

Brief on the Merits of Electoral Reform

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Electoral reform is desperately needed in order to properly engage the electorate, and motivate people to vote in greater numbers. I was born in 1985, and I have watched politics become increasingly less stimulating for my generation and the generations following behind me as my life has progressed. One of reasons most often cited is, "my vote doesn't matter". With the current 'first past the post' system, it is hard to refute such a claim, considering the votes of people who choose losing candidates are effectively thrown away. For instance: Over one million people voted for the Green Party for several elections without the Green Party ever securing any representation in the House of Commons until very recently; those over a million votes did not count for anything for those who cast them, despite the fact that so many people voted for that party. The NDP has enjoyed solid popular support (not all that far behind the Liberals and Conservatives in many elections), but relatively few seats have been gained from that support in most elections, despite so many people voting for them.

Democracy only works if the electorate is engaged; the electorate will not be engaged if they feel the system is set up in such a way as to throw away votes that are not cast for eventual winning candidates. As a young man who has been interested in politics all his life, and has been the strongest of advocates among his peers to go out and vote, I can say that a move to proportional representation would provide motivation and stimulus to participate in elections for members of my age group. It would not be a cure all, but it would help convince people their vote actually matters, and that such a statement is not simply an empty platitude.

Additionally, if voting were made mandatory, and a system were set up whereby people paid an extra tax for not voting, there would be a drastic increase in voter turnout. Another alarmingly common reason I have encountered for lack of interest in voting is general laziness; people not wanting to be bothered to take the time, and such a measure would combat that.

Thank you for considering my opinion, I eagerly await the electoral reforms I so fervently hoped for when voting for the current Liberal government.

- Donald Guse Salah

