just let me remind you again of the official referendum question. It is: *At present, the UK uses the "first past the post" system to elect MPs to the House of Commons. Should the "alternative vote" system be used instead?*

I believe the answer is No.

The referendum is being held under the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011. If the majority vote Yes the Act provides for the United Kingdom electoral law to be changed accordingly. I intend to issue another short video about this.

References

None