

## **Fiction Wrapped in Fact Sheets.**

There are 14 of them posted on the CA website. In hard copy they are distributed at the CA public hearings and elsewhere I presume. They are the CA “Fact Sheets”.

They serve a dual purpose. One is channeling the thinking of the CA members to that of the Fact Sheet authors. The other is to “soften the target”, that is to say, to make the public receptive to the verdict the CA will concoct by following these “Fact Sheets”.

The authors have not expressly claimed infallibility, yet they have neither invited debate nor have exposed otherwise to scrutiny these Fact Sheets. Yet, the need to test the “facts” served on these sheets is pressing, for their potential to mislead is large and the consequence of that grave.

Alcyone News has emerged as the voice of “Opposition” to the CA Managers and from that position will challenge the factuality of these Fact Sheets. This series of articles we will call “Fiction Wrapped in Fact Sheets”

Tom Varzeliotis

---

The title of Fact Sheet #12 is:    **“Mixed electoral systems”**

FS#12 relates the technicalities of another yet “electoral system family”. It may not even be a legitimate family, the authors of FS#12 say, for it is a mishmash of members taken away from the other four, the legitimate “Families” of electoral systems. This is done, we are informed, to produce hybrids systems combining *“the two key principles that are generally seen as mutually exclusive: identifiable local representation and some measure of proportionality.”* One wonders how *principles, i.e. “Fundamental truths”*, could conceivably be *taken as being “mutually exclusive”* but that is neither here nor there.

To this FS I would not comment beyond what I have already said in reviews of preceding FSs. Except that a highly important notion is sneaked in by this FS. It could be inadvertent but, irrespective of intentions, this sort of mention of it could come in handy if and when the credibility of the FS authors have to explain their treatment of NOTA. For the concept mentioned en passant in FS#12 is big in importance and commands corresponding consideration.

Specifically, the last paragraph of the FS, that is to say, the last paragraph before the “commercial”, is devoted to the NOTA. The entire paragraph, the whole of four lines and a bit, are dedicated to NOTA!

The paragraph in question, is titled “**Systems that mix different kinds of options**”, which is rather ambiguous, insinuating to a “catch all” category. It is really much worse than that. I will reproduce it here in its entirety:

*“Russia has included a none of the above (NOTA) option on their ballot papers, in addition to listing candidates by party. In Russia , the NOTA option has never attracted a very large percentage of the vote. However if NOTA should win the procedure is that another election would be held. An alternate proposal would have a member of the legislature chosen at random if the NOTA option gets a majority.”*

That is all the “fact” they have made of it. Please read it again!

In “*addition to listing candidates by party*”? Are the two mutually inclusive, exclusive, or un-related? Apples and oranges? How does NOTA relate to “*listing candidates by party*”?

In any case, where is the “fact” in the short introduction of the NOTA concept? What are the consequences of providing for NOTA on the ballot? What are the advantages and disadvantages of it? Why is NOTA absent on our ballots now? Does NOTA appertain to “how votes translate into seats” or it is part of the overall electoral system?

There is no further treatment of the NOTA concept in FS#12. What is found in these four lines and a bit, is all the “facts” we are treated to on this issue. It is a very important issue and many people, not all uniformly motivated, promote the inclusion of NOTA onto election ballots. I am one of them.

There are many reasons for NOTA, the list starts by recognizing the probability that all the candidates on the ballot may be disliked by voters. In a democracy no one should eliminate the voter’s choice. No one, be it a living person or an inanimate “system”, may conceivably have the right to compel the citizenry “to love” or “to trust” at least one of the candidates on a ballot Much more so when the ballot is not composed by citizens themselves, but it is made up by political parties. Yet, de facto, that is what election systems without NOTA are imposing, they dictate we “love” at least one of the people listed on the ballot, at penalty of being democratically disenfranchised. As a result, in our society, increasingly people opt for political self-exile, as they abstain from voting.

Australian politicians became so irked by people who would rather watch kangaroos jump than visit the polls, that they passed laws forcing citizens to present themselves at the polls on election day. Thereafter, Ausie politicians enjoy the consideration of their candidacy by all Australians. As a matter of record and to be fair, the Australians are not the only ones doing it, there are others as well.

Without being mindless of the other reasons for NOTA, my pet one is that its presence on the ballot serves as a gauge of the peoples consent to be governed by the system current in the society. Such consent is an essential element of democracy, for if the people are governed against their will, democracy is nonexistent, by definition.

I have discussed the NOTA concept at some length in the article No “12 NOTA”, it being some 1,300 words long published on March 3, 2004. in Alcyone News, in this series. In contrast, the NOTA piece in FS#12 is 70 words short. I maintain that NOTA deserves more than 1,300 words.

A most noteworthy aspect of the issue, is that it was sneaked by in that small paragraph of FS#12, where it is easy to miss and easier than that to miss its significance. It is equally noteworthy that the NOTA “fact” was wrapped in the wrong FS.

NOTA does not relate to any particular system of “translating votes into seats”, it is independent of them all. It is also equally thoroughly compatible with all of them, you can attach NOTA to any ballot. Why it was mixed up with “Mixed electoral systems” in FS#12, is puzzling.

Must we take these as being inadvertent?

Finally, I should remark on the presence of the “Additional Resources” commercial in this FS,as well. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> time it has been published in the FS series.

Tom Varzeliotis.