**PRESS RELEASE**

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**THE CONFIDENCE OF THE HOUSE?**

**OR ITS CONSENSUS?**

If the topic is complex – as, for example, the first question: who will form the next government? – then, in any democracy aspiring to the adjective ‘plural’, there should be a plurality of options ‘on the table’. If in debate a verbal consensus proves to be elusive – the most likely scenario – MPs should use a multi-option ballot; the vote should be free and un-whipped; and the outcome could be the option with the highest average preference.

Why, then, in one of the world’s oldest parliaments, this reliance on the world’s oldest decision-making voting procedure, the two-option, divisive, primitive and manipulable majority vote? It is now over 2,500 years old, and was first shown to be inadequate for any plural debate by Pliny the Younger in AD 105.

So why not electronic preference voting, with something a little more up-to-date? The prototype of the Modified Borda Count, MBC, was first advocated by Nicholas Cusanus in 1435. Developed over the last 30 years, it was first tested with electronic voting at a cross-community public meeting in Belfast in 1991.

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