

Jim Bennett

Wikipedia has an article on The Arrow Theorem.

I confess that I don't follow the logic completely. However, the conclusion is clear: *no voting system can produce the 'correct' result* for all possible voter choices. There is always a 'pathological' case where the system will vote-in the wrong result.

That's one reason I think consultation is, however well-meant, perhaps misplaced. The real reason I think it's not a good idea is a bit more elitist.

We had a vote in Ontario on this issue some time ago. (I worked that election as DRO and we had to manage two full sets of ballots. Not something one would easily forget.) There was a lot of public consultation, and it caused a lot of confusion. Confused voters are uncertain, and uncertainty creates neophobia: fear of the new (system.)

I predict the same result this time. Read Arrow's theorem and you might agree that designing a voting methodology is complicated.

Instead, I think that a few existing systems should be explained in simple terms and people should be asked to choose between them. Don't start with first principles, start with working systems and get testimonials (and complaints) from the citizenry that now votes in them. Look at foreign jurisdictions with other voting systems.

Can we shape the discussion on electoral reform? Can it be about choice between a few systems that are known to work elsewhere?

Can we avoid having 'ordinary citizens' try to outshout each other about choice, when they for sure don't know (most of them) about Arrow's Theorem or the complexity of the space of all possible systems?

Can we keep it simple? and then decide by (shudder) one last first-past-the-post vote?