

## Does this not mean that the "Person who comes third wins"?

Around 400 or more of the seats in parliament are occupied by people who the electorate said they did not want! These are the people who could not get more than half the votes, in some cases they got as little as a third or more of the votes, yet the first-past-the-post system declares them the democratic choice despite the fact that their election has no democratic legitimacy!

Imagine that you are out with friends and one of them offers to go and buy some crisps. You are asked what flavour you would like and reply "I would like Cheese and Onion but if they do not have that I would like Prawn flavour". Your friend tells you that crisp stocks are pretty low so you add "well if neither of those is available I will have Plain but on no account get me Salt and Vinegar!" AV works in exactly that fashion and if you definitely do not want someone you put them last in your rankings.



In the same fashion, in an election someone may come top in the first round with, say, 38% of the vote. But if the other 62% of the voters definitely do not want him or her then they will not win the election - and that is perfectly just! The candidate who wins is one that is the choice of more than half the voters. They are the democratic choice, chosen as if we were actually using a real run-off system.

If a candidate is not prepared to adapt their election programme so that it is acceptable to more than half the voters, but still expects to get a seat in parliament they are being arrogant and think themselves more important than the majority of voters.

## Nine Reasons to choose AV

- *Requires a majority vote to win*
- *Candidate must be acceptable to majority*
- *Everyone has one vote in the voting pool all the time*
- *Allows voters to express their views*
- *Gives voters more control of MPs*
- *Will improve MP behaviour*
- *Is fair to everyone*
- *Is cost effective if run properly*
- *In Australia it has rarely led to coalition governments*



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## Your Questions on the Alternative Vote System:

Answered!



On May the 5th, 2011 we will all have the opportunity to vote in the referendum on the Alternative Vote System or AV

## What is AV?

AV is nothing more nor less than an Instant form of the Run-Off voting system.

In the run-off system when the votes are cast if no one has at least 50% + 1 of the votes one or more of the bottom candidates is eliminated and everyone goes back to the polls to vote again on the remaining candidates. At this stage you can cast your vote for the same candidate or change to a different one. The votes are counted and if there is still no one with 50%+1 of the vote more candidates are eliminated and the vote is done again.



The run-off system is fair because everyone gets to vote again at each round and because it ensures that the person elected has more than half the votes cast and it is clear therefore who is the "popular"

candidate. Because the run-off system is cumbersome there have been many different systems devised to keep the benefits whilst avoiding people having to keep on going back to vote. AV is one of these system.

## How does AV work?

When you cast your vote you also say who you will vote for if no one has more than half the votes and your candidate is eliminated.

There is then another round of counting where **ALL THE VOTES ARE COUNTED AGAIN** (if they were not then the candidates remaining would have zero votes!). If you candidate has been eliminated your second choice is counted instead. This ensures that no one has more than one vote in the pool and also ensures that no one has less than one vote. This is the true meaning of "one person one vote". This goes on till someone has more than half the votes.

## Will AV improve parliamentary behaviour?

One of the reason why we have so many examples of bad behaviour by MPs is that so many of them are arrogant. Over 400 of them did not get a majority of the votes. In effect they were not wanted by the electorate, but they still managed to get their seat. Why, they think, do they need voters and why should they keep their promises?

With AV around 200 MPs will get a majority at the first round of counting (but it may be less as the number has been declining for decades). All the rest will have to adapt to the wishes of the majority of their electorate if they wish to win. They will also know that if they do not keep their promises they are much less likely to get voted in the next time since many more people will put them in the "I want none of that" slot in their votes.

*Savage Chickens*

by Doug Savage



## Will voters get more control over their MP

YES!

## Is run-off voting and its variants common?

They are extremely common. They are used in the some countries for voting for legislatures, for electing hereditary peers to the House of Lords, in primaries in some States in the USA, in town and city elections around the world and, in the UK for elected mayors and for choosing the leader of the three main political parties and some trades unions. In short it is an extremely successful method of voting.

## Will it not be expensive to run?

Manually counting votes in elections is extremely expensive and the additional cost of AV has not shown itself to be either certain or excessive (see [Wikipedia](#)). If machines are purchased then there will be a one-off cost but this can be

off-set against the savings of not manually counting votes. In any case the cost relative to the gain in democracy is likely to be very small or zero.

## Why spend money on this referendum?

Referendums go to the heart of democracy and place the power for a wide number of decisions in the hands of ordinary people. Arguing against the cost of referendums is to argue against democracy itself. After all we could go further and save even more money by not having any elections at all!

If cost is an issue then surely it would be wiser for the people to pay MPs only minimal expenses for doing their job! The millions of pounds saved could then be used to fund more referendums, so allowing the people to tell their MPs what they should be doing!

## Will BNP voters get more votes?

The English Democrats do not like the BNP, nor indeed do many of us like the Tories, the Lib-Dems or Labour. However we would never use this as an excuse to deprive our fellow citizens of their voting rights. This way lies fascism, and it is unsurprising to us how many of the Westminster political elite in the NO campaign appear to be crypto-fascists.

## A Vote for AV is a Vote for Democracy!

The campaign against AV has shown itself to be deceitful & anti-democratic, at least. It is symptomatic of the very low standards of public life that currently exist at Westminster. The AV offers ordinary people a way to start putting this right. And many MPs don't like that.