

Brief to the ERRE COMMITTEE, Government of Canada

- 1) Recommendation: KEEP THE FPTP SYSTEM CURRENTLY IN EXISTENCE.
 - a. System is easy to understand, person with the most votes wins. Period
 - b. System is straight forward. Count the votes for each candidate and determine the winner.
 - c. System has worked for 160 years. No failures in elections ever encountered.
 - d. The complaint that small parties can't get represented is a figment of imagination. As proof, look at SOCIAL CREDIT IN THE WEST. It formed governments in AB and BC for 35 and 37 years respectively, and sent MPs to parliament in the 60's. This, despite that this party was a non-entity nationally. The CREDITISTES also sent MP's during the 60's despite being a nonentity nationally. In 1990 neither REFORM (formerly SOCIAL CREDIT). And the BLOC QUEBECOIS did not exist. We all know what happened in 1992 and how these parties turned politics upside down! To be legitimate, win a seat in a fair fight. It is being done on a regular basis.
 - e. Close elections are good for democracy. Although a winner has been chosen, the second and even third place person has hope in winning the next time. If only 500 votes separate first and third in a 10,00 vote riding, getting a small shift in opinion does make a difference.
- 2) Recommendation: DO NOT ADOPT ANY SYSTEM THAT INVOLVES MULTIPLE COUNTS TO DETERMINE A WINNER.
 - a. There is no need to require 50% of the people to make the victor legitimate. If I candidate gets 50% of the vote in a 4 way race, that means the other candidates don't have much support. People vote for a candidate for multiple reasons, some to vote for a person or political position, others to vote against somebody else's person or position. Some candidates are seen as a vote for NONE OF THE ABOVE (think RHINOSEROUS!). To get 50% you really need separation, the result is landslide for someone. If a candidate needs 2 or 3 levels of support to get over the top, is that person really the people's choice? The people's choice is a first ballot determination. If you like #2, WHY DIDN'T YOU VOTE FOR HIM/HER IN THE FIRST PLACE?
 - b. MARK TWAIN the American Humorist understood facts and numbers. HE said " There are LIES, damned LIES and STATISTICS! ".
 - i. the corollary to this is "FIGURES NEVER LIE, LAIRS ONLY FIGURE";
 - ii. the corollary to that is "NUMBERS CAN BE MANIPULATED TO TELL YOU WHAT EVER YOU WANT TO HEAR!"
- 3) Question. I read in Saturday (July 17/16) GLOBE AND MAIL (Gordon Gibson article) that changing the election method may require constitutional change.
 - a. Has the Court weighed in or will it weigh in on this matter?
 - b. Will a change at the federal level automatically mean that the provinces and cities must change their election methodology?

- c. Has the federal government obtained their consent or have a means in place to get their consent if they must change methods? Having different systems to elect different offices is SHEER MADNESS!!!!!!!!!!!!
 - d. Does the federal government acknowledge that the election process belongs to the people and that the elected officials are merely their instruments to exercise their power?
 - e. Is the government committed to obtain the people's consent either by a referendum or by making the re-election dependent upon this one specific issue.
- 4) Question Proportional Representation
- a. How will the ballot be arranged?
 - b. Who makes up the lists, the party or will the best vote getters be ranked 1,2,etc on that list?
 - c. Will the people on that list be actively campaigning?
 - d. Will the lists be provincial or national?
 - e. Will there be a minimum threshold to earn a seat and will it be by province or national?
 - f. Even if a party is wiped out in a FPTP election that is a difficult option for the party only. It tells them to clean up their act and get new blood. Change or disappear! Parties come and go all the time. If the party reforms it will only take an election or two to recover. The Conservatives regained power in NB after RICHARD HATFIELD's CRUSHING defeat in 1987. It took 4 elections but it happened. All wasn't lost after all and the party that took over in 1987 didn't act like a dictator.
- 5) RECOMMENDATION: FORGET IMPELEMENTING THE SYSTEM ALL AT ONCE AND DOING IT FOR THE 2019 ELECTION.
- a. Any changes need to be validated
 - i. Did it really reflect the will of the people
 - ii. Was it fair
 - iii. Are the people in agreement that the result was as intended.
 - b. Why isn't this system rolled out gradually to test it and debug it?
 - c. System should be tried in an area where those seats regularly change hands and should be done there to ensure that when the people change their mind the results are reflected in the seat count.
 - d. Game the impact of the changes first. Test to see what happens when 2, 5, 10 and 50% of the voters shift their choice.
- 6) IT WAS AGREED AT OUR TOWN HALL IN SAINT JOHN THAT CIVICS NEED TO BE EMPHASIZED IN SCHOOL TO GET, EDUCATED AND INVOLVED YOUNG VOTERS. The upcoming generations need to vote and not only that they need to know who and what they are voting for!
- 7) Question IS THIS EXERCISE REALLY NECESSARY? Recommendation: IF THE LIBERALS FEEL THAT ELECTORAL REFORM IS A BURNING, ISSUE LET THEM FIGHT THE 2019 ELECTOIN OVER IT.
- a. Electoral reform is not an issue. Only 20 people attended the town hall in Saint John. Where was everybody else? Why weren't they there? This is not a topic of

conversation I hear on the streets. I assume that nobody cares! Columnist in THE GLOBE AND MAIL and other papers say as much when they discuss electoral reform.

- b. I remember the Flag debate of 1964. My family did a road trip through Canada from Maine to Vancouver. The only place where we saw any activity was in Quebec. There were different flags flying from car aerials everywhere. The message was clear. DITCH THE UNION JACK. Once we got to Ontario the debate disappeared and never reared its head again. Was it that burning an issue? FREE TRADE on THE OTHER HAND WAS A BURNING ISSUE FROM COAST TO COAST.
- 8) Recommendation: POLITICIANS SHOULD NOT CALL THE SHOTS ON REFORM NOR SHOULD THEY BE THE DRIVING FORCE.
- a. The election procedure is the rules of the game. To allow politicians the prime say in how they are selection is a threat to democracy. They will try to enhance their power not diminish it as well as their chances for election..
 - b. As proof I offer FLORIDA 2000. In the USA the election is run from the ATTORNEY GENERAL's office, a political position. The politicians will and did everything legal to enhance their chance of success. My wife and I were in Florida in Feb 2001 and the locals were still laughing over the election. The fix was in and everybody knew it.

Jim Norfolk

Saint John NB