

Barry Anderson
20823 – 47 Avenue
Langley, BC
V3A 7E2
May 3, 2004

Mr. J. Blaney
Chairman
Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Dear Sirs & Mesdames:

Submission to Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform
(to be transmitted only in whole, not edited or summarized)

As a Canadian senior citizen who has voted regularly at three levels since 1949, has reviewed your "Preliminary Statement", 14 "fact Sheets", and Newsletters, and has attempted to watch your televised Weekend Assemblies (the Hansard TV quality was inferior to their Legislature standard – dull colour, K. Carty's and J. Blaney's faces and voices frequently distorted, no overhead charts shown, no showing at all by Shaw Cable of your 2nd Weekend), I make the following submission.

My sources are Dr. Jean Barman, UBC Historian; David Mitchell, Historian and former BC MLA; World Book Year Book 1966; your Assembly's proceedings.

- 1) Firstly, your 160 Members must remember they have had 5.5 million dollars worth of instruction and dialogue the rest of us can only marginally share (40% of us do not use the Internet and regard it as a coercive and discriminatory medium). They perhaps should not expect total open-mindedness from the short Public Hearings. They should insist on knowing if the 232 submissions and 109 presentation requests received as of April 27 are mostly from members of special interest groups for Proportional Representation. Will the average voter even begin to understand alternative systems such as "Proportional Representation – Single Transferable Vote"?
- 2) A good test of alternative balloting was in the June/52 BC Election. A long-term coalition of Liberals and Conservatives brought in the Single Transferable Ballot hoping Liberal voters would give their 2nd choice to Conservatives and vice versa. Election day was on June 12/52 – seven weeks later we still had no Premier, no Cabinet, no government – the people were aghast, the media were frantic, the province was in limbo.

Only five MLA's were elected on the first ballot and while the CCF led in 21 ridings, Social Credit in 14, LIB in 9, Cons in 3, Ind in 1, seven weeks later the counters wearily announced that 2nd choices in all 48 ridings gave SC 19, CCF 18, LIB 6, Cons 4, Ind 1. Popular vote percentages were CCF 34.3, SC 30.2, LIB 25.3, Cons 9.7, Ind/other 0.5. W.A.C. Bennett, the SC leader, convinced the Lt. Gov. he could form a cabinet and he became Premier. Party standings varied little over the next 20 years of Bennett's reign,

everybody seemed to have a voice in the parliaments and BC had some of its more golden years. STB was early gone!

3) A good test of the flexibility of our present system Federally was the Nov/65 election when a minority Liberal government went to the people. The results for the 265 ridings were, with little change from 1963, LIB 131, Prog. Cons. 97, NDP 21, SOC CR/Creditiste 14, Ind 2. Popular vote was LIB 40%, PC 32, NDP 18, SC/C 8, Ind/Other 2.

The Liberals continued as a minority government. There were many voices, often raucous and there were scandals. But the '63 and '65 parliaments produced some of the most impressive legislation ever – the CPP, RRSP's, a new flag, CUSO, lowed OAS age, Medicare and Bilingualism.

4) It could be argued that Canadians generally have known what they were doing in most elections, throwing out perceived incompetents, electing some minority governments or some with few or no opposition members.

5) It doesn't appear that the Assembly is allowed to consider a NO PARTY SYSTEM – NON-PARTISAN VOTING as in the state of Nebraska and in most civic elections. The party system is vicious, biased, dictatorial and in-bred.

Voters are often torn among their preferences for a Party, a Party leader, or a local Party candidate. For this reason I suggest The idea of Proportional Representation is a non-sequitur – how can you ever know which of the foregoing three factors influenced an individual vote??

6) The NOMINATING PORCESS needs to be addressed – ridings party memberships are being high-jacked or candidates are parachuted in.

7) It didn't appear that the Assembly considered staggered terms of office as in the U.S. Senate where valuable Committee work is continued.

8) I heard no evidence from Mr. Carty or Mr. Sharman that P.R. systems in other places produce more efficient, more effective or more respected parliaments, or significantly increased voter participation.

9) No evidence the PR system allows democratic selection – in most, the Party chooses the Party's candidate from the Party's list – riding not represented.

10) If the Assembly recommends NO CHANGE, will there be a referendum to see if the voters agree with them as to NO CHANGE??

Not wishing to appear at a hearing, I wish the Assembly wisdom.

Yours truly,

Barry Anderson