

Submission by Richard Lung (UK) to the Parliament of Canada Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

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Summary and Recommendation.

“Voting, like any other process, is subject to scientific treatment; there is one right method of voting which automatically destroys bilaterality, and there is a considerable variety of wrong methods amenable to manipulation and fruitful of corruption and enfeebling complications. The sane method of voting is known as Proportional Representation with large constituencies and the single transferable vote... The advantage of this method is not a matter of opinion, but a matter of demonstration; it needs but an hour or so of inquiry to convince any intelligent person of its merit and desirability and of the fatal and incurable mischiefs of any other method...”

HG Wells, 1916, The Elements Of Reconstruction.

Binary choice is the simplest election. The voters have a single preference for one candidate over the other. These single preferences sum to a single majority of one candidate over the other. The generalisation, of this special case of a single preference vote for a single majority count, is a multiple preference vote for a multiple majority count.

The so-called preference vote or ranked choice is actually a many-preference vote, in order of choice, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc. This matches a many-majority count of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc majorities, by the Droop quota: One member requires half the votes; two members each require one third the votes; three members each require one quarter the votes; and so on, increasing the proportional representation, with the number of members per constituency.

This consistent generalisation, from the one to the many, of both the vote and the count, uniquely makes the single transferable vote the essentially scientific theory of choice, with the greatest power of explaining the peoples wishes.

“Science is measurement.” Sciences advance with quantitative accuracy. SS Stevens (1946, On the theory of scales of measurement, Science, 103, 677-680) analysed measurement to consist of four successively more powerful scales. Each scale uses the natural number system (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc) to supply four distinct kinds of quantitative information. Only STV follows all four scales of measurement.

A summary of measurement and method of elections is, in French, as a UNESCO copyright, 1981, in Peace-making Power-sharing:

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/542631>

This work also records the British Columbia and Ontario Citizens Assemblies, to which I submitted, explaining their differences. (The Ontario assembly chairman said they didn't have enough time to do their job.)

The French essay is more fully treated in English, in a second book, *Scientific Method Of Elections*:

<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/548524>

There is a critique of electoral scepticism that was made the terms of the Ontario CA. Also included is my solution to the universal electoral malady of "premature exclusion" of candidates: Binomial STV; and my other innovation to the proportional count, the Harmonic Mean quota.

Recommendation:

STV for Canadian federal elections, bearing in mind that this system could (and should) be used for all official elections. Political elections could adopt and adapt the BC Citizens Assembly technical report specifications. Non-political elections could readily implement computer-counted Meek method STV, mandatory for New Zealand Health Boards.

Mandate.

1) Effectiveness and legitimacy.

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Ireland learned of STV over a century ago. The public resisted two attempts to remove STV in referendums, including a provision to reduce rural areas to single-member constituencies.

In 2013, the Irish Constitutional Convention over-whelmingly backed STV and recommended an increase in the minimum of three member constituencies to five, for greater proportional representation.

Independent British reports favored STV, from the 1916 Speakers Conference to the 1973 Kilbrandon report on the Constitution, and more recently the Kerley, Sunderland, Richard, Arbuthnott and Tyler reports, the Councillors Commission report, and the Helena Kennedy Power report.

The wavering of the Arbuthnott report, from fully endorsing STV, followed incumbent politicians out-right rejection of the Richard report.

The apparent exception, to the STV consensus of independent commissions, was the Jenkins report, which attempted an ersatz STV called Alternative Vote top-up. In *The Ashdown Diaries of 1997-9*, Roy Jenkins confided that "Blair wouldn't give us Single Transferable Vote".

The British medical profession, in 1979, appreciated the Electoral Reform Society, for giving STV proportional representation to women, immigrants and specialists. First Past The Post had monopolised the General Medical Council for white male GPs.

2) Engagement.

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STV elections in Malta had, at over 90%, the highest turn-out in the European Union. STV Ulster Euro-elections had the highest turn-out in the UK. Irish elections had extremely high turn-outs, before the largest party reduced the numbers of seats per constituency, to steal more seats.

After the 1922 Irish treaty, the pro-and anti-treaty parties sought to pre-empt Irish public opinion on the treaty, by putting forward an agreed panel of candidates for the election. FPTP in a single-member system would have prevented any other candidates prevailing against them. But STV in multi-member constituencies allowed voters to prefer or order several candidates, pro- or anti-treaty, that gave a clear democratic direction to the country. (Enid Lakeman: How Democracies Vote.)

In Ireland, the voters extend preferences to more than one party, thus democratically establishing a preferred majority government from a coalition of two or more parties, such as Fine Gail and Labour.

When the Irish Labour party split, their supporters continued to extend their preferences over the two parties, so that their representation in parliament held up, and eventually the party re-united.

STV cannot make unity or a community but it uniquely can make unity or a community electorally possible.

The Single Transferable Vote uniquely allowed the three-seat Northern Irish Euro-elections to proportionally represent the Catholic Irish nationalist minority of one-third the population. Had the Regional List been used, the nationalist vote would have split between the SDLP and Sinn Fein. These irreconcilable peace and war parties would not share the same list, losing them a combined proportion of votes, and a seat in the European Parliament.

But STV allowed nationalist voters to prefer individual candidates, in order of choice, from all nationalist parties, till the most preferred nationalist won the elective quota.

When Sinn Fein made peace with the Unionists, SDLP supporters were more willing to give their next preferences to Sinn Fein candidates.

Tasmania, reducing from seven-member to five member constituencies, threatened Green representation. But that overlooked the willingness of not primarily Green voters to extend later preferences to Green candidates.

Even in Irish three to five member constituencies, voters, recognising environmental problems, are liable to transfer later preferences to the Greens, thus helping to secure them a few seats, and even coalition.

A unique democratic advantage of STV is that transferable voting transcends party divisions to represent universal concerns and unify a nation.

In the 2007 Scottish local elections, despite just three or four member constituencies, STV ensured that 74% of voters first preferences were elected. (Lewis Baston, Electoral Reform Society pdf: Local Authority Elections in Scotland.)

Contrast the 2007 English local elections, with non-transferable voting FPTP, where the British National Party won the Abbey Green ward of Stoke on Trent with 27% votes. David Green (Our voting system's knackered) comments: "The reaction of the 73% of those whose wishes were thwarted by the system can only be imagined."

Ranked Ballots in single member constituencies (aka Alternative Vote or Instant Run-off Voting) guarantees 50% representation, but typically only 35% to 40% of first preferences are elected. Moreover, the AV single-member constituency offers no choice of candidates from the same party, unlike in the much greater range of choice, in a large STV multi-member constituency.

FPTP might have given the Nazis a majority of seats, in 1933. However, a party list system can promote an extremely factional party. FPTP can split the votes between more popular individual candidates. But party list X-votes can split the votes for more popular parties.

Had the Weimar Republic used STV, in 1933, the Nazi party might not have been the single largest party, with the prerogative to form a government, because nasty parties are less likely to be transferred votes from supporters of other

parties.

Proportional counting without preference voting (party lists, including MMP) are as ineffective, as preference voting without proportional counting (Ranked Ballots/IRV). See last section: Strategic voting and wasted voting in party lists, MMP systems.

3) Accessibility and inclusiveness.

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Enid Lakeman said since 1922, in the Irish republic, invalid ballots declined from 3.08% to well under one per cent.

As the comedian, John Cleese said about STV: If you can't count up to five, then you're in trouble.

In 2007, STV was introduced into Scottish local elections, on the same day as MMP elections to the Scottish parliament. MMP had been used before, albeit with a different format to the ballot paper. But the number of spoiled ballot papers were relatively small with STV, compared to MMP: about two percent compared to three and a half percent.

An apologetic public enquiry was held into the confusion with MMP. Some MPs suggested that STV should be the standard election system. STV is the policy of the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Greens.

Both the Richard and Arbuthnott reports found very little Welsh or Scottish understanding of their (unscientific) MMP systems.

Regarding Inclusiveness:

"Electoral systems have the potential for influencing the selection of under represented groups. Our research confirms that the first-past-the-post system used in most English local government elections contains the least favourable combination of factors likely to achieve this (Rao et al., 2007). The system coming closest to offering the best chance of promoting under represented groups is the Single Transferable Vote (STV) proportional system which was used for the first time in the Scottish local government elections earlier this year."

Councillors Commission 2007.

(Quoted from STV Action web-site, Anthony Tuffin.)

4) Integrity.

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James Gilmour held that the level of distrust, between parties in Northern Ireland, required an openly recorded manual STV count.

The Richard report on Welsh Assembly elections sent an observer to the Northern Ireland Assembly STV elections. He found that it was readily understood and that all the parties agreed it is fair.

James Gilmour, who was hired by Iceland, to supervise an STV count for a constitutional body, ensured that the British Columbia Citizens Assembly STV recommendation adopted a reliable version of the manual count for transferring votes.

Recommendation:

The BC CA report would be a good basis for the use of STV in Canadian federal elections.

The virtue of that STV manual count is that interested parties, specialists and the curious could see the moving cogs to the arithmetic mechanism, which has its fascination for some.

Democracy cannot forever be left at the unspecialised level of a prehistoric gatherer society, without any division of labor, such that everyone must understand the election count, as well as the vote.

Millions use STV in non-political elections. Many British and North American universities use STV. In the UK, the London Mathematical Society, the Statistical Society and the Computer Society use Meek STV.

5) Local representation.

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“a 1997 study comparing constituency activity by junior legislators in Britain and Ireland found that Irish TDs were significantly more active in their constituencies than British MPs, undermining some FPTP supporters’ claims that you cannot have proportionality without breaking the constituency link.”

(The 2016 Irish general election. PR and the local link. Chris Terry. Electoral Reform Society.)

The anti-STV British Labour party preliminary Plant report complained that Irish STV was too much beholden to local interests. (In that case, make constituencies less local with more seats, as the Irish Constitutional Convention recommended.)

The BC Citizens Assembly of 160 men and women, in pairs for each Riding, devised constituencies to fit communities, cities having proportionately more seats than sparse rural ridings. Population shifts can be met by adjusting the number of seats. With STV, boundaries can fulfill their true role by stably bounding real communities.

The single-member system requires the expensive bureaucracy of a boundary commission, always shifting constituencies to serve the balance of power between the parties, at the expense of local community identity.

Before being abolished without consultation, STV, for many years, in Winnipeg was a 10 member constituency, giving very good PR. (Academics used its election results high information content for sociological analysis.) Calgary and Edmonton were two 5 member constituencies, giving good PR.

PR by STV probably prevented Alberta from being completely without an opposition, in 1948. For, Ranked Ballots, in single-member constituencies, in the rest of Alberta, gave Social Credit all the seats, with 58% of the votes. (Enid Lakeman: How Democracies Vote.)

Whereas BC CA devised gradations of PR, in a compromise, between urban and rural representation. Gordon Gibson commended the civility of their proceedings.

Social choice theory claims there is no fair electoral system. I guess this scepticism was an ethnocentric apology for the hounding of proportional representation from some twenty American cities.

Douglas J Amy said:

“Proportional representation also encouraged fairer racial and ethnic representation. It produced the first Irish Catholics elected in Ashtabula, and the first Polish-Americans elected in Toledo. In Cincinnati, Hamilton, and Toledo, African-Americans had never been able to win city office until the coming of PR. Significantly, after these cities abandoned PR, African-Americans again found it almost impossible to get elected.”

Only Cambridge Massachusetts, with its world-famous Institute of Technology, survived the rout. The state government has forbidden other local governments to use STV/PR, putting under quarantine the politics of intelligent compromise, lest it prove a catching disease!

Enid Lakeman discussed the general acknowledgment, that local government was better run during, but allegedly not because of, PR. A typically scandal-hit municipality, Cincinnati, while reformed to PR, was judged, by Forbes magazine, the best governed city in America.

That by-word for corruption, Tammany Hall, took three referendums, with the money and the media on side, to rid New York of PR. Eventually, one-party representation bankrupted the city, having to hand over their stewardship of the public interest to private firms.

Strategic voting and wasted voting in party lists, MMP systems.

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A Fair Vote Canada video showed red lines crossing out both strategic voting and wasted votes, as not present with MMP. Not so. European academics, such as Annika Freden, show “strategic sequencing” of voters fore-going a first choice for a small party because its larger coalition partner, in a party-proportional list system, must come first past the post, as the largest party, with first chance to form a coalition government.

Conversely, voters who prefer the larger party in a coalition, may vote for a second choice party, in danger of missing the threshold of votes to be given seats. In the German MMP system, Christian Democrats were obliged to think strategically, in terms of “threshold insurance voting” for their Free Democrat partners. Just failing 5% of the votes lost them 40 seats in one go.

Both large and small party supporters also have their respective wasted vote dilemmas, in party list systems. A small party supporter may fear to waste an X-vote as a first preference, on a party that may not reach the threshold.

A large party supporter may not wish to waste an X-vote on a first preference for a party, already with a clear lead over all other parties, even if that lead is not an over-all majority.

With Free Democrats, sympathetic to Green policies, if both parties split the environmental vote to just under 5% votes each, it would lose all representation.

Conversely, MMP can disproportion representation, by bloating a large party already over-represented in the monopolistic FPTP single member constituencies, if its voters can give their party list X-vote to a false pretender as another party, to scoop the proportional representation for small parties. When Italian elections used MMP, Forza Italia was one such “fake party.”

The single member system naturally gerrymanders itself from population shifts. An inequity of duplicate representation also can arise accidentally: parties policies may converge, to make them effectively one party, usurping the representation of alternatives.

In this case, party domination prevails over party divisions, an artifice of the monopolistic-schismatic vacillations of the dysfunctional MMP system.

MMP is unscientific to combine two false and contradictory axioms of domination and division, in a party monopolising single member system versus a party sharing list system.

Nor do so-called Open lists give individual choice. At best, they re-locate the split voting problem, of FPTP between parties, to first past the post within parties. Even then, the X-vote, as a party vote, over-rules its role as a personal vote. The British Home Secretary, Merlin Rees had to admit, in the House of Commons, that an individual candidate on the Regional List, a fully open list system, might be “elected” without receiving personal votes.

MMP is a doubly safe seat system of incumbents PR. If a safe seat is lost in a monopolistic single-member district, the candidate falls back on another safe place on the party list. The Richard report condemned MMP as denying voters the

fundamental democratic right to reject candidates, and recommended its replacement by STV.

The New Zealand Labour government specified that parties be recognised in electoral reform. This has no constitutional basis in a Westminster style democracy like NZ (or Canada). They recommended MMP, the PR system that parties usually press on the public. A first past the post referendum split the vote between several electoral reforms. Graham Kelly, NZ High Commissioner for Canada, remarked (in Ontario CA submission) that when voters saw MMP reported slightly ahead, fearing a split vote, they all rushed “like lemmings” behind it.

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