

THE MANY, NOT THE FEW

Proportional Representation
& Labour in the 21st Century

Second edition



The Many, Not The Few

Proportional Representation & Labour in the 21st Century

The Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform (LCER) aims to change Labour Party policy to reject the current voting system and replace it with one in which seats in the House of Commons broadly reflect the vote, in the context of wider constitutional reform.

Make Votes Matter (MVM) is the cross-party campaign to introduce Proportional Representation to the House of Commons.

MVM does not endorse or support any party or alliance of parties, but aims to encourage all parties, organisations and individuals to support the use of a proportional voting system for general elections so that Parliament reflects the voters.

This report is based on literature review and research carried out by MVM and LCER activists who are Labour Party members, in order to make the case for Proportional Representation to the Labour movement. The report does not represent an endorsement of Labour's or any other political ideology on the part of MVM.

Acknowledgements

This report was researched and drafted by Joe Sousek, co-founder of Make Votes Matter and an executive member of the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform with contributions and editing by Mary Southcott, LCER Parliamentary & Political Officer.

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Contents

- 4 Preface to the second edition
- 6 Foreword to the first edition by Cat Smith, Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement & Youth Affairs, and Parliamentary colleagues
- 8 Executive summary
- 11 First Past the Post illustrated
- 14 First Past the Post harms our party, voters and activists
- 19 The answer is Proportional Representation
- 22 Proportional Representation strengthens progressive politics
- 26 Proportional Representation creates equal societies and better outcomes
- 32 The time is now

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

“We are not just interested in electoral reform for functional reasons, but because we see it as a means to an end. The electoral system to the House of Commons is a crucial part of our democracy. And for the Labour Party democracy cannot be just viewed as a means, it is also a value - a value which expresses how fair, how open, how equal we are in our society. At the moment we have a democracy that fails to match that value and that’s why it’s a matter of principle that we must insist on it being changed... Our objective, our slogan, should be to achieve an electoral system which puts our democracy in the hands of the many voters, not the few voters who happen to be key in marginal seats.”

Robin Cook, July 2005

The first edition of *The Many, Not the Few: Proportional Representation & Labour in the 21st Century* was published before the launch of the 2017 party manifestos. Labour’s manifesto commitment to a Constitutional Convention rather than reform was significant but cautious. It encourages, but does not keep pace with, the shift taking place in the party and among its constituents.

Polling shortly before the general election found that 76 per cent of Labour voters believed the party should commit to Proportional Representation, with just five per cent opposed. Over 200 Labour parliamentary candidates were strongly in favour of PR. Only around 40 were known to be firmly opposed, almost all of whom were incumbent MPs in safe seats. The result was many new Labour MPs who want to change the voting system.

Demand in the party for reform has continued to grow since the day Theresa May lost her majority. Constituency Labour Parties are passing resolutions

in support of electoral reform, membership of LCER and activism on the issue has increased rather than diminished, and MPs, including the Shadow Chancellor, have repeated their calls for PR.

This continued enthusiasm for Proportional Representation reflects an understanding that a modern, proportional democratic model is fundamental to the tasks Labour faces as a party. The principles of democratic socialism, social democracy or progressive politics in general simply cannot be embedded in a society that is handed over to the Conservatives, on a minority vote, over half the time.

In 14 of the last 15 general elections the majority have voted for parties to the left of the Conservatives, including throughout the entire Thatcher era. Yet because of the voting system the Conservatives have governed for most of this time.

Political scientists have documented this “substantive conservative bias” of First Past the



Post internationally. It is one of the reasons why academics have also discovered what they call causal links between Proportional Representation and socialist or progressive outcomes: better income equality, fairer distribution of public goods, higher social spending, better environmental protections and faster action on climate change.

Proportional Representation has enabled the world's most egalitarian societies to deliver these things. It will enable us to do so too; not by artificially skewing the election results to one side or the other, as First Past the Post does, but by giving fair and equal voice to the majority of voters who want a better society.

We cannot truly be the party of the many unless we have what the late Robin Cook called "the legitimacy of popular support", which any Labour government needs to implement its manifesto.

We began to enthuse the public, especially young people, with a new political vision during the general election. But our vision and our values are undermined by insisting that we arrive in office with a majority in Parliament which does not reflect the electorate as a whole. To make our victory legitimate we need to change the voting system at the heart of our democracy.

The Labour Party remains the only social democratic party in the developed world that officially supports First Past the Post. The time has come for change, but change will not come without action from the membership, affiliated trade unions, socialist societies and MPs. This report is a contribution to the discussion, but more importantly it is a rallying call to all those who want a democracy, party and society for the many, not the few.

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION, APRIL 2017

"..by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone, so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few."

Clause IV, Aims and Values of the Labour Party

It is impossible to explain the outbreak of democracy in 20th Century Britain without discussing the rise of the Labour Party. We sometimes imagine the United Kingdom as an ancient and pioneering democracy, but until relatively recently the country was nothing we would today recognise as democratic. Until 1918, most of the adult population were not allowed to vote, and no women were. The House of Commons was an instrument for managing the population, not a means of representing it.

Things changed. Just three and a half million propertied men could vote in the 1900 general election, which returned two Labour MPs. Forty-five years later, more than twenty-five million men and women had the right to vote, and they elected the Labour Government that created the NHS, established the welfare state, built a million new homes and enshrined workers' rights that are now taken for granted.

The Labour movement achieved this by re-appropriating the Parliamentary system that had until then been used only by the privileged few. By representing the newly enfranchised masses it was able to reshape British society in the interests of the many, not the few.

But the pre-democratic voting system was never properly reformed. Today, a great deal of the Many

have found themselves all but excluded from political decision making by an electoral system designed for the 19th Century.

New polling of Labour voters has found that an overwhelming majority would support replacing our current First Past the Post system with a form of Proportional Representation. 76 per cent of Labour voters said we should commit to making this change, with just five per cent opposing. In fact, a majority of supporters of every major political party believe we should switch to PR.

Countries which use PR are much more likely to be the kind of social democracies that we in the Labour Party want to create.

This report sets out the reasons why the Labour Party must listen to the wisdom of this majority and commit to Proportional Representation in our manifesto.

The most obvious of these reasons are to do with the way our voting system denies most people a real say about who represents them and how



76 per cent of Labour voters now say we should commit to changing our voting system to Proportional Representation.

they are governed. By limiting voter choice and distorting representation at local, regional and national levels, the system forces voters and parties alike to put tactics before principles. This inevitably breeds cynicism and alienation, and it produces Parliaments that don't reflect the people.

What is less well-known is that there's a substantial body of evidence showing that countries which use PR are much more likely to be the kind of social democracies that we in the Labour Party want to create. They have significantly better income equality than countries with systems like our own. They are more likely to be welfare states, more likely to share out public goods equally, and are more likely to take action on climate change.

Workers, activists, parties and trade unions all have to fight for these things, wherever they are in the world. But it is becoming increasingly clear that those who fight for justice and equality in proportional democracies find that their efforts bear greater fruit than those who do so under winner-takes-all systems like ours.

It is no exaggeration to say that in the 21st Century, Proportional Representation is a prerequisite of a properly-functioning democracy in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few.

It once again falls to the Labour Party to play a crucial role in transforming the terms on which democracy is conducted by supporting this historic change. In doing so, Labour will find an electorate re-enfranchised. It will find activists and members across the country re-empowered to organise and use political power to shape a good society. We will find ourselves welcomed by allies, thanked by voters, and lauded by history.

We hope you will consider the arguments and evidence in this report and we look forward to the debate.

Signed

Cat Smith MP, Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement and Youth Affairs

Richard Burden MP, Shadow Minister for Transport

Jon Cruddas MP

Paul Flynn MP

Mary Honeyball MEP

Stephen Kinnock MP

Clive Lewis MP

April 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

First Past the Post illustrated

A critical review of First Past the Post (FPTP) reveals that it fails to perform even the most basic tasks expected of a voting system. It has become indefensible because it violates democratic principles.

FPTP denies political representation to millions of voters, often to most voters. It guarantees that a large majority of votes are wasted and have no impact on the election result. This forces many rational voters to vote tactically for someone they do not really want to win to avoid letting in their least favourite candidate. 20-30 per cent of voters said they planned to do so in 2017⁴.

It delivers Parliaments that do not reflect the voters. Conservative majority governments elected on as little as 37 per cent of the vote, while smaller parties are denied representation even when they receive millions of votes. In our elections major parties routinely *gain* votes but *lose* seats or *lose* votes but *gain* seats, meaning that political power is divorced from public support. We cannot even guarantee that the party that receives the most votes wins the most seats.

First Past the Post harms our party, voters and activists

Winning general elections under FPTP requires the targeting of swing voters in marginal constituencies. Despite more voters changing parties in 2017 than in any election since 1931, the number of seats to change hands remains low and there are more ultrasafe seats than ever. The logic of targeting the marginal seats harms every aspect of political life in the UK.

Ignoring unwinnable seats demoralises Constituency Labour Parties and gives them no reason to campaign. De-prioritising unwinnable and safe seats disillusion voters who have neither incentive nor encouragement to vote for us or for anyone. They either feel Labour does not need them or takes them for granted.

Labour supporters in many constituencies, and often whole regions, resort to voting tactically for

parties they do not believe in, artificially depressing Labour's vote share. Exaggerated, polarised heartlands develop. Tactical behaviour by voters and parties make voters' true opinions impossible to determine and their support for us unpredictable and unreliable.

The party is forced to decide between focusing its resources and policies on a small segment of the population in order to win, or focusing on the whole population and harming itself electorally. Campaigning in safe and unwinnable seats is partly responsible for making 2017 the first general election in which Labour's seat share has not been larger than its vote share since 1959. The only way out of this dilemma is to replace FPTP.

The answer is Proportional Representation

PR means that seats match votes, and that every vote matters. Contrary to the misrepresentation, there are proportional systems that maintain a strong constituency link and allow voters to vote for candidates rather than simply parties. These are already tried-and-tested in parts of the UK.

This is how most countries do democracy. At least 80 per cent of the thirty five OECD nations use some form of PR, and this percentage is growing over time as countries become more democratic.

With PR, the irrational effects of FPTP disappear, as does the distinction between marginal seats and safe seats. The problems associated with the marginal targeting strategy would therefore be neutralised and a broader approach that values every voter and every party member equally could be adopted in its place.

PR countries consistently achieve better gender balance in politics and encourage fairer representation for Black and Minority Ethnic representation. There is consensus that PR encourages voter turnout, which may lead to more people voting from the demographics in which Labour polls the strongest. Citizens of PR countries are more satisfied with their democracies and the world's top performing democracies use PR.

The societal impact of Proportional Representation

FPTP has a well-documented and explainable bias towards right-wing parties. On average, countries which use FPTP, including the UK, have many more conservative governments, while those with PR have many more progressive governments.

Looking at the UK:

- If the 2017 election had taken place under a system of PR, we would almost certainly have a Labour-led government now rather than a right-wing coalition.
- If the UK had used PR throughout the modern era, the Labour Party would have been in government significantly more often. Most voters backed parties to the left of the Conservatives in 14 of the last 15 general elections. Yet the Conservatives have governed 55 per cent of the time since 1964, usually as a majority.

In keeping with and as a result of this, political scientists have identified causal relationships between proportional democracies and the outcomes the Labour Party wants to achieve. These are statistically significant and accompanied by credible explanations of causality.

Societies with proportional systems exhibit:

- Lower income inequality.
- Greater likelihood of being welfare states.
- 4.75 per cent higher social expenditure, on average.
- Fairer distribution of public goods.
- Better environmental controls.
- More effective action on climate change.
- Lower likelihood of armed conflict.
- Better long-term decision making.

At least 80 per cent of developed countries use some form of PR. They have a strong tendency to perform better as democracies than those with majoritarian systems like FPTP.

- The countries independently assessed as the top performing democracies all use PR.
- Countries with PR have 5-8 per cent higher voter turnouts.
- People in countries with PR record higher satisfaction with democratic institutions, regardless of whether their preferred party is in power at the time.
- PR enables better gender and BAME representation in politics. Every country with more than 40 per cent women in its main legislative chamber uses PR.

PR strengthens progressive politics

Independent research shows that FPTP has a bias towards right-wing governments, while PR produces more left-wing governments. Political scientists can explain the causality behind this correlation in simple terms.

Looking back at past UK elections, we discover that a majority voted for parties to the left of the Conservatives in 14 of the last 15 general elections. Although people vote differently under different systems, we surmise that under PR a progressive majority of votes would have translated into a progressive majority of MPs. This would have led to more progressive government for more of the time.

This is supported by more sophisticated modelling of the 2017 election under proportional systems carried out by the Electoral Reform Society. Under one system we would now be the largest party in the House of Commons but under any form of PR we would likely be in government today.

PR creates equal societies and better outcomes

The vast majority of those societies Labour wishes to emulate use systems of PR. Evidence suggests a causal relationship between proportional voting systems and many of the progressive and socialist features that we value.

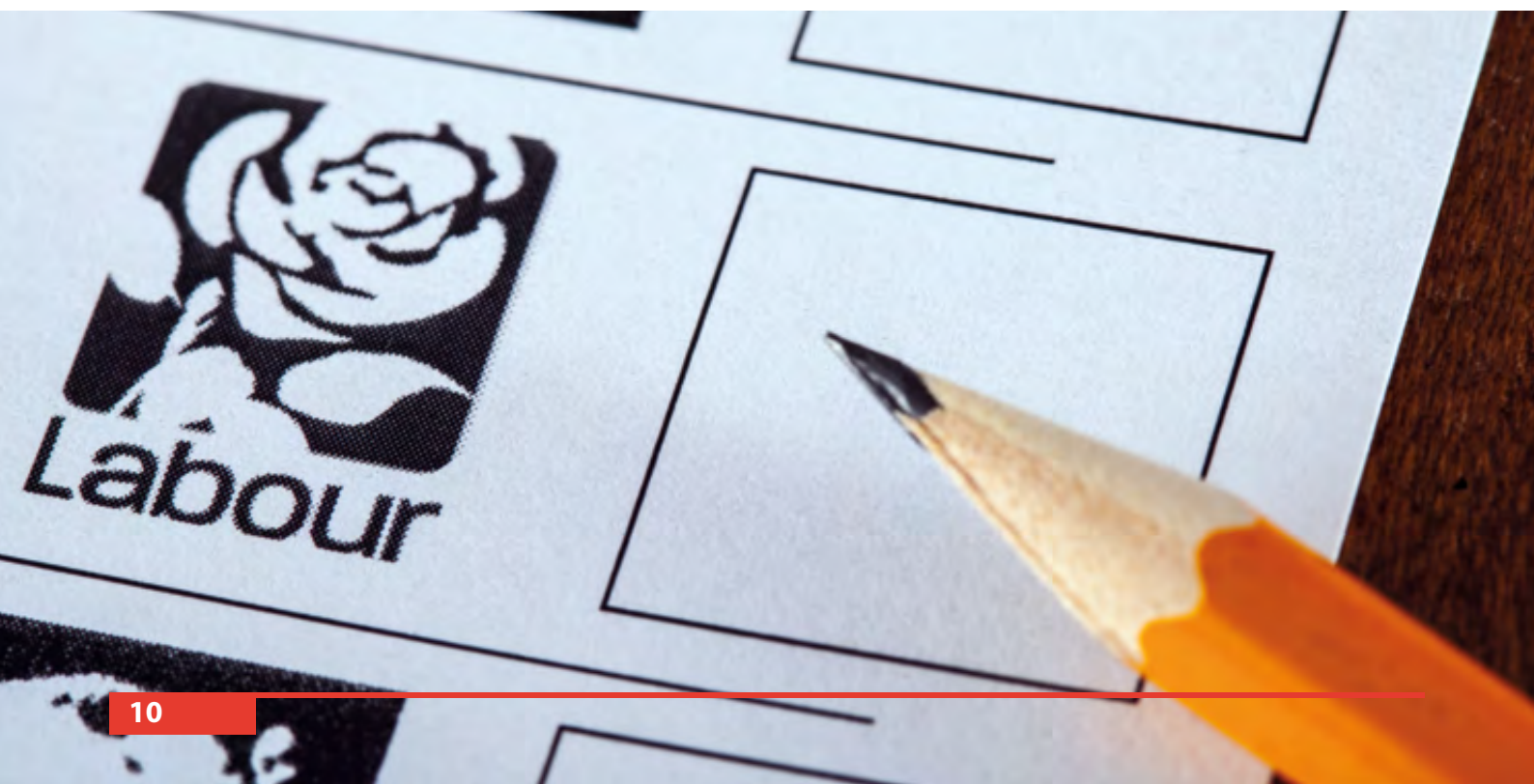
Countries with PR have lower income inequality, are more likely to be welfare states, share social goods more equally and make better provisions for the wellbeing of the population because they give wider public access to the political power required to achieve these things. They have better environmental protections and take more effective action on climate change.

PR leads to better decisions and long-term policy-making. In contrast, “strong and stable” FPTP has contributed to some of the worst inequality in the developed world and inaction by successive governments on some of the most pressing problems we face, such as climate change.

Developed democracies with FPTP are even significantly more likely to go to war. PR countries require broader consensus before they are led into conflict or other major decisions.

The time is now

Our support for Proportional Representation is now vital if we are to show we are serious about democratising our society and putting trust in the voters. It would improve British democracy, apply our values to society and offer voters the chance to make this important change at the next general election.



FIRST PAST THE POST ILLUSTRATED

Under our current First Past the Post voting system the country is divided into constituencies, each of which elects one MP. Voters put a cross next to their preferred candidate or representative of their preferred party. The votes are counted, and the single candidate with the largest number of votes is elected to the House of Commons.

This might sound simple, but it has surprising consequences that render FPTP unable to perform many of the most basic tasks expected of a democratic system.

Political representation is routinely denied to most voters

Since only one MP can represent each constituency, divisions of opinion within that constituency are not represented in Parliament. Even where votes are very close between two, or even three or four candidates, the “winner takes all”.

5.5 million Labour voters are currently represented by an MP from another party, mostly by Conservatives.

For example, in 2017, the winning candidate in Ceredigion received just 29 per cent of votes cast, with over 71 per cent of those who turned out represented by someone they did not vote for. The record low to date was in 2015, when an MP was elected with 24.5 per cent of votes cast: less than 16 per cent of the electorate.

In three of the last four elections most MPs did not receive a majority of votes cast. At least half the votes cast went to losing candidates in these elections: 52.4 per cent in 2005, 52.8 per cent in 2010 and exactly 50 per cent in 2015. This figure fell to 44.1 per cent, or 14 million voters, in 2017. 5.5 million Labour voters are currently represented by an MP from another party, mostly Conservatives.

MPs often do a fine job of helping all their constituents with personal issues or local problems, and carry out symbolic functions such as the expression of grief after a tragedy on behalf of the community. But MPs cannot represent all their constituents on political issues even if they wish to because their constituents hold diverse and contradictory views.

Labour voters in Cornwall, for example, do not look to their local Conservative MP for political representation. When their political views are represented in Parliament it is by Labour MPs elsewhere. The closest is at least fifty miles away and unacquainted with local matters. In any case cannot take up the concerns of non-constituents under Parliamentary protocol.

FPTP has denied this political representation to most voters much of the time and to many millions of voters all of the time.

With multiple parties, seats can be won on a small share of the vote



50% + 1 vote needed to win



33.3% + 1 vote to win



25% + 1 vote to win



20% + 1 vote to win



16.7% + 1 vote to win

Most votes consistently have no impact on the result

The huge number of votes that go to losing candidates obviously have no impact on the election result but neither do votes for winning candidates above the number needed to win the seat. A “vote mountain” in a constituency won by a 30,000 vote majority has the same impact as a seat won by a single vote; each elects one MP.

Votes that have no impact are known as “wasted votes”. FPTP guarantees that a large majority of votes are wasted at every election. 70 per cent were wasted in 2005, 71.1 per cent in 2010, 74.4 per cent in 2015 and 68.4 per cent in 2017.

Voters are prevented from voting as they wish

With so many votes having no impact on the election, it is logical for voters to try to make sure their vote matters. The rational question for most voters to ask in a FPTP election is not “who will best represent me?” but “who has the best chance of beating the candidate or party I don’t want to win?”

The result is tactical voting, when people vote for someone they do not really want to win to avoid letting in their least favourite candidate. In 2017 there were at least four major tactical voting initiatives in support of progressive, centrist, pro-EU or pro-Brexit candidates. In Scotland there was additional tactical voting for and against independence. As a result the number of voters reporting that they planned to vote tactically surged from nine per cent in 2015 to 20-30 per cent in 2017.

20 to 30 per cent of people said they planned to vote tactically in 2017

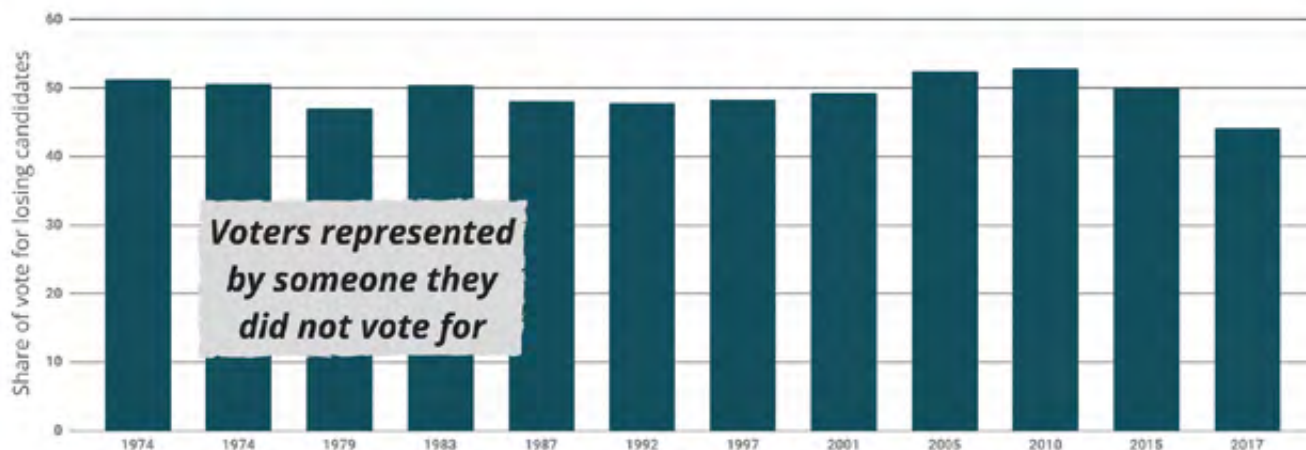
This lack of unencumbered choice is unacceptable democratically. It also contributes to making the true balance of opinion of voters impossible to judge based on the national vote. In 2017, millions selected a candidate in order to avoid letting someone “worse” win, not because the candidate represents their views.

This picture is complicated further because some people vote on the basis of party manifestos, while others vote for an individual candidate. In fact, Lynton Crosby’s leaked advice to the Conservatives warned that voters “believe that they can vote for the best local MP” rather than for the party they want to be in government!

Parliament does not reflect the voters

When a huge number of votes make no difference to the outcome, the inevitable consequence is a House of Commons that does not reflect the voters. This usually results in governments which hold a majority of seats in the Commons despite having the support of only a minority of voters: minority rule.

In 2015, a majority of seats were won by the Conservatives with 37 per cent of the vote. This was the weakest democratic mandate of any majority government among the 35 OECD nations. Following the last election the Conservatives and DUP hold a majority of seats on a combined 43 per cent of the vote.



Meanwhile, the Green Party, Liberal Democrats and UKIP received 11 per cent of the vote between them in 2017, yet now hold just 2 per cent of the seats. In 2015, notoriously the most disproportionate election in British history, the same parties shared 24.4 per cent of the vote but only 1.5 per cent of seats.

The difference between 2015 and 2017 illustrates a dilemma created by FPTP. In 2015, many people chose not to vote tactically but in doing so millions of them also “chose” to waste their votes on candidates who could not win. In 2017, the House of Commons was a better reflection of the votes and fewer votes were wasted, but in large part this is because millions felt forced to vote tactically. As one problem recedes, the inverse problem intensifies.

Attracting voters does not mean gaining seats, and vice versa

Severing the link between seats and votes often turns the logic of democracy on its head. In most of the general elections since World War II, one of the largest three parties either gained votes but lost seats or lost votes but gained seats.

For example, in the 1983 election the Conservatives' vote share dropped by 1.5 per cent. But FPTP rewarded them with a “landslide victory”, with their Parliamentary majority increasing by 38 seats.

Contrast this with 2015, when Labour gained 1.5 per cent of the vote, only to lose 26 seats. In the same election, the Conservatives increased their vote share by just 0.8 per cent. But instead of losing 26 seats, they gained 28!

Winning the vote does not mean winning the election

FPTP cannot even ensure the correct side wins. The UK and Canada, which also uses FPTP, have each had two “wrong winner” elections since WWII. Two such “wrong winner” elections happened

consecutively in New Zealand before it scrapped FPTP for a system of PR.

The US electoral college shares this weakness, which is why Trump is now President despite receiving almost three million votes fewer than Hillary Clinton, and why George Bush instead of Al Gore became President in 2000.

This has not happened for many years in the UK but it can happen here again. In fact, as Labour's seat share now does not exceed its vote share for the first time since 1959, it is becoming increasingly likely that Labour could win on votes but lose on seats.

Principles of democracy are violated

We can test the performance of FPTP against Ernest Naville's observation that, “in a democratic government the right of decision belongs to the majority but the right of representation belongs to all.” It is hard to find fault with these principles, but FPTP defies both.

It breaches the majority's right to decision-making by ordinarily placing decision-making power in the hands of a minority. It breaches the right of representation by denying a voice in Parliament to millions and often a majority of voters.

But in several ways, FPTP causes damage that is deeper than the unfairness and irrationality of election results. On the one hand, it fundamentally skews the behaviours and policies of political parties in a way that polarises politics, marginalises voters and demoralises activists. On the other, it reduces the likelihood of progressive government and the development of an egalitarian society.

We turn first to the impact of the voting system on parties, voters and activists.

FIRST PAST THE POST HARMS OUR PARTY, VOTERS AND ACTIVISTS

The targeting necessary to win elections under our current voting system is destroying our politics and creating unnecessary polarisation, disillusion and lack of engagement. At the root of this is the clear demarcation between safe seats and marginal seats that occurs under First Past the Post.

Safe seats are those in which only one party has a realistic chance of winning the highest vote by a large margin. Most seats are safe seats. In 2017, about three quarters of seats were won by a margin of more than 10 per cent of votes cast. The number of ultrasafe seats won by a majority of more than 40 per cent increased to 107 in 2017, from 82 in 2015, and 28 in 2010.

34 of the 35 safest seats in the UK were held by Labour, with tens of thousands of votes piling up in each of them without affecting the size of the PLP.

Far fewer constituencies are marginal seats where victories are likely to be narrow. There may be three or even four significant parties in some of these seats but the voting system pushes them towards having just two main contenders, often the incumbent and the opposer.

Defenders of FPTP sometimes claim “there’s no such thing as a safe seat”. They point to examples of MPs with large majorities being unseated or even parties losing whole regions at once. But this is to cherry-pick examples of a statistically rare phenomenon. Even in 2015, when Labour all but lost Scotland, just 11.7 per cent of seats changed hands between parties. In 2017, only 10.8 per cent of seats changed hands. This was despite voters switching allegiance in greater numbers than in any general election since 1931.

Under FPTP, parties have no direct electoral incentive to maximise their share of the vote across the entire country. What matters is winning seats. The marginal seats that might change hands are where any rational party must focus if it is to win elections under this system. As John Denham explains:

“Under First Past the Post, it is logical. You employ staff and election organisers to win you general elections and they will tell you that is what you need to do. You want to win the election, these are the two thousand people and these are their characteristics in each of your 40 key seats that will win you the election. In one sense you are daft to ignore them... But it can narrow the political appeal you make. It can narrow it so much that you say “who cares who lives in Woking?” Or “let’s not look too much at the core Labour vote” because they’ve not been identified as the swing voters.”

Put another way, if Labour (or indeed the Conservatives) adopted the honourable approach of spreading our resources evenly across the country, giving every voter in every constituency an equal share of our attention, it would severely harm our chances of winning the most seats. Every pound spent reaching voters in Liverpool or Surrey is a pound diverted away from super marginals like Hastings and Rye.

There are some signs that Labour is moving towards such an approach. Jeremy Corbyn was criticised in 2017 for campaigning in safe seats as well as marginals. With a renewed emphasis on Labour as a social movement, it is natural for the party to want to be active across the whole country rather than just in marginals. Since the election, Momentum’s Unseat campaign has begun targeting perceived safe seats like Welwyn Hatfield, and Uxbridge and South Ruislip in addition to a handful of marginals.

Under FPTP this approach has consequences. Following the 2017 election, 34 of the 35 safest seats in the UK were held by Labour, with tens



of thousands of votes piling up in each of them without affecting the size of the PLP. On the other hand, campaigning in Tory-held non-marginals has in most cases increased the Labour vote without coming close to electing an MP.

In part as a result, this was the first general election in which Labour's seat share has not been larger than its vote share since 1959. Labour won 40 per cent of seats with 40 per cent of the vote. The Conservatives, who have no misgivings whatsoever about pursuing an electoral rather than moral victory, won 49 per cent of the seats with 42 per cent of the vote.

The number of seats won by less than 5 per cent increased to 97 in 2017. Despite this, around 85 per cent of the electorate live in constituencies where parties are unlikely to make much of an effort and voters do not matter. The effects are negative all round.

The membership

Keeping up the morale of Labour Party members in a constituency where there is no possibility of winning is difficult. There is little point in local parties knocking on doors and people putting up posters. The drop off in activity also leads to poorer performance in local elections, which further dampens enthusiasm.

Labour does little to support local branches in rural Hampshire in comparison to the marginals. Activists from Conservative majority seats are often bussed to the nearest marginal where their efforts may have an impact. Many more members would be willing and able to campaign if doing so had value in their own area.

This de-prioritisation of no hope constituencies inevitably leads to demoralisation among party activists. "The effect on the Labour Party membership of targeting super marginals has been quite devastating", writes Anne Campbell. "In active well supported constituencies, members are much more likely to feel valued and useful and much more likely to remain members."

In contrast, constituency parties in unwinnable seats can become intellectual debating societies where even members who put Labour posters in their windows may vote tactically. In some areas they gradually lose members, leaving a hard core who have little contact with Labour voters or grasp of the policies needed to attract them. Some of them do not even support the reform of the voting system, which is the real author of their misfortunes.

The voters

The targeting strategy made necessary by FPTP means that in safe seats there is less incentive for

voters to vote and less encouragement to do so from the parties. They are not made to feel valued because, electorally speaking, their votes are of significantly lower value. These vast electoral deserts now extend across swathes of rural England, and indeed across areas of Labour-held cities, where there is no influence on a Conservative government.

In our own majority seats, Labour voters become disillusioned, passive, used to seeing Labour only at election times, if then. One of the perverse effects of FPTP is that it encourages parties to take their strongest heartlands for granted. If a constituency is expected to vote Labour come what may, there is no strategic benefit in listening to the constituents' concerns and responding to them.

The effect is that people are turned off from voting. 2017 saw an unusual lack of correlation between marginality and turnout, which may reflect the way the party leaders campaigned, but the general relationship is clear. Safe seats, including Labour ones, have had lower turnouts than marginals in every general election from 1950 to 2015.

This statistic does not capture the hopelessness with which millions of ordinary, decent people have come to view our democratic process. At many meetings which Labour campaigners for electoral reform attend they hear from older people who have voted in every general election but whose vote has never made the slightest difference.

If the danger in Conservative safe seats is that we are absent, in our own safe seats the danger is complacency or disconnection. For years Labour members have become accustomed to winning some elections with very little effort and it is inevitable that winning too easily will lead some to complacency or arrogance. Scotland is the prime example of what can happen if this goes unchecked. The 2014 independence referendum was the catalyst, but Labour was unable to hold its seats because it had disengaged from many local voters.

Voter disillusionment is also the perfect environment for the far right. For a discussion of the implications of PR for the far right, see the box on page 18.

Tacticalisation

Tactical voting appears to be more attractive than ever but it is by no means new. In seats where Labour is in a poor third or fourth place, with no real chance of winning, Labour supporters have escaped from the futility of voting Labour by voting tactically. This artificially compresses our vote share and can create a vicious circle; lower vote shares encourage further tactical voting, further understating our support in the constituency and region.

This puts paid to the claim made by supporters of FPTP that their system gives voters a clear choice between the effective contenders for government. In much of the country, voters simply have no way of expressing a choice between Labour and Conservative. Their only meaningful choice is between Conservative and Liberal Democrat, SNP and Green, and so on, if they are lucky enough to live somewhere their vote matters at all.

As discussed above under First Past the Post Illustrated, 20-30 per cent of voters said they intended to vote tactically in 2017. Tacticalisation influences the behaviour of parties as well as voters. The Liberal Democrats and particularly the Green Party stood down in seats to avoid splitting the "progressive" vote, as did UKIP to the benefit of Conservative MPs who voted to leave the European Union.

Where it benefits us, tactical voting is inherently unstable. It is driven by circumstances and fear of the alternative rather than necessarily sharing a party's beliefs. It is therefore very volatile and a weak foundation on which to establish a lasting progressive government.

When smaller parties and their supporters stop seeing "keeping out the Conservatives" as the priority, tactical votes can quickly unwind with dramatic consequences.

When smaller parties and their supporters stop seeing “keeping out the Conservatives” as the priority, tactical votes can quickly unwind with dramatic consequences. For example, the tactical unwind that occurred in Liberal Democrat-Conservative seats in 2015 as a reaction to the 2010 coalition ironically produced even more Conservative MPs.

Voters who vote tactically know they have to do so because of a coercive voting system. Green and Liberal Democrat interest in the “progressive alliance” was driven by the hope that a Labour-led government would reform this system if elected. If we get into government thanks to tactical votes and fail to fix this system, we should not expect to retain these votes. On the other hand, committing to reform will certainly retain and attract more tactical votes where we need them the most at the next election.

Polarisation

FPTP has been said to lead to what is sometimes called a north-south polarisation, but that is not entirely accurate. Rural areas, even in the North of England, have become more Conservative. The most accurate description is that it is a polarisation into areas in which each party is predominant. As a rule, predominantly Labour areas have become more Labour and predominantly Conservative areas more Conservative - with some notable exceptions.

FPTP does not cause this regional cleavage, but it exaggerates it. In predominantly Conservative areas in the south, Labour supporters see no point in voting for candidates who have no chance of success. They switch to supporting a closer contender, who in turn gain further prominence. Labour falls further behind and loses credibility as a serious contender for the seat.

This peculiar bias produced by FPTP means that party decision-makers, MPs and Shadow Cabinets almost all come from safe seats in Labour heartlands and cities. For Labour this used to include Scotland too. The party may try to compensate for this, but the positions of power are usually held by MPs representing safe seats and these will inevitably see issues through the prism of their constituents’ interests. The Conservatives are the mirror image of this. We consequently tend to

get swings in policy favouring our regions when we are in power and favouring the rural and suburban south when the Conservatives are.

The party

The effect on the party is destructive. As Lewis Baston commented: “By fighting on a narrower and narrower front, Labour has moved once again from representing the people - broadly defined - to ignoring millions of them because they live in suburban Surrey or inner city Manchester. The electoral system is failing the Labour Party in its traditional mission of building an equal society, and the modernisers’ mission of building a genuine people’s party with broad and deep electoral support.”

The “narrower front” created by marginal seats goes beyond allocation of campaign resources and even influences policy. When Labour governments have been elected in recent decades, it has arguably been with significantly watered-down socialist principles in our manifestos. Parties are incentivised to test and tailor their policies with focus groups of swing voters in marginal constituencies, who make up a tiny fraction of the electorate.

This is not a problem that can be addressed within the current system; it is an inescapable dilemma created by FPTP.

This is not a problem that can be addressed within the current system; it is an inescapable dilemma created by FPTP. Labour must either focus on the marginals to the neglect of most voters, or make policy and campaign for the whole country and put ourselves at greater electoral disadvantage.

Labour may have begun to pay more attention to the whole electorate during and since the 2017 election, but this has had the predicted consequences. Our share of the seats is no longer larger than our share of the votes. The only long-term solution to this imbalance is to change the system so that votes matter equally wherever they are cast.



First Past the Post, Proportional Representation and the far right

As Chuka Umunna said during the LCER/MVM rally at Labour Party Conference 2016, “you beat UKIP and you beat the BNP by beating them in argument. You don’t beat them by avoiding having the argument”. The reasons for this are pragmatic as well as principled. Depriving right-wing voters of any participation in public life is a sure way to increase resentment. The low turnout and lack of political activity in Labour heartlands has provided open terrain for the far right.

That winner-takes-all elections are protection against extremism has always been false but recent events have provided us with a stark reminder. Donald Trump is US President despite getting almost three million fewer votes than Hillary Clinton. The alienation that led people to vote for him has all the hallmarks of a disenfranchised and unrepresented population. Bigotry has been put into office by a minority of votes and a voting system that encouraged parties to focus on swing states to the neglect of the rust belt.

Compare this to “rise of the right” in proportional Holland. Geert Wilders’ party came second, winning 13 per cent of the votes and seats in their recent general election. Before the vote, it was clear he would get nowhere near power. All the other parties had already ruled out a coalition deal with him. So Wilders goes no further. Unless he is able to quadruple his vote he has no prospect of seizing power as Trump has done and for as long as his views are deemed extreme by most people, no parties will deal with him.

Indeed, when the far right wins representation through a PR system it often exposes itself as unaligned with the interests of its voters, incompetent, or both. The BNP held two seats in the EU Parliament for a single term, but rather than gaining a foothold they were thrown out by the voters at the next election.

The US has seen a reactionary leader take control of one of the two major parties, retain the bulk of that party’s core vote and combined it with disillusioned former non-voters. The electoral system put him in the White House with a majority in both Houses of Congress. When we consider who stood for leadership of the Conservative Party in 2016, the drift to the right of the current leadership, and who might lead the party next, this seems a plausible danger for the UK. UKIP may have been denied representation but FPTP does not prevent the influence of their ideas, as the holding of the EU Referendum has shown. In fact, divisions among Conservative politicians and voters over Europe have encouraged centrists to pander to extreme elements and have emboldened extreme elements to demand ever more influence.

FPTP is the only voting system that consistently hands total power to the representatives of a minority. No party in the UK is a great danger if its power is proportional to its support. But history suggests that any party can behave dangerously when handed total power without popular support. PR is our best defence against the risk of domination by extreme or right-wing voices.

THE ANSWER IS PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Proportional Representation means that Parliament is a reflection of the votes cast by the people. Seats match votes, and every vote matters.

There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved (see *systems and constituency links*). These options have been designed, implemented, trialed and adjusted in many other countries for over a hundred years. There are tried-and-tested systems that maintain a strong constituency link, that allow voters to vote for candidates rather than just parties, and that give voters vastly greater choice when casting their votes. What they all have in common is that they aim to make seats match votes, and in doing so they make all votes matter equally.

It is worth taking a moment to reflect that this is the normal way the developed world does democracy. Among the thirty five nations of the OECD, at least 80 per cent use some form of PR. Of those countries that do not, just three use First Past the Post, the other two of which are ex-colonies of the UK.

The international trend is for countries to move away from disproportional systems and towards increasingly proportional ones, with the following countries scrapping FPTP for a form of PR: Belgium (1899), the Netherlands (1917), Germany (1918), Denmark (1920), Ireland (1921), Malta (1921), South Africa (1994) and New Zealand (1996). The Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly have both used systems of PR since their creation in 1999, as has the Northern Ireland Assembly. Both Northern Ireland and Scotland use PR for local elections.

The Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) found that 31 countries had changed their electoral system over a 20 year period. Of these, 27 increased the level of proportionality, while just one (Madagascar) reduced it. Worldwide, the

move towards greater proportionality of electoral systems is as unmistakable as the trend toward the extension of the franchise to women and minority groups. It is, in short, progress.

With any system of PR, the gross disproportionality and irrationality we see in our own Parliament would instantly disappear. Parties receiving a minority of the vote would not be handed the power of a Parliamentary majority. Those who vote for smaller parties would not be denied representation. Every vote would be equal. If a party increases its share of the vote, it would be guaranteed an increased share of the seats, and likewise it would lose seats when it loses votes. For the first time in British electoral history, we could be sure that whichever party gets most votes in a general election would win the largest number of seats.

It is equally easy to see how this solves all at once the problems we detailed in the previous section. When every vote matters, safe seats and marginals no longer factor in election campaigning. Parties would be incentivised to campaign everywhere and for everyone's support. The activism of Labour Party members in Somerset would have identical value to the same work in Crewe & Nantwich. As a result, constituency parties would be reinvigorated. We would need to keep all our core voters happy in our heartlands, or risk taking a smaller share of the votes and therefore of the power.

With PR, voters would not find themselves having to calculate who can realistically win and vote tactically for the lesser of two evils. The country would no longer be polarised into Labour and Conservative areas. Voters for minority parties in those areas would be represented in proportion to their votes.

This is the normal way the developed world does democracy. Among the thirty-five nations of the OECD, at least 80 per cent use some form of PR.

There is strong evidence that PR enhances democracy in a host of other respects. Eight academic studies find a trend for countries with PR to produce a better gender balance in politics. On the other hand, FPTP has been described as the world's worst system for achieving gender balance. Just 32 per cent of British MPs are women. Every single country with more than 40 per cent female MP in its primary legislature uses PR. Richard Kuper explains: "the moment there is more than one place to be filled, parties can nominate candidates who complement each other by appealing to different sections of the electorate. Indeed failing to do so is likely to lose them support from any significant group which considers itself neglected."

Every single country with more than 40 per cent female MPs in its primary legislature uses PR.

The same logic applies to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic representation. Patrick Vernon suggests that the marginal targeting strategy, "also helps explain why there is not the confidence to field more BAME candidates in safe and increasingly marginal seats... the current voting system means that white middle class men are perceived as a 'safe pair of hands'. Under PR there would be a greater focus on selecting candidates based on an equality and diversity perspective along the spectrum of candidates with the right skill mix to be a politician."

Labour has become better at fielding BAME and women candidates, but PR would help us go further and would mean that all parties are incentivised by the electoral system to do the same. We would expect to see a more representative Parliament as a result.

It is well established that PR leads to increased voter turnout - for reasons that are obvious when you consider that many votes under FPTP have no

practical value. Countries with PR experience 7.5 per cent higher turnouts on average, once other contextual factors are taken into account, according to Lijphart. Pilon estimates a turnout bonus of 7-8 per cent. Norris derived a more conservative estimate of 5 per cent bonus to turnout under PR systems. IDEA used actual global turnout statistics from 1945 and 2002 to calculate that list PR turnouts are 6 per cent higher than FPTP, while Single Transferable Vote (STV) turnouts have been 13 per cent higher than those in FPTP systems.

Labour is particularly interested in increasing turnout, not only as democrats but because the demographics in which we poll the strongest are those in which turnout and even registration is the lowest. In both 2015 and 2017, the social groups that reported the strongest support for us were precisely those in which turnout was lowest: young people, those in lower social classes, some BAME communities, private and social renters. Indeed 60 per cent of 2017 voters who did not vote in 2015 backed us, compared to 27 per cent who voted Conservative.

Arend Lijphart found in his study, *Patterns of Democracy*, that citizens in countries with PR are more satisfied with the performance of their country's democratic institutions, even when the party they voted for is not in power. The countries topping the Economist's Democracy Index (which takes no account of proportionality) finds that the top five countries all use PR. Thirteen of the fifteen countries above the UK use PR. Australia uses PR for its upper House, and Canada, ranked 9, uses FPTP. According to Lijphart, "Consensus democracies", which use PR, "clearly outperform the majoritarian democracies with regard to the quality of democracy and democratic representation".

But what would PR mean for the Labour and the left?



Systems and constituency links

Under FPTP, everyone has a single local MP but for millions of people this is someone they profoundly disagree with. Over 5.5 million Labour voters are represented by an MP from another party.

Systems of PR use multi-member constituencies as well as (or instead of) the current single-member constituencies, so that several representatives are elected to reflect the balance of opinion in an area. In rural England, Labour and other parties would have MPs in proportion to their vote, so most voters would have an MP who shares their values and views. They would see their MPs cast votes they support in key decisions made in Parliament.

PR can keep the current one-to-one link so every constituency is represented by a single MP, with “top-up” MPs elected to make sure seats match votes across a region. This is called the Additional Member System and is used in Scotland, Wales and the Greater London Assembly, Germany and New Zealand.

Other forms of PR use only multi-member constituencies, including the Single Transferable Vote (used in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland Assembly, and local elections in Scotland), and “open list” systems (Austria, Denmark, Norway). The “closed list” used for European Parliamentary elections is the system commonly caricatured and generalised to all proportional systems by FPTP advocates.

The Alternative Vote (AV), the voting system in the 2011 referendum, is not a form of PR. Nor is it necessarily more proportional than FPTP. Analysis by the Electoral Reform Society shows that if AV had been used in the 2015 general election, the Conservatives could have won an even bigger majority on the same share of the vote.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION STRENGTHENS PROGRESSIVE POLITICS

It is possible to acknowledge that First Past the Post is unacceptable in a modern democracy, but nonetheless worry that a change to Proportional Representation would harm Labour's chances of electoral success. Could PR tip the balance of political power to the right?

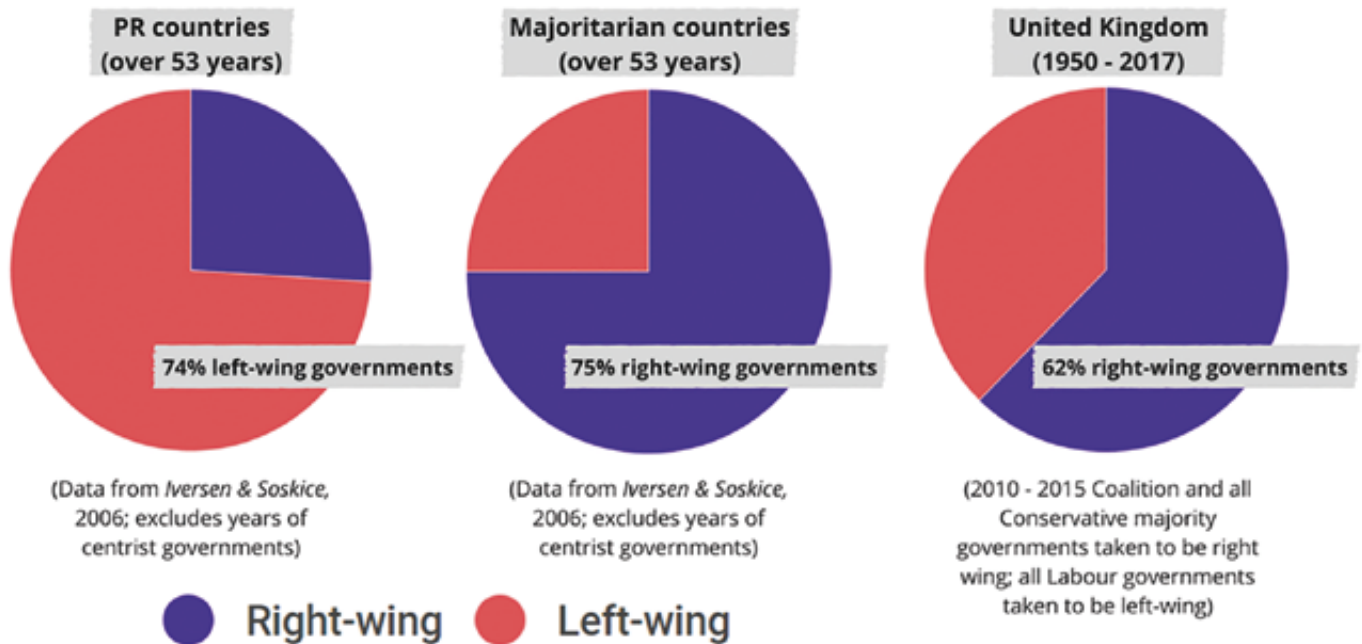
This is a reasonable question to ask, since if PR were to put the left in general and the Labour Party in particular further from power, we would be less able to defend the things we value and change society for the better.

However, political scientists have studied the relationship between types of electoral system and political leaning of the governments they tend to elect. The evidence is that it is FPTP and other majoritarian systems, rather than PR, that advantage the right.

First Past the Post has a right-wing bias

Countries with majoritarian systems have been found to be significantly more likely to have right-wing governments. Those with systems of PR are significantly more likely to have left-wing governments. A study published in 2017 confirmed "that majoritarian systems have a substantive conservative bias, whereas countries with PR show more differentiated patterns". Studies which reviewed the experience of seventeen advanced democracies over a fifty three year period found that proportional democracies were governed by left-leaning governments on average for 74 per cent of the time, while majoritarian democracies (which includes those with FPTP) were governed by right-leaning governments for 75 per cent of the time.

Torben Iversen (Harvard) and David Soskice (LSE) provide a compelling explanation of why such a strong relationship exists. This imagines an unequal





society in which there are three equally-sized social groups - high income, middle income and low income. The middle and low income groups have a shared interest in allying to form a majority, and applying tax and welfare policies that redistribute some of the high income group's wealth.

"In a PR system, each group can form a political party which will enjoy a share of parliamentary representation roughly equivalent to the size of the group - here, 33 per cent each. Low and Middle together have 66 per cent of the votes in parliament, and can establish a government which would redistribute resources from High. They can bargain about how to distribute these resources among themselves, in the knowledge that if one group seeks an unfair advantage, the coalition would break down and both sides would lose out. As a result, redistribution is the likely outcome.

"In a majoritarian system, the electoral rules tend to favour two large parties (as is evident in the US and UK), not three. So, in order to act jointly to achieve redistribution, Low and Middle must form a political party jointly. But, although Low and Middle have a joint interest in redistribution, they have divergent interests when it comes to distributing these resources amongst themselves. The Middle income group, in particular, may be concerned that the Low group could take control of the party and redistribute not only from the High income group, but also from the Middle. So in order to head off this possibility, Middle may choose instead to ally with High, and keep its income to itself."

Under FPTP, only one progressive party (in the UK, the Labour Party) has a realistic prospect of forming

a government, but in order to do so it must attract the support of a dauntingly broad range of social and political groups all at the same time. To retain power, it must continually manage and mediate between their competing interests - who might otherwise vote Green, Liberal Democrat, UKIP or even Conservative. Failing to satisfy all of these constituent groups results in a loss of power for Labour and, consequently, for the only potential left-leaning government in the UK. The Higher income group represented by the Conservatives typically resumes power.

PR makes progressive government more likely because it removes these artificial barriers to forming and maintaining the broad social and political alliances that must be in place in order for progressive government to exist.

PR would empower the UK's progressive majority

For a more concrete idea of what a move to PR might mean for Labour, we can examine how past UK general elections would have looked under PR. We must, however, do so with caution. Electoral systems change the way parties campaign, the way people vote, and whether people vote. These are some of the very reasons the system must be changed.

Nonetheless, past election results indicate broad trends in public attitudes and can be used to illustrate how a proportional House of Commons might have looked over the years.

The graph below shows the percentage vote share of “progressive” parties for every general election since 1964. The “Liberal” bar refers to the prevalent liberal party of the time - variously the Liberal Party, SDP-Liberal Alliance and the Liberal Democrats. The “other progressive” bar only includes parties which received at least 0.4 per cent of the national vote in a particular election. These are the Green Party (1992, 2001-2015), Plaid Cymru (1970- 2015), SDLP (1974-2010), SNP (1966-2015) and Unity (1970).

What we find is that in fourteen of the last fifteen elections, a majority of voters voted for parties to the left of the Conservatives. In reality, the Conservatives have governed for most of this time: 55 per cent of the duration since 1964. If the current government completes its term, this will rise to 59 per cent.

Furthermore, these have usually been Conservative majority governments, despite never once winning a majority of the vote. It has often been under the leadership of extreme Conservative voices: Margaret Thatcher and now Theresa May.

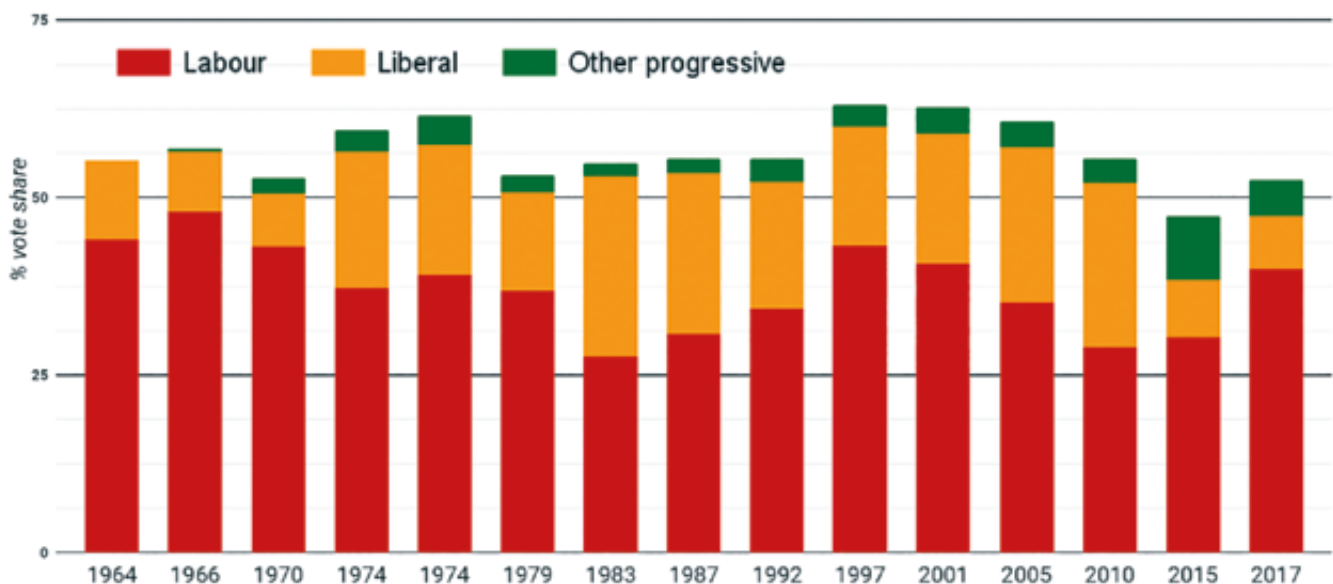
Under PR, it seems beyond doubt modern British history would have been very different.

The Thatcher era of unmoderated right-wing government simply could not have happened.

If seats matched votes, the worst possible government during the entire Thatcher era - from Labour’s point of view - would have been a Conservative-SDP-Liberal Alliance. We know what a Conservative-Liberal Alliance looks like, because we had one from 2010 to 2015. It is not progressive, but it is a far cry from the extremes of Conservative majority government. Furthermore, FPTP ensured that the balance of power within the 2010 Coalition was decisively weighted towards the Conservatives: 20 per cent Liberal Democrat and 80 per cent Conservative. Under PR, it would have been 40 per cent Liberal Democrat and 60 per cent Conservative, and greater moderation of Conservative policy would therefore follow.

On the other hand, there would have been every possibility of a genuinely left-leaning government throughout the seventies and eighties. The point here is not that a Labour-Liberal coalition would be exactly the same as a Labour majority government, but that it would be incomparably better and more representative of British voters than the actual outcome, nearly two decades of Thatcherism.

In fourteen of the last fifteen elections, a majority of voters voted for parties to the left of the Conservatives, yet the Conservatives have governed for most of this time.



Under one form of PR, Labour would now have the largest number of seats, but under any form of PR it seems inconceivable that we would now have a Conservative-led government.



Yes, the Liberal Democrats chose to go into Coalition with the Conservatives in 2010. But the Liberal Democrats had a fairly progressive manifesto (scrapping tuition fees, action on climate change, greater banking regulation) and it is only because of our disproportional voting system that Labour and the Liberal Democrats did not have enough seats between them to form a majority Coalition. It is, again, difficult to doubt that a Liberal Democrat-Labour Coalition would have been better than the Conservative-Liberal Democrat one actually formed.

If we used PR, Labour would probably be in government now

2017 saw the return of a progressive majority of British voters, but depriving Theresa May of her majority was bitter-sweet. Because of FPTP, a deal with the DUP has kept the Conservatives in power with a shared 43 per cent of the vote. This is despite an absolute majority of voters backing parties to the left of them.

The Electoral Reform Society conducted a huge voter survey to project the election results under different voting systems. They presented their findings with the caveat: "It is worth noting that the projections are just that, rather than predictions. It is impossible to know for sure what elections under these systems would look like given that a change in the electoral system will be followed by people becoming more used to the electoral system and its functioning."

They found that under one form of PR (the Single Transferable Vote), Labour would now have the largest number of seats, with 297 to the Conservatives' 282. But under any form of PR, including the other proportional system modelled by the Electoral Reform Society (the Additional Member System), it seems inconceivable that we would now have a Conservative-led government. Both projections suggest a significant majority of MPs from parties to the left of the Conservatives. The combined seat share of their potential coalition partners (the DUP and UKIP) is far less than a majority.

It would therefore fall to Labour to form a government: either a minority government with confidence and supply from one or more smaller parties, or a coalition. This would require alliance building and compromise, but as the dominant party Labour would set the agenda.

We must ask: would such a Labour-led government be better or worse than up to five years of Conservative-DUP rule for the people we represent? The answer, surely, is better.

The evidence from political science suggests that an inbuilt advantage to the right is found in majoritarian electoral systems. This chimes with our own experience, in which a Conservative minority have frequently governed the UK almost by default. Historical voting patterns suggest the UK would have had significantly more progressive governments if we had used PR. The available evidence suggests we would be in government now.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION CREATES EQUAL SOCIETIES AND BETTER OUTCOMES

So PR is not only healthier for democracy and for politics, it is likely to lead to more years of progressive or left-leaning governments. But we are not in politics to seek power for power's sake. Our project is to put power, wealth and opportunity in the hands of the many, not the few. Regardless of who is likely to be in power, we need to know that PR is consistent with the kind of equal and egalitarian society we want.

Again, this is a subject on which political science has much to say. The world has provided a large sample of proportional and majoritarian countries, and academics have been able to draw comparisons of their performance.

INCOME EQUALITY

The evidence

There is a body of evidence showing that countries with proportional electoral systems have considerably lower income inequality than those with majoritarian systems like First Past the Post. Based on the evidence, political scientists have concluded that there is a causal relationship at work: "consensual political institutions [which use PR] tend to reduce income inequalities whereas majoritarian institutions have the opposite effect" and that when the degree of proportionality of a system increases, income inequality decreases. Analysis has found these effects to be highly significant, with PR accounting for 51 per cent of the variance of income inequality among countries.

The Gini Coefficient is a metric used to quantify income equality, with lower scores indicating better income equality. The table below shows the thirty-five OECD nations (the advanced democracies) ranked in order of Gini Coefficient, using the most

recent data available for each country. This powerfully illustrates the relationship. The top 14 in terms of income equality all use PR. The UK and US, with FPTP, are right down at the bottom with the likes of Israel, Turkey and Mexico, countries which face notably different challenges from our more comparable peers.

responsive to the demands of a wider range of citizens".

This should ring true to us as democratic socialists. As Tony Benn put it, "democracy is the most revolutionary thing in the world, because if you have power you use it to meet the needs of you and your community". We

"Consensual political institutions (which use PR) tend to reduce income inequalities whereas majoritarian institutions have the opposite effect."

Explanation

Birchfield and Crepaz explain these results as follows: "The more widespread the access to political institutions, and the more representative the political system, the more citizens will take part in the political process to change it in their favour which will manifest itself, among other things, in lower income inequality. Such consensual political institutions make the government more

are unsurprised that democratic countries have better income equality than authoritarian states, because with democracy the general population has the political power to seek to rebalance wealth. A more representative democracy provides better income equality than a less representative democracy for exactly the same reason.

Rank	Country index	Income equality
1	Iceland	0.244
2	Norway	0.252
3	Denmark	0.254
4	Slovenia	0.255
5	Finland	0.257
6	Czech Republic	0.262
7	Belgium	0.268
8	Slovak Republic	0.269
9	Austria	0.280
10	Sweden	0.281
11	Luxembourg	0.281
12	Netherlands	0.283
13	Hungary	0.288
14	Germany	0.292
15	France	0.294
16	Switzerland	0.295
17	Poland	0.300
18	Korea	0.302
19	Ireland	0.309
20	Canada	0.322
21	Italy	0.325
22	Japan	0.330
23	New Zealand	0.333
24	Australia	0.337
25	Portugal	0.342
26	Greece	0.343
27	Spain	0.346
28	Latvia	0.352
29	United Kingdom	0.358
30	Estonia	0.361
31	Israel	0.365
32	Turkey	0.393
33	United States	0.394
34	Mexico	0.459
35	Chile	0.465

Key

Use First Past the Post
Use another majoritarian system
Use some form of Proportional Representation

WELFARE AND SHARING OF PUBLIC GOODS

The evidence

There is a similar relationship between electoral systems and the sharing of public goods. Arend Lijphart found that “consensus democracies”, which use proportional electoral systems, demonstrate “kinder, gentler qualities” in a number of ways, including that “they are more likely to be welfare states”. He found that they spent an average of 4.75 per cent more on social expenditures than majoritarian democracies, describing this relationship as “strongly positive and statistically significant.”

In a 2009 study, Carey and Hix looked at 610 elections over 60 years in 81 countries and found that PR countries garnered higher scores on the United Nations Index of Human Development, which incorporates health, education and standard of living indicators. Carey and Hix consider the Index to provide “a reasonable overall indicator of government performance in the delivery of public goods and human welfare.”

Explanation

The better performance of PR countries as social democracies can be explained in a similar way to their improved income equality. When a general population has better access to political power, governments are

more likely to act in the interest of the whole of that population.

As an illustration of this, we can compare the way that British and Norwegian governments have managed the proceeds of our respective North Sea oil and gas resources. The discoveries occurred around the same time, were of roughly comparable size, and were significant enough to place both countries among the most important oil producers in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. While the UK uses FPTP, Norway uses PR and is usually governed by coalitions.

By now, most North Sea oil has gone and production is in decline. In Norway, the legacy of exploiting this huge natural resource is that the Norwegian people own the world’s largest sovereign wealth fund. This \$900 billion fund owns on average 1.3 per cent of every publicly listed company in the world.

In contrast, the UK has no such fund. John Hawksworth of PricewaterhouseCoopers made what he called a conservative estimate. If UK oil profits had been set aside it would have been worth £450bn by 2008, with Professor Sukhdev Johal, University of London, estimating as much as £850bn. Not only was this not done, but the extra tax revenue raised over the oil-producing era does not register as an increase in public investment or expenditure.

Hawksworth’s conclusion: “The logical answer is that the oil money enabled non-oil taxes to be kept lower”. Canada, also with FPTP, has followed the same model as the UK.

The UK and Norway faced a very similar opportunity. Norway now has a vast public asset, while the UK has little to show for it. This is clearly due to the decisions made by successive governments in Norway and the UK. But the evidence suggests that the electoral system influences both the composition and decisions of those governments.

Periods of centre and centre-right government have passed in Norway (1997-2005, 2013-present) without the oil fund being abolished, plundered or privatised. It is striking that in majoritarian UK, saving up oil profits under public ownership has been politically unthinkable. In proportional Norway, it is ceasing to do so that is unthinkable.

We cannot be certain that Norway would have squandered its oil wealth if it used FPTP for its general elections or that the UK would have treated its responsibly if it used PR. But these are the kinds of effects that political science leads us to expect each of these electoral systems to have on their societies and in this instance these expectations appear to hold true.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

The evidence

Studies have found that countries using proportional systems set stricter environmental policies and were faster to ratify the Kyoto protocol. On environmental performance, Lijphart and Orellana found that countries with PR scored six points higher on the Yale Environmental Performance Index, which measures ten policy areas, including environmental health, air quality, resource management, biodiversity and habitat, forestry, fisheries, agriculture and climate change.

Using data from the International Energy Agency, Orellana found that between 1990 and 2007, when carbon emissions were rising everywhere, the statistically predicted increase was significantly lower in countries with fully proportional systems, at 9.5 per cent, compared to 45.5 per cent in countries using winner-take-all systems. Orellana found use of renewable energy to be 117 percent higher in countries with fully proportional systems.

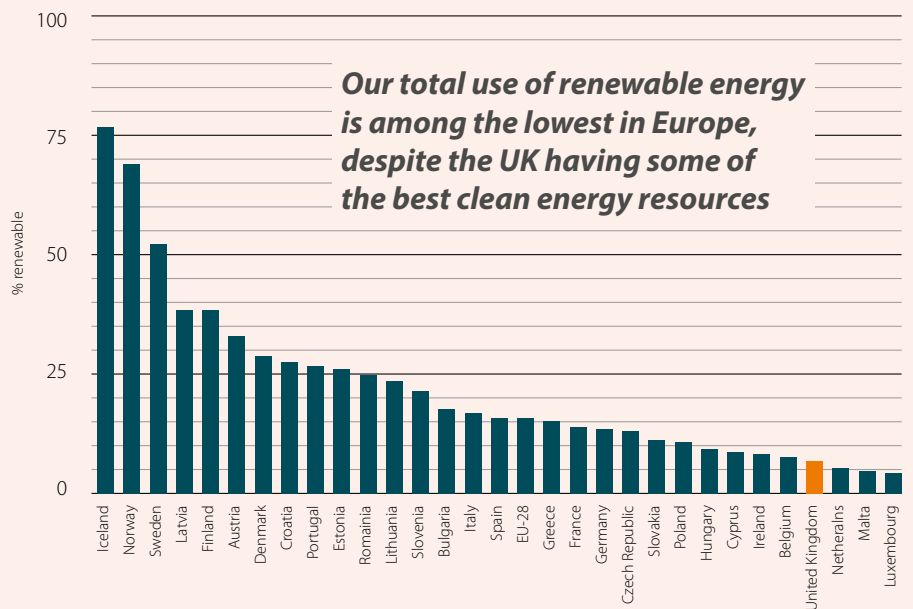
Explanation

The UK has historically lagged behind its European peers when it comes to action on climate change and uptake of renewable energy. Depressingly, this is despite having by far the best

offshore wind and marine energy potential in Europe. Successive governments have at best taken relatively limited action to move away from fossil fuels and reduce emissions, or at worst have actively resisted such progress (with the current government determined to begin shale gas production despite strong opposition from both local communities and the general public). Using data from the International Energy Agency,

In his 1990 book, *Electing for Democracy*, Richard Kuper offers an explanation for this which remains true to this day. “Were the Greens”, he writes, “in a position to obtain representation in proportion to their vote, it is inconceivable

that Labour would not already have in place a coherent and much strengthened range of environmental policies in order to head off the challenge.” Because a vote for the Green Party remains a wasted vote in almost every constituency, we in the Labour Party have little electoral incentive to worry about winning those voters back by competing with the Greens with our environmental credentials. On the contrary, since the swing voters in marginal seats may not be keen on the idea of a wind turbine at the bottom of their garden, an electoral agent may well advise us not to make too much of a fuss about climate change.



LONG-TERMISM AND DECISIVENESS

The preceding three issues all point to a fundamental flaw with FPTP: the exaggerated incentive to focus on short term issues. Because electoral victory is all-or-nothing and a Parliamentary majority is paramount, parties do not have the luxury of coming together to find solutions to long-term problems. Decisions which need to be made, but which might prove unpopular, are routinely deferred until after the next election - often repeatedly.

It has been suggested that this is a contributing factor to the UK's housing crisis since a proper response would mean building

on some of the green belt, much of which lies in marginal constituencies where the cities meet the countryside. Further research would be required in order to test this hypothesis.

However, the evidence on the issues discussed above also exposes the myth sometimes repeated by proponents of FPTP, that coalition governments formed under PR are "weak", "indecisive" or "unable to get anything done". The idea that greater economic equality, fairer distribution of public goods and effective action on climate change are symptoms of

weakness or indecision is clearly an absurd one. In the UK, the so-called "strong" and "decisive" FPTP system has coincided with some of the worst inequality in Europe, the absence of an effective housing policy for many decades, and inaction on climate change.

Indeed, Arend Lijphart's *Patterns of Democracy* found that "majoritarian democracies do not outperform the consensus democracies [which use PR] on effective government and effective policymaking - in fact, the consensus democracies have the better record".

The so-called "strong" and "decisive" FPTP system has coincided with some of the worst inequality in Europe, the absence of an effective housing policy for many decades, and inadequate action on climate change.



WAR AND CONFLICT

The Evidence

Leblang and Chan found that the electoral system is the most important institutional predictor of a democracy's involvement in war. Established democracies with systems of PR tend to have significantly less involvement in armed conflict. They found, "a proportionate-representation system turns out to be consistently significant in dampening war involvement in all three meanings we have operationalized in this context."

Established democracies with systems of PR tend to have significantly less involvement in armed conflict.

The three meanings of "war" referred to are: 1) likelihood of being the first to enter into war, 2) likelihood of joining a multinational coalition in an ongoing war, and 3) likelihood of remaining in a war it is already involved in.

Separately, Orellana found that the predicted level of military expenditure for countries with majoritarian systems was more than twice as high as for countries with fully proportional systems.

Explanation

Leblang and Chan comment: "What is it about the nature of a PR system that discourages foreign belligerence?... Instead of supposing that only competitive politics can restrain war involvement, an informal culture and a traditional practise of consensual politics may serve as an equally and perhaps even more effective barrier to

such involvement ... European countries with a PR system tend to have parliamentary majorities based on an oversized coalition with participation from several parties. Even where there is one dominant party, they tend to offer a more encompassing coalition with institutionalized representation of various sectoral interests. Their political process acknowledges multiple veto groups and promotes regular consultation to develop consensual policy."

In short, when the people are fairly represented in Parliament, more of those groups who may object to any potential war have access to the political power that is necessary to prevent it. In a proportional democracy, war - and other major decisions - generally requires the consent of the majority.

THE TIME IS NOW

It is no exaggeration to say that Proportional Representation is a prerequisite of a properly-functioning democracy in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few. Keir Hardie, himself a supporter of PR, would likely have said so at the turn of the 20th Century.

By recognising this and committing to reforming our voting system, we would take a long awaited step to empower our voters and members. We would make Labour votes count wherever they were cast. We would be putting our trust in the voters and showing them we are serious about democratising the UK.

It would mean that the default setting of British politics would never again be Conservative majority government but government determined by the wisdom of the progressive majority that has almost always existed in the UK throughout modern times.

To many voters, who are more diverse and less tribal than ever, it would offer an important change to vote for in the next general election.

By backing and then introducing PR, the Labour Party would be rediscovering and applying its founding values of democracy and equality to the crucial part of our political system. And by governing in this reformed system, Labour would be able to realise its vision by its means as well as its ends.

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1. The electoral systems of the OECD nations can be broken down as follows: 21 List PR; 2 List PR with plurality bonus; 2 Additional Member System; 1 Single Transferable Vote; 4 Supplementary Member; 3 First Past the Post; 2 other majoritarian.

"List PR with plurality bonus" includes Greece and Italy, which use PR but award a bonus to the largest minority in a way that usually results in a majority government. "Supplementary Member" systems use proportional and majoritarian systems for elections to a single legislature simultaneously, resulting in partially proportional results. We judge that Hungary's unique system most resembles SM and have categorised it as such. All of the systems ensure that everyone has a vote that has some influence on the outcomes except for First Past the Post.
2. See <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN02028>
3. Electoral Reform Society (2015), Electoral Reform Society (2017); Grice, Independent (2017)
4. Walters, Daily Mail (2017)
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9. Norris (1985); Matland (1998); Reynolds (1999); Kenworthy and Malami (1999); Siaroff (2000); Moser (2001); Salmond (2006); Lijphart (2012)
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12. Cusack and Engelhardt (2002); Cusack and Fuchs (2002); Powell (2002); Doring and Manow (2017)
13. Doring & Manow (2017)
14. Cusack & Engelhardt (2002); Cusack & Fuchs (2002)
15. Among parties who have won at least 0.4 per cent of the vote in at least one election during this period, the following are excluded from the "Other Progressives" category: Sinn Féin (not sitting in Westminster); Referendum Party (single issue); BNP, DUP, National Front, UKIP and UUP (not progressive).
16. Lijphart (2012: 282); Birchfield & Crepaz (1998); Vincenzo Verardi (2005)
17. Birchfield and Crepaz (1998)
18. Verardi (2005)
19. Birchfield & Crepaz (1998)
20. Aditya Chakraborty, Guardian (2014)
21. Fredriksson & Millimet (2004)
22. Cohen (2010)
23. Orellana (2014)
24. Johnston, Independent (2016)
25. Press Association, Guardian (2017)
26. Lijphart (2012)

This new edition of the 2017 report by Make Votes Matter and the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform argues that Labour must now back Proportional Representation for the House of Commons.

Not only is electoral reform desperately needed to revitalise democracy in the United Kingdom, it is increasingly clear that PR is an essential feature of the modern social democracies around the world that the Labour Party would wish to emulate here.

It is no exaggeration to say that in the 21st Century, Proportional Representation is a prerequisite of a democracy in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few.

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