**PRESS RELEASE**

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**INDICATIVE VOTES**

“When there are more than two” options, a ranking system is “the best interpretation of majority rule,” (*Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, Iain McLean, 2003, p 139).

On indicative votes, a series of majority votes (as in 2003 on Lords reform) would be “daft,” (Lord Desai, *Hansard*, 22.1.2003), and so too a plurality vote, while a knock-out system – the two-round system or a version of AV – could also give a ‘fake’ outcome. Consider a simple example: a parliament of a dozen MPs with preferences on three options – ***A, B*** and ***C –*** as shown:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Preferences | Number of MPs |
| 5 | 4 | 3 |
| 1st | ***A*** | ***C*** | ***B*** |
| 2nd | ***B*** | ***B*** | ***C*** |
| 3rd | ***C*** | ***A*** | ***A*** |

So ***B***, the 1st or 2nd preference of everyone, is the obvious consensus “will of parliament.”   But, in a series of majority votes (assuming MPs vote ‘for’ on only their 1st preferences), nothing has a majority, so all would lose; in a plurality vote, ***A*** would win; and in a knock-out ballot, ***C*** would win!

Now according to Arrow’s theorem, no voting procedure is perfect.  A ranking system, however, the Borda or Condorcet rule, is the best; some procedures are inaccurate, others can even be wrong.

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1 The Borda and Condorcet ranking systems are as in sport. To identify the most popular option (*champion*), all concerned cast their preferences (*every team plays every other team*). We look at the preferences cast (*and the games played*): is option (*team*) ***A*** more popular (*better*) than ***B***? than ***C?*** and so on… and the option (*team*) which wins the most pairings (*matches*) is the Condorcet winner (*champion*). Or the option (*team*) with the highest average preference (*goal difference*) is the Borda winner. In many voters’ profiles (*seasons*), the Condorcet winner (*league* *champion*) is also the Borda winner (*has the best goal difference*). Both rules are very accurate, but neither is perfect.

2 Arrow’s theorem says a Borda (but not a Condorcet) count can suffer from an ‘irrelevant alternative’, while a Condorcet (but not a Borda) count can be vulnerable to a ‘paradox’. If the vote in parliament is counted according to the rules laid down for both a Modified Borda Count, MBC, *and* a Condorcet count, and if the MBC winner is the same as the Condorcet winner, then all can be 99.9% certain that the outcome is indeed an accurate representation of the will of parliament.

3 The more sophisticated a voting procedure, the more difficult it is to manipulate. The simplest of all – the binary vote – is easily manipulated… which is what Theresa May has been doing with her ‘meaningful vote’.