F2PTP

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A VOTING SYSTEM FOR EQUALITY OF REPRESENTATION IN A MULTI-PARTY STATE

F2PTP

TIME FOR CHANGE

In 2010, 29,687,604 people voted. The Conservatives received 10,703,654, the Labour Party 8,606,517 and the Liberal Democrats 6,836,248 with the remaining 3,541,185 shared amongst the other parties. That translated to a voting power in the legislature of 306, 258, 57, and 29 seats respectively.

The Liberal Democrats required four times the support of Labour per parliamentary vote.

In 2015 the situation has become even less representative:

SNP   < 1.5 million votes = 56 seats

UKIP > 3.8 million votes = 1 seat.

This distortion of representation cannot be allowed to continue.

A fair yet pragmatic voting system needs to adhere to some fundamental principles.

1. It must be simple to understand for the electorate and transparent in operation. All current PR systems fail to meet such criteria.
2. An elected representative must retain a direct connection with the constituents that elected them. This underpins the authority of a representative and allows for recall (sacking) by the very constituents that gave that authority to begin with. All current PR systems fail on this point, at least in part.
3. Parliamentary power should accurately reflect the wishes of all the people and not just a fortunately placed minority. FPTP fails spectacularly in this respect.
4. Very small parties or geographically limited parties should be excluded from representation. FPTP achieves this to the point of excluding major parties but most PR systems depend upon some arbitrary pre-definition of success to do this. F2PTP incorporates this aspect automatically. Second place works third place doesn't.
5. Constituency boundaries and size of electorate should not be overly significant. Whilst it makes sense to retain some uniformity it makes even more sense to align constituencies with existing governmental structures such as counties or regions. FPTP requires some strange boundary configurations to attempt equality of electorate size which would cease to be an issue.

Any system that can meet all the above criteria must be worth a look.

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FIRST TWO PAST THE POST

THE FUNDMENTAL FLAWS OF FPTP

FPTP has been the voting system used in the UK for many years and has some benefit where only two main parties contest an election. When in a multi party state the system breaks down and disenfranchises the majority of voters who see no possibility of achieving representation. The overall effect of this is to contribute to the alienation of people and discourage involvement.

FPTP encourages the marginalisation of many parts of the country. Ironically, the vast majority of electoral local effort goes to 'marginal seats' thereby ignoring those seats where the majority is seen to be unshakable. Not only do 'safe' seats lose out from party and government attention the whole philosophic foundation of the democratic process is undermined when just a handful of places always decide the outcome.

An aspect of FTPT, because of its propensity to overly advantage geographical enclaves is the encouragement and real increase in sectarian movements as seen with the SNP. Despite the appearance of overwhelming support the reality is very different. Only 1,454,436 people in Scotland voted for the SNP out of a population of 5.3 million and an electorate of 4.2 million.

Only the distortion provided by the FPTP system could display this result as an overwhelming statement of support. Most Scots voted against the SNP but their views were nullified by a system that artificially created a disproportionate outcome.

Sectarianism and division always lead to extreme behaviour once a certain tipping point has been reached. One might think that it would be in the best interests of a country to avoid creating such situations yet the self serving nature of the two main parties are content to allow such disparity to grow because they believe that the distortion apparent in this election benefits them enormously and the nature of party politics in the 21st century seems to value the maintenance of political power above all other considerations. It is surprising then that in the 2015 election Labour would have done better under the F2PTP system than FPTP

The F2PTP system, described, below resolves all of these aspects. Perhaps it's worth some consideration?

F2PTP

A SUMMARY

F2PTP is a voting system that selects both the winner and the second placed candidates in a constituency parliamentary election. This is the representative aspect.

The MPs selected by this method vote in parliament with the actual numbers of votes cast for them directly in the said election. This is the proportional aspect.

As it happens the inclusion of second place automatically creates a degree of proportionality whilst still requiring a bar to be overcome (see the votes per seat calculations below).

There are 650 members of Parliament, 533 in England, 59 in Scotland, 40 in Wales and 18 in Northern Ireland. By merging every two adjacent constituencies into one new F2PTP constituency the numbers of MPs remains almost the same. The actual number will be 648 because of the odd numbers of constituencies in England and Scotland requiring two new F2PTP constituencies to be made up of six former ones. Each MP will retain equality of representation, status and opportunity so as far as the constituency elector is concerned they remain equal in their representational roles. The F2PTP system is not affected by any subsequent re-definition of boundaries for any reason and still works well.

Voting in parliament, however, will change. The outdated and quaint system of passing through to a lobby has massive disadvantages and is no longer suited to the modern world. In voting matters the representative will lose the existing and artificial equality within the legislature, which is part of the current system and change to a proportional one. If MP1 was elected with 10,000 votes and MP2 with 20,000 they will remain the numbers of votes they individually cast in parliament every time a vote is taken. This way your vote counts for the duration of the parliament.

By these means representatives retain a constituency association and equality of direct representation yet exercise their proportional support within the legislative process. An individual vote of a successful first or second placed candidate would no longer be discarded immediately after the election result but be cast again and again in every parliamentary vote.

This simple, feasible and practical system is relatively easy to implement and provides some remarkable and not immediately apparent progress in widening representation and making the political process more relevant to the people.

If more people get what they vote for more may well engage with the process.

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The 2015 effect on principle electoral measurements is as follows.

FPTP the current system

30,674,959   Votes cast

15,339,995   Voters got the representative they voted for.

7,461,407   Votes were wasted by being in excess of the required number to secure first place

15,335,614   Votes were wasted or ineffective by being cast for unsuccessful candidates.

Party	SumOfVote	Seats	Votes Per Seat	% Total Vote
Conservative	11,325,531	331	34216	36.9211%
Labour Total	9,347,304	232	40290	30.4721%
UKIP	3,876,674	1	3876674	12.6379%
Liberal Democrat	2,415,862	8	301983	7.8757%
SNP	1,454,436	56	25972	4.7414%
Green	1,155,375	1	1155375	3.7665%
DUP	184,260	8	23033	0.6007%
Alliance	61556	0		0.2007%
Sinn Fein	176,232	4	44058	0.5745%
UUP	114935	2	57468	0.3747%
SDLP	99,809	3	33270	0.3254%
Plaid Cymru	181704	3	60568	0.5924%
Others	281,281	1	281281	0.9170%
Total	30,674,959	650		

Overall majority required 326 seats, achieved

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If the F2PTP system were to be introduced for the 2020 general election 325 MPs would be guaranteed to lose their seats. Whilst this is not likely to find support with the group whose self interest may be a significant factor it may well be just what the public would like to see.
It is less likely to provide a government with an overall majority.

F2PTP the proposed system

30,674,959   Votes Cast

22,778,475   Voters would have got the representative they voted for.

0   Votes would have been wasted by being in excess of what was required

7,896,484   Votes would have been wasted or ineffective by being cast for unsuccessful candidates.

Party	SumOfVote	Seats	Votes Per Seat	% Total Vote
Conservative	11,325,531	265	42738	36.9211%
Labour Total	9,347,304	253	36946	30.4721%
UKIP	3,876,674	45	86148	12.6379%
Liberal Democrat	2,415,862	33	73208	7.8757%
SNP	1,454,436	29	50153	4.7414%
Green	1,155,375	0		3.7665%
DUP	184,260	7	26323	0.6007%
Alliance	61556	2	30778	0.2007%
Sinn Fein	176,232	4	44058	0.5745%
UUP	114935	3	38312	0.3747%
SDLP	99,809	2	49905	0.3254%
Plaid Cymru	181704	4	45426	0.5924%
Others	281,281	1	281281	0.9170%
Total	30,674,959	648		

Overall majority required 15,337,480 votes; not achieved.

Conservative, UKIP, DUP = 15,386,465 = Majority.

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Constituency MPs remain accountable to their constituents.

A third more voters get the representative they voted for.

There are less than a third of the wasted votes under FPTP.

The votes per MP/Seat are much more even.

Voting power in the commons is directly proportional to votes cast.

When a vote is cast it remains active throughout the parliament.

It would have benefited the Labour Party as well as Liberal Democrats and UKIP.

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THE EFFECT 2010

The 2010 effect on principle electoral measurements is as follows.

<u>FPTP the current system</u>

14,002,295 Voters got the representative they voted for.

5,438,510 Votes were wasted by being in excess of the required number to secure first place

15,684,659 Votes were wasted or ineffective by being cast for unsuccessful candidates.

Party	SumOfVote	Seats	Votes Per Seat	% Total Vote
Conservative	10,703,654	306	34979	36.0543%
Labour Total	8,606,517	258	33359	28.9903%
Liberal Democrat	6,836,248	57	119934	23.0273%
Others	3,541,185	29	122110	11.9282%

Overall majority required 326 seats, not achieved

<u>F2PTP the proposed system</u>

20,727,717 Voters would have got the representative they voted for.

0 Votes would have been wasted by being in excess of what was required

8,959,239 Votes would have been wasted or ineffective by being cast for unsuccessful candidates.

Party	SumOfVote	Seats	Votes Per Seat	% Total Vote
Conservative	10703654	248	43160	36.0543%
Labour Total	8606517	213	40406	28.9903%
Liberal Democrat	6836248	149	45881	23.0273%
Others	3541185	38	93189	11.9282%

Overall majority required 14,843,803 votes, not achieved.

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THE OVERALL EFFECT OF F2PTP

- **One and a half times as many voters would get the representative they voted for.**
- **A third less wasted votes.**
- **Every successful vote counts throughout the parliament again and again.**
- **Votes per seat are virtually equalised for the main parties.**
- **No longer could there be overwhelming sectarian enclaves based on geographical or nationalistic factors.**
- **Tactical voting becomes irrelevant.**
- **A majority government is still perfectly possible but would have greater moral legitimacy.**
- **Were a coalition to be required its make up would likely be more evident before voting began.**
- **Constituency boundaries become irrelevant in terms of size of electorate thereby easier to match them to naturally occurring or existing governmental boundaries.**
- **The concept of 'marginal seats' becomes much more difficult to rationalise. In the F2PTP scenario most seats could be described as 'marginal'.**
- **Success attracts! Better quality officials, members and candidates are attracted to causes that are more likely to be successful.**

Because of the inclusion of second placed candidates parties that have a spread of support nationally will generally do better than localised or nationalistic parties. It also has the effect of spreading the colours. No longer will the south be only blue but blue, purple, red and yellow. This applies almost everywhere even Scotland where current levels of SNP support are unusually high.

Quite unexpectedly the parties who would benefit from this system, were it to have been in place for the 2015 election, would include Labour. Clearly it provides better representation for Liberal Democrats and UKIP as expected but not for the Greens showing that their success in Brighton Pavilion is highly localised and doesn't extend to even neighbouring constituencies.

As well as the numerical improvements one has to consider that the extension of representation as delivered by the F2PTP system may well encourage future participation in the electoral process by simply giving a voice to those permanently disenfranchised by the current system.

Today, 'why bother to vote' is an arguable concept, after all most votes will be unsuccessful and discarded. This most simple and transparent of systems changes almost all of that.

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A significant factor would be a change in voting habit. Whereas people may well have regarded a vote for a smaller party such as the Liberal Democrats, or currently UKIP, they may well revise their views to reflect the reality that, as second places count, a protest vote may no longer be just a protest.

This is likely to sharpen the minds of smaller parties and encourage them to become more professional and electable rather than adopt a negative and undefined position simply to attract the disaffected. This would be a good thing. A campaign content of 'vote for us because you don't like them' loses traction and becomes vote for us because of what we stand for and what we would want to achieve.

With any change there are unforeseen effects, but because this comparison has been applied over two elections with similar outcomes there should not be too many surprises.

We must be aware though, that voting behaviour will most probably change with a more egalitarian system like F2PTP but perhaps that can only be a good thing.

Importantly the system avoids the obvious accusation that it is only being promoted because it benefits X,Y,or Z. Sometimes one has to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do and not driven by self interest. All PR systems would have the effect of benefitting the smaller parties, such as UKIP, far greater than the F2PTP system described here. Opposition underpinned by such argument would, therefore, be much less effective.

Tuesday, 05 May 2015 David Allen