

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VANCOUVER PUBLIC HEARING JUNE 12,
2004 AT MARRIOTT PINNACLE HOTEL

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PRESENTATION TO THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON ELECTORAL REFORM. IT ATTEMPTS TO CAPTURE THE KEY ISSUES AND ARGUMENTS THAT WERE PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED DURING THE PUBLIC HEARING. IN SOME INSTANCES, THE PRESENTER HAS ALSO MADE A SUBMISSION TO THE ASSEMBLY AND THIS IS ACCESSIBLE VIA THE WEBSITE AT WWW.CITIZENSASSEMBLY.BC.CA BY CLICKING ON "GET INVOLVED". IF SUCH A SUBMISSION IS AVAILABLE, IT WILL BE NOTED AT THE END OF THIS REPORT.

Mark Latham

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

One advantage of a single transferable vote (STV) system over a mixed member proportional (MMP) system is that STV does not build in a dominant role for political parties, whereas MMP is defined in terms of political parties. My research on how to make voting more effective in corporations and in civic politics proposes some improvements that would result in a less dominant role for political parties (see www.corpmon.com).

KEY THEMES

The main message I have is to suggest that if you can choose an electoral system that is more flexible in the role it gives to political parties, it is a good thing.

STV is more flexible regarding the role of political parties. In MMP, you design seats and allocation of votes in terms of political parties. I think that is a very big difference. I want to suggest that a more flexible system like STV is good.

I am a financial economist and I have been working on the power of corporations and the voting and shares of stocks of corporations. I went down to the States for my graduate work. I was assistant professor at Berkeley and worked on Wall Street. I got very interested in the dysfunctions of corporations, in wasting shareholders money and the impact of on environment. I refer you to my website: www.corporatemon.com. I notice a lot of similarities between dysfunctions in politics and voting. There is a voting process in corporations, where shareholders vote for the board of directors. There are similar problems as in politics. The key link that I have focused on has been information. When you cast a vote, you have very little information; it would be nice if we had the time to deliberate, but we are all busy.

The role of political parties in civic politics:

- 1) Organizing the actions of the members of the political parties.
- 2) When the average voter goes to the polls, they think a lot about political parties; we use political parties to organize the information. They are very useful for this. Each party has a philosophy.

We organize that information in terms of political parties. I design a system to get more information to the voter. One suggestion that I have is to use the vote to allocate collectively owned money (publicly owned money) to pay for independent voter advisory organizations. This does exist but it is not funded by corporations. The trick is how to set that up without the money corrupting the process. There have been some corporate researchers who have published on this.

We see researchers writing about "Voting with Dollars", how to use public funds. Some other researchers took those ideas and tried to apply them to corporations. These ideas are still in flux. In a month I will put a paper on my website.

There are some new ways to develop information to help guide voters that are distinct from political parties. It may be that a more flexible system is better, like STV.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Keep BC's electoral system flexible enough to allow a possible future evolution where parties are less dominant, a system like STV may be preferable to one like MMP.

“The main message I have is to suggest that if you can choose an electoral system that is more flexible in the role it gives to political parties, it is a good thing. STV is more flexible regarding the role of political parties.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Comment It seems to me that you are agreeing with the deliberative assembly of the previous speaker.

- A Some of the issues I am looking at are the same but the mechanisms are different.

- Comment I will notify the CA about my paper. I have another paper on my website about democracy and politics.