**PRESS RELEASE**

**IMMEDIATE**

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**MONDAY’S PREFERENCE VOTES**

Preference voting is a huge improvement on binary voting, and the best methodology allows for an accurate identification of the true majority option. So, first, a (short) list of all options, including Theresa May’s withdrawal, on the ballot. Next, the mps vote. And then?

Preference votes can be counted by:

i) alternative vote, av, a knock-out, (like single transferable vote stv without pr).

ii) Borda Count, bc, a points system. Preferences are turned into points, and the option with the most wins. The bc does not take account of partial voting and in a ballot on *n* options, it gives an mp’s 1st preference *n* points, regardless of how many other preferences, if any, he has cast.

iii) The original or Modified Borda Count, mbc, does take account of partial voting. If the mp casts only *m* options, her 1st preference gets only *m* points, her 2nd gets *(m-1)* points, etc.

iv) The Condorcet rule compares pairings – ***A:B, A:C, A:D,*** ***A:E,*** ***B:C, B:D*** etc. – and the option which wins the most pairings is the winner.

Consider, then, a small parliament of just 15 mps with preferences as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Preferences | Number of mps |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1st | ***A*** | ***B*** | ***C*** | ***D*** | ***E*** |
| 2nd | ***D*** | ***C*** | ***E*** | ***E*** | ***C*** |
| 3rd | ***E*** | ***E*** | ***B*** | ***C*** | ***D*** |
| 4th  | ***C*** | ***A*** | ***A*** | ***B*** | ***B*** |
| 5th  | ***B*** | ***D*** | ***D*** | ***A*** | ***A*** |

In this profile, option ***E*** – the 1st, 2nd or 3rd  preference of all MPs – probably best represents the parliament’s consensus. But what happens in practice

Binary voting: there’s no majority for anything.

With plurality voting, ***A*** wins. It has 5 1st preferences; and the fact that it also gets 10 4th/5th preferences is just ignored.

With two-round voting, trs, ***A*** and ***B*** go into the second round and, if preferences stay the same, ***B*** now wins with 10 to ***A***’s 5.

In preferential voting:

With av, ***E*** is out, and its 1 vote goes to ***C*** for a stage (ii) score of ***A*** 5, ***B*** 4, ***C*** 4 and ***D*** 2. So ***D*** is now out, its 2 votes go (not to ***E*** but) to ***C***, so it’s ***A*** 5, ***B*** 4, ***C*** 6; so ***B*** goes, and ***C*** wins 10 to ***A***’s 5.

With the bc or mbc – (if every voter submits a full ballot, the two counts are the same) – the scores are ***A*** 42, ***B*** 40, ***C*** 51, ***D*** 40 and ***E*** 52, so the winner is indeed ***E***.

And with Condorcet, the pairings are ***A:B*** = 5:10, ***A:C*** = 5:10, ***A:D*** = 12:3, ***A:E*** = 5:10, ***B:C*** = 4:11, ***B:D*** = 7:8, ***B:E*** = 4:11, ***C:D*** = 8:7, s ***C:E*** = 7:8, and ***D:E*** = 7:8, so ***E*** wins on 4, ***C*** 3, ***A/B/D*** 1.

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In the current atmosphere, lots of mps may want to vote tactically and/or partially. Is it in their best interests? This second example looks at what happens if the ***C*** and ***E*** supporters decide to submit partial votes of one preference only:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Preferences | Number of mps |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1st | ***A*** | ***B*** | ***C*** | ***D*** | ***E*** |
| 2nd | ***D*** | ***C*** | ***-*** | ***E*** | ***-*** |
| 3rd | ***E*** | ***E*** | ***-*** | ***C*** | ***-*** |
| 4th  | ***C*** | ***A*** | ***-*** | ***B*** | ***-*** |
| 5th  | ***B*** | ***D*** | ***-*** | ***A*** | ***-*** |

With over 25% partial votes, with so few participating fully in the democratic process, a cursory glance suggests that there is no real consensus. The outcomes are now:

plurality voting still ***A*** by 5 to ***B***’s 4, ***C***’s 3, ***D***’s 2 and ***E***’s 1.

trs still ***B*** by 6 to ***A***’s 5.

av ***C*** by 9 to ***A***’s 5.

bc ***A*** 35, ***B*** 29, ***C*** 47, ***D*** 34 and ***E*** 40, so the winner is ***C***. In contrast,

mbc ***A*** 35, ***B*** 29, ***C*** 35, ***D*** 34 and ***E*** 36, so the winner is ***E***… just. Its margin of victory was much bigger, though, when its supporters cast full ballots.

Condorcet ***A:B*** = 5:6, ***A:C*** = 5:9, ***A:D*** = 9:2, ***A:D*** = 5:7, ***B:C*** = 4:10, ***B:D*** = 4:7, ***B:D*** = 4:8, ***C:D*** = 7:7, ***C:E*** = 7:8, ***D:E*** = 7:5, so ***E*** still wins with 3… just, to ***C/D*** on 2.5, and ***A/B*** on1.

In conclusion:

Plurality voting is hopeless; if mps are not saying what is their individual compromise, we can’t find the collective compromise.

trs gives an incentive to vote tactically in the first round.

av is better; it encourages the mps to cast some compromise preferences.

bc In a really divided House, the bc can deteriorate into a sort of plurality vote.

mbc No matter how contentious the topic, an mbc encourages the voters to cast full ballots, i.e., to express all their compromise option(s). Then, sure enough, it is possible to identify the collective compromise or, if the outcome gets a good score, the mps’ consensus. **In other words, if it’s an mbc, the mps will be encouraged by the very mathematics of the count to be consensual.**

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“When there are more than two” options, a ranking system – mbc or Condorcet – is “the best interpretation of majority rule,”

(*Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*

Iain McLean, 2003, p 139.)

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