

## How to fix democracy

Neil Merrick

Our democracy is broken. The most recent election results gave the Conservative party a majority of seats in the House of Commons based on only 36.9% (BBC News, 2015) of the vote. The whole system is geared to giving the minority a controlling share against the clear wishes of the electorate.

In the United Kingdom, the system we have is an adversarial system (Watts, 2007) where the various political parties are fighting each other for control of parliament. Every 5 years, we have a chance to vote for whichever party we want to be in power but we have very little real choice. Each party puts forward a raft of policies and we have to choose a party based on the one whose policies we agree with the most. However, it is unlikely that anyone outside of the party's die-hard supporters will fully agree with all of the policies put forward by any specific party. This means that ultimately we end up voting for the least bad party (Dahlgreen, 2015), rather than the best; the one that we disagree with the least.

If you happen to find that you don't agree enough with any of the parties then you are left with two choices: don't vote or spoil your ballot paper (Filar, 2015).

There are plenty of people, and organisations, advocating change to the electoral system, but most of these are advocating some form of proportional representation (PR) where the number of seats a party gets is in proportion to the number of votes they get. The problem with this is that we still have an adversarial system, with each party trying to push their policies against all the others. The effect of this is likely to be a parliament that is hamstrung; unable to make any decisions because of the internal conflict between the many parties. There are many problems in the country that needs a strong government to deal with, and a parliament based on PR will be unable to deal with them.

This paper is proposing a new more consensual way. We need to elect representatives who genuinely represent the views of their constituents, and not those of the various parties, and who are there to enact the will of the people. I propose a system where each party puts forward a set of policies, on a whole range of subjects, and we vote for which of these policies we want them to follow. The representatives in parliament are then charged with enacting the policies that the people chose. In this way, we get to choose what the government does and they become directly responsible to the people. We would still need parties, since we have to have some way of generating policies for people to choose between. A quick look at the petitions currently active on the government's petition website would suggest that allowing anyone to suggest policies is not necessarily a good idea. We also need a range of policies from across the political spectrum and the parties we have are best placed to do this. The important difference would be that the parties are no long vying for control of parliament but instead are challenging for their policies to be enacted. Clearly this will benefit the smaller parties too, who would have a chance to get their policies on the political agenda in a way that hasn't been possible before.

Under this new system, the parties would not be in control, but we still need someone to represent us, the electorate. To this end there would need to be a second election to elect someone to represent the constituents. The parties could, and probably would, put forward candidates but the elected representative (MP) would have to argue the case for the policies chosen by their constituents and not those chosen by their party. The MP would no longer be under the control of the party, but instead would be under the control of the electorate. We would need a system

whereby constituency members can petition to have the MP removed if they weren't performing their duties properly or if they weren't representing the stated views of the constituency. The fine details can be hammered out at a later date. The point here is that the MPs would have to represent the electorate directly and not the parties that sponsored them.

The benefits of this change are that we get a parliament that is truly democratic, that enacts the will of the people. There can still be debate and decision making, it would be up to the MPs to work out the best way to achieve the policies selected, and people in different parts of the country would clearly choose different policies. But MPs would have to work together, as a team, rather than against each other on partisan lines. It would mean that MPs are more directly responsible to the electorate and would have to be more honest as a result.

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