



Direct Party and Representative Voting

(DPR Voting)

www.dprvoting.org

a description of an electoral system

A form of Proportional Representation

for multi party single member constituency parliamentary democracies

S Johnson v11. Feb 2012

Direct Party and Representative Voting is an electoral system
intended as the basis for reform of the House of Commons in the UK

Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) – a description of an electoral system

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Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting)

1 Summary – features, principal outcomes and comment

Features

Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) is an electoral system for parliamentary democracies designed to replace the 'First past the post' (FPTP) voting system used to elect the House of Commons in the UK. It is a form of Proportional Representation based on single member constituencies.

Voters have two separate and distinct votes. One vote (the party vote) determines the number of votes the party has in the Parliament, and therefore which party or parties can form the government. The other vote (the representative vote) elects the MP for the constituency.

The party votes, aggregated nationwide, determine the number of votes of each parliamentary party. MPs are elected by simple plurality of representative votes in each constituency. The Parliamentary Party votes are shared out equally amongst the parties sponsored MPs, so each MP has a vote in parliament for party political issues that has a value which may be more or less than one. Each MP has an equal vote on 'non party political' issues.

Principal outcomes:

- A form of proportional representation is achieved with minimal change to the voting system.
- The existing system of single member constituencies is retained.
- The existing system of electing MPs is retained.
- Each ('Party') vote in every constituency makes a difference to the result of the election.
- The votes each party has in parliament are proportional to the votes won in the election.
- This determines which party, or parties, can form the government
- The election is not decided by voting in 'marginal' constituencies. All votes are of equal importance.
- Simplicity of voting and counting is comparable with FPTP.
- Frequent revision to constituency boundaries is not required to retain this fairness.
- Separating the vote for the MP from the vote for the party means:
 - Election of the individual MP is on personal merit, not party label
 - There are no safe party seats
 - It encourages independent and independent minded candidates
 - The MP becomes more responsive to his/her constituents
 - The MP is politically less dependent on the central party organisation

Note: Voting is not preferential, Multimember constituencies are not used, Party Lists are not used

Comment: DPR Voting is a way of introducing proportionality to our political system while retaining much of the existing familiar electoral system. It addresses the main criticisms of the FPTP and avoids the main criticisms of other proposed systems of electoral reform.

DPR Voting results in a parliament of elected representatives, not a microcosm of British Society. Each MP who is elected is the local choice, elected on individual merit. It requires some changes to the way parliament operates. MPs previously elected under FPTP could hope to be re-elected in their existing constituency under the new system.

The system retains much of the existing electoral system. This would ease the process of change. The cost of introducing the new system would be low. It would be straightforward to reverse the change.

Objections to the system include:

- The system is not based on 'one MP one vote'.
- Constituency MPs are elected by a plurality rather than a proportional or preferential system.
- The system is not proportional for the smallest parties.
- 'Heavy votes' might encourage 'Pork Barrel politics'
- The system does not use multimember constituencies.
- A PR system it is likely to result in a coalition government.

2 Introduction

This paper describes Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) which is an electoral system for parliamentary democracies designed to replace the 'First past the post' (FPTP) voting system used to elect the House of Commons in the UK.

2.1 A brief description

Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) is a form of Proportional Representation based on single member constituencies. It is not a preferential voting system. It does not employ party lists.

The voter is asked to cast one vote for a party (the Party vote) and a second vote for a candidate (The Representative or Constituency vote) to elect an MP.

The 'Party' votes are aggregated nationwide to determine the potential number of votes each party has in the parliament and thus which party or parties can form the government.

MPs are elected in single member constituencies by a plurality of 'Representative' votes.

The system is superficially similar to both MMP and FPTP, but has different principles, features and outcomes. Voting for the constituency MP and the party to form the government is not conflated.

2.2 The underlying principles of DPR Voting

The FPTP voting system has shortcomings for a multi party representative democracy. At an election voters have two objectives:

Firstly, to vote for a party to form a national government

Secondly, to elect an individual to represent the local constituency in the parliament.

In the FPTP system and in many other electoral systems these two aspects are conflated in one vote. This aspect of the system is the cause of a number of problems for our democracy.

The shortcomings of the system are compounded by the way the result is counted.

A number of individuals are elected, and once elected, a parliament is formed from the elected individuals, and arbitrarily they are each given equal elected status, ignoring all the votes cast in the election for both winning and losing parties/candidates. A majority of 1, or 10,000, makes no difference. Similarly 10,000 votes cast for a losing candidate are completely ignored. It is not surprising that the results are often disconnected from the wishes of the voters as expressed in a comparable opinion poll, and fail to reflect a balanced result.

DPR Voting separates these basic voting objectives. Each voter has two votes which have different consequences.

a) The Representative vote

All MPs are elected as single member constituency MPs by a plurality of Representative Votes.

b) The Party Vote

Votes cast in the Party Vote election determine the number of votes for each Parliamentary Party. This determines which party, or parties, can form the Government.

In parliament, these votes are exercised in 'party political' votes (divisions). DPR Voting makes a distinction between 'party political' issues and 'non party political' issues when parliamentary divisions are conducted.

The mechanism for exercising these votes is that the votes won by each party are shared out equally amongst its sponsored MPs. This means that Party sponsored MPs have votes with a value of more or less than one, the value being expressed as a decimal.

How this vote is exercised is up to each MP, allowing for personal judgement and party discipline in the same way that MPs decide how to vote under the current system.

Note: all divisions are 'party political' unless there is unanimous agreement amongst all the parties that a division is 'non party political'

All MPs have an equal vote (value one) in 'non party political' divisions.

For Independent MPs, all divisions are 'non party political' because they are not party sponsored, so they have a vote value of one in every division.

Although the votes each party has are determined by the Party vote, the party needs party sponsored MPs elected by the Representative vote in order to exercise this voting power.

2.2 An illustration.

After a General Election, the 'party political' vote values of party sponsored MPs might be calculated as follows.

There are currently 650 seats in the House of Commons. If 10 Independent MPs are elected, there will be 640 'party' MPs. Collectively these 'party' MPs will be able to exercise 640 votes.

Each Party will have a percentage share of these votes determined by the share of the Party vote they won in the election. Each party distributes these votes to its party sponsored MPs, each MP having an equal share, as follows.

If party 'A' got 40% support in the 'Party' vote but 50% of the 'party' MPs, each of their MPs would have a vote value of $40/50 = 0.8$

40% of the 640 votes is 256 votes (shared equally amongst the 320 party 'A' MPs that were elected.)

If party 'B' got 40% support in the 'Party' vote but 30% of the party MPs, each of their MPs would have a vote value of $40/30 = 1.333$

40% of the 640 votes is 256 votes (shared equally amongst the 192 party 'B' MPs that were elected.)

3 Objectives

The principal objectives of the system are

3.1 That the votes a party has in parliament are proportional to the votes cast in the election.

Party Votes cast in the election determine the number of parliamentary votes for each Party. This determines which party or parties can form the Government.

DPR Voting achieves relative proportionality for each party that gets one constituency MP elected.

A small party has a better chance of getting at least one MP elected under DPR Voting than under the existing FPTP system because the vote for the party is not conflated with the vote for the representative.

Automatic election allows the election of a single party representative for a party which wins enough votes to exceed a predetermined threshold level but fails to get a single constituency MP elected.

3.2 To allow the voter to choose a local MP on personal merit, and to choose the party of government separately.

The consequence of separating the party and representative votes is that the Representative is elected on personal merit rather than the popularity of the MP's party. This has implications for the relationship between parties, their MPs and their constituents. It also has implications for the motivation of MPs.

For example, consider a constituency N where Party A is dominant. Party A supporters will vote for Party A in the party vote. When it comes to the Representative vote, they are free to vote for the best representative for the constituency. This might be the candidate of Party B. By voting for the candidate of Party B this neither strengthens the chances of party B forming the Government, nor weakens party A's chances of forming the government. In short they can vote for the best candidate, regardless of party allegiance.

They may vote for candidate B because candidate A is lazy, incompetent, dishonest, disliked, does not live in the constituency, was foisted on the constituency by Party A HQ, or a whole variety of reasons. Alternatively it could be because candidate B is hard working, charismatic, high profile, well known locally, or for other reasons will make the best MP.

Party A supporters can vote for party A but don't have to vote for the candidate of party A so no MP can consider their seat safe, or take election for granted, however strong the support for the party locally.

3.3 To retain the existing system of single member constituencies

DPR Voting is based on using single member constituencies. Most other electoral systems require either slightly larger (and fewer) constituencies or much larger (and many fewer) multimember constituencies.

Smaller constituencies encourage personal and local involvement in politics:

- The MP can be better aware of and responsive to the concerns of constituents.

- Individual candidates can be known locally, even if they are not nationally prominent.

- Election campaigns can be conducted by small organisations at lower cost per candidate.

- Smaller constituencies encourage local involvement in campaigns rather than central control.

- Personal contact between MPs, candidates, and constituents is easier, and thus more likely.

- Larger constituencies disadvantage Independent candidates.

A change to the size of constituencies requires changes to constituency boundaries, and resulting cost, upheaval, the suspicion of gerrymandering and breakdown of electoral continuity.

DPR Voting does not require any change to constituency boundaries, and is resistant to gerrymandering, which would save costs in the introduction of the new system. Future frequent boundary changes are not necessary to maintain the fairness of the system.

3.4 To retain simple voting and counting procedures.

The simplicity of voting and counting is comparable with FPTP.

The constituency MP is elected by a simple plurality, just as at present.

It is not a preferential voting system. Multimember constituencies are not used.

Voting:

A simple voting method makes an election process more inclusive, and thus more democratic.

The Party vote asks the voter to choose their preferred party. Although this vote can be seen as an additional choice, and thus a more complicated vote than FPTP, in practice people are more likely to know which party they wish to support than which local representative.

The Representative vote is very similar to the existing electoral system so would pose no difficulties to the electorate that they are not already faced with.

Splitting the party vote from the representative vote removes a dilemma for some voters.

Counting:

A simple counting process that everyone understands makes the result more transparent, reduces the risk of fraud, and improves confidence in the system.

The counting of the Representative vote is identical to the current electoral system. The winner could be declared in a similar manner, within a similar timescale.

The counting of the Party vote is also very similar. This is counted on a constituency basis, and then the individual constituency results are aggregated nationwide to give the final result. This count should be achieved in not much more than the time it takes to bring in all the constituency results.

4 Secondary outcomes

The party vote, aggregated nationwide, and the separate representative vote have additional outcomes.

4.1 Safe Seats

There are no safe seats in a DPR Voting election, in the sense that the candidate of a particular party is likely to win regardless of the personal characteristics and track record of the candidate.

Party vote:

Votes are aggregated nationwide so that every party vote makes a difference to the election result regardless of where the vote is cast. Each party has to compete for each vote in each constituency.

Representative vote:

The election of the MP is separate from the Party vote. No party sponsored candidate is guaranteed the support of the electorate, regardless of how popular their party is.

The electorate can vote for their party but need not vote for the candidate of that party (and vice versa). No MP can consider their seat safe. The election result will depend the personal merit, appeal, and track record of the candidates.

4.2 Marginal Constituencies

Marginal constituencies can not influence the outcome of the election because the votes a party has are determined by the nationwide aggregate of the Party vote, not the result of individual constituencies.

Some constituencies will be considered marginal in respect of the election of the individual MP, but the significance is limited to the constituency and the individuals concerned.

Those individuals may be important within the party, and may be potential Ministers or senior party officials, so the results in these constituencies would still be of special interest, and would not necessarily go with any nationwide party 'swing'.

4.3 Constituency Boundaries and Gerrymandering

How constituency boundaries are drawn makes no difference to the outcome of the Party vote and therefore the number of votes each party has in the parliament. Therefore frequent revision of constituency boundaries is not necessary.

Constituency boundaries retain significance in that ideally each MP should represent roughly the same number of constituents.

How boundaries are drawn could have an effect on the election of the representatives of the constituencies concerned, but the consequences would be limited, local, and not necessarily predictable, so gerrymandering problems would be minimised.

Adoption of the system would save costs related to the Boundary Commission and the associated administrative changes that result from continuous boundary reviews.

4.4 Party Lists

All MPs are elected for a geographical constituency. No party lists are required.

The most frequently voiced criticisms of MMP relate to the election of party list MPs, and thus do not apply to DPR Voting.

4.5 The significance of each vote (Every vote 'counts')

In DPR Voting, every 'party' vote cast is significant in that it changes the result of the election. That is, it changes the potential voting power of the different parties. Every Party vote, regardless of where it is cast, counts equally towards the final result of the election.

The voter knows in advance that their vote not only 'counts', but will make a mathematical difference to the result. This is an answer to the question 'Why should I bother to vote?'

The only exception would be where a small party fails to get an MP elected. Even in this instance, the party vote cast for that small party would reduce the votes of all the other parties relative to the votes of any independent MPs elected. (see 4.7 [small parties](#))

As regards the Representative vote, the situation is similar to the existing FPTP system. However since the voter is not restricted by the desire to support the party of choice, the voter has more freedom as to how to cast the representative vote and the election outcome is more uncertain.

4.6 Tactical Voting

Each Party vote cast strengthens the party voted for (and weakens every other party). As a result there is no sensible rationale for tactical voting.

Tactical voting can play a part in the Representative election, but it only impacts on the constituency result, and does not affect the votes of the different parties in the parliament. Tactical voting may be more likely to occur in the Representative vote where a particularly high profile or contentious candidate is standing.

4.7 Small parties:

The system allows small parties to have a number of votes in parliament proportional to the votes they won in the election provided one of their MPs is elected. Winning one seat might be easier than under FPTP.

For example a small party might be expected to have at least one outstanding or charismatic candidate. Such a candidate of a small party could have a better chance of being elected under DPR Voting because it is possible for voters to use their Party vote to support the party of their choice, and then use their Representative vote to choose the best MP regardless of party. A small party does not need to have a natural plurality of party supporters in the constituency to get their candidate elected.

The hurdle of having to get at least one MP elected in a constituency is reduced by 'automatic election'. A set threshold of Party votes would limit the formation of a multiplicity of small parties. (see also [5.2 Votes threshold and automatic election](#))

4.8 Extremist Parties

Extremist parties are a special case of the small party. The Party vote should gauge the level of support for each party accurately. An extremist party would need to have a constituency MP elected. A high profile extremist candidate might be expected to attract tactical voting in the representative vote.

Whether or not this would make it more or less difficult for an extremist party to be fully represented in the parliament is a matter of conjecture, and would depend on local circumstances and voter behaviour.

4.9 Independent candidates:

Independent candidates are candidates not sponsored by a party that has qualified to be present on the Party ballot paper.

The main disadvantage that Independent candidates have under FPTP is that voters are obliged to vote for their party sponsored candidate if they wish to support a particular party to form the Government. DPR Voting removes this constraint. Voting behaviour may still favour party sponsored MPs, but a well known, charismatic local independent candidate could have a better chance than under FPTP.

The retention of the single member constituency is also an advantage for the Independent candidate, in that the candidate will be best known in a smaller constituency, and it is easier for an Independent candidate to campaign in a small area compared with the larger area of a multimember constituency.

As an independent candidate, the only description allowed on the Representative ballot paper would be 'Independent'. Independent Candidates would only be differentiated by their name.

5 Electoral Procedures and exceptional events

In order to conduct a DPR Voting election, some additional procedures are necessary, or might be adopted.

5.1 Party qualification

In order to determine which political parties appeared in the Party section of the ballot paper, there should be a qualification process. The details of this procedure are not fundamental to the election process, so this paper does not seek to define or specify this process, but rather to suggest how it could be implemented.

Qualification could be a national or regional qualification process. Parties might need to obtain numbers of signatures across a number of constituencies or perhaps achieve a threshold level in a regulated opinion poll. Some parties might be deemed to have achieved qualification on the basis of the results obtained in the previous election

Parties that qualified to be on the Party ballot paper could win Party votes even if there was no candidate of that party standing in the representative section of the vote.

If a party failed to qualify, its candidates could still stand as independents, but there would be no mention of their party either in the Party section or in the representative section of the ballot paper.

5.2 Votes threshold and automatic election

In DPR Voting small parties must get at least one party sponsored MP elected in order to exercise their party vote. An additional feature, automatic election, could be introduced to allow representation in the parliament of small parties who fail to get any MPs elected, based on a threshold level of Party votes.

If a party exceeds the threshold level of Party votes in the election, but fails to get any MP elected, the leader of the party would automatically be elected as an MP. In this way the party would be represented in the Parliament and the MP would be able to exercise the appropriately 'heavy' vote.

Such a 'Party Leader' MP would have no constituency link, but this would be an exception.

5.3 By-elections, and defection or expulsion of members.

In normal circumstances each MP retains their vote value until the next General Election.

By-elections

In the event of the death or resignation from parliament of an MP, a by-election is held. The winner of the Representative ballot becomes the new MP, and exercises a vote value of one.

A Party ballot is not necessary. It could be included but the result would have no significance. It would allow the voter to send a message to the different parties. This message would have no parliamentary significance, but would allow the electorate the opportunity to 'let off steam'

Alternatively, the election could be held exactly as a by-election would be conducted under the existing FPTP system without a Party vote ballot.

Defection or expulsions

In the event of an MP resigning the party whip, the consequences are governed by a rule:

An MP who resigned the party whip would retain the same value vote or a vote value of one, whichever is the lower, for the remainder of the Parliament.

This rule is designed to deal with particular situations.

1 An MP from a small party with a heavy vote defects.
It seems unfair for such an MP to take a heavy vote to the new party.

2 An MP should not be able to gain a heavier vote by resigning from the party.

There is no rule to stop an MP defecting.

The party who loses the MP loses the vote value of one MP.

The party who gains an MP does not gain a heavy vote (ie a vote value greater than one).

There is no redistribution of votes between General Elections (eg after a by-election). The party vote mandate is only significant when aggregated nationwide at a General Election.

5.4 Abuse of the system - attempts to cheat or exploit the system

Theoretically there is one potential loophole that should be blocked by electoral legal sanction.

Consider the situation where party A has a large majority in a constituency. If party A decides not to field a candidate but instead supports an independent who, once elected, defects to or always votes with Party A, that party would gain one parliamentary vote more than would be the case if Party A had fielded a winning candidate.

For this reason, for a party not to field a candidate in a constituency where it wins the highest share of the party vote, would be a contravention of electoral law.

This tactic cannot be hidden, because it is apparent immediately the election result is declared.

It is difficult to know whether or not this tactic would be adopted, or whether it would be successful.

In any event, it should be straightforward for a court to impose a penalty on the party, either financial, or electoral, or both. It would require concerted action to be taken in a number of constituencies for a party to get a significant advantage. Conversely it is possible for a contravention in one constituency to happen accidentally, and the penalty could be graduated accordingly.

6 Electoral administration.

There would not be a great deal of change to the administrative arrangements for an election using DPR Voting.

6.1 Before the election

No changes to the electoral constituencies mean that there would be little change to administration of elections prior to polling day.

Party Qualification: The process of finalising party qualification could occur well before the election was called.

6.2 Election day

The retention of the existing system of constituencies would mean no changes to polling station administration would be required.

There would be two ballot papers.

The Party ballot paper would list the qualifying parties.

It would be possible to have an option 'None of the above'

The Representative ballot paper would list the Candidates.

The description for party sponsored candidates should match the party description on the Party ballot paper.

The only permitted description for Independent candidates would be 'Independent'

Voting and counting would be similar to the existing system, with a single vote cast for the candidate on one ballot paper, and a single vote cast for the party on the other.

The ballot papers would be collected in separate ballot boxes.

It would be possible for a voter to cast a vote on only one of the ballot papers and abstain or spoil the ballot on the other.

6.3 The Election Count

The two sections of the ballot paper are counted separately. The counts in both sections are similar to the current counting system, so virtually no change to administration is required.

The representative ballot count determines the election of the MP by simple plurality. This can be done quickly and easily, and thus results in some constituencies could be available, as at present, on the night.

The Party vote would be counted for each constituency and results declared as soon as available. As constituency counts were declared it would be possible to make reasonably accurate projections of the final results.

The Party vote would only have practical significance when aggregated with all the other votes to reach a national total, but local constituency results would be of psephological and political interest. The overall party vote result would be available soon after the last constituency result was declared.

7 Campaign issues

As a result of the nature of DPR Voting, political parties would change some aspects of their campaigning.

7.1 Election Campaigning

Campaign strategies based on campaigning in 'marginals' would be redundant. Party voting strength in the parliament depends on votes aggregated nationally, so parties would have to campaign nationwide for the Party vote, and of course locally for their individual candidates.

7.2 Candidates

There would be increased pressure to find good local candidates. Constituency campaigns would need to focus on the merits and track record of the candidates.

Party organisations would be wary of pressuring a local party organisation to accept a parachuted candidate because this might not be accepted by the voters. It would be possible for a party to win a plurality in the Party vote, but fail to get their candidate elected.

7.3 'Election night' and psephology

Election results would be declared at a similar speed to the existing FPTP system. Thus election night television would not be adversely affected.

The system would add an extra dimension to political analysis because it would be possible to compare party voting results directly with opinion polls taken prior to polling day.

It would also be interesting to compare the votes for the candidates with the votes for the parties in particular constituencies, and thus identify politicians who did better, and worse, than their parties in terms of the share of the vote.

8 Parliamentary and Constitutional matters

8.1 Changes to Commons voting procedures (Divisions) in Parliament

The main change to parliamentary procedure is the way parliamentary votes are conducted.

A form of electronic voting (for example, each MP could be given a machine readable card and a card reader could be placed in each division lobby) would be introduced to the Commons to make the voting (division) process foolproof and simple.

8.2 'Non party political' divisions

'Party political' divisions and the related system of MPs vote values is the default system for deciding divisions in parliament. If Parliament votes on a matter agreed as a 'non party political' vote, where no party has a policy on the matter, the system of MPs party vote values does not apply.

Specifically a particular vote is deemed a 'non party political' vote if all political parties agree as much and inform the speaker accordingly.

In this situation each MP has a vote with a value of one.

8.3 Select Committees

The process of finding members to fill select committees would be similar to the current system. Since the numbers of MPs present in the chamber would not be proportional to the votes cast for the party, membership of select committees would not necessarily be more proportional than at present.

It is possible that where a particular party is badly under represented in the house compared with the party vote, there would be strain in appointing MPs to Select Committees. This will be no worse than at present.

8.4 The effect of the system on MPs

Change to the system of single member constituencies system is not required by a change to DPR Voting. An MP (if re-elected) would therefore be able to continue representing the same constituency.

The representative vote is similar in certain respects to the existing FPTP voting method, so an MP who is well liked and respected within the constituency should have a good chance of retaining their seat after a change of the electoral system.

For this reason, a change to DPR Voting would not necessarily offer a very much greater threat to the employment of most MPs than an election under FPTP. In asking MPs to agree to legislation introducing DPR Voting, MPs would not, in effect, be asked to vote for a change that would make large numbers of MPs redundant, as might be considered the case with some other electoral systems.

MPs' link with the constituency will be closer because the personal qualities and record in public life of the candidates in election will carry more significance, and an MP will not be able to rely on the party label to be elected. This will also give MPs a measure of independence since a popular MP has a better chance of retaining their seat when his or her party suffers an electoral setback. Of course the converse is also true.

After the election result, the Representative votes cast for the candidate will be compared with the Party vote in the constituency. This will be enable observers to measure the personal success or otherwise of the candidate.

As a further consequence, in Parliament, the whips may find their influence and patronage diminished. MPs may feel they have more independence when it comes to voting. For similar reasons, a party might be wary of imposing a candidate on a local party.

8.5 The fragmentation of parties

It is argued that PR results in many small parties. There is no reason to suggest that DPR Voting would necessarily encourage the formation of many small parties, or cause schisms within existing parties.

Formation of new parties: The decision as to whether or not to launch a new party would be influenced by several factors: The difficulty or ease of the qualification process, the difficulty or ease for a new party

to get at least one MP elected, and the level that is set for the threshold for automatic representation.

Schisms within the larger parties: There is no reason to suggest that DPR Voting would encourage schisms within the larger parties. There would be no particular benefit or incentive from the system, and the disincentive that applies to small parties would apply to new breakaway parties

8.6 Coalition Government

The system seems as likely as any other PR system to result in a coalition government if the public does not back any one party strongly enough to give them a clear majority of votes cast. This cannot be assumed. Recent experience shows FPTP can result in a coalition and PR can lead to a majority Government.

From a democratic standpoint it would seem better to improve the way we manage coalition government than devise an electoral system that forces an arbitrary or capricious 'strong government' result when this does not reflect the clear desire of the electorate.

Currently unresolved issues, such as a coalition claiming a mandate for a programme for government after an election where no party won a majority of votes cast, are not resolved by this or any other electoral system.

8.7 Election of the Speaker

The convention is that the speaker is returned to Parliament unopposed. If convention is followed, there is no competition, and thus the constituents of the Speaker's constituency do not have the chance to vote for the party of their choice.

With DPR Voting this problem would not arise. The election would take place with electors completing the Party Ballot section only (assuming there were no candidates standing to oppose the Speaker). Accordingly their Party votes would still count alongside every other Party vote in the election.

9 Objections to the system

9.1 MPs and differing vote values rather than 'One MP one Vote'

The main concern about the system encountered so far is that it is not based on 'one MP one vote'.

In practice each MP has two roles to play – two hats. One is a constituency representative. The other is as a member of the party's parliamentary party. FPTP makes no distinction between these roles in terms of the vote the MP exercises in the parliament. DPR Voting does make a distinction.

In DPR Voting, each MP has an equal vote when voting on non party political issues. Party political divisions are different. Here the MP acts as a member of the party. The division is decided by the votes of the MPs who support the party line. The mandate for these votes has been determined by the party vote in the election. The MP is an equal member of his or her parliamentary party and gets an equal share of the party's votes.

But what is wrong with the existing 'one MP one vote' system?

There is no inherent reason why each MP should have the same voting power as every other MP. After all, they represent different sized constituencies, win different numbers of votes, and they will have different majorities. As the representative of a political party they owe something of their election to the popularity of the political party they represent. They are not elected purely on personal merit. They are not all equal. Giving them an equal vote results in an electoral system that is disproportional.

The shortcomings of FPTP are compounded by the way we count the result.

We elect a number of individuals by a plurality. Once elected, we form a parliament from the elected individuals, and arbitrarily give them each equal elected status, ignoring all the votes cast in the individual constituency elections for both winning and losing parties/candidates. A majority of one counts

equally with a majority of 10,000. Similarly 10,000 votes cast for a losing candidate are ignored.

If we conflate the questions of party and representative, and then confer one equal vote on each elected MP, we ignore the total numbers of votes cast in the election and the result is almost inevitably unfair, unrepresentative and undemocratic.

9.2 MPs are elected by a plurality

Each constituency elects their MP by a plurality. The candidate who gets the most votes wins. This is the simplest system of election.

In considering the merits of plurality voting within DPR Voting it should be remembered that this has very limited significance for the overall election result and formation of the government.

DPR Voting does not necessarily result in a parliament which is a microcosm of British Society. It does not necessarily result in a Parliament that consists of balanced proportions of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc.

The MPs that are elected will be the local choices. Each MP who is elected should be the local choice, elected on individual merit, not because he or she sports the right party credentials.

This will encourage the election of the best. Election of the best MPs will lead to a better parliament, and better government. It may well, in time, result in the election of a parliament of balanced proportions, but it is not inherent in the system, nor should it be.

Plurality voting could result in some parties having fewer MPs present in the parliament than they might expect. In this respect the situation would be similar to the existing experience under FPTP.

The different views expressed within a small party might be reduced. It might appear that the support for such a party was lower than it actually was.

Conversely a party with more than its proportional share of MPs might appear stronger than it really was. Membership of Select Committees and other MP groupings would be determined as at present.

9.3 Proportionality for the smallest parties

The system is proportional for parties strong enough to get one constituency MP elected in that the number of parliamentary votes their MPs can exercise will be proportional to their share of the vote in the General Election.

Parties may not have numbers of MPs proportional to their share of the vote. This is particularly likely where a party has widespread but thin support. The situation would be no worse and arguably rather better than under the FPTP system. Better because small parties may have a number of outstanding individuals who can get elected on the basis of personal merit even though their party does not have the most support in the constituency.

Small parties who do not get a constituency MP elected but manage to exceed the threshold level of votes in the General Election would still be represented in parliament by one member, usually the party leader, with one vote.

9.4 'Pork barrel politics' and the 'heavy' vote.

It might be conjectured that an MP with a 'heavy' vote could negotiate benefits for their constituency that other MPs might not be able to get, as a 'quid pro quo' for the MP's 'heavy' vote support for a specific issue. In practice an MP with a particularly heavy vote is likely to belong to a small party. The extreme situation is where a party has a single MP.

If this did occur there might be a self correcting mechanism that would mitigate the problem

If there was a perception that this type of 'pork barrel politicking' occurred, the electorate might form the

view that a constituency benefits from having the leader or sole representative of a small party 'A' with a 'heavy' vote as an MP. As a result, and in anticipation of this effect, the leading figure of party 'A' might have a better chance being elected and thus there would be a better chance of Party 'A' being represented in Parliament. This also applies to a lesser extent to a second MP, provided there is enough support for the party to give two MPs 'heavy' votes, and of course third and fourth representatives. As the heavy vote declines so the perceived benefit declines.

There could be two results from this. Firstly party 'A' has a better chance of being represented in parliament (and this might apply to all parties with widespread geographical support), and secondly the effect might encourage the election of other party 'A' MPs so that the number of Party 'A' MPs tends towards proportionality (and their vote value tends towards unity).

9.5 Multimember constituencies or single member constituencies

Some electoral systems depend on the use of multimember constituencies (MMCs) in order to achieve proportionality. Proportionality is also linked to the number of political parties involved. The more political parties, the more members are required to achieve proportionality: The larger the number of members, the more proportional the result, but the longer the ballot paper.

If the number of MPs in the legislature is to remain fixed, MMCs must be geographically considerably larger than the single member constituency, and where the population density is low, such as in the highlands of Scotland, this can be a practical problem.

DPR Voting does not use multimember constituencies. It does not offer the electorate as large a choice of candidates as would be the case with multimember constituencies, and does not offer a choice of candidates from within the major parties.

It is self evident that the greater the number of candidates the greater the choice. However a larger number of candidates is not necessarily better, and does not always offer a better practical choice.

In a multimember constituency the choice of candidate may still be conflated with the choice of party, which effectively restricts the election choice of the voter.

The other counter arguments relate to other properties of multimember constituencies.

Having several MPs can mean that responsibility and accountability is blurred.

Multimember constituencies are necessarily larger which makes it more difficult for candidates to campaign, for MPs to meet their constituents and for constituents to think of their MP as their local MP.

9.6 PR may lead to coalition government and 'third party' power

DPR Voting is as likely as any other PR system to result in a coalition government, if the public does not back any one party strongly enough to give them a clear majority of votes cast.

It is argued that PR could lead to a third party remaining continuously in power as the minor coalition partner. This assumes that a third party would be able to remain in coalition without sustaining the electoral damage that is often incurred by Government parties.

This is not the only possible scenario. The third party may split into two competing parties, or another party may grow up to compete for the third place position, or the difference between the two largest parties may be bridged by one or more parties to form a coalition excluding the third party.

Ultimately it will be determined by the electorate. Recent results show that PR can lead to majority Government, and FPTP can lead to coalition Government.

Conclusion – see over

10 Conclusion

Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) is an electoral system for parliamentary democracies designed to replace the 'First past the post' (FPTP) voting system used to elect the House of Commons in the UK. It is a form of Proportional Representation based on single member constituencies.

In the election separate votes are cast for Party and Representative. The Party votes directly determine the level of support for each party. Constituency MPs are elected (the Representative Vote) by a simple plurality vote. The system requires a change to the way parliamentary votes are conducted.

DPR Voting has a unique combination of advantages:

- Proportional representation is achieved with minimal change to the voting system.
- The votes each party has in parliament are proportional to the votes won in the election.
- This determines which party, or parties, can form the government
- The existing system of single member constituencies is retained.
- The existing system of electing MPs is retained.
- The elections of the MP and the party of government are not conflated.
- There are no safe 'party' seats.
- Marginal constituencies cannot determine the election of the Government.
- Simplicity of voting and counting is comparable with FPTP.
- Every vote in every constituency makes a difference to the election result.
- Voting power in parliament is proportional, there is no party bias
- Frequent revision to constituency boundaries is not required to retain this fairness.

The introduction of DPR Voting would involve only the smallest change to our current electoral system. It would preserve the relationship between MPs and their constituents on the basis of a method of constituency election which is familiar. DPR Voting would achieve greater equality for the voter, greater voter choice, and a significant increase in proportionality with the minimum disruption to our current electoral system. It could be simply and powerfully presented to the electorate as a fairer electoral system for Westminster.

Stephen Johnson, November 2011