



WORKING PAPER 16

**TEN GOALS AND ONE SOLUTION FOR WESTMINSTER ELECTORAL REFORM:
MARRYING CONSTITUENCY LINKS WITH PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION**

Monica Threlfall

Reader in European Politics

London Metropolitan University

m.threlfall@londonmet.ac.uk

June 2010

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author, and do not represent the collective view of ISET

Abstract

There is little debate over the goals of electoral reform, yet goals should determine the choice of a new system. This paper proposes ten goals that are wider than merely giving more seats to the Liberal Democrats. In a society made up of women and men, both need balanced representation. In an educated society, citizens need to be kept abreast of their MPs' performance as legislators, so as to engage with parliamentary affairs. In an increasingly diverse society, the electoral system needs to improve who gets to be represented by whom. Majority government must be encouraged.

A new system is proposed, which keeps constituencies as they are, but teams them up into groups of 10-12 to form new Electoral Districts where votes are counted and seats distributed to parties in a more proportional way. The moderately disproportional D'Hondt method ensures a governable majority to the leading party unless voters spread their votes unusually widely. Parties could offer a suitably diverse list of 10-12 candidates on the ballot to help voters feel represented by people reflecting society and the skills required of parliamentarians.

The new system requires only minimal change, keeps MPs attached to constituencies, adds desirable features of proportional representation, and ensures a dramatic reduction of wasted votes.

Keywords

Electoral reform, members of parliament, proportional representation, constituency links

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Jane Boote, Frank Bongiorno, David Metz, and Donald Sassoon for their contribution to various aspects of this paper.

TEN GOALS AND ONE SOLUTION FOR WESTMINSTER ELECTORAL REFORM: MARRYING CONSTITUENCY LINKS WITH PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Introduction	2
I. What should electoral reform be for?	4
Ten priority goals for a reformed electoral system	6
II. How electoral systems can help or hinder such goals.	7
Goal 1. Simplicity and transparency.	7
Goal 2. Avoiding 'wasted' votes	9
Goal 3. A fair share to the 3 rd party	9
Goal 4. Allowing a 4 th nationwide party into parliament?	10
Goal 5. Keeping the constituency link	11
Goal 6. Improving the political dialogue between MPs and constituents	14
Goal 7. Reducing the burden on MPs	14
Goal 8. Representing women equally	15
Goal 9. Representing ethnic minorities in an inclusive way	16
Goal 10. The desirable qualities of representatives	17
III. A new electoral system for minimal upheaval: Constituencies + PR	18
Step 1. Create new Electoral Districts for the purpose of vote count and seat allocation.	18
Step 2. Parties draw up lists of their candidates for each Electoral District.	19
Step 3. Allocate seats to parties within Electoral Districts (EDs)	21
Step 4. Announcing the winning party	23
Step 5. Allocate seats to named MPs	23
Conclusion	27
IV. Annex 1. The Australian Alternative Vote Ballot Paper.	28

INTRODUCTION

Given the current coalition government's promise to call a referendum on electoral reform for Westminster in 2011, it is high time the implications of this were made clear. Yet there is no clarity over what features the referendum's proponents seek to introduce nor to abolish, nor how it would reshape British democracy. Is the purpose of reform only to be fairer to the Liberal-Democrats? Is it to allow other smaller parties to obtain MPs? To get more women into parliament? To get more ethnic minorities into parliament? To save the 'constituency link'? To strengthen opposition parties in the face of the power of a Prime Minister enjoying parliamentary dominance, thereby leading to more consensual government? Or perhaps to reinforce parliamentary scrutiny of government by legislators currently overburdened by constituency casework? ¹

Answers to these key considerations do not come neatly pinned to each electoral system, and especially not the current misnomer 'FPTP', nor indeed by 'AV+'.² Yet if any referendum is to be won, the purposes of the change should be crystal clear and form part of a parliamentary consensus and a public understanding regarding the benefits that it will bring - not just an announcement that one system will substitute the other, leaving the implications unknown. The fact that the Ontario referendum to move from FPTP to a mixed-member system was lost because voters suspected that the reform would lead to the parties becoming 'yet more remote and powerful', signals the dangers that lie ahead.³ Or perhaps our promised referendum is a trick to provoke the public's rejection? For non-cynics, there is a need for a consensus over the purpose of reform. What should these priority goals be? What is electoral reform *for*?

This paper proposes a set of priority goals linked to the desired improvements on our present defective system of representation. It then examines how far these goals can be met by a simple new hybrid system that protects key merits of the existing FPTP/single-member-plurality system while reforming it to include key merits from a proportional representation system – all with minimal change and disruption.

WHAT SHOULD ELECTORAL REFORM BE FOR?

Electoral reform advocacy has mainly focused on making the system more proportional, due to the long-standing under-representation in the House of Commons of the Liberal-Democrat vote. Chief objections to the change towards alternatives used in other countries have focused on the allegedly especially strong, British 'constituency link' phenomenon, which refers both to the frequent presence of MPs in their constituencies in order to hear grievances, and their work of servicing them and finding redress for individual cases; and also encompasses, as seen in numerous surveys, constituents' expectations that their MP will represent their views and the constituency's 'interests' in the course of their parliamentary duties. In addition much has been made of the need for strong government in contrast to the allegedly unstable government that PR is thought – erroneously as it turns out - to lead to.

There are good reasons to want to preserve desirable features of single-member/single winner systems, but there are other less debated arguments against them. These are, briefly:

- i) The problem that single-member MPs are poorly placed compared to multi-member teams of MPs - *because they operate on their own* - to both represent the social, gender and ethnic diversity of the area's residents, and to represent the conflicting interests of contrasting economic lobbies and policy communities within their constituency while at the same time following the policy dictates of their party.
- ii) In addition, between elections the voters for any of the other parties that did not manage to occupy the single seat available are left without *political* representation, especially when such voters remain attached to losing parties. Worse, such politically unrepresented voters are nearly always the *majority* of the residents of the constituency, because rarely does one candidate obtain over 50% of the vote.⁴
- iii) Given the single-member plurality system creates a large amount of safe seats, a vast number of voters can remain politically unrepresented for life. Thus the values and policy priorities represented by these voters (all, except the supporters of the single-winner) are deprived of any formal political platform in the constituency, decade after decade – to the point where citizens claim they are disenfranchised. By contrast in multi-member systems it is likely that most constituencies will have MPs from two or three parties (e.g. 2 nationwide and 1 regional, or 3 nationwide parties).
- iv) Single-winner/SMP/FPTP systems also widely disadvantage the chances of women candidates being selected to stand and winning. This is because when they stand

individually for the one and only top post, women are less likely to gain support, whereas when they are presented as part of a team of candidates (the party lists), or as a running mate, they are more welcome.⁵ With its single MPs, the UK, even counting its recent achievement of 22% of women MPs, still ranks only around 50th in the world, in the company of Pakistan, Senegal, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Canada (another SMP/FPTP user).

v) In addition, the Westminster system is widely dominated by male incumbents in safe seats: only 117 seats (18% of 646), were predicted to change⁶ and in fact only 107 did,⁷ leaving around 543 'no change' seats, many of these experiencing no change over a number of elections ('safe'). Of the latter, an estimated 400 are occupied by men - over 60% of Parliament. Is impregnable security of tenure desirable in contrast to reselection on the basis of job competence as a legislator or persuasive advocacy of political/policy solutions?

vi) True, ethnic minority candidates can get representation under single-winner/SMP/FPTP if they stand for constituencies with high levels of ethnic minority inhabitants, because this concentrates local support. For instance in Ealing Southall, all 6 candidates, including those for the Conservative, Christian, and English Democrat parties, had Asian-origin surnames (there are no photos on ballot papers). But British ethnic minority citizens should also be able to have representatives who suit them when they live dispersed across the country, yet ethnic minority candidates are far less likely to be selected as the single candidate for a party in low ethnic concentration constituencies.

Thus the Westminster single-winner system has considerable drawbacks, with the issue of political disenfranchisement being the most serious at the formal level, closely followed by the continued constraints placed on women trying to enter the representation system, in so far as both issues affect many millions of people.

Ten priority goals for a reformed electoral system

1. Selecting a straightforward and transparent system that can be understood and used by the public with minimum effort, and which is easy to administer and quick to count.⁸
2. Avoiding systems that systematically 'waste' votes and those that encourage tactical voting.
3. Giving the third nationwide party in the UK a fairer share of the seats for the votes it regularly receives.
4. Allowing a fourth party to gain a seat there where the electorate give it a politically significant proportion of the vote, e.g. 10-15%.
5. Keeping the constituency link in which MPs are accountable to residents of a small geographic area with a population similar to the current average of about 94,000 people per MP.
6. Ensuring the constituency link provides a channel for two-way political communications and dialogue between MPs and constituents, in order to inform, persuade and foster feelings of being included.
7. Ensuring MPs are not over-burdened with constituency affairs of a servicing nature given their duties to legislate, to scrutinise government activity, and to account for their actions to their constituents and party.
8. Ensuring equitable representation of women by women⁹, given that society is evenly made up of two genders with different and comparable needs that still do not receive equal treatment.
9. Ensuring the presence of an adequate number of MPs who represent substantial ethnic minorities according to the latter's preferences.
10. Facilitating and maintaining a high quality of representation, with a range of MPs who are able to represent the social groups in society that currently require protection from social exclusion, discrimination and abuse, and are able to deploy expertise in recent and upcoming economic, technological, scientific and environmental developments, so as to foster fair and enforceable legislation and effective scrutiny of government.

HOW ELECTORAL SYSTEMS CAN HELP OR HINDER SUCH AIMS.

Goal 1. Simplicity and transparency.

Selecting a straightforward and transparent system that can be understood and used by the public with minimum effort, and which is easy to administer and quick to count.

System simplicity and transparency to the public will be key to achieving popular support for electoral reform, since this will be put to a referendum. On these grounds alone, all preferential systems should be discounted, such as AV, used only in Papua New Guinea and Australia or STV used in the Irish Republic. Because they are complicated to work out, counting of ballots takes up much time and computerisation, which makes the process dependent on administrators expert in the reassigning of the losing party votes to winners and runners up in millions of ballot papers.¹⁰ It is also questionable that second, third and fourth etc preferences should ever determine outcomes. They encourage woolly thinking (such as when parties campaign to be the *second* preference) and personalisation¹¹ (more independents, and individuals selected from several parties). They detract from the democratic need for voters to back one party or another so as to give them clear mandates, particularly important in parliamentary systems run by parties, such as ours. Under AV, both the 'full preferential' and 'optional preferential' options have counting complications that were already flagged up as problematic by the Jenkins Commission.¹²

In terms of transparency of counting, the Party List with the D'Hondt and the Sainte-Laguë seat allocation methods - the *not-so-proportional* versions of PR - have the distinct advantage that the vote count can be done manually without a calculator, as Table 1 below shows. After choosing a party offering a list of candidates (1 vote), ballots are counted within each multi-member constituency (in this example it has 8 seats allocated according to its size of population). The 8 seats are distributed to the parties as follows:

Table 1. Transparency in Allocation of Seats to Parties with the D'Hondt Method in a Multi-Member Constituency

	Columns divide each party's total votes by 1, then 2,3,4,5,6,7,8 to obtain 'distribution numbers'. The highest 8 numbers (underlined) show which party get the 8 seats allocated to the 8-member electoral district.									
Turnout in example: 120,000 votes	1 Party total votes	Divide by 2	Divide by 3	Divide by 4	Divide by 5	Divide by 6	Divide of 7	Divide by 8	Seats won	% of seats
Party A 41,6%	<u>50,000</u> seat 1*	<u>25,000</u> seat 3	<u>16,666</u> seat 5	<u>12,500</u> seat 8	10,000	8,333	7,143	6,250	4	50%
Party B 33,3%	<u>40,000</u> seat 2	<u>20,000</u> seat 4	<u>13,333</u> seat 7	10,000	8,000	6,333	5,714	5,000	3	37,5%
Party C 12,5%	<u>15,000</u> seat 6	7,500	5,000	3,750	3,000	2,500	2,142	1875	1	12,5%
Party D 4,1%	5,000	2,500	1,666	1,250	1,000	833	714	625	0	0

Source: Table re-designed by M.Threlfall for greater degree of clarity than that offered in other manuals and websites. See also The Electoral Knowledge Network, www.aceproject.org

Note: *The seat numbers merely indicate the order of the top numbers - the seats themselves bear no number.

As Party A has 4 of the highest distribution numbers, which allocate the seats, it gets 4 seats to give to the top 4 candidates on its list. Party B has 3 of the highest distribution numbers, so it gets 3 seats. Party C has only 1 of the highest distribution numbers, so it gets only 1 seat. Party D has no top distribution number, so its gets 0 seats.

The table is presented is an illustration to dispel the notion that only FPTP is easy to count and transparent. Other issues of PR are discussed below, where relevant.

Goal 2. Avoiding 'wasted' votes

Avoiding the systematic waste of votes by not counting nor using the votes cast to designate the winners if voters choose parties other than the leading two contenders.

Avoiding the wasted vote problem necessarily means discarding all 'single-winner', 'single-member', 'plurality' or 'majoritarian' systems, since only one party can win a seat, making it a two-horse race, with votes to other parties having no effect on who becomes the next Prime Minister. In safe constituencies, even votes for a second party are wasted as they have no effect. Making every vote count is achieved in PR with the D'Hondt (or its variant Sainte-Laguë) seat allocation methods, since they are based on each party achieving high 'distribution numbers' (see above) in which a single vote can make the difference between allocating a seat to one party or another.

However it remains the case with Party Lists + D'Hondt or Sainte-Laguë that voting for parties that are unlikely to achieve about 10% of the constituency vote will have no effect on the outcome and could be considered wasted, but the systems do not impose a threshold as such. In the context of the British political culture, this could be a welcome feature, as it prevents a rash of small parties holding a handful of seats in parliament.

Goal 3. A fair share to the 3rd party

Giving the third nationwide party in the UK a fair share of the seats for the votes it regularly receives.

Clearly the situation of the Liberal Democrats under our single-winner system is not an equitable one in a democracy. They gained only 67 seats in 2005 (10,4%) for 21% of the popular vote, and 57 seats in 2010 (less than 9%) for 23% of the vote,¹³ a situation that reflects an even grater amount of 'wasted' votes than before, and the anomaly that they won less seats for more votes in 2010 – a clear fault of the Westminster system. If the major goal of electoral reform were no more than giving the Liberal Democrats their 'fair' share, a move towards PR Party List system with D'Hondt as the seat allocation method would meet this goal, for it is still quite disproportional, as Figure 1 showed. It would give the Lib Dems a bigger share of seats while still favouring Labour and the Conservatives. Just how many seats would require some estimating, but in a hypothetical electoral district of South East London covering ten current constituencies (see Part III) they would gain 2 seats instead of

none. However, the Liberal Democrats are not our only concern.

Goal 4. Allowing a 4th nationwide party into parliament?

Allowing a fourth party to gain a seat, there where the electorate give it a politically significant proportion of the vote, e.g. 10-15%.

Many supporters of electoral reform would like to give a fourth nationwide party such as an environmental party the chance of entering parliament, so this possibility should be envisaged. But is it a case of 'the more the merrier' or should there be limits? PR does not automatically open the way for many small parties to enter parliament - it all depends on the seat allocation method. The 'fragmentation' of preferences for parties and the need for coalition governments that give ammunition to PR's detractors are *not* characteristic of the constituency Party List with D'Hondt or Sainte-Laguë seat allocation as seen in Figure 1. D'Hondt is unfriendly to fourth, still less to fifth countrywide parties as it is *not proportional enough* for this and instead, reinforces the number of seats of larger parties, and it becomes more proportional the greater the number of seats there are to allocate. And ultimately the outcome depends on the electorate: should it spread its vote widely, giving even the fourth party at least 10% of the vote in a given constituency, the latter stands a chance of a seat.

True, for supporters of the Green party, a second preference system such as that used in the London Assembly elections may offer it a better chance, especially under 'presidential' elections like that for Mayor of London where the Green candidate got nearly 17% of second choices.¹⁴ But in general PR is the Greens' only hope, and the more proportional the better for them. However, their main problem remains: the Greens need to obtain greater support to become an influence in Westminster.

As to the fear of coalition government resulting from having more smaller parties in the House¹⁵, possibly this is less of a concern now that coalition has become familiar. Avoiding it need no longer be a priority goal of reform. As shown on 6 May 2010, even single winner/SMP/FPTP can lead to the outcome most feared because as to a large extent it depends on voter choices. Minority government with parliamentary support from various small parties, or with a parliamentary pact over its policy programme made before the Queen's Speech, or a two-party coalition, are alternative configurations for government deriving also from the electorate's preferences, which need to be respected and not just from

the electoral system.

Nonetheless, the two dominant British parties may anyway resist a system change that might allow seats to a fourth nationwide party. The point is to offer parliament the choice, for instance, to adopt a system that might grant a seat to a Green party but not to the BNP or UKIP unless these have a very concentrated vote in a given constituency. Multi-member constituencies with D'Hondt and Sainte-Laguë allocation methods can allocate seats to *either expand or narrow* the number of parties to be let in to parliament without needing separate formula or calculations. In a political culture with a long tradition of two-party rivalry, those who want minimal change, such as the Conservatives, would do well to offer the Liberal Democrats PR + Party List + D'Hondt seat allocation to keep the outcome as similar to the current FPTP/SMP as possible.

Goal 5. Keeping the constituency link:

Keeping the constituency link in which MPs are accountable to residents of a small geographic area with a population similar to the current average of about 94,000 people per MP.

The concept and practice of the constituency link enjoys political support in the UK, despite having been called a 'myth' some 25 years ago with substantial evidence.¹⁶ While MPs are known to be quick to defend their record on constituency service work, in-depth interviews with hundreds of MPs in the 1990s showed that the constituency was not their main concern in career terms. Casework is time-consuming and does not constitute the basis for political preferment unless it is accompanied by broader and more visible policy successes. Neither does constituency work guarantee re-election. Studies have shown it is impossible for individual MPs to buck their party's trend and save their seat except to a minor extent, since voters are committed to a party or to a certain party leader's chances of becoming Prime Minister. And if the MP retires and is replaced, the vote the party gets does not change, it remains constant or follows the national swing, with few exceptions.¹⁷ Despite research on disaffection with parties and on the alleged increasing volatility of the electorate, which suggests much might depend on the individual, even popular constituency MP can rarely withstand the weight of the voters' support for, or rejection of, their party leader as a potential Prime Minister.

In addition, detractors of PR fear that if MPs no longer have their own constituency to fight for

at every election they will be increasing beholden to the party for preferment in order to get onto the Party List of candidates at the next election, something that would allegedly give party managers too much power. This is based on three faulty presumptions. The first is that the MPs efforts alone gain them re-election, as discussed above, rather than the party. Clearly, many Labour losers blame Gordon Brown for losing them the seat, just as many winners recognised the role of Blair in getting them theirs in 1997. Liberal Democrats who lost their seat in 2010 will be troubled by the fact this happened despite their leader's popularity but will not want to blame themselves – rightly, as they are the victims of other factors however hard they worked in their constituency.

The second false presumption is that selections for Party Lists are overly centralised, made by the leadership alone. This would be strongly contested by parties in PR systems who would claim that the party branch in every electoral district is always involved in the confection of their list, since all parts of the party are keen to attract votes by fielding local representatives as well as national figures. The differences are mainly a matter of degree of involvement and in this the question of the political influence of party HQs over the selection procedure for Westminster MPs – especially for obtaining a safe seat – would have to be included. On the other hand, the subtext of those who object to PR Party List on the grounds of the potential loss of the constituency link may be their awareness that it would mean rebalancing the current gender imbalance. Parity within a flexible range of no more than 60% and no less than 40% of candidates from each gender is a hallmark of PR in many other countries, where gender parity is a party rule for a wide range of parties especially the Social Democrat and Labour parties (103 parties), with 110 countries boasting some method or other to promote the access of women to parliament.¹⁸

The third faulty presumption is that Party List systems mean that there are no links between deputies and localities. This is also contestable as Lists may indeed represent geographically large or highly populated areas, but the number of residents per deputy/MP may actually be fewer than the UK, such as in the case of Poland and Macedonia.¹⁹ Furthermore, political links to the constituency do develop and can be cultivated under Party List systems,²⁰ as there are more MPs to attend to a variety of problems, and they can each be approached according to the resident's political preference, giving them assurance that their concerns will be heard because they share priorities or outlook. And in both single- and multi-member systems, representatives make choices of whether to settle for being a good local MP or to cultivate political advancement through the party.

Notwithstanding these arguments, a new Westminster system would do well to preserve the constituency link because it is cherished by many MPs themselves. How can this be achieved without the dis-proportionality and wasted votes of the current system? Much discussion so far has ended up endorsing the more complicated mixed-member and preferential systems because they include large proportions of single-winner/SMP/FPTP seats - thought to be the only way to preserve the constituency link - and accept rebalancing the outcome with more proportional 'national-list' representatives. Thus disadvantages have been overlooked for the sake of preserving the constituency link. Yet the top-up lists of the mixed-member systems involves creating two types of MPs, one who can relate to a constituency and a second tier of unattached, free-floating representatives flagging up the party colour at election time and beholden to the party for the rest.²¹ While this may be technically satisfying (i.e. constituency + proportionality), in the British context there is a risk of such MPs lacking legitimacy and being seen as the cause of any failing coalition government. In Germany there are 328 'floating' and 328 'grounded' MPs.

Fresh thinking on the advantages of offering voters several representatives is needed. It is often forgotten that Party Lists of candidates have merits. They are a good opportunity to field a variety of candidates that voters can identify with, whether local, women, men, or a member of a minority group, while still allowing those who do not know any individual MP (who in the UK are the majority) to simply choose their preferred party, or the party of their preferred leader, just like under the single-member system. The importance of diversity within the multiple-member list is discussed further under goals 7-9.

Given these considerations, Westminster needs its own new system as no other will meet goals 1-5 above, nor goals 6-10 discussed below. It needs it to have: simple vote counting, multi-member electoral districts offering a diversity of representatives, a not-fully proportional/slightly-disproportional seat allocation method, and a way of ensuring some political accountability between parliamentarians and the areas of (preferably) less than 100,000 residents.

Goal 6. Improving the political dialogue between MPs and constituents

Ensuring the constituency link provides a channel for two-way political communications and dialogue between MPs and constituents, in order to inform, persuade and foster feelings of being included.

Goal 7. Reducing the burden on MPs

Ensuring MPs are not over-burdened with constituency affairs of a servicing nature given their duties to legislate and to scrutinise government activity, and to account for their actions to their constituents and party.

Given the extensive concern for citizens' growing disaffection with politicians and party politics, a reform of the system needs to seize any opportunity for engaging residents with the political process. A number of ideas have been produced for encouraging political activism in interest groups and advocacy organisations as well as parties. *But few have addressed the revitalisation of the formal representation process.* Here it is proposed that the constituency link should play a part in kindling interest in politics. MPs should engage with constituents in a two-way dialogue over substantial issues of public concern. How? By devoting less time to servicing the cases of constituents who could be helped through local councillors, the many statutory bodies and specialist charitable support groups.²² The fact that they do devote so much effort is thought to be an indication, not just of their commitment and hard work, but also of poorly functioning council departments and lack of public knowledge about who to turn to. But this is not a good reason for taking up large amounts of a parliamentarian's time. MPs are legislators who need to account for, and report back on, their legislative activity and scrutiny of the government – these are their constitutional functions.

In an increasingly educated, opinionated and rights-aware society, furthering political understanding of policies and law through a web-based dialogue and emailed reports to individuals who sign up for them is key to obtaining public consent and promoting constituents' feelings of inclusion in the political system.²³ Efficient ways to do this are not hard to find since impecunious pressure groups currently do it, e.g. with effective (electronic and printed) mail shots. So do some parties, showering their members with messages purporting to be from a party leader. MPs could receive administrative help from public funds for responding to constituents, not least because outreach is now a House of Commons priority.²⁴ MPs do need to be seen at meetings in their constituency but having their photograph up in all public libraries, buildings and CABs would increase the feeling of their presence among the least informed constituents and augment crucial face recognition.

Otherwise MPs remain invisible to residents other than at special functions and surgeries.

Goal 8. Representing women equally

Ensuring equitable representation of women by women, given that societies always comprise two genders with different and comparable needs deserving of equal treatment.

One of the major advantages of the PR Party List system is its ability, unique among electoral systems, of allowing all parties to present an offer of full representation to all or most of the electorate in an electoral district. The need for women to take on at least 40% (if not half) of the task of representing a male-female society has been recognised and implemented worldwide. On Party Lists candidates are placed in rank order according to the party's priorities and suitably matched to the areas they are standing for. This gives party leaderships some control over the implementation of gender balance and enables them to negotiate the inclusion of women with local leaderships throughout the country; indeed local leaderships may already have an array of women candidates they wish to field. The Labour Party conference in 1990 adopted a target of reaching 50% of women MPs within ten years – long passed, despite the policy of having all-women short lists in selections for half of the vacant seats. But the number of women did double in 1997 to 18.5 % due almost exclusively to the use of such short-lists. They were again responsible for stemming the decline of Labour women in 2010.²⁵

No single-winner system whether SMP/FPTP, Preferential, Alternative or Ranked Voting, nor any single or mixed member system that includes making the electorate choose individual candidates rather than parties, will help boost women's presence as much as the multi-member Party List will. And if local and national-level party leaders negotiate the rank order of candidates creating a 'zip-list' of alternating male/female candidates all the way down the list, then gender parity will result. There is considerable research evidence on this, though the voting system is by no means the major factor determining the equality of women's access to representation - much depends on the political will of parties. But *all single-winner systems end up over-representing middle-class white men to the detriment of women, minorities, working class men and women and other discriminated or disadvantaged groups.*

Goal 9. Representing ethnic minorities in an inclusive way

Ensuring the presence of an adequate number of MPs who represent substantial ethnic minorities according to the latter's preferences.

Historically ethnic minorities, as working people on low-incomes, have mainly chosen to vote Labour without making strong demands to be included. But the 1980s saw claims for the inclusion of minority candidates and Labour's victory in 1987 brought 4 ethnic minority MPs to Westminster, rising subsequently to 15 in 2005 (5 of them women, including 2 Conservatives). But they were still only 2.3% of the House of Commons. The call was renewed in 2007 with a key demand being to 'Make parties subject to Race Relations Legislation and introduce all-Black shortlists in wards and constituencies with significant Black communities'. Based on a survey, the 1990 Trust concluded that 'Black people feel that without better representation, local or national politics at best fails to understand the concerns of Black communities and at worst does not care'.²⁶ This approach echoes the arguments for the full representation of women, and resonates with the feelings of the British workers who set up the Labour Party as they felt they could not be represented by the Tories or Liberals. The claim to being represented by 'one of your own kind' is reiterated today by Operation Black Vote, the organisation devoted to recruiting potential Black candidates and persuading the parties to field more of them. In addition, the growth of the resident Muslim population to 2.4 million has also led to demands for Muslim MPs, which have been met to the extent of obtaining 8 seats, mainly though not exclusively through the Labour Party, who has also just secured 3 Muslim women MPs.²⁷ In total the 2010 elections led to an increase of ethnic minority MPs to between 18 and 21²⁸ just 2.8-3.2% of the House of Commons in the context of a 'non-white' population of 7.9%²⁹ including children.

At first glance therefore, it could be argued the current system is not entirely unfriendly to ethnic diversity, against the conclusion of the Ministry of Justice report which states: 'No voting system in the UK has led to significant improvements in the representation of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. Party selection processes for fielding candidates are much more important for improving social representation than voting systems'.³⁰ But is only semi-friendly because most of the 'non-white' MPs have stood in, and been supported by, constituencies with concentrated ethnic minority residents,³¹ a fact which can also reflect the relative 'ghettoisation' of ethnic minority households³². While it is the right of ethnic minority communities to be represented by people whom they feel to be one of their own, they should still have that right if they live dispersed across the country. Yet with any single-winner

system, this will not happen. Only with Party Lists can parties ensure that diverse ethnic representation occurs across the country. Furthermore, ethnic minority communities are also internally diverse and the representation of those of African-Caribbean heritage should not be overlooked.

Goal 10. The desirable qualities of representatives

Facilitating and maintaining a high quality of representation, with a range of MPs who are able to represent the social groups in society that currently require protection from social exclusion, discrimination and abuse, and are able to deploy expertise in recent and upcoming economic, technological, scientific and environmental developments, so as to foster fair and enforceable legislation and effective scrutiny of government.

The final goal in the change of the electoral system should be a greater renewal of the body of MPs, to ensure their ability to represent the groups who would benefit from stronger advocacy by MPs coming from their own ranks (in addition to the unusual examples of David Blunkett, and Chris Smith). Ever fewer Labour MPs lack university education or come from severely disadvantaged backgrounds, perhaps due to the professionalisation of the job and rising public expectations of MPs' educational attainment levels and technical competence. But this represents a change away from a time when a Labour MP could safely claim legitimacy just on the basis of his or her working class roots. Yet the D and E socio-economic categories remain largely Labour voters and even if they did not, continue to have a claim on political representation. Where is this to come from? As the Electoral Reform Society Women's Officer put it,³³ 'Long careers, safe seats and a reliance on generational change are unfortunate by-products of an antique political system' - giving little hope for a more diverse body of MPs.

Therefore an electoral system is required in which parties are able to deploy teams of candidates who are able to be more than just hard-working in general; namely, are able to represent those who need representing; are able to specialise in economic, technological, scientific, social or environmental issues so as to ensure the quality of legislation; and are able to reach out to communicate with the public, in addition to their personal and political qualities. The Westminster system is known to provide safe seats with very little change (even with swings of 5% overall), and to encourage a focus on constituency service in the hope of being voted back in, in preference to a focus on social representation, competence in legislation and scrutiny of government, let alone education of the public. While there is

evidently a case for supporting MPs to make a career of representation, this should be, as with all jobs, the product of their individual abilities rather than the quirks of the system. In this sense the PR Party List system is more open to a renewal of candidates, as these can be proposed by a wider selectorate of constituency-level party members and local and national party selection committees. But this facility for a higher turnover is also governed by party politics and government performance. Nothing prevents the Party Lists from fielding the same top candidates at every election, nor prevents the winners from repeating their mandates over and over again if their party wants to field them and the electorate is thereby more likely to vote for this List.

A NEW ELECTORAL SYSTEM FOR MINIMAL UPHEAVAL: CONSTITUENCIES + PR

It is possible to reconcile single-winner plurality with proportional representation Party List systems by combining their most desirable features into a simple new way. This would consist of:

- a) Maintenance of campaigning and voting in the current constituencies;
- b) New Party Lists of candidates;
- c) New Electoral Districts;
- d) Use of a not-so-proportional seat allocation method from the PR stable such as D'Hondt or Sainte-Laguë to allocate seats to parties;
- e) Maintenance of each MP's link to a small geographical area of no more than 100,000 residents.

The following steps would have to be taken:

Step 1. Create new Electoral Districts for the purpose of vote count and seat allocation.

The Electoral Commission would have to combine the current 650 constituencies into, for instance, 65 Electoral Districts of 10 constituency seats each (or fewer Districts with 11-12 seats each, depending on their number of residents or the need to keep existing administrative boundaries).³⁴ For instance, the London area's 73 constituencies make for 7 new Electoral Districts, but 3 of them would have to have 11 seats if the current boundaries

of the London region are kept. As the Boundary Commission ensures that each seat does not contain too wide a divergence in population size, there is no need to vary the size of each new Electoral District (ED).

The new EDs are in charge of seat allocation to parties. The ED becomes the unit in where the votes of its 10 constituencies are aggregated by party, and the seats distributed to the parties. Each party's allocation of seats is then given to each party's candidates who figured on the ballot paper (see below).

Step 2. Parties draw up lists of their candidates for each Electoral District.

At election time, each party fields a list of 10 candidates if it wishes to contest all the seats in a 10-seat Electoral District.³⁵ Candidates stand for constituencies, and constituencies appear in alphabetical order on the Party List with the candidate's name next to it. Candidates are designated to campaign in, win in - and represent the constituency *if they are successful in being allocated the seat by the Electoral District*.

The example of the ballot below shows only 3 Party Lists. A large ballot paper could show all the Party Lists on one piece of paper, to avoid the need for several ballot papers per voter.

Table 2. Example of a Ballot Paper

Partial view (3 parties) of the single ballot paper for all parties in each Electoral District

Electoral District "Birmingham South East"					
YOU MAY ONLY MARK ONE OF THESE PARTIES' WITH AN 'X'					
Conservative Party	Mark 'X' here	Labour Party	Mark 'X' here	Liberal Party	Mark 'X' here
Constituency A – Mervyn	photo	Constituency A - Grace	photo	Constituency A - Darren	photo
Constituency B - Tamsin	photo	Constituency B - Mehmet	photo	Constituency B - Vivien	photo
Constituency C - Bikkhu	photo	Constituency C - Carolina	photo	Constituency C - Faisal	photo
Constituency D - Diana	photo	Constituency D - Russell	photo	Constituency D - Joan	photo
Constituency E - Greg	photo	Constituency E - Gloria	photo	Constituency E - Lloyd	photo
Constituency F - Surinder	photo	Constituency F - Jason	photo	Constituency F - Amira	photo
Constituency G - Larry	photo	Constituency G - Rachel	photo	Constituency G - Richard	photo
Constituency H - Eva	photo	Constituency H - Firoz	photo	Constituency H - Carmen	photo
Constituency I - John	photo	Constituency I – Jenny	photo	Constituency I - Howard	photo
Constituency J - Seila	photo	Constituency J - Allan	photo	Constituency J - Carol	photo

Source: Designed by M.Threlfall. Note: I have included the suggestion of a candidate photo, to help voters put a name to a face.

Voters vote for one party list only, in their local polling station in their constituency. They can see which candidate from each party is hoping to represent their constituency, and the list of all candidates for the Electoral District, and can choose a party on that basis. But as many are not familiar with their local MP (a substantial proportion, sometimes over half, of voters are not), voters are offered a range of candidates on each party's list to help them decide purely on the basis of the party. They only mark one cross against one party. First and second preferences of *parties* are avoided in this model to ensure simplicity and ease of count. 1st and 2nd preferences of *candidates* cannot be accommodated because there is only one candidate per constituency from each party. Ballot papers are distributed within constituencies, voted on according to the constituency register of voters and counted up in the constituency first.

Step 3. Allocate seats to parties within Electoral Districts (EDs)

The number of seats in an ED is allocated to parties using D'Hondt or Sainte-Laguë method, as preferred (see Goal 1. Table 1, above).

a) Add up all the votes from all the constituencies in the ED, per party.

b) *Summary version:* Write down one party's total vote, then divide it repeatedly by 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 (for 10 seats - or as many times as there are seats to be allocated) and set out the numbers in a row. Repeat with each party in a row, creating columns under the divisors. Pick out the 10 top numbers from the whole set. The numbers that fall in each party's row constitute the number of seats it gets.

Detailed version: It is easiest to start with the leading party. Write down one party's total vote. In a second column, enter the result of dividing this total by 2. In a 3rd column, the total party vote divided by 3 and repeat dividing by 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or 11, 12 according to the number of seats in the ED. These numbers are called 'distribution numbers'. With the next party, create another row beneath the first and repeat the divisions. Then do the same with the remaining parties. These are called 'distribution numbers'. Bear in mind that parties with less than 10% of the vote do not have a chance to win a seat, so there is no need to do this with their votes. Then pick out the 10 highest numbers across all parties. These are the 'allocation numbers' that allocate the seats to the party. Mark each with a number (seat 1, seat 2, etc) in descending numerical order – in effect starting with the winning party's total. Then note if, for instance:

- Party A's row of numbers contains 5 of the allocation numbers - it gets 5 seats.
- Party B's row of numbers contains 3 of the allocation numbers - it gets 3 seats.
- Party C's row of numbers contains 1 of the allocation numbers – it gets 1 seat.
- Party D's row of numbers contains none of the allocation numbers – it gets 0 seats.

The example below shows the actual votes emitted in 2010, aggregated into a fictitious Electoral District using 10 real constituencies that are contiguous and together form the

example "London South East" ED.

Table 3. Example of fictitious Electoral District seat allocation using 2010 results

2010 ELECTIONS: RESULTS OF "LONDON SOUTH EAST ELECTORAL DISTRICT"										
Party seats	Total party votes	D'Hondt method distribution numbers								
		Divide by 1	Divide by 2	Divide by 3	Divide by 4	Divide by 5	Divide by 6	Divide by 7	Divide by 8	Divide by 9
CON: 4/10 seats = 40% for 37% of ED vote	163,703 1 st seat	81,851 4 th seat	54,568 6 th seat	40,926 9 th seat	32,741	27,281	23,386	20,463	18,189	16,370
LAB: 4/10 seats = 40% for 34% of ED vote	149,751 2 nd seat	74,875 5 th seat	49,917 7 th seat	37,438 10 th seat	29,950	24,959	21,394	18,719	16,639	14,975
LIB DEM: 2/10 seats = 20% for 19% of ED vote	83,949 3 rd seat	41,975 8 th seat	27,983	20,987	16,789	13,991.0	11,993	10,494	9,328	8,395
Total Electoral District turnout/vote = 442,984 votes										

Source: Compiled by M.Threlfall from the 2010 results of 10 London contiguous constituencies in the south-east area of London. Notes: a) Distribution numbers have been rounded up to a complete integer. b) The Sainte-Laguë method could also be used. It is similar except that it uses the highest numbers only in columns 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 to allocate the seat. And column 1, instead of being the same as the party's total, is its total divided by 1.4. This would have not changed this result, but the Liberal Democrats' second seat would have been won by only 706 votes. Applied to bigger constituencies of 10-12 seats, Sainte-Laguë has the effect of being more proportional.

As can be seen, the D'Hondt allocation method in this hypothetical Electoral District did not produce full proportionality between seats and votes, giving the Conservatives 40% of the seats for 37% of the vote; the Labour Party 40% of the seats for 34% of the vote, and the Liberal Democrats 20% of the seats for 19% of the vote. It did however, rebalance the results for the Liberal Democrats without letting in any other party in. The result is clearly seen and achieves the goal of being fair to the 3rd nationwide party.

Speculating on the possibilities for flexibility in the system, if legislators wish it, a fourth party

would have had to win more than 37,438 votes to take the last seat from Labour. Had this fictitious ED had 11 seats to allocate across these same numbers of votes, the 11th seat would have gone to the Conservatives as they have the next highest number (32,741). In that case a distribution of 5-4-2 seats would have been even more proportional to each party's share of the vote. This is the 'district magnitude' effect: with more seats per ED the system becomes more proportional, with less seats per ED it becomes more disproportional. Legislators have a small choice.

Step 4. Announcing the winning party

Electoral Districts announce their seat allocation to each party when they have completed it. When all ED results are known, the nationwide total of seats per party will indicate whether the winner has obtained a majority in the House of Commons with at least 326 seats, or only a plurality. The party with the largest number of seats can charge their leader to begin forming a government, or negotiating a minority government, or a coalition, according to Constitutional rules.

Note that this can take place *before* the exact allocation of seats to named candidates is complete.

Step 5. Allocate seats to named MPs

Although an *informal* allocation of List MPs to areas of the Electoral District is made in other countries using Party List PR, in this new system, a *formal* constituency link of MPs to existing constituencies is proposed. The following method is probably the only way of having both a moderately proportional seat allocation between parties while retaining the one person per constituency culture, without encountering the pitfalls of preferential, alternative or top-up systems mentioned in Sections 2-3.

- a) Individual candidates campaign in a specific constituency in which they are incumbents or with which they have some affiliation and ability to represent. All candidates' campaigns contribute to maximise the party's profile and positions across the whole of the Electoral District, even if they take place within their constituency's boundaries. *This is a positive effect of the Electoral District system: candidates with low expectations of attracting a majority of votes (the safe seat depressant syndrome)*

would be contributing to their party's overall gain in vote with their campaigning, since every vote counts towards their party's total ED vote, and can affect the distribution numbers and seats allocated.

b) The counting system takes place in the constituencies in the same way as always, but the results must first be sent to the Electoral District as the constituency cannot immediately allocate the seat to the individual 'winning' candidate at constituency level. First, the constituency has to learn from the ED how many seats have been allocated to each party. Of course, for the top winners with large majorities, a seat is assured. It is the distribution of seats to candidates with a plurality or a large minority of votes that need to be worked out so as to achieve proportionality across the whole of the ED, not within the constituency.

The example below shows the actual votes emitted in 2010, aggregated into an Electoral District using 10 real contiguous constituencies that together form the fictitious "London South East" ED.

Table 4. How MPs win/lose a seat in the 10 constituencies of a fictitious Electoral District

RESULTS OF THE ELECTORAL DISTRICT "LONDON SOUTH EAST"							
Constituencies in the Electoral District	Total Vote 2010	LIB DEM vote	Seats 2	CON vote	Seats 4	LAB vote	Seats 4
Beckenham	47,686	9,813		27,597	majority - win	6,893	
Bexleyheath & Crayford	43,182	5,502		21,794	majority - win	11,450	
Bromley & Chislehurst	44,037	9,669		23,569	majority - win	7,295	
Eltham	41,964	5,299		15,753		17,416	Plurality - win
Erith & Thamesmead	42,476	5,116		13,365		19,068	Majority - win
Greenwich & Woolwich	41,188	7,498		10,109		20,262	Majority -win
Lewisham & Deptford	41,220	9,633		5,551		22,132	Majority -win
Lewisham East	41,719	11,750	runner up - win	9,850		17,966	Plurality-cede
Lewisham W. & Penge	54,020	12,673	runner up - win	11,489		18,501	Plurality -cede
Old Bexley & Sidcup	45,492	6,996		24,625	majority -win	8,768	
All parties (including those not listed) total turnout in ED	(442,984)	83,949		163,702		149,751	
3-party total in ED:	89.7% of vote	397,402 turnout					
All other parties	10.3%	45,582					

Source: compiled by M.Threlfall, using results for each constituency found in BBC, Election 2010, Results, Find you result > Constituency List. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/election2010/results/> [May 7th onwards]

Where a party has obtained a full majority in the constituency area - in this method, more than both the next 2 runners-up - its candidate is sure to be allocated to the constituency area s/he has campaigned in. If the party has been allocated 4 seats and there are 4 constituencies where its candidate has topped both runners up, those 4 candidates will be elected and will be the constituency representative (and also become part of a team of MPs from their party, and part of a team of MPs representing the Electoral District). This is what happened with the Conservative vote: Conservative candidates for Beckenham, Bexleyheath & Crayford, Bromley & Chislehurst, Old Bexley & Sidcup would all get their seat – the seat they obtained under SMP/FPTP in 2010. Labour candidates for Eltham, Eltham & Thamesmead, Greenwich & Woolwich, Lewisham & Deptford would also win their seat comfortably. But Labour’s winners of a plurality in Lewisham East and in Lewisham and

Penge would not have received sufficient votes for a seat since the Liberal Democrats have won enough votes at ED level to have 2 seats mandated to them. Happily these two constituencies coincide with the Liberal Democrats' two best results.

Under this new system Labour would have lost 2 seats of the 6 they won on 6th May 2010. But in fact they won these 6 seats with fewer votes than the Conservatives across the 10 constituencies, so it is logical that under a more proportional system they would have 2 fewer seats given to them. Thus the proposed hybrid system also corrects the anomalies of FPTP, by filtering out the small pluralities ('majorities') with which parties can currently gain seats. If there is agreement that a third party must get a fairer share of the seats in accordance with its votes not its pluralities in the constituencies, some constituencies currently won by one of the large parties must be given over to the 3rd party. This is fair overall at national level.

It is possible that the 1 or 2 candidates per ED from leading parties who thereby do not get to represent the constituency they have fought for despite receiving more votes than others (but only pluralities) will feel upset. But their party will *not* have won the right to more than their allocated number of seats, and the failed candidate will have to resign him/herself to losing because s/he did not win a full majority of the votes in his/her constituency, and also won a smaller proportion of votes than his/her colleagues did in the other constituencies. Thus the outcome should be acceptable for all.

In this new system, all candidates have an additional incentive to match the votes of their party colleagues in the other 9 constituencies of the Electoral District. Because no seat is completely safe, they each have an incentive to maximise the overall ED party vote as well as their own, since this will bring their party more seats through the D'Hondt (or Sainte-Laguë) allocation method. This also has merit: it encourages collaboration and teamwork, making the experience of the 'bound to lose' candidate in a safe seat much more rewarding and less hopeless.

CONCLUSIONS

The new hybrid system can be summarised as: Single-Member Constituencies + Party Lists of Candidates + D'Hondt Seat Allocation in 10-12-seat Electoral Districts. The proposed marriage of FPTP with this particular type of proportional representation is particularly successful at:

- *Increasing the incentive to vote* of every single supporter of the three largest nationwide parties of every Electoral District, as any extra vote could lead to an extra seat.
- *Increasing the incentive for every candidate to campaign* both for their party and for themselves as every vote counts both in their constituency and throughout their Electoral District.
- *Increasing the lead in seats of the most popular party* so as to enable majority governments to be formed if the electorate have a strong preference, thereby avoiding the pitfalls of *exact* proportional representation.
- *Allowing parties to field an array of candidates* in every Electoral Districts to fully represent the diverse needs of its populations.
- *Encouraging the participation of women and all minorities* on Party Lists in campaigning and gaining political exposure without the depressing effect of being lone losers in safe seats.
- *Facilitating the election of women MPs* in all Electoral Districts, making for more balanced representation, given the more or less 50/50 presence of women and men throughout the country.
- *Allowing parties to field women and minority candidates in winnable seats* more easily, within the composition of the Party List.
- *Facilitating a smoother changeover* to the new system than to others: all incumbents can stand again in their own constituency.
- *Remaining simple to administer*: only requiring the delineation of new Electoral Districts, respecting the boundaries of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; and saving on the printing only 58-60 different versions of the ballot papers instead of 650.

- *Performing better than mixed systems* containing constituencies and top-up lists, because mixed systems retain all the unfair winning with a small plurality ('majority') that created the wasted vote syndrome, and retain all the wasted effort of candidates campaigning in truly unwinnable safe seats (in the constituency part of the mixed system). Furthermore, this new hybrid system avoids: the plight of the floating MPs from the national top-up Party Lists, detached from localities; the different legitimacy and duties of the two types of MPs; and the uneven chances of winning, which could lead, in Britain, to two different sets of political career opportunities.

- *Remaining simpler than the AV preferential and mixed-member systems* in practice: suffice to glance at an Australian ballot (see a forthcoming Appendix on 'What is wrong with AV and AV and 'Top Up') to see how much more complicated it is to fill in the ballot paper than it would be with the proposed new ballot paper in Figure 2. It is impossible to envisage implementing AV successfully in Britain if every member of the electorate is asked to forcibly make many 22 choices. Recent television examples of an AV ballot, shown after the new government's announcement of the coalition, all misleadingly designed one with only 3 or 4 choices, but as we know from constituency results, there are usually 6, 7 or 8 candidates, rising to 10 or 12 in some cases. Therefore it is politically risky to try to win a referendum on this basis.

ANNEX : THE AUSTRALIAN ALTERNATIVE VOTE BALLOT PAPER.

A single ballot paper with all parties and independents, one candidate for each, and 22 obligatory preferences.



BALLOT PAPER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
VICTORIA
ELECTORAL DIVISION OF WILLS

***Number the boxes
from 1 to 22
in the order of your choice***

- SAVAGE, Katheryne
INDEPENDENT
- KARDAMITSIS, Bill
AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY (ALP)
- KUHNE, Otto Ernest
- PHILLIPS, Richard
- KAPPAN, Will
INDEPENDENT
- RAWSON, Geraldine
INDEPENDENT
- DELACRETAZ, John
LIBERAL
- POULOS, Patricia
- DROULERS, Julien Paul
INDEPENDENT
- FRENCH, Bill
INDEPENDENT
- POTTER, F. C.
INDEPENDENT
- MURRAY, John
INDEPENDENT
- VASSIS, Chris
INDEPENDENT
- CLEARY, Philip
INDEPENDENT
- FERRARO, Salvatore
INDEPENDENT
- GERMAINE, Stan
THE FEDERAL PARTY OF AUSTRALIA
- WALKER, Angela
AUSTRALIANS AGAINST FURTHER IMMIGRATION
- MACKAY, David
DEMOCRATS
- LEWIS, Bob
INDEPENDENT
- SYKES, Ian Grant
INDEPENDENT
- KYROU, Kon
INDEPENDENT
- MURGATROYD

***Remember ... number
every box
to make your vote count.***

¹NOTES

¹ The Ministry of Justice's review of the functioning of the new electoral systems in the devolved administrations of the UK and the new PR system for European Parliament introduced in 1997 chose as its themes proportionality, voter participation, stability and effectiveness of governance, impact on the voter, social representation, political campaigning, impact on administration. These mostly do not correspond to the questions asked at the start, nor do they come ranked or tied to each system.

² First Past The Post is a truly misleading common name since there is no post, or quota, or 50% mark that party candidates have to achieve. The fact of coming first is not the point, it is that the winner takes all the available seats. So, 'single-winner system' and 'Single Member *Plurality*' (its official name) are accurate descriptions that remind us that, too often, the seat is occupied by an MP who did not win a majority.

³ Kent, Tom (2007) 'Electoral Reform For Constructive Competition', *Policy Options/Options Politiques*, November 2007, p.31, Quebec: Institute for Research on Public Policy.
www.irpp.org/po/archive/nov07/kent2.pdf

⁴ Reviewing the 532 Labour and Conservative held constituencies in 2005, I found only 40 Labour MPs and 102 Conservatives elected with 50% or over of the turnout, using Electoral Calculus > Ordered Seats > Majority Sorted Seats by Martin Baxter. <http://www.electoralcalculus.co.uk/> Accessed at various dates, April-May 2010. Some estimates for 2005 claim 52% of votes were wasted on candidates with no chance of winning the seat.

⁵ Research on the posts of mayors find that these remain overwhelmingly male even in countries where women are prominent as MPs and cabinet members, e.g. in Spain. In England, of 18 directly elected mayors, only 2 have been women (calculated from Wikipedia 'Elected mayors in the UK', 9.05.2010.)

⁶ Electoral Calculus website, May 2010.

⁷ Author calculation using lists in The Observer, 9 May 2010, p.12, p.24.

⁸ Expert advice for designers states that electoral systems that are likely to be easily understood by the voters and the politicians are more effective and sustainable, and that "Too much complexity can lead to misunderstandings, unintended consequences, and voter mistrust of the results." See Advice for Electoral Systems Designers, <http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/esg?toc>

⁹ The Plant Committee (1991) already reported the need for 'fairness to groups, such as ethnic minorities, and women currently under-represented in the Commons'. See *Democracy Representation and Elections*, The Labour Party, *Report of the Working Party on Electoral Systems* (chaired by Lord Plant).

¹⁰ In Australia, the only good example, almost half the ballots have had to be redistributed. An expert website concludes 'The decline of what was a very stable two party system, the rise of minor parties, and the increasing influence of independent candidates' is the impact of preference voting since the 1990s. 'Australia: The Alternative Vote System', ACE: The Electoral Knowledge Network, http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/esy/esy_au

¹¹ As seen in Japan See McKean, Margaret and Scheiner, Ethan. 2000. 'Japan's new electoral system: plus ça change ...', *Electoral Studies*, 19:447-477.

¹² In Australia, compulsory marking of all preferences (itself a violation of the voter's right not to contribute to any party's vote) was so tricky to implement that parties took to distributing leaflets with pre-marked 'drafts' of the ballot for voters to take with them and copy. Non-compulsory marking leads to the need for the leading candidate to obtain 50%, thus excluding smaller parties again. See 'Australia: The Alternative Vote System', ACE: The Electoral Knowledge Network, http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/esy/esy_au . See also Jenkins Report, pp.97-8.

¹³ See BBC, Election 2010, Results, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/election2010/results/>

¹⁴ See Data Management and Analysis Group (2008) *The 2008 Election Results Summary*, London: Greater London Authority, p.12.

<http://www.london.gov.uk/archive/gla/publications/factsandfigures/dmag-briefing-2008-19.pdf>

¹⁵ As the Ministry for Justice report states: "Support for PR decreases in survey results when questions suggest that PR would result in more small parties in Parliament, indicating that there is concern and public uncertainty about the influence of small parties and coalitions on government." §48, Ministry of Justice (2008), *The experience of new voting systems in the United Kingdom since 1997*. Governance of Britain series, Cm 7304, presented to Parliament by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice by Command of Her Majesty the Queen, January 2008.

¹⁶ See Crewe, Ivor (1984) 'British MPs and their constituents: how strong are their links?', Essex Papers in Politics and Government, Nr.10, http://www.essex.ac.uk/government/Essex_Papers/essex_papers_new2004.shtm . Also published in Bogdanor, V. (1985) ed., *Representatives of the People? Parliamentarians and constituents in Western democracies*, London: Gower.

¹⁷ Manin, Bernard (1997) *The Principles of Representative Government*, Cambridge: CUP.

¹⁸ Author count using the database of the Quota Project, International IDEA Institute, Stockholm University, maintained with the contributions of the Inter-Parliamentary Union –IPU. <http://www.quotaproject.org/systemParty.cfm>

¹⁹ Poland has 82,900 inhabitants for each of their 460 deputies; Macedonia has 16,900 inhabitants for each of their 120 deputies and the UK 94,400 for each MP.

²⁰ There is evidence that there are different cultures of dealing with casework under many Party List systems. This is often because the local government, local ministerial social security and labour departments, regional governments and several other channels for grievances are seen to be appropriate channels of redress operating at the service of citizens. These free the legislator from this duty.

²¹ In Thailand this has created 'two classes of politicians with radically divergent career incentives for election', Benjamin Reilly (2004) *Democratization and political reform in the Asia-Pacific: Is there an 'Asian model' of institutional design?*, Discussion Paper 04-04, Australia National University, <http://apseg.anu.edu.au>

²² Although the Scottish Parliament explicitly recognises the constituent's right to expect one of their MSPs to take on a case, it adds that it is up to the MSP to decide how best to deal with it, and implies that constituents should have approached other bodies first before the MP takes on a case. This is even more relevant at Westminster level. See Scottish Parliament (February 2010), *MSPs and their Work*, 5th edition, 20885/02.2010/5000, p.7.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/vli/mspwork/documents/MSPs5thedFeb2010.pdf>

²³ Drawing on the contents of 20 discussion groups in four countries carried out during the research project reported in M. Threlfall (2009) 'What makes citizens feel politically represented? Results from qualitative research in the UK, Spain, Poland and Macedonia', Working Paper.

²⁴ House of Commons Outreach Unit, public statements; The Speaker's public statements, eg. on 30 November 2009 to The Hansard Society.

²⁵ See Krook, M-L., Lovenduski, J. and Squires, J. , (2006) chapter 8 of *Women, Quotas and Politics*, ed. D. Dahlerup, London and New York: Routledge; and Centre for Women and Democracy (2010) News item, 7 May 2010 ('Derisory increase in number of women MPs') in which it claims "The unusually high number of MPs retiring at this election meant that the loss of Labour women in marginal seats was balanced out by [the rule of] 50% of Labour candidates in seats where the Labour MP was retiring being women. Had this not been the case [the rule] the number of women in the House of Commons would have declined significantly". <http://www.cfwd.org.uk/news/28/61/Derisory-increase-in-number-of-women-MPs>.

²⁶ See The 1990s Trust (2007) *A Black Manifesto 2007*, p.4, p.26.

²⁷ They include: former Labour Transport Minister Sadiq Khan, Tooting; Khalid Mahmood, re-elected for Labour in Birmingham Perry Bar); Anas Sarwar, Glasgow Central. The 3 Muslim women are Labour: Yasmin Qureshi, Bolton South East; Shabana Mahmood, Birmingham Ladywood; and Rushnara Ali, with a huge majority of 11,000 in Bethnal Green and Bow. The first Muslim

Conservatives to be elected were Sajid Javid, who retained Bromsgrove, and Rehman Chisti, who won in newly-created Gillingham & Rainham. Nadhim Zahawi, chief executive of online market research agency YouGov, became the first Iraqi Kurd to become an MP defending the Conservative majority in Stratford-on-Avon. See *Radiance News*, 1 June 2010,

<http://www.radianceweekly.com/204/5420/Why-Silence-on-Madhuri-Gupta's-Espionage-for-Pakistan/2010-05-16/Muslim-World/Story-Detail/Suspects-In-Killing-Of-Hamas-Official.html>

²⁸ My own list of names is 21, but 18 appears in *The Muslim News* online, Issue 253, Friday 28 May 2010, accessed 1 June 2010.

²⁹ Using Dorling, Danny (2004, p.45) who states that in the 2001 census, 92.1% or 54.2 million people reported themselves or their family members to be White. See *People and Places: A 2001 Census Atlas of the UK*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

³⁰ Ministry of Justice (2008), *The experience of new voting systems in the United Kingdom since 1997*. Governance of Britain series, Cm 7304, § 31.

³¹ As Guardian correspondent Hirsh claimed 'The link between constituencies with a high proportion of minority voters and longstanding black and Asian MPs remained firm in many places. Diane Abbott in Hackney North and Stoke Newington and David Lammy in Tottenham both won with large majorities, increasing their share of the vote.' (Afua Hirsch, Guardian.co.uk, Friday 7 May 2010). The case of Ealing Southall mentioned earlier, reinforces this interpretation.

³² Re 'ghettoisation', the 2001 census showed that in three-quarters of districts, more than 95% of the population are White; in half of districts, more than 98 % are White (Dorling 2004 p.45, *People and Places: A 2001 Census Atlas of the UK*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

³³ Beatrice Barleon (2009) 'Reform parliament, for diversity's sake', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jul/17/speakers-conference-proportional-representation-diversity> Guardian.co.uk 17.07.09,

³⁴ For instance, 58 EDs of 11 seats each + 1 ED of 12 = 650; or 53 EDs of 12 seats each + 1 ED of 14 = 650. The larger the number of seats (district magnitude), the more proportional the allocation of seats. As the Electoral Knowledge Network states" ... when designing an electoral system, district magnitude is in many ways the key factor in determining how the system will operate in practice, the strength of the link between voters and elected members, and the overall proportionality of election results". See 'District Magnitude', ACE, <http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/esd/esd02/esd02e/esd02e01?toc>

³⁵ This is similar to UK parties fielding 'no-hope' candidates in unwinnable seats.