

## The Voters' Choice - STV

Voters prefer the power that STV gives them to ensure their views are reflected in election results.

I was fortunate enough to know Enid Lakeman and was inspired by her indefatigable work explaining the benefits of STV. Her extensive knowledge of electoral systems was legendary and her book "How Democracies Vote" is still essential reading. It is one section in that book which has persuaded me to make a submission to the Assembly in case it has been overlooked in other submissions.

STV really is valued by voters as it encourages the elected members to have regard to views of those who voted for them. That feature of STV is sometimes not as much appreciated by Governments as it is by the electorate and I would like to bring this to the attention of Assembly Members. They are in the unique position of being able to say what system **they** want, without having to be concerned that those in power will not listen, and they might find the events documented on the attached pages 266 and 267 of "How Democracies Vote" instructive.

Twice in Ireland, there have been attempts to remove STV by referendum because the Governments resented the limitations imposed by the system on their power and envied their counterparts in Britain with their impregnable majorities. The Party Whips' influence, particularly on Ministers, was balanced by the elected members' concerns to represent their voters' views. The referendums were not straightforward and were coupled with issues which had popular support to make it more likely that the votes to abolish STV would be won. Fortunately, the Irish voters saw through these exercises and voted to retain STV.

The Citizens' Assembly has a real opportunity to recommend a voting system which will benefit them, as well as influencing politicians and parties in beneficial ways, though without giving them power to over-ride the wishes of the electorate. I urge the Assembly to give the Irish voters' experience the utmost consideration in their deliberations and to recommend STV in their own interests and for the benefit of future citizens. As your Chair is quoted as saying on your web site "This really is power to the people" so please choose STV so the people can keep that power.

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