All political parties are the same. Discuss.

War industry economic peace food national freedom social

work private

work

industry trade production

industry private social continue

peace new war cost employment national production taxation

new international

peace freedom production

public service new local

new nationa

new

național

new national building development economic industry public social houses transport

local
industrial
developmen
education
industry
national
social
economic
work

new national economic industry market oil community control food tax 10/1974

new
industry
oil
national
help
social
women
development
economic
give

02/1974

new work social industrial community jobs local services national

new local rights support work help provide

1983

services

local services health developme provide nuclear support

support education community tax work housing income rights

1987

health national services community training care education work

local

new

education

new investment

new

new work services help loçal crime investme reform

support new work environm police tax education transport

new local work work support services local care national

2010

local

tax

2005

real substance and fail to communicate anything. suppor The words on the left, map the most frequently used services words by the three main parties in every manifesto since 1945. The top ten words from all parties over the last 60 years are: new, local, national, work, industry, tax, economic services, support and education.

What the information on the left shows is how the language used by the parties has become more similar over time. If you look at the words used in 1945 compared to 2010 there were clear differences in priorities between the manifestos Today there is consensus well at least in how the parties communicate their messages.

Politics is filled with vague

reaction and yet contain no

sound good, provoke a

The public often perceive very little between the parties but it is important that the differences stand out because there are of course fundamental differences between them It is vital that they communicate these

War new industry men national state service enterprise food free

food local national empire enterprise house industry state production united

national united freedom industry work home nationalised new profits

new home help trade prosperi developm modern service work industry

help give provide

new **encourage** building local schools industrial

candidates in multi-member

members per area increases

open-list system, the size of

districts, or sometimes an

entire country. The more

the proportionality of

the system, and, in an

the ballot paper.

For

Closed party lists are

regional area.

completely impersonal,

the representative and a

weakening any link between

national local regional economic

new local tax provide housing social industry education give help

Care national individual tax industry trade battalions house market

help economic national service industry new tax work community local

work
new
pay
union
help
trade
community
jobs
economic

tax

reform

local new change resources income

industrial

economic

new help services private encourage work community jobs right

new

unemploy industry local

new local Services
work
national
community
support
help
tax
private new services standard work help schools europe local private children

local

give

tax

suppor

improve rights education

work

tax new local give work help cut

support right schools choice work children families education

tax

control

new give work system local power national

support change help

We can't go on like this. A voting system fair for all.

Electoral Reform

Under our There has been a lot of current discussion over the last few months over electoral system, a reform but the idea isn't new. Labour promised nation of 45 electoral reform in their 1997 manifesto, the Jenkins million Commission recommended changing to a new system voters will called Alternative Vote Plus. However, nothing resulted leave it to a of the commission, the issue was raised again by quarter of a Gordon Brown in the run up to this years general million in the election. marginals to It is easy to be sceptical and decide the

the next

election.

equivalent

who live in

Brighton

United

Kingdom.

Sullivan

of letting

see this as an issue raised by parties when they are seeking power who then reject it when they don't want to relinquish power. However, there is real benefit to reform. Look at the figures on the right and see how the percentage of the votes compares to seat distribution. Or worse look at the map which represents the number of votes cast for the winning MP in each constituency. No member got over 45%. some as low as 18% and the average is around 25%.

Alternative voting systems offer a fairer system, taking into account all parties. Arguments against these systems often bemoan a lack of strong governments or minority parties having too much power but strong governments just lead to elected dictatorships. Coalition reflects that the public have a variety of views, no party ever has such a mandate that they would deserve an outright majority.

It is somewhat indicative of the skewed electoral system that in 2005 the difference between the Conservative and Labour party, by the popular vote, was 3% but Labour had 157 more MPs. This year the difference in the popular vote was 7% in favour of the Tories, yet they only managed 49 more MPs than Labour, In fact, the Tories actually have a higher percentage than Labour when Labour had a strong working majority.

There are a number of different voting systems which are used for various election types; local, all have different systems. However, voting systems are divided into only two categories, single member constituencies and proportional systems (multi-member constituencies).

Single member constituencies have traditionally been popular because they provide a between MPs and the outcome of MP who represents them.

> voters a choice of representatives to approach with their concerns post-election rather than just the one, who may not be at all sympathetic to a voter's views, or may even be the cause of the concern.

only people between a constituency decide the more personal and local government level, but also, the constituencies are likely to be more sensible reflections of where community feeling lies.

alternative systems are,

Election Systems

national, European and they

direct and accountable link electorate. Everyone has an

However, there are counter arguments: STV offers

There are other benefits of proportional systems: there is a more sophisticated link and its representative. Not only is there more incentive to campaign and work on a

This table shows what the how they work and their advantages and disadvantages.

public support. Only three MPs elected in 2005 secured the votes of more than 40 per cent of their constituents. It encourages tactical voting, as voters vote not for the candidate they most prefer but against the candidate

they most dislike. FPTP in effect wastes huge numbers of votes, in 2005 70 per cent of votes were wasted - that's over 19 million ballots.

Election Systems

Post, the voter simply puts

a cross in a box next to one

candidate. The candidate

constituency wins. All other

with the most votes in the

votes count for nothing.

It's simple to understand.

member of parliament.

There is a close geographical

link between voters and their

Representatives can get

elected on tiny amounts of

Single Member Constituencies Proportional Systems Single Transferable Vote First Past The Post List Systems Alternative Vote To vote under First Past the AV is very much like FPTP, Under List PR, voters elect STV uses preferential voting

> except that rather than simply in multi-member marking one solitary 'X' on constituencies. Each voter the ballot paper, the voter has gets one vote, but ranks the the chance to rank the candidates. The vote can candidates on offer. transfer from their first-The voter thus puts a '1' by preference to their secondtheir first-preference preference and so on, as candidate, and can continue, if they wish, to put a '2' by their second-preference, and If your preferred candidate has no chance of being elected or has enough votes

If a candidate receives a majority of first-preference votes, then they are elected. If not, then the secondpreference votes of the candidate who finished last are redistributed. This process is repeated until someone gets over 50%.

For All MPs would have the support of a majority of their constituents.

It more accurately reflects public opinion of extremist parties, who are unlikely to gain many secondpreference votes.

It can be less proportional than First Past the Post. It does very little to improve the voice of traditionally under-represented groups in

under STV. parliament, strengthening the dominance of the 'central' viewpoint

ensures that very few votes are wasted, unlike other systems, especially First Past the Post, where only a small number of votes actually contribute to the result.

Fewer votes are wasted with Party-list systems guarantee STV. This means that most a high degree of party voters can identity a representative that they personally helped to elect. Every vote has equal value. Such a link in turn increases a representative's Lists can, and do, ensure that accountability. women and ethnic-minority groups are represented.

already, your vote is

transferred to another

candidate in accordance with

vour instructions. STV thus

STV offers voters a choice of representatives to approach with their concerns post-election, rather than just the one. There are no safe seats

There is no need for tactical voting. There is a more sophisticated link between a constituency and its representative.

What would change?

These figures show the proportion of votes and the number of seats each of the major parties would receive in a variety of voting systems. Translucency of colour is used to show the proportion of seats each number represents.

These results are estimated by the Electoral Reform Society and assume that the votes cast in these elections would have been their first choice. This does not take into account tactical voting and it is likely the share of votes for minority parties, such as the Greens, would be higher. However, these figures do provide a rough overview of what would

change. In addition to the systems described on the left, there are also the results for two other voting systems.

Alternative Vote Plus: This is a mixture of the Alternative Vote with Proportional Representation at a county level to top-up the proportion of seats to make it more democratic. This system would create two kinds of MPs, the traditional constituency based MP and a selection of regional MPs. the latter is similar to the

Regional MMP: AMS is a hybrid voting system. It is part FPTP and part closed party list. The party list element is added on to make the result more proportional, overcoming (to a greater or lesser extent) the distortion inherent in FPTP. Supporters of AMS claim that it combines the best of

both; its detractors say it

combines the worst of both.

232

213

European Union.

2010 Results

Number of seats - First Past The Post Liberal Democrat Other Labour Conservative Percentage of votes 29% **12**% How the UK could be represented under alternative voting systems (2010) Alternative Vote 262 Single Transferable Vote 207

2005 Results

Number of seats - First Past The Post 198 Liberal Democrat Other Labour Conservative Percentage of votes 32% How the UK could be represented under alternative voting systems (2005) Alternative Vote 175 Alternative Vote Plus 199 Single Transferable Vote 200 Regional MMP 208 242 National List PR

2010 General Election

This map shows the distribution of votes across the United Kingdom in the 2010 General Election. The colours used depict the party or individual who won the seat. The size of the hexagon and translucency are calculated by combining the total number of votes for the winning candidate and the turnout. For example, in William Hague's seat of Richmond Mr Hauge received 62.8% of the vote and the turnout was 67.2%; combining these gives the value of 42%.

This system does not take into account size of majority, or any of the competing individuals, no matter how close they were, to demonstrate how the FPTP system works, winner takes all. The size and intensity of colour get bigger and darker respectively the more democratic the seat is.

You will notice that the Conservative party tend to win seats with either a larger percentage of votes or higher turnout, hence the larger, darker hexagons.

Sources: Electoral Reform Society, The Guardian, Vote For a Change. Election Systems text adapted from Electoral Reform Society.