

# Renewing Canadian Democracy: Citizen Engagement in Voting System Reform

*Phase One: Lessons from Around the World*

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Prepared by  
Dennis Pilon  
York University

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## Summary

The voting system as a particular component of democratic practice has come under increasing scrutiny in the last decade. Reform of existing voting systems in countries like New Zealand, Italy and Japan, along with the rebuilding of democratic institutions in Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America, has focused popular and academic attention on how different voting systems work and what effects they may have on democratic processes. *Lessons from Around the World*, prepared by Dennis Pilon, York University, reviews the relevant experience with voting system reform from around the world, both past and present, and the degree and nature of citizen engagement involved. The objectives of the paper are threefold: to demonstrate how voting system reforms have occurred historically and the specific political conditions that have facilitated them; highlight the role of citizen participation in the process, both its limits historically and potentially today; and, draw out some of the practical lessons from this experience to help determine how voting system reform might become an issue in Canada, and how citizens might best become involved.

The paper reveals that voting systems are primarily pragmatic historical accomplishments, rather than reflections of political culture or an embodiment of explicit values. Voting systems tend to emerge out of specific historical and political struggles: disputes over representation, demands for democratic accountability, fear of political parties of the left or right, or conditions of social and political instability. Within this context, anomalous election results or the existence of longstanding disproportionalities in election outcomes will not, of themselves, bring about a change of voting systems. In each of the countries where reform succeeded, the case for change became successfully intertwined with larger reform objectives – increased accountability from government parties, an end to corruption in politics, or efforts to re-align the party system. In New Zealand and the United Kingdom, for example, voting system reform was part of a larger process of making government more accountable.

The paper also highlights the typically low levels of public consultation around voting systems and some of the recent, though uneven, improvement in citizen engagement. In general, the process of voting system reform has been largely an elite affair, negotiated by party leaders with little public input or knowledge. However, the last decade has witnessed greater citizen engagement in voting system reform. For example, the citizen engagement experience in New Zealand included an impartial fact-finding commission to inform and set the terms of the discussion, an independent educational body, and a clear process for citizens to decide amongst alternative voting

systems. Although recent reform campaigns in Japan, Italy, Britain and New Zealand experienced varying levels of citizen engagement, there was a common recognition that voter concerns had to at least appear to be heard and responded to.

The paper concludes by distilling some key historical and contemporary 'lessons from around the world' that remain relevant to a citizen engagement process around voting systems today. To this end, seven key themes were gleaned from the historical record:

- 1) Voting systems are historical accomplishments: Particular ways of voting have emerged in particular places because political and social actors have struggled to put them there.
- 2) Existing institutional arrangements matter: Existing institutional arrangements form the terrain upon which reform efforts will be fought.
- 3) Mobilization of public opinion matters: Increasing public knowledge of voting systems and their potential efforts will be crucial to getting – and keeping – reform on the political agenda.
- 4) Political parties matter: In mobilizing public opinion, reformers must be careful not to allow their campaigns to become focused against parties, or deny the proper role for parties in the process.
- 5) Civil society organizations matter: these organizations must focus on citizen and organizational outreach if they are going to effectively connect a mobilized public opinion around the issue of voting system reform.
- 6) Methods of citizen engagement matter: Levels of citizen engagement can be assessed by determining who made the decision to change, who facilitated the process, and what kind of resources were made available to animate the discussion.
- 7) Unpredictable opportunities matter: In New Zealand, for example, a televised slip-up by the Prime Minister shifted the center of the campaign from a debate over *whether* to *when* action would be taken. The catalyst for a thorough re-evaluation of Canada's voting rules may already be present, or it may be still to come; either way it is the task of reformers to find it and build a campaign around it.

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## 1. Introduction

*Renewing Canadian Democracy: Citizen Engagement in Voting System Reform*, a research effort jointly sponsored by the Law Commission of Canada and Fair Vote Canada, is a three phase project designed to explore how Canadians might become actively involved in a far reaching public discussion about democratic reform, specifically as concerns our voting system. How would this process get started? Who should initiate it? What kind of resources will be required? If Canadians are to have a meaningful say in the future shape of their democracy, we need to determine how best to facilitate that discussion in concrete terms. That is the object of this study.

This first paper, *Lessons from Around the World*, reviews the relevant experience with voting system reform from around the world, both in the past and the present, and the degree and nature of citizen engagement involved. The second and third phases of the project will examine the particular challenges facing us here in Canada, and offer some suggestions about how to get this process of citizen-engagement started.

The organization of this paper is both historical and thematic. Moving chronologically, we review the initial struggles for representation and legislatively accountable government in the nineteenth century, the various struggles over voting systems in the early to mid-twentieth century, and attend in more detail to the more recent successful reforms of the 1990s. At the same time, we trace the shifting balance in favour of citizen engagement around the reform of democratic institutions, from an era when successful voting system change was largely the product of elite imposition, to the present where more and more governments worldwide consult citizens about reforming democratic institutions.

This paper has three broad objectives. The first is to demonstrate how voting system reforms have occurred historically and the specific political conditions that have facilitated them. The second is to highlight the role of citizen participation in the process, both its limits historically and potential today. Finally, the third is to draw out some practical lessons from all this experience to help determine how voting system reform might become an issue in Canada, and how citizens might best become involved.

The historic and specific political conditions of voting system reform - democratization, war, anti-communism, party system change, etc. - are taken up in sections two and three. Section four recounts the rise of citizen participation and the uneven role it has played in recent voting system reforms. Finally, section five

concludes by distilling a number of key historic 'lessons from around the world' concerning voting system reform, including the importance of parties, civil society organizations, and unpredictable opportunities, among others.

*Lessons from Around the World* seeks to provide Canadians with a much-needed historical and international context on voting system reform. Though this context will not provide us with any kind of blueprint to follow, it can help inform whatever 'made-in-Canada' approach to voting system reform we do come up with. It should also be underlined that the views expressed in this paper are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of either the Law Commission of Canada or Fair Vote Canada.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Democracy and Electoral Reform: Historical Insights

### ***Introduction***

Where do voting systems come from? For most citizens, the method by which votes are counted and representation allocated is uncontroversial and remains largely unnoticed. For most participants, the particular voting system in use *is* 'voting' writ large. It is most likely the only system they've ever used. On the other hand, political scientists or journalists may recognize the voting system as a distinct and particular entity, but it is typically considered a detail, the product of historical accident or longstanding cultural values, and not terribly important. The truth is, the legitimacy of democratic institutions like voting systems often stem from little more than time-honoured use. There is a kind of inertia behind existing institutional arrangements like these that tend to keep them in place, long after their original authors or purpose have been forgotten.

But, historically, voting systems did not come about accidentally or in a fit of absent-mindedness. They were the explicit historical accomplishments of political actors, designed with political objectives in mind. This must be underlined - voting systems are and always have been historical accomplishments, the product or by-product of social and political struggle.<sup>2</sup>

### ***The Rise of Representation and Voting Systems***

The nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic increase in the use of representative institutions as a key component of governing. In 1800 only the United States and Britain had directly elected legislative houses. One hundred years later, nearly all western industrialized countries had them. Though seldom amounting to 'democracy' as we would understand it today, the rise of representative institutions created a new channel of public accountability, one that relied on periodic elections for their legitimacy.<sup>3</sup>

Nineteenth century legislatures typically conducted elections under plurality or majority voting rules in single and/or multi-member districts (for a detailed explanation of how voting systems work see Appendix 1). Both the United States and Britain, the oldest directly-elected legislative houses, used the plurality system. Later Sweden, Denmark, and Finland would all adopt plurality voting when inaugurating directly-elected parliaments. British colonies in Australia, New Zealand and what would become Canada utilized plurality rules for voting. France briefly toyed with plurality voting after the

revolutionary outbursts of 1848 and 1870. Countries using majority voting rules in the nineteenth century included Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and France (for most of the time). Norway also used majority voting, though it did not have its first direct legislative election until the twentieth century (1905).<sup>4</sup>

Why did some countries use plurality and others majority voting systems? The choice of voting rules for nineteenth century legislatures was informed by a host of sometimes conflicting, sometimes overlapping social and political struggles in each country, and the strength and cohesion of the various forces involved. Arguably the key issue in the nineteenth century concerned parliamentary sovereignty, whether the governing administration was primarily responsible - and accountable - to the crown or the elected legislature. Increasingly important as the century progressed was the composition of the parliament itself, who was eligible to stand for election, and - more crucially - who was eligible to vote. Conservatives might have supported the idea of a representative parliament but not one that could control the government. On these terms some even supported the extension of suffrage to the working class. Liberals tended to strongly support legislative control over government but were less enamored with extending the vote to the working class. Left parties, as they emerged late in the century, were champions of both responsible government and full manhood suffrage.<sup>5</sup> The relative strength of these different forces, and the internal divisions they had to manage, had great influence over the initial voting systems that were adopted.<sup>6</sup>

Plurality typified elections where competition was individualized and explicit political organization was either weak or informal. This was true for both Britain and the US where plurality voting was entrenched before the emergence of strong parties or factions. In Sweden, nineteenth century elections were dominated by an urban/rural divide with geographically homogenous electorates, thus raising few of the problems of minority representation associated with plurality.<sup>7</sup> However, where different political interests were not geographically separate, majority voting systems were more typical, particularly when conservative electorates were divided. For instance, conservatives were divided by religion in the Netherlands and language in Belgium.

## ***The Rise of Democracy and Voting System Reform***

### European experience

The proliferation of representative legislatures and limited elections in the nineteenth century should not be confused with the accomplishment of democracy itself. Though 'democracy' is a highly contested term, its generally accepted minimum requirements are fairly uncontroversial: executive or governing accountability to an elected legislature, and a fairly broad and inclusive franchise.<sup>8</sup> Yet under these strictures, few countries could be considered democratic by 1900. In Europe, only two countries would qualify: Switzerland and France. Typically, nineteenth century states satisfied one of the two minimum conditions for democracy but not both (for a detailed breakdown by country, see Appendix 2). For instance, Germany had adopted full manhood suffrage by 1871 but the elected legislature did not control the government.

Throughout the nineteenth century there were muted calls for voting system reform, particularly for more proportional systems of voting. Initially left parties were the strongest supporters of proportional representation (PR) as they were consistently under-represented in plurality and majority systems in terms of seats, and marginalized in terms of legislative influence due to the exaggerated majorities awarded to other parties. However, PR also appealed to those who worried what 'class legislation' the left might want to introduce were they to gain more influence. Political theorist and one-time British MP John Stuart Mill supported proportional voting suggesting it could offer protection to minorities - like society's wealthy elite.<sup>9</sup> Yet appeals like his made little headway in the nineteenth century.

The early moves toward proportional voting came with an intensification of the social pressure for minimally democratic regimes and the increasing success of left political parties. Belgium widened its franchise in 1893 and then adopted a partial-PR system in 1899 in response to the mobilization of large street demonstrations and near riots in major urban centres by the political left (though widespread plural voting limited democratic accountability).<sup>10</sup> Similar social upheaval in Russia, Finland and Sweden contributed to PR adoptions in 1906-7 though, as with Belgium, all stopped short of democratic control of government.<sup>11</sup>

World War I would prove to be the decisive moment in the shift from the narrowly representative legislatures of the nineteenth century to the minimally democratic ones of the twentieth. Since before the turn of the century, pressure had been building

everywhere in continental Europe for democratic accountability in government but, prior to the war, it had not resulted in greatly altering existing arrangements. WWI changed this by shifting the balance of social and political forces within European countries. As the war progressed, those forces who had successfully opposed democratic rule were increasingly discredited, often being held responsible for the descent into war itself. By contrast, support for labour and social democratic parties, and their more thorough-going democratic agenda, mushroomed. At the same time, revolutionary activity in Russia, Finland and eastern Europe between 1916 and 1919 served notice to traditional elites that democracy was not necessarily the only alternative to the status quo.<sup>12</sup>

Faced with these uncertainties, Europe's traditional elites and their political parties began negotiating the terms of democracy. Here they were keen to assure two results: (1) prevent the already weakened conservative forces from dividing any further, and (2) place maximum constraints on the legislative capacity of left parties should they assume office. Though the deal worked out somewhat differently in each country, the broad outlines were consistent: at a minimum, full male suffrage, a government accountable to an elected legislature, and some element of PR. Essentially, PR was the price of conservative acquiescence to a minimally democratic regime. PR answered both of the conservatives' key concerns: it would allow non-left forces to form strategic alliances against a rising left party without forcing them to merge, and it would deny the left the kind of over-representation that non-left parties had enjoyed under plurality and majority systems.<sup>13</sup> Of course, the fact that the left itself was committed to PR in most European countries made the process appear uncontroversial. Indeed, in Germany it was the Social Democrats who introduced the legislation.<sup>14</sup>

However, to note that the introduction of PR went uncontested in a number of European countries between 1915 and 1920 should not be interpreted to mean that it was unimportant. The fact is that the period was marked by stark uncertainties, and in an era without polling nobody could predict just how much public attitudes and the strength of various political forces had shifted. The possibility of a left electoral victory at the polls haunted Europe's traditional elites, with conservatives and liberals alike fearing what a left majority government might do. From our vantage point today, European left governments of the twentieth century hardly appear that threatening. But between 1917 and 1920, against a backdrop of revolution in Russia, and social upheaval across Europe, what the left might do in office was the subject of much dire speculation by traditional power brokers.<sup>15</sup>

For their part, left parties, though philosophically committed to proportional voting as a more fair and just way of voting, were also calculating their odds of success. Where the left was increasingly confident of its electoral strength, as in Sweden from the turn of the century, the British Labour party from the 1920s on, and the New Zealand Labour party from the 1930s, its commitment to PR started to slip. Social democrats in those countries suspected they were on the verge of a major breakthrough, and that the tendency to over-represent under plurality would start to work in their favour. But in most European countries near the end of WWI, the left was as uncertain as their right adversaries about their relative strength vis-a-vis the voting public. They stuck with PR to assure an end to the endemic under-representation they'd suffered under both plurality and majority systems. Thus both left and right supported the introduction of PR in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Italy, and Norway in the period between 1915 and 1920. By contrast, left opinion on PR had been more divided earlier in Belgium (1899) and Sweden (1907).<sup>16</sup>

#### Anglo-American experience

Where the move to minimally democratic regimes in Europe was often clear and sudden, the path in Anglo-American countries was more ambiguous and gradual. In terms of our two key minimal democratic elements, government accountable to an elected legislature and a fairly broad and inclusive franchise, change tended to be incremental, with largely unclear implications. For instance, scholarly opinion as to when the British government finally became accountable to Parliament ranges from 1688 to 1841.<sup>17</sup> The franchise in Britain was also extended at a glacial pace, with incremental improvements in 1832, 1867, and 1885, with full male suffrage only finally achieved in 1918. And the un-elected upper House of Lords continued to amend, delay and defeat legislation from the directly-elected House of Commons well into the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> This slow consolidation of minimal democratic government allowed traditional elites to manage the process with more confidence than their European counterparts. Anglo-American elites also faced fewer serious divisions on questions of religion or ethnicity. As such, recourse to voting system reform, either to manage traditional elite fragmentation or ward off the unknown dangers of 'democratic socialism', was less pressing. Of course, this does not mean Anglo-American countries were without debate and struggle over voting systems.

America moved more quickly than any other country in establishing legislatively accountable government and full male suffrage (for whites) but it was still a very gradual

process. With the first national election of 1789, a broad though uneven electorate voted directly for members of the lower House of Representatives, while Senators and presidential electors were chosen indirectly by state legislatures. By 1830, an approximation of white manhood suffrage existed across the country, and state selection of presidential electors had given way to direct election. Further reforms came with the enfranchisement of black males after the civil war (subsequently curtailed at the end of the reconstruction period), the direct election of senators in 1913, national female suffrage in 1919, and the national voting rights act of 1965 to prevent black disenfranchisement.<sup>19</sup> But through all this, voting system reform never became a national issue. Because the minimal conditions of democracy were extended gradually and selectively, and powerful third parties never emerged to challenge America's own traditional elites, the conditions pushing voting system reform in Europe in the early twentieth century did not materialize in the US.<sup>20</sup>

For Britain, and the colonies that remained within its orbit, suffrage and responsible government were more gradually extended than in the United States. British colonies in New Zealand, Australia and Canada slowly opened the franchise to white males through a successive lowering of property qualifications. But in fact, given the wide availability of land in all these colonies, property ownership did not prove much of a barrier to voting.<sup>21</sup> As such, *de facto* manhood suffrage existed in all three by the late nineteenth century.

A more significant departure from European experience was the ambiguous state of government accountability to legislative, and thus elected, power. Though granted 'responsible government' in the late nineteenth century, British colonies vested great power in un-elected upper houses, and the crown's representative, the Governor General. For instance, Canada's constitutional framers were explicit in their desire to create a 'constitutional government' that could effectively check any 'democratic tide' that might emerge. "The rights of the minority," remarked Canada's first Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, "must be protected, and the rich are always fewer in number than the poor." The un-elected Senate would represent that minority. Macdonald's chief spokesman for French Canada, Sir George Cartier, made the point clearly - the Senate's purpose was to serve as "a power of resistance to oppose the democratic element."<sup>22</sup> This vaguery on the part of government accountability allowed colonial elites to have their democratic cake and eat it too. They could allow ostensibly 'democratic' government to function, but reserve the right to intervene undemocratically over specific policies or programs.

Still, challenges to the voting system did emerge in Britain and its colonies. Britain very nearly adopted a partial PR system after an all-party Speaker's Conference recommended it in 1918.<sup>23</sup> Canada's 1921 federal election returned a majority of MPs representing parties with commitments on PR, but nothing came of it.<sup>24</sup> New Zealand adopted the alternative vote in 1908 but reverted to plurality after two elections. Australia adopted the same system in 1918 but stuck with it, still using it in lower house elections today. Voting system reform was also a municipal issue in Anglo-American democracies, with a brief flurry of adoptions in the US, Australia, New Zealand, and, most successfully, Canada.<sup>25</sup>

Here, as in Europe, the presence or absence of a strong labour party was key. New Zealand's Labour party didn't emerge until 1916, four years after the majoritarian voting system had been abandoned. By the time Labour gained power in 1935, its opponents responded by merging into a single opposition party, eliminating the necessity of voting system reform.<sup>26</sup> By contrast, conservative opposition to Labour in Australia could not unify their rural and urban interests behind one party. Thus the adoption of the alternative vote in 1918 allowed both rural and urban parties to co-exist without giving advantage to Labour through centre-right vote splits.<sup>27</sup> Similar dynamics led to its adoption in most Australian states as well.<sup>28</sup> In Canada, the situation was different again as the key national reform party of the era was organized around farmers, not urban labourers. Initially, labour led a spate postwar social organizing, culminating in the 1919 general strikes in Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver, and the rise of the radical One Big Union. But by the 1921 federal election, recession and state repression had thinned their ranks, and labour candidates won just a handful of ridings. However, at the provincial level, the political threat from the left and their allies had more impact, leading to the adoption of partial PR systems in Manitoba (1920) and Alberta (1924).<sup>29</sup>

### ***Interwar Voting System Reform***

After the dramatic shift to proportional voting on the continent following WWI, European voting systems remained largely untouched during the interwar period. A number of countries did fine-tune the process, particularly as concerned minimal thresholds for representation.<sup>30</sup> Only France and Italy made major changes, the former reverting from a partial-PR system adopted in 1919 to their traditional double ballot majority system by 1927, the latter shifting in 1923 from PR to a lop-sided bonus system that eased the country's transition to fascist rule and an end to democracy altogether.<sup>31</sup>

In the end, the Italian example would prove more threatening to PR than the French. In the 1930s Austria and Germany, both countries that used PR, would also succumb to dictatorship, a connection that postwar critics of proportional voting would later highlight.

Anglo-American discussion of voting system reform, after a brief surge of interest after WWI, slipped from public discussion throughout the 1920s, and from favour with many previous supporters in the 1930s. Britain faced the prospect of electoral reform again in 1931 under a minority Labour government but the parties couldn't agree on an alternative. Increasingly, left activists everywhere were viewing calls for proportional voting as a manipulation by their opponents to simply limit their influence or ability to govern.<sup>32</sup> Certainly British Labour's unhappy experience in minority government in 1924 and 1929-31, where neither Liberals or Tories would sanction much of the left's policy agenda, convinced many that only a majority for the left would allow them to do much.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, throughout Europe, left parties faced hostile coalitions determined to block their agenda. New Zealand Labour reversed its historic support for PR in 1934 just as it was on the verge of power, and the Canadian Trades and Labour Congress dropped PR from its annual list of demands in 1931 after a decade of lobbying for it.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, in the United States interest in voting system reform had declined such that the influential American PR League was forced to suspend its journal and close its offices in 1932.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Postwar Voting System Reform***

The end of World War II reactivated interest in voting systems, both to rebuild democratic institutions in occupied countries like Italy, Japan and Germany, or to sustain them in deeply divided countries like France. As with the end of the previous world war, institutional choices were framed within highly uncertain political circumstances. In 1945 the political left of all stripes was ascendant throughout Europe, while the right, closely associated with the pre-war policy of appeasement to Hitler, or collaboration with axis occupying powers (or both), was in disarray.<sup>36</sup> For instance, even Churchill's stirring leadership couldn't save his Conservative party from defeat in 1945 as Labour won an unprecedented 48% of the poll and a majority of seats in the British general election. Victory for the left across the continent was widely predicted even before the war's end. Once again, reform of institutions like voting systems became a terrain of political struggle, one characterized by participants unsure of their own political power, and keen to limit that of their opponents.

However, unlike the previous war, the debate over voting system reform was not neatly circumscribed within national borders. There was a larger context defined by the

emerging competition for influence between the United States and the Soviet Union, and, to a much lesser extent, Britain and France. As an occupying power and guarantor of economic aid to most of Europe, America had inordinate influence over the political and institutional decisions made there.<sup>37</sup> As the US and the Soviet Union shifted strategies in the immediate postwar period, so too did American influence on institutional design. Between 1945 and 1947 both countries endorsed proportional voting arrangements in politically volatile countries like Germany and Italy. But as the Cold War began, US opposition to PR became a common theme in its anti-communist efforts.

In both France and Italy a fear of the potential political strength of communist parties hastened an embrace of proportional voting. For the right, PR created space to regroup around acceptable new parties and leaders. On the left, it demonstrated the communists' commitment to democratic majoritarianism, and facilitated cooperation with other socialist parties, while still allowing keen competition between them for working class votes. In both countries, provisional administrations (that included communists) adopted proportional systems for initial elections that were subsequently sustained by elected governments.<sup>38</sup>

Not surprisingly, some of the greatest struggle over voting rules occurred in occupied Germany. For their part, the emergent major parties in the immediate postwar period, the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, were internally divided on the question. The unhappy experience with PR under the Weimar Republic, combined with the exposure of German political exiles to American and British political systems during the war, converted some to plurality voting.<sup>39</sup> However, wherever particular party forces were in a minority, like the regional branch of the CDU in northern Germany, support for PR remained strong.<sup>40</sup> The occupying powers were also divided on the question. The Soviets introduced PR in their zone and announced in 1947 that its adoption would be a precondition of any potential future all-German elections. The Americans and French also used PR in their zones. Only the British introduced plurality voting, albeit with a small measure of PR as compensation (an experiment that influenced the design of the national West German voting system adopted later).<sup>41</sup>

As the prospects for German re-unification dimmed in 1948, US policy shifted to favour the CDU and British call for plurality voting, but it was too late. Though occupying powers had given shape to the early party system and the voting systems for local and state voting systems, the national choice was made by German politicians. Though the CDU made the case for predominantly single member plurality system, with a small measure of PR compensation, the SPD, with help from the smaller parties, tipped the

scales toward more thorough-going PR.<sup>42</sup> In the end, US influence was limited to simply keeping the voting system out of the constitution (thus possibly allowing an easier shift to plurality sometime in the future).<sup>43</sup>

### ***Voting System Reform and the Cold War***

The escalation of tensions between the US and the Soviet Union in the late 1940s and 1950s manifested itself in a host of political decisions taken in Europe. The US used its economic clout to force communists from caretaker governments in both France and Italy in 1947, and pressured European countries to take sides in the super-power confrontation by joining its North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In a number of countries, again, particularly France and Italy, anti-communism soon became effective fuel for more voting system reform. In the US itself, the election of two communists to New York City Council in the 1940s sparked a vitriolic, and in the end successful, campaign to abolish the city's decade-old experiment with proportional voting.<sup>44</sup> Academically, the debate over voting systems increasingly bifurcated continentally, with American social scientists identifying 'democracy' with plurality voting, while European scholars remained more open to a variety of voting systems.

In Italy the strong victory for Christian Democrats in 1948, combined with the surprisingly weak showing of the joint Communist-Socialist ticket, encouraged the government to weaken the proportionality of the country's voting system. The DC proposed a voting system where any party, or alliance of parties, that received more than 50% of the popular vote would automatically be awarded two-thirds of the legislative seats, with the other parties sharing what was left. Not surprisingly, given its resemblance to the hated fascist 'bonus law' of 1920s that had ushered in dictatorship, the proposal sparked spirited public opposition. In the end, the DC and its allies failed to garner 50% of the popular vote when the system was put to the test in 1953, leading to its repeal and a return to PR.<sup>45</sup>

The situation in France was somewhat different; there a coalition of socialists and centre parties rigged the electoral system to discriminate both against the communists on the left and General de Gaulle's new party on the right.<sup>46</sup> Though the tactic worked in 1951, at the expense of wildly disproportional results and failing public faith in the system, it faltered in 1956.<sup>47</sup> Of course, France's political problems in 1950s amounted to more than a disproportional voting system. When the extraordinary events of 1957 led to General de Gaulle assuming power, he abandoned PR altogether and reverted to the country's traditional choice, the majoritarian double ballot. This time, the system discriminated primarily against the communists. In 1958 the Gaulists and the PCF both gained approximately 20% of the popular vote, but former got 40% of the seats, while the latter were left with just 2%.<sup>48</sup>

German debate over voting systems remained open as well into the 1950s and 1960s, despite the compromise adopted in 1949. The initial voting system was only valid for one term, as was the slightly modified version adopted in 1953. In both 1953 and 1956 the CDU tried to lessen the voting system's proportionality, but failed. Even after a more permanent voting law was finally passed in 1957, the CDU continued to use the threat of voting system reform to discipline its sometime coalition partner, the liberal FDP.<sup>49</sup> Reform appeared certain in 1966 when the CDU formed a grand coalition government with its longtime opponent, the SPD. In fact, their joint manifesto committed the government to introduce a British-style plurality voting system, one that would create single party majority governments. However, under pressure from the FDP and public opinion, the SPD began to have doubts about the proposed changes, worrying the plurality might make the CDU unbeatable. In 1968, the SPD reneged on their commitment to change the system, and after the 1969 election formed a long-term governing coalition with the centre FDP itself, effectively closing the debate.<sup>50</sup>

The Cold War attack on communism in Europe translated into a more vague assault in North America. Lacking targets like the large, popular communist parties of France and Italy, the campaign aimed at any manifestations of 'leftism', from American left-liberals to Canadian social democrats. And voting systems came into play here too. In British Columbia, a coalition of Liberals and Tories had ruled for much of the 1940s but under pressure both internally and externally to end the arrangement, they examined a majoritarian 'transferable ballot', one that would allow voters to support either party without inadvertently allowing the socialist Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) to come to power. As CCF fortunes rose in the 1940s the transferable ballot had been resurrected on the federal scene again and again, though never implemented. In BC, the system was implemented, though things didn't work out as planned.

In its first use in 1952, neither the Liberals nor the Tories benefited from its workings. Instead, a new right wing interloper, Social Credit, came to power. After another election victory in 1953 Social Credit was clearly the dominant right wing choice of voters, and the transferable ballot was repealed having served its purpose.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, in Alberta and Manitoba the 1950s witnessed the repeal of their mixed PR/majority voting systems in favour of more 'British' methods.<sup>52</sup>

The influence of the Cold War slackened into the 1960s and interest in voting systems fell too. As more and more social democratic parties came to power and governed in rather conventional terms, one of the great pressures fueling voting system reform, fear of the left, had dissipated. Interest in voting rules did emerge for other

reasons. In Holland a new party broke onto the electoral scene in the 1960s decrying the stifling effects of PR, claiming it created too much stability, rather than too little (instability had been one of the classic complaints about PR systems).<sup>53</sup> In New York City PR was introduced for school board elections in 1969 to better represent the city's racial and ethnic diversity.<sup>54</sup> However, for much of Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, voting rules had ceased to be controversial. In fact, for average citizens, they were hardly noticed at all.

### ***Voting System Reform by Referendum***

For the most part, voting system reform in Europe had been an elite venture - discussed, debated and negotiated by traditional elites and political parties amid highly uncertain circumstances. The citizens themselves in most European countries never had much input into the choice of voting system put in use. But, historically, elite negotiations were not the only means of voting system change. New voting systems were adopted in a host of locales using referendum procedures, most notably at the cantonal and federal level in Switzerland, and the municipal level in Anglo-American democracies. However, while successful in establishing proportional voting as the norm in Switzerland, the referendum approach also proved effective in repealing PR in the United States and Canada.

Swiss political developments in the nineteenth century bore little resemblance to those in the rest of Europe. The country was highly decentralized, without a monarch or traditional nobility, divided by religion, ethnicity, language, and geography, and resistant to European-wide patterns of urbanization given Switzerland's unique form of industrialization. Institutionally, who had power and how democratic it was remained vague for most of the nineteenth century. Suffrage was technically universal for males after 1830 but a host of formal and informal barriers prevented effective, fair participation.<sup>55</sup> The national executive was elected by parliament but not clearly accountable to it. Even what formed the appropriate realm of national politics was bitterly fought over.

Protestant victory in the country's mid-century civil war did not settle these fundamental questions about state power, decentralization, and religious co-existence. From mid-century on the referenda would become arguably the key instrument in struggles over the state and its further democratization. It was through referenda that minorities - Catholics, conservatives, and later, the left - successfully organized to reverse their weaknesses at the level of representation. Though discussed over the

previous thirty years, it was via referenda that proportional voting was first adopted at the cantonal level in 1891, and in up to half the total cantons by 1916. After narrow defeats in 1900 and 1910, a concerted push by the left in 1918 helped fuel a referendum victory for PR nationally.<sup>56</sup> No efforts have been made since to repeal it.

Referenda use in Anglo-American voting reform had a very different character than in Switzerland. While the Swiss campaigns were largely political party affairs by the late nineteenth century, Anglo-American efforts were typically populist and sometimes explicitly anti-party. Referenda-use, though nowhere as central to politics as in Switzerland, was commonly used in various parts of the US and Canada for consultative purposes, particularly for local government. North America reformers made active use of the referenda where possible to bring about proportional voting. Nineteen municipalities across Canada adopted PR, most in the period between 1916 and 1922, ten by referendum. All twenty-two municipal adoptions of PR in the US between 1915 and 1950 were by referendum.<sup>57</sup>

More so than Europe, Anglo-American democracies sported active voting system reform associations that attempted to raise public awareness of voting rules and their implications for election results. In Australia, New Zealand and Britain these groups had a public role but primarily worked to gain political party support for the issue. By contrast, the American PR League worked through civic reform organizations like the National Municipal League and local reformers keen to 'clean up city hall'. Canadian experience fell somewhere between the two, with campaigns for support from both reform-oriented parties and civic-minded populists.<sup>58</sup> Though gaining slightly fewer adoptions, Canadian reformers were ultimately more successful than their American counterparts, succeeding with a variety of strategies including - but not limited to - referenda. Indeed, the referenda would prove to be a double-edged sword in the PR reform movement.

America's first notable referenda effort for PR occurred in Oregon in 1910. After a failed effort to convince the state legislature to introduce a modified party list form of PR for its elections in 1908, reformers energetically campaigned to have the system adopted in a state-wide referenda in 1910 - it failed. Efforts to introduce other arguably proportional systems by referenda in 1912 and 1914 also failed.<sup>59</sup> These efforts convinced reformers to shift their ground to the municipal level, hoping both for easier victories and a helpful demonstration effect of PR's practical workings, one that would aid its adoption at all levels of government. They were proven wrong on both counts. Beginning in 1915 municipal conversions came slowly, and were subject to political,

legislative and legal attack almost immediately. Ashtabula, Ohio, the reformers initial victory, faced its first referendum for repeal of the PR system just five years after it was adopted. Kalamazoo, Michigan and Sacramento, California had their PR adoptions declared unconstitutional by state courts within two years. And West Hartford, Connecticut had their PR system repealed by the state legislature after two uses.<sup>60</sup> Of course, PR reforms did succeed for some time in a few US cities - for more than thirty years in Boulder, Colorado and Cincinnati, Ohio, and over fifty in Cambridge, Massachusetts. But American cities faced dogged efforts to remove PR voting systems: there were four separate repeal referendums in Boulder and Cambridge, and five in Hamilton, Toledo, Cleveland and Cincinnati. By 1961, PR remained in just one suburb of Boston: Cambridge. And until 1988, there were no efforts to re-instate PR where it had been defeated.<sup>61</sup>

Basically, PR efforts in the US suffered from two key problems. First, PR was often only a little known component of a larger municipal reform package (i.e. city manager forms of government). Second, these reform efforts were typically volubly hostile to the party 'machines', both Republican and Democrat, that dominated American politics at every level. In turn, party machines would become the main financial and organization force working against PR.<sup>62</sup> Though recently a new voting reform organization has emerged in US, it has enjoyed even less success than its predecessor. All recent referendums for PR in US cities have failed, and efforts for more modest reforms at the civic level, like majority voting, have led to ambiguous results. By contrast, some success has been made in using the courts to challenge voting rules in New York, Alabama, and New Mexico.<sup>63</sup>

Voting reform efforts in Canada were more varied than in the US. Like American reformers, Canadians had a national reform organization, and initiated broad and lively campaigns of public and media education. They too tirelessly attended meetings of ratepayers, business groups, and a myriad of community groups, demonstrating how proportional voting would work, and propounding why it was needed. Yet Canadian efforts managed to secure a higher public profile for voting system reform than their American counterparts. This was partially due to the lack of competing reforms. Canadian municipal reform of the era was more typically ad hoc and lacked the programmatic approach of American efforts. As a result, PR could remain front and centre.

Canadians also had more success with political parties, particularly with reformist elements of the Liberal party around WWI. In all four western provinces it was PR

activists within the Liberal party that helped secure legislation from their reform-oriented administrations to allow municipal plebiscites on voting reform and PR adoptions at the local level.<sup>64</sup> The need to gain governing party support for the issue at the provincial level to even have a referendum on it locally meant that the question of voting system reform was not so divorced from mainstream political party activity as in the US. This degree of integration would become important particularly when conventional political parties were challenged by labour and farmer parties at the end of WWI.

On the surface, Canadian experience appears broadly similar to American results. Of seventeen municipalities in Canada that ended up with a PR system between 1916 and 1928, either by referendum, adoption by council, or imposition from their provincial government, only two remained after 1930. Referendums aided repeal in eight cases. But this summary neglects the provincial breakthroughs in Alberta and Manitoba where mixed systems of PR for urban centres and majority voting for rural areas were consolidated by 1924.<sup>65</sup> Not coincidentally, the municipal PR holdouts were also the major cities in these provinces. Consistent in both provinces was a successful challenge to the political status quo from farmer and labour parties, a challenge that helped create powerful institutional support for PR. In Manitoba that support came from the traditional parties and the business elites against labour; in Alberta it came from a rural-based farmer government keen to divide its opponents and aid its labour allies in urban centres. However, when key institutional players turned against those systems in the 1950s they were quickly repealed.<sup>66</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The adoption of voting systems and their subsequent reform took place against a larger historical backdrop of political and social struggle. The initial choice of particular systems in different European countries in the nineteenth century occurred amid varied struggles for limited representation and legislatively accountable government. In turn, the reform of those systems in the twentieth century reflected uncertain elite responses to pressure, particularly from the left, for minimally democratic regimes. By contrast, Anglo-American voting rules reflected British experience, and - leaving aside the US - followed Britain's lead in gradually extending voting rights and legislatively accountable government. As a rule, these countries - barring Australia - stuck with their initial voting systems.

This process of voting system reform was largely an elite affair, negotiated by party leaders with little public input or knowledge. In fact, in most European countries

public views only came into play occasionally, usually when the proportional aspects of voting systems were under attack, as in Italy in 1953 or Germany in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>67</sup> There was an alternative tradition of public consultation over voting system change via referenda in Switzerland and North American, but it was much less successful. Again, party support was key. Where political parties supported the results, as in Switzerland, the campaigns succeeded. Where they were opposed, as in North America, they largely failed.

At various points throughout the twentieth century, voting system reform was both a left and right issue. On the other hand, for some it wasn't an issue of left or right politics at all, but a matter of 'progress'. However, looking at the question historically, the fortunes of the political left are the most reliable barometer of either rising or falling interest in voting systems and their reform. At the end of both WWI and WWII traditional elites made voting system reform a top priority wherever the left appeared on the brink of power. The Cold War also influenced voting system reforms, particularly in Europe where Communist parties were a tangible political force. However, by the 1960s and 1970s the political strength of the left ceased to fuel calls for new voting rules, and interest in voting system reform waned.

### 3. Electoral Reform in the Modern Era

#### *Introduction*

It is perhaps ironic that just as voting systems ceased to be a matter of much discussion in northern Europe by the 1970s, concern over voting rules and their possible effects re-entered public debate just about everywhere else. The question of electoral reform in the modern era was given a boost by the return to democratic government in parts of southern Europe and South America, the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament, and a host of anomalous election results in Britain, Canada and New Zealand.<sup>68</sup>

The results of these public debates varied. In southern Europe and South America, emerging political elites had to rebuild democratic institutions largely from scratch, first studying and then struggling over voting systems. When the choice had to be made, nearly all opted for European-style proportional systems.<sup>69</sup> The introduction of direct elections to the European parliament in 1979 also led to some debate about voting rules, with continental Europe arguing for PR and Britain for plurality. In the end there was no consensus and the decision was left to the individual countries.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile in Anglo-American democracies various investigative commissions - the Hansard Society in Britain, a Royal Commission in New Zealand, the Task Force on Canadian Unity in Canada - were created to answer criticisms about their traditional plurality systems. But unlike the south where new institutions had to be created, the north could continue to rely on the status quo - and they did. After New Zealand's Royal Commission on the Electoral System reported in 1986 most expected its recommendation would be ignored, just as Britain's Hansard and Canada's Task Force reports were. Indeed, the dean of electoral studies, Arend Lijphart, declared in 1987 that electoral reform in Anglo-American democracies, particularly New Zealand, was most unlikely.<sup>71</sup> France's flip-flop on voting system reform between 1986-88 no doubt only dampened enthusiasm about the prospects of reform.<sup>72</sup>

Yet less than a decade later new voting systems were adopted in Anglo-American countries, as well as other advanced industrialized democracies. Italy and New Zealand adopted 'mixed' voting systems via public referenda in 1993. A new reform-oriented coalition government in Japan did likewise in 1994. And in 1997-8 Britain's Labour government established elected regional authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with somewhat proportional voting systems (foregoing the country's long

dominant preference for plurality voting). Britain also switched from plurality to PR for elections to the European Parliament. In each case, the process hardly resembled previous eras of voting system reform. Indeed, two key factors, the Cold War and the threat of left political parties, had both ebbed with the fall of the Soviet bloc. Instead, for the first time, the voting system itself was gaining a public profile as a democratic institution, and public opinion about the relative merits of the different systems was brought to bear on the struggle over institutional rules.

### ***New Zealand***

After more than a century of single member plurality elections, New Zealand's voters opted for a German-style mixed-member proportional (MMP) system in a binding referendum in 1993. What academics described as the most majoritarian form of Westminster parliament anywhere stood repudiated by a majority of voters.<sup>73</sup> Commentators typically explained the result as the cumulative effect of a host of longstanding problems: highly disproportional election results, minor party under-representation, poor representation of visible minorities and women, the lack of accountability from parties on policy, etc.<sup>74</sup> But why did these concerns become focused on the voting system as opposed to other more conventional channels of political contestation, and how did voters get into a position where they would have the power to maintain or change such a tightly-controlled institution like voting rules? After all, as Jackson and McRobie note in reference to the New Zealand case, "It is a rare occurrence for a nation to change its electoral system, it is even rarer for that choice to be left to the voting public."<sup>75</sup> Indeed, national voting rules had not been put to a public vote in any western industrialized country since the French rejected a proposed new voting system in 1946.

The struggle over the voting system in New Zealand emerged out of a growing dissonance between its political conventions, political institutions, and the behaviour of its political parties and voters. Institutionally, New Zealand was a highly majoritarian Westminster-style parliamentary system. Lacking an upper house, or any constitutionally-protected competing levels of government (local government was weak), the national parliament was 'politics' for all intents and purposes. And plurality voting only reinforced its majoritarian tendencies, regularly awarding the party with the most votes (though seldom an outright majority) a working majority in the house. However, for many, this didn't appear problematic when two parties dominated competitive politics and alternated regularly enough in office. By convention, each party would run on a

platform that would form the parameters of its agenda in office. The majoritarian bias in the system allowed parties to implement their programmes relatively unhindered. If enough voters were unhappy with the government they could switch to the other major party and see their alternative policy agenda implemented.<sup>76</sup>

The problems began when a substantial number of voters opted for third parties. Starting in 1957 the two major parties share of the vote declined to 90%, and in 1978 slipped further to 80%. Yet their share of the total seats remained constant - nearly 100%. As minor parties were consistently under-represented, voters could do little to make government accountable but vote for the other major party. But there were problems here too. In 1978 and again in 1981 Labour was the most popular party but it lost both elections. As the sometimes arbitrary effects of the plurality system started to affect one of the major parties, the profile of the voting system rose, and more people started to question whether it should be replaced.<sup>77</sup> Activists in the Labour party brought resolutions to conventions throughout the 1970s calling for voting system reform, and in 1979 an academic expert on the issue, Geoffrey Palmer, was elected as a Labour MP.<sup>78</sup> By 1981, the party was committed to establishing a royal commission on the issue when it came to power.<sup>79</sup>

When Labour won the 1984 election everything might have returned to normal. After all, alternation in government was supposed to be the hallmark of accountability in plurality systems. Even the fact that 20% of voters had supported minor parties in the election could be safely ignored, if past experience was anything to go by. Concerns about the poor representation of minor parties, as well as any lingering interest in voting rules within the Labour party, would be addressed by honouring the party's Royal Commission pledge. Royal Commissions could prove very useful to governments that wanted to take action, but just as useful to those that did not. For one thing, by the time they reported, the issue itself could have faded or lost its supporters.<sup>80</sup>

But the issue did not fade despite a drop in third party voting in 1987. Another factor keeping it alive was the changed behaviour of the two major political parties. As mentioned above, it was an accepted political convention in New Zealand that parties ran on explicit platforms, and used their majorities to implement what they had campaigned for. But the Labour government elected in 1984 surprised everyone by implementing an aggressive policy of neoliberal restructuring, including free trade, privatizations, the introduction of user fees for social services, and a dramatic overhaul of labour legislation that weakened organized labour, none of which the party had mentioned before taking office let alone campaigned for.<sup>81</sup> Amid a torrent of criticism

and protest in their first term, Labour promised a renewed social agenda in their second to mollify their longtime supporters and social liberals. But re-election in 1987 only brought more of the same neoliberal policy. National, the other major party, was elected in 1990 on promises to back off from Labour's neoliberal approach but quickly moved even further to the right.<sup>82</sup> Voters had just faced three elections where governments acted explicitly against what they had promised, and voting for minor parties didn't appear to make any difference.<sup>83</sup> No wonder the public complained about an increasingly 'elected dictatorship'.

While the actions of Labour and National in government alienated more and more voters, the results of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System, which reported in 1986, continued to percolate through the public consciousness, courtesy of a devoted pro-PR lobby group, the Electoral Reform Coalition, a few independent-minded MPs, and the over-confidence of the major parties themselves. As Jackson and McRobie note, "That reform was on the formal political agenda at all was the result of an unusual admixture of principle, miscalculation and political opportunism."<sup>84</sup>

Principle was embodied in the form of the Labour deputy Prime Minister, Geoffrey Palmer, a tireless advocate of voting system reform. A law professor before his political career, Palmer diagnosed what he saw as the dangerous tendencies of New Zealand majoritarianism in his 1979 book, *Unbridled Power*. He guided the party's policy toward a Royal Commission investigation of the issue before the party assumed office in 1984, he pushed the party to act on it once in government, and he supervised the selection of its members and the surprisingly broad mandate it received. By all accounts, Palmer was fair-minded; he wanted an open-ended assessment of the question and he assured that the commission members chosen were similarly open-minded.<sup>85</sup>

Miscalculation and opportunism were primarily the province of the majority of caucus members of the two major parties. Palmer's colleagues in Labour only agreed to a Royal Commission on the Electoral System because they thought little would come of it. Amid all Labour's first term policy surprises, they thought it was only good politics to be seen to be honouring at least some of their campaign promises. When the commission reported with a strong recommendation for PR the Labour caucus was furious.<sup>86</sup> Embarrassed, they initially tried to sit on the report, hoping the issue would simply go away. But in a televised election debate in 1987 Labour PM Jim Lange promised a binding referendum on the question, though later he complained he'd misread his briefing notes.<sup>87</sup>

The ERC and various independent-minded MPs pressed Labour to honour its commitment to hold a referendum after Labour's election win in 1987. Throughout their term the question went round and round, from committees to caucus to the legislature and back again, but nothing came of it. As Labour had clearly broken its promise, National taunted them in the 1990 election campaign and promised to hold a referendum on the question themselves if elected. Here again, the National caucus only agreed to promise a vote because they thought little would come of it.<sup>88</sup> National had plans to muddy the issue with other reform options and a multi-stage process for voting. In the end, they assumed that voters would stick with what they knew.<sup>89</sup> And given the fact that both the major party elites and the overwhelming majority of their MPs were opposed to any change, it is not surprising that the politicians were confident that they could keep the reform process under their control.

After winning the 1990 election, National proceeded to break most of its campaign promises, particularly as concerned neoliberal economic policy. It did, however, honour its commitment to hold a referendum on the voting system. The process was split in two, with an indicative referendum first, followed - if necessary - by a binding one. The indicative referendum would either sustain a majority for plurality and end the process, or narrow the field of alternative voting system choices and trigger a final binding referendum between the most popular alternative and the status quo. Both Labour and National hoped the referendum process would finally kill off interest in changing the voting system, either at the first step, or, as debate and media scrutiny intensified and voters considered the risks of change, at the second.<sup>90</sup> But the parties misjudged the electorate's mood.

In the September 1992 indicative referendum nearly 85% of voters opted to switch from plurality, with a further 70% settling on the MMP as their alternative (perhaps not coincidentally MMP had also been the recommendation of the Royal Commission). Though the results were a disaster for the politicians, many comforted themselves that the results represented a misdirected voter rage, an interpretation bolstered by the much lower than average voter turnout (just 53%). Indeed, by the time the next vote came a little over a year later, the forces defending plurality had pulled even with the reformers, aided by an extraordinary advertising campaign (sponsored by the business community) and the mobilization of National party voters against the initiative. The 1993 binding referendum coincided with a general election and, not surprisingly, enjoyed a much higher voter turnout than the previous vote (82%), and a much closer result - 54% in favour of MMP. Voter surveys suggested that the drop in support for MMP resulted

less from people changing their minds than the mobilization of opposition from the ranks of non-voters the previous year. They also suggested that, as a rule, Labour voters supported the change while National voters did not.<sup>91</sup>

New Zealand has now used MMP in two elections - 1996 and 1999 - and, aside from a slight delay in forming its first post-PR ministry, its government has functioned effectively, visible minorities and minority parties have improved their representation in parliament, and the electorate has faced fewer policy surprises. National and Labour have remained the major parties and both have formed working coalitions with the new smaller parties that have joined their ranks.<sup>92</sup> When the new voting system came up for statutory review by a select committee of Parliament in 2001, they recommended sticking with it.<sup>93</sup>

### ***Italy***

On June 9, 1991 Italian voters gave decisive support to a referendum initiative aimed at eliminating multiple preference voting in Senatorial elections.<sup>94</sup> Though preference voting - a feature of the country's party list PR system long blamed for aiding corruption and vote-peddling - was hardly considered Italy's most serious institutional deficiency, the campaign against it became a rallying point for public frustration with the political system generally.<sup>95</sup> The referendum proved to be the first step in a decade long struggle for institutional and political reform, a struggle that would lay low the existing party system, and challenge more central institutions like the country's controversial proportional voting arrangements. By 2000, the voting system alone had been subject to four separate reform initiatives. Why and how voting system reform became arguably the key strategy in a larger process of political and state reform is the subject of much debate and little consensus.

The 1991 referendum victory appeared to spark an unstoppable process of political and institutional unraveling. In the 1992 national elections the traditional ruling bloc of parties lost their majority for the first time since 1948. In the same year a judicial inquiry into political corruption in Milan uncovered a dense and far-reaching web of illegal political kickbacks; as the investigation - dubbed *Tangentopoli* ('kickback city') - expanded, more than half of the members of Parliament were eventually brought up on corruption charges. Facing political and legal challenges, and mindful of new referendum campaigns aimed at reforming local and national elections, politicians tried to reform themselves - with mixed results. Though a bicameral commission of Parliament in 1992 managed to reform local election laws, no agreement could be

reached on a new national voting system. Despite all the upheaval, it appeared that many politicians still believed the crisis would blow over.<sup>96</sup>

The results of the 1993 referendum to effectively replace the country's traditional party list form of PR with a much less proportional mixed system clearly signaled that there would be no return to 'normal'. Turnout exceeded the 1991 preference referendum; 75% of registered voters came to the polls with 82.7% in favour of reducing proportionality. Though Parliament toyed with other less far-reaching voting reforms, in the end they altered the electoral laws in line with the referendum results.<sup>97</sup> The 1994 national election, the first conducted under the new mixed system of single member plurality (75% of the seats) and compensatory list (25% of the seats), pleased no one. Under the new rules even more parties managed to gain entry to parliament, government was still the product of coalition wrangling, and the promise of more stable government remained unfulfilled - the new administration fell in less than a year. Attention now shifted to eliminating the last vestiges of proportionality altogether.

The renewal of the party system so clearly marked in the 1994 election appeared to change the dynamic and possibilities for more far-reaching electoral and constitutional reforms. Where the old leading parties had been either committed to proportional voting (Communists) or unwilling to risk change (Christian Democrats, Socialists), the new leading parties (Forza Italia, Democratic Party of the Left) were committed to majoritarian over proportional voting rules, though agreement on a specific alternative eluded them. In fact, the 1996 national election was dominated by competing visions of a reformed Italian state and its institutions from both the right and left coalitions. However, the lack of consensus about an acceptable alternative ultimately hobbled the efforts of a new bicameral committee of Parliament in 1997 and 1998.<sup>98</sup> The failure triggered yet another round of referendums in 1999 and 2000, both times with the express purpose of repealing the proportional element of the voting system. Surprisingly, the first initiative in 1999 narrowly failed for lack of quorum, while a second effort in 2000 witnessed voter turnout plunge to just 32.4%, suggesting the limits of referendum-driven reform had been reached.<sup>99</sup> With the election of an apparently stable majority government in 2001, arguably the key objective of reform forces, it is not clear whether the era of voting system reform is now over.

More startling than the scope and depth of the changes to Italian political system in the 1990s for many observers was the fact that change occurred at all. Just one year prior to the preference referendum in 1991 veteran Italian political scientist Gianfranco Pasquino described voting system reform as an 'obscure object of desire', noting "there

is nothing more political than reforming an electoral system" and "nothing more difficult ... than reforming a consolidated electoral system".<sup>100</sup> Given that nearly all political parties - large or small - had an interest in maintaining the existing system, it wasn't clear how any reform would be possible.

A host of explanations have surfaced that largely agree on the key events contributing to Italy's recent party system change and institutional reform - the fall of Communism, the rise of the Northern League, *Tangentopoli*, the judicial 'clean hands' investigations, and the pressures of European economic integration - though each tends to assign greater weight and decisive influence to a different one. Beyond assessing the precise balance of factors propelling the changes was the question of timing - why did reform only appear to become possible in 1990s? Many of the complaints - corruption, clientelism, lack of alternation in government, etc. - were longstanding and publicly well known. What had prevented them from fuelling reform previously? Here a number of theories point to a combination of forces, specifically the impact of particular conjunctural factors - ie the specific events mentioned above - on lingering and widespread structural problems - the need for thorough-going state reform, the unsustainable costs of clientelism, the increasing economic and social integration with Europe.<sup>101</sup>

Attention must also be paid to Italy's distinctive party system. The strength of the left coming out of WWII had assured the adoption of a highly proportional voting system. When a united left comprising the socialist (PSI) and communist (PCI) parties did poorly in the initial legislative election of 1948, however, the centre-right Christian Democrats (DC) tried to reform the system toward a more majoritarian orientation. Yet this turned out to be risky strategy. Though the DC and its coalition partners nearly achieved a majority in 1953, the PCI moved ahead of the PSI and became the leading party on the left, a position they subsequently never relinquished. In fact, voting support for the PCI only increased over the next two decades. As a result, the DC backed away from majoritarianism for fear it might one day benefit the left and push the DC too far from the centre.<sup>102</sup> As long as the DC could straddle the centre-right, and use the state to distribute largesse, an acceptable political stasis could be maintained.<sup>103</sup>

The failure of the 'historic compromise' between the DC and PCI in the late 1970s revived interest in voting system reforms. Various members of the DC and the PSI mooted calls for consideration of the German mixed system or the French double ballot. The Bozzi commission of the 1980s explored voting system reform but lacked sufficient political party support. Countless academics called for reform, particularly for a British-

style single member plurality system, but they too lacked any party elite backers or public influence.<sup>104</sup>

Long before the fall of the eastern bloc, Italy's 'frozen' party system was starting to melt. Under Benito Craxi the PSI moved to the right and maneuvered themselves to the front rank of the coalition government with the DC.<sup>105</sup> The PCI too were re-examining their position in political system, years before the Soviet Union collapsed. In fact, the PCI's new leader had just embarked on a thorough-going reform process in March 1989, *before* the unanticipated fall of the eastern bloc.<sup>106</sup> As for the DC, the party's long-running internal warfare took on a new dimension as the 'glue' that held the organization together - patronage and clientelism - increasingly came into conflict with the more global strategies of its business supporters.<sup>107</sup>

In examining the upheaval in Italian politics in the 1990s, much attention has been paid to the independent-minded justices, the non-party technocrats brought in to run the government at different times, and the renegade politicians like DC MP Mario Segni who became publicly associated with leading the reform cause. But the role of the parties has tended to be overlooked. Though reformers in the 1990s struck upon the referendum as a means to electoral reform, successfully using it to end multiple preference voting in 1991, and effectively forcing a shift from the country's highly proportional party list form of PR to a less proportional mixed voting system in 1993, it must be remembered that party organization played a strong role in facilitating this process. In fact, the signature campaigns to get the referendums before the public crucially benefited from the political parties, or the factions within them, who thought they could benefit from the changes.<sup>108</sup> And the uneven party support for subsequent changes goes a long way in explaining why efforts to eliminate proportionality altogether, either by members of parliament (1992, 1997-8) or by public referendum (1999, 2000), failed repeatedly.<sup>109</sup>

### *Japan*

In 1994 the first non-Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) government in 38 years replaced the Japan's traditional semi-proportional voting system with a mixed-member system consisting of 300 single member plurality seats and another 200 seats elected from party lists. Voting system reform had long been a back-burner issue in Japanese politics, trotted out every few years by the reigning LDP to either discipline their rivals or appear to respond to the seemingly endless corruption charges, but it always faced strong opposition from other parties and a majority within the LDP itself. Why did the

status quo give way in 1994? Some analysts credited heightened public concern over corruption for fueling the reform, along with an emerging consensus amongst political commentators and elites that the country's persistent political problems - money politics, one-party dominance, factionalized parties - were the product of its traditional single-nontransferable vote system.<sup>110</sup> But others pointed to a new instability in the party system itself, noting divisive struggles within all parties around key issues like economic development, market liberalization and foreign diplomacy.

Just as in Italy and New Zealand, the reform of the voting system in Japan took place against a torrent of public criticism of politics, political parties and the conventional ways of doing things. But unlike elsewhere, public fury in Japan was focused more on campaign finance problems and corruption than voting rules. In fact, surveys demonstrated that public identification of the voting system as a key part of the problem was very low, ranking well below illicit contributions and influence peddling.<sup>111</sup> The public wanted 'political reform', primarily restrictions on campaign contributions and spending, and tighter controls on corruption. What they got was a new voting system, public funding for political parties, and little to control money or corruption.

This points to another difference between reform in Japan and reform in New Zealand and Italy - the role of the political parties. In New Zealand the key parties fought voting system reform against a large measure of public support for the change. In Italy, elements within many parties mobilized public opinion toward changing voting rules as a means to larger political change, but the parties could not subsequently agree on an alternative. But in Japan it was the parties that channeled vague public sentiment for 'political reform' into a specific alternative to the status quo voting system. Why did Japanese politicians appear to embrace voting system reform more readily than politicians in other countries? Some say the politicians miscalculated and the process of reform, caught up in the unpredictable events of the time, went further than they intended. Others suggest that politicians did believe that voting system reform would address other political problems. Still others suspect that the focus on the voting system in Japan was to serve the opposite effect than in Italy - to distract public attention from larger political problems and stall real political change.<sup>112</sup>

Japan's traditional voting system, the single nontransferable vote (SNTV), is typically described by commentators as 'unusual' or 'unique', despite the fact that it has a long history of use in Japan, Taiwan, and pre-revolutionary China, and essentially represents a minor variant of the semi-proportional limited vote, a system which has seen use in Britain, Canada and the United States at different levels of government.<sup>113</sup>

Politicians and academic commentators have long focused on SNTV as a key determinant of Japan's party system, particularly in producing some of its more negative traits, such as long periods of one-party rule, party factionalization and the never-ending quest for campaign finances.<sup>114</sup>

These effects are alleged to result from SNTV because of the way the system combines districting with the voting process. SNTV consists of multi-member districts but provides voters with only a single non-transferable vote. Where parties hope to elect more than one candidate in a riding, their hopefuls must compete not just against the candidates of other parties but also members of their own party. This is said to weaken party cohesion, focus candidates on their individual rather than party campaigns, and build campaign fundraising around candidates rather than parties. The link between corruption and one-party rule is also attributed to SNTV because candidates need money to campaign effectively, particularly if their party runs more than one candidate in the riding. To get money, candidates promise 'pork' - government contracts, tax breaks - to local business to get it.<sup>115</sup> Smaller parties often avoid this dilemma by running just one candidate per riding, thus lowering their costs, but with the result that they cannot compete effectively for government (because they are not running enough candidates), thus reinforcing one-party rule.

The first concerted push to change the system came shortly after the return of governing control to the Japanese in the early 1950s.<sup>116</sup> Initially, the opposition Socialist party (JSP) lobbied for an Anglo-American single member plurality (SMP) system hoping to benefit from right-wing vote splits between the Liberal and Democratic parties. But when those right parties fused into a single governing party in 1955 and forged ahead with voting system reform, specifically an SMP system, the JSP balked and organized ferocious opposition, preferring instead a proportional system or the status quo. After heated wrangling, to the point where police forces were brought in to the legislature, and facing time constraints in passing other government legislation, the LDP reform plan was allowed to expire in the Upper House. But the failure in 1956 did not end the debate.<sup>117</sup>

Electoral reform issues generally returned to the legislature in the 1960s, often in response to allegations of corruption. Between 1960 and 1972 seven advisory councils on electoral reform were convened, six with an explicit focus on the voting system. Consensus was difficult to achieve: the LDP stuck by its proposals for SMP, while the opposition parties called for PR or adjustments to SNTV. In the end, most reports were

simply filed away. Put simply, individual LDP legislators could see little point in changing a system that had worked so well for them.<sup>118</sup>

The most serious moves toward reform of voting system occurred in 1973 and 1990-1. In 1970 LDP Prime Minister Sato pressed the Seventh Electoral Reform Advisory Council to recommend a voting system that would “eliminate intraparty competition, and produce party-centred, policy-centred campaigns.” Tellingly, he gave up the LDP’s exclusive focus on SMP and suggested they might consider proposals with single member ridings “seasoned by proportional representation.”<sup>119</sup> Given past experience, expectations remained low. Surprisingly, Sato's successor Tanaka did press ahead with the Council's proposal for a mixed plurality/PR system in 1973, primarily in the hopes that it would reverse a trend toward LDP losses in seats in the Lower House. However, the initiative produced enormous opposition from the other parties, including a boycott of the legislature and the organization of large anti-government rallies across the country. Facing opposition within his party, outside the legislature, and from newspapers and the public, Tanaka retreated, withdrawing the bill in favour of further study.<sup>120</sup>

Interest in voting system reform re-emerged in all parties in the late 1980s as a series of high profile scandals toppled two LDP prime ministers and host of high ranking legislators. Opposition parties, reveling in the LDP loss of control in the now-PR elected Upper House, supported change as a possible way of forcing the LDP from government. Meanwhile various factions within the LDP considered a focus on voting system reform an effective pre-emptive move that might stall more thorough-going reforms and allow the party to stay in power.<sup>121</sup> But the mixed system proposal that emerged from the Eighth Electoral Reform Commission in 1990 earned only criticism from the opposition and indifference from the LDP.<sup>122</sup>

New scandals in 1992, including the discovery of stacks of gold bars and millions of dollars in cash stowed away in the office of a former LDP vice president, resuscitated the voting system reform debate.<sup>123</sup> The opposition called for stricter controls on campaign finances, particularly from corporations. The LDP responded that SNTV was to blame and needed to be replaced by a full SMP system to end intraparty competition, kill off factions and bring about a stable two party system with the possibility of alternation in government. To that end the government introduced a bill for a full 500 seat SMP system in March 1993. At this point, the opposition broke with its traditional opposition to mixed systems and proposed a fully proportional MMP system as an

alternative. The subsequent debate on these proposals split the LDP, toppled the government, and led to the first non-LDP administration since 1955.

In the July 1993 Lower House elections LDP support remained stable but short of an overall majority. Basically, voters supported LDP incumbents but they also rewarded the former LDP incumbents who had left to form other parties, gains the emerged mostly at the expense of the JSP.<sup>124</sup> In the end, an historic non-LDP coalition government emerged, though it agreed on little but the need for voting system reform.

The new coalition government made political reform its top priority but had difficulty carrying out its objectives. The JSP, despite its recent electoral setbacks, was still the largest opposition party and thus a key player in the new government. But JSP members were divided over the proposed electoral reforms, and 17 voted against the government bill when it reached the Upper House, causing it to fail.<sup>125</sup> Now the coalition leaders turned to the LDP to work out a compromise. LDP influence reduced the new system's proportionality and gutted provisions to reduce the impact of money on campaigns. After the new voting system was finally adopted in January 1994 the non-LDP coalition government slowly imploded, incapable of managing its policy contradictions.<sup>126</sup> Just five months later, the LDP was back in power and has remained there ever since, first in coalition with their longtime rivals, the JSP, and after their demise in the 1996 elections, with other parties. Though complaints about the new system abound, no serious effort has emerged to replace it.<sup>127</sup>

Analysis of Japan's 1994 voting system reform has focused heavily on the timely conjuncture of repeated scandal and corruption, with increasing public pressure for a political response, alongside an emerging consensus amongst the political class that the country's traditional single non-transferable voting system has been responsible for much of what ails the political system (e.g. excessive party factionalization, one-party rule, the corrupting influence of money on politicians and policy outcomes, etc). While these factors were undoubtedly influential, they fail to explain why voting system reform succeeded in the 1990s when it had failed so many times before. Scandal, promises of reform, blaming the voting system; these decade old factors had done little to challenge either the LDP or SNTV before.<sup>128</sup>

The key difference between the 1990s and previous eras of voting system reform was a markedly changed international environment, both politically and economically. The end of the Cold War showed up the irrelevance of an LDP hegemony based on the need to protect Japan from 'socialism'. Japan's Socialist Party had long ceased to dominate the opposition or offer more than token criticism of the country's economic

arrangements. In fact, by the late 1980s and 1990s, the JSP was one of the strongest defenders of Japan's distinctive brand of state-interventionist capitalism.<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, the restructuring of international trade along free market lines put enormous pressure on Japan to open markets and internationalize corporate ownership, decision-making and investment.<sup>130</sup> As Japan's competitive position in the world economy declined, and the economy stagnated at home, support for decentralization, deregulation and neoliberal policies emerged within the LDP itself, despite the party's traditional reliance on a strong hand in economic affairs to pay back contributors and voters. At the same time, more and more voters and business leaders were questioning whether contemporary conditions required their traditional fidelity to the LDP.<sup>131</sup>

Thus the heightened impact of otherwise ostensibly normal political conditions in Japan - money politics, corruption, complaints about the negative effects of the voting system - gained their saliency amid a process of sometimes subtle, sometimes not-so-subtle, party realignment. The perceived end of the '1955 system', and economic logic that had fueled LDP politics, was one reason that so many politicians were willing to take up voting system reform and pursue new political allegiances. In turn, defections from the LDP only put more pressure on those that remained to demonstrate the party's commitment to reform, another factor that helped clinch a new voting system. For their part, the JSP were also facing internal pressures for change, fueled in part by a reorganization and centralization of the labour movement that helped fund the party.<sup>132</sup> The left in the JSP opposed voting system reform and many of their legislators broke ranks to vote against it. On the other hand, the right in the JSP thought a new voting system would weaken its left, aiding the development of a new government-oriented centre-left party. Both sides were proven correct when the JSP was practically wiped out in the 1996 Lower House elections, the remnants joining the centrist Democratic party.<sup>133</sup>

Elections under Japan's new voting system in 1996 and 2000 confirmed some predictions, confounded others. The LDP continues in power, though in coalition with other conservative parties.<sup>134</sup> There has been some move to consolidate opposition behind another potential governing vehicle, the Democratic party. The change from medium-sized multi-member districts to a combination of single member ridings and larger PR ridings has altered the nature of factional influence within the LDP, but it remains a force. Factions do appear to have a reduced role in leadership selection within the LDP as a result of all the changes.<sup>135</sup>

### ***United Kingdom***

Recently, Britain has moved from a longstanding defence of single member plurality for every kind of election to a startling embrace of electoral system pluralism, adopting no less than five separate voting systems for different electoral purposes, all in less than five years. The shift is entirely the product of a resurgent Labour Party, back in government after eighteen years in opposition. To the surprise of many, Labour's victory in 1997 came without much of its traditional policy platform - 'new' Labour appeared as committed to free markets and scaled-back social entitlements as Lady Thatcher herself. However, Labour did campaign heavily behind many proposals for democratic reform - proposals that included referenda, devolution, restored local government, and constitutional reform.

After gaining power, veteran political observers expected to see Labour give most of these proposals a 'kick into the long grass': endless rounds of study, committee hearings, expert council, etc. Instead, Labour took up action very shortly after assuming government in May 1997. Elections for a Northern Irish constitutional assembly were held later in May, the government announced a switch to PR for European elections in July, and referendums on establishing local assemblies for Scotland and Wales were held in September. Plans for the return of London's local government were also quickly pulled together, complete with directly elected mayor and council. All these new representative structures involved countless decisions about design, composition, decision rules and constitutional powers. Curiously, the voting systems for all contained some element of proportionality, a clear departure from British electoral traditions. Nationally, voting system reform was also under consideration. By December 1997 Labour struck an Independent Commission on the Electoral System, dubbed the 'Jenkins Commission' after its chair, Lord Jenkins. After less than a year in power, Labour's resolve to honour its pledge to hold a referendum on the Britain's voting rules appeared firm.

The rise of voting system reform in British circles was as surprising as it was meteoric. A decade earlier, the topic was the province of mostly-ignored constitutional reform groups like Charter 88, and the third place Alliance (an electoral alliance of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties). This is not to say that Britain's traditional SMP voting system had not come under recent scrutiny and criticism, it had. But few expected decisive action from the parliamentary Labour Party. After all, in a 1977 free vote on whether to adopt a party list PR system for European elections, Labour leaders appeared indecisive and half the caucus joined with the Tories to vote it down.<sup>136</sup> Two

decades later, most of it spent mired in opposition after four successive defeats at the polls, Labour still seemed lukewarm about change. In fact, new leader Tony Blair declared he was unconvinced of the merits of PR shortly before the 1997 campaign.<sup>137</sup> All facts that made his party's speedy adoption of a flurry of proportional and semi-proportional voting systems shortly after taking office all the more curious.

Though never dominating public discussion, voting system debates had been percolating through British public consciousness for at least two decades. The governing Conservatives brought the topic back to life in 1973 when they mandated the use of PR for elections in Northern Ireland as one response to emerging social and political tensions there.<sup>138</sup> However, the representational quirks of Britain's traditional single member plurality system really made headlines when the party with the most votes lost the February 1974 election. In that instance Labour triumphed over the Conservatives despite enjoying slightly less public support. In a way this just reversed a previous injustice; in 1951 it was Labour who suffered, losing to the Tories despite getting more votes. But the situation in the 1970s was complicated by a further injustice to the third place Liberals, a party whose negligible support in 1951 (3%) had mushroomed to 20% in the back-to-back elections of 1974. Yet the Liberals secured less than two percent of the seats in the House of Commons, fewer seats in fact than much less popular regional parties. These disturbing trends motivated a number of ruminations about electoral reform, including the highly touted Hansard Commission Report of 1976 that called for a semi-proportional additional member system.<sup>139</sup>

The question of voting system reform remained within sight in the 1980s but well beyond political reach. When the new Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance gained 25% of the popular vote in the 1983 election (just 3% less than Labour) but only a handful of seats, another round of hand-wringing occurred, though little came of it.<sup>140</sup> The problem was simple: both Conservatives and Labour utterly opposed any change. Without support from either of the two major parties, the parties generally perceived to have a realistic chance of forming governments, the issue was a non-starter.<sup>141</sup>

The break came with the third straight defeat for Labour in 1987. At this point the 'Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform' started to gain ground within the party as both members and a few MPs began to worry that the pendulum might not ever swing back.<sup>142</sup> Whether to let off steam or hedge their bets in the event of another loss, Labour established a working group on electoral reform under Raymond Plant in 1990. The Plant Reports sketched out many of the innovative ideas Labour would later introduce in government, particularly as concerned sub-national reform and European

elections. But Plant's call for a new national voting system, the semi-proportional 'supplementary vote', still proved too controversial for the party, despite Labour's fourth consecutive defeat in 1992. In the convention debate on the issue, Plant's proposal was voted down but supporters did manage to commit the party to a national referendum on the question.<sup>143</sup>

The Labour Party's shift on voting system reform has been explained in a number of ways. Some credit leader Tony Blair's stated desire to move Britain away from confrontation and toward a more consensual style of politics. Others point to it as a component of Labour's new commitment to broader constitutional reform, accountability and consultation. And there have been suggestions that Labour may just be trying to 'wrong-foot' the Conservatives and keep them on the defensive, just as the Tories used to do to them.<sup>144</sup> Less attention has been paid to how Labour's position may reflect larger struggles and changes within the party itself. Today's Labour is hardly recognizable. Under Tony Blair the party has jettisoned much of its traditional policy program, weakened the influence of activists in the party, and strengthened the hand of the leader to act unilaterally.<sup>145</sup> Some claim to see a similar pattern at work in the Labour government's democratic reforms.

A good deal of Labour's motives can be seen in its shifting positions on Scottish and Welsh devolution. Historically Labour opposed it for that same reasons that left parties everywhere opposed federalism, bicameralism or a separation of powers - it might limit a central government's ability to act, particularly with regards to the economy. As long as Labour was committed to its traditional interventionist approach to government and the economy the party vigorously resisted devolution. The rise of the Scottish Nationalist Party in the 1970s cut into Labour's support in the region, traditionally a stronghold for the party, forcing it to concede a referendum on the issue in 1979. Though a majority endorsed the idea, it failed for lack of turnout. Tight competition with the SNP forced Labour to pay close attention to Scottish affairs in the 1980s and 1990s. In a series of constitutional conventions starting in 1989 Labour endorsed devolution and eventually a proportional scheme to elect a Scottish Parliament.<sup>146</sup> At the same time, Labour was in the process of backing off its traditional policy commitments to interventionism and an expanded welfare state.<sup>147</sup>

While reformers applauded what they saw as the good faith of the Labour government in keeping their promises about voting reform for European elections, the new London council and devolution, critics charged that Blair's zeal for the job was all about settling scores within his own party. For instance, Labour MEPs complained that

the leader deliberately introduced the party list form of PR for European elections to gain control over nominations and root out one of the final bastions of opposition to his remaking of the party.<sup>148</sup> Blair's later effort to rig Labour's nomination for the London Mayoralty against his leftish MP Ken Livingstone only appeared to confirm this assessment. Even the government's much-vaunted power-sharing approach to devolution was decidedly asymmetrical and reflected Labour's biases about proportional voting. A dose of PR for the regions meant they would be much more representative, but it could also mean they would be less decisive, less likely to challenge the dominance of Westminster.

Labour's institutional reforms around devolution and more proportional voting systems developed out of countless consultations - Scotland's constitutional conventions, contributors to the Plant reports, interaction and negotiation with community groups and even other political parties. In the run-up to the 1997 general election, Labour was keen to build the broadest coalition behind its programme. The party went so far as to work publicly with the third place Liberal Democrats in 1996, signing a number of pre-election agreements around democratic and constitutional reform.<sup>149</sup> But all this shouldn't obscure where Labour's self interest also dictated their commitment to reform. Labour's keen action on devolution and voting system reform may have reflected their commitment to values supporting local governance and inclusion, or represent in part a principled response to public and stakeholder demands, but it no doubt also reflected a pragmatic calculation of how much these policies would help the party without interfering with its own source of power at Westminster. The fact that Labour now appears to be stalling on electoral reform at the national level only lends further credence to this interpretation.

Few leaders legislate away their own power base. But Labour's rapid work on devolution and the reform of European voting convinced many pundits that the party just might be serious about applying reform to itself as well - elections to the House of Commons. Of course, as a party Labour didn't endorse any specific change to the country's voting system. Instead, they'd committed themselves to a process where change could be considered, first through extensive research and consultation, and then via a national referendum on the question. For many in Labour, the promise was hardly threatening as they felt confident that tradition would win out over 'foreign' ways of doing things. Thus little opposition emerged when the Labour government appointed the Jenkins Commission in December 1997 to get the process started.

But before the Commission could submit its report, a host of political developments began to subtly undermine Labour's continued commitment to the process. The initial results in Scotland under their semi-PR voting system witnessed a significant drop in Labour support from the national elections just one year earlier, forcing Labour there into a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats. This fueled opposition within Labour's parliamentary caucus and furthered the organization of an explicitly anti-PR group of MPs. Lord Jenkins report did little to quell the growing opposition or inspire new support.

Submitted in October 1998, Jenkins recommended the mildly proportional Supplementary Vote, rejecting both the German-style MMP and Britain's traditional choice of proportional voting, STV. Many cried foul claiming Jenkins' cozy relations with the new PM had influenced his deliberations. Though Jenkins denied improper influence, his conclusions bore striking resemblance to Labour's own maximal position.<sup>150</sup> This perhaps pragmatic accommodation to power did little to speed the process. Interest in a report so timid in its recommendations for change evaporated quickly. In the end, Labour broke its promise to hold a referendum on the question in its first term, and now, well into its second, gives little indication when it may be forthcoming.

To date, elections have been held under all the new voting systems - in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, London and Europe. The Irish are a special case and face special problems, but elsewhere the process has gone smoothly. Only Labour has appeared somewhat disgruntled with the various results, having discovered that the best laid plans for constitutional engineering can often go awry.

### ***The Debate Continues: North America***

Positive discussion of different voting systems has also re-emerged in North America. Both the United States and Canada have witnessed a revival of public interest in democratic reform recently, some of which has touched directly on the voting system.

Recent reform interest in the US has had many sources: the poor representation of blacks, hispanics and women in most elections, declining interest in the main two parties and the difficulties faced by new ones, and falling voter turnout generally. Sometimes reform interest has emerged at the municipal level, as when two separate citizen-driven referendums to restore PR in Cincinnati only narrowly failed.<sup>151</sup> The courts have also played a key role, challenging traditional American approaches to voting and mandating the use of various semi-proportional alternatives.<sup>152</sup> Reform talk even broke

into more conventional political circles recently amid strong third party challenges from Ross Perot, and to a much lesser extent Ralph Nader.

All these factors led to the formation of a new voting reform advocacy group, the Washington DC-based Center for Voting and Democracy (CVD) in the early 1990s. CVD has lobbied all levels of government to replace SMP with PR or majority voting but with little effect - voting system reform remains marginal in US, both with political elites and the voting public.<sup>153</sup> Even the fact that the most popular candidate lost the 2000 Presidential election failed to raise the profile of the voting system significantly in mainstream political discussion.

Compared to the US, the question of voting system reform has enjoyed much more attention in Canada. Numerous commissions have recommended it, various political elites have been willing to entertain it, and recently even the public has shown an interest in it. Three concerns have kept the issue alive through successive waves of interest: Quebec, constitutional reform, and post-1993 party system change.

Canada's previous era of reform peaked in the 1920s, key repeals came in the 1950s, with the last municipal uses of non-plurality systems finally eliminated in 1972-3. Yet three years later the election of a nationalist government in Quebec brought the issue back to the top of the agenda. Though scholars had long noted the regional biases in Canada's voting system, that it benefited parties with regionally concentrated support while punishing those without, the major parties appeared to have little incentive to change it.<sup>154</sup> The 1976 election in Quebec changed all that. Now a better reflection of the country, both its regional differences and its shared national aspirations, seemed imperative to stave off a nasty break-up. In one response, Prime Minister Trudeau established the Pepin-Robarts Task Force on Canadian Unity to sound out a way forward. Reporting in 1979, the commissioners recommended a host of institutional reforms, including a slight element of proportionality for elections to the House of Commons.<sup>155</sup>

For a time, Canadians produced report after report in favour of mildly proportional reforms, exhibiting a hitherto little-known passion for electoral engineering.<sup>156</sup> The key concern was to eliminate the sometimes wild distortions that appeared between what were real patterns of regional voting and the artificially inflated regional results that parties achieved in elections. Yet consideration of these reforms was influenced by pressures created or dissipated through other political developments. After Quebec voted 'no' to negotiations around sovereignty association in 1980 pressure to fix Canada's problems via representation slackened. And when NDP activists voted down

their leader's plan to add some small measure of proportionality to House of Commons elections, a plan that Liberal PM Trudeau seemed willing to consider, the previous inertia behind the issue slipped away.<sup>157</sup> Ironically, the nationalist Parti Quebecois government was also embroiled in debate over voting system reform throughout this period, split between members committed to reform as a matter of principle, and more pragmatic activists and legislative members keen to hold on to government. Though the party and the government officially studied the question, its ultimate defeat as policy in the 1980s surprised few.<sup>158</sup>

As relations with Quebec appeared to normalize in the 1980s, voting system reform shifted into the realm of constitutional debate, specifically discussions about democratizing the Senate, and a much lower profile. In the negotiations between provincial and federal political elites, buttressed by numerous academic studies and proposals, just how the Senate would be elected became a point of contention between western provinces and Quebec. The latter wanted their National Assembly to appoint Senators; the West witnessed a rare consensus of left and right in favour of direct elections with proportional voting. For a time it appeared that PR would make it into the final constitutional package, eventually dubbed the Charlottetown Accord, that was to be subject to voter approval in a national referendum. In the end, rules about voting systems were left up to the individual provinces to decide - they could adopt PR or not.<sup>159</sup> But when Charlottetown failed to pass in 1992, the chance for some measure of voting system reform appeared to disappear with it.

Constitutional fatigue effectively blocked a Senate-led route to voting system change but inadvertently opened another. Voter frustration with conventional politics, in part fueled by the political antics of more than a decade of constitutional wrangling, burst out into the open in the 1993 federal election. Real shifts in voter preferences became dramatic shifts in party standings, effectively laying waste to Canada's traditional party system. The Tories were toppled from government, reduced to just two seats in the new parliament. The 'loyal' opposition comprised the Bloc Quebecois, a party committed to breaking up the country. And the new right-wing Reform party from the west elbowed aside both left and right, drawing voters from the NDP and the Conservatives. While the popular vote for various parties clearly demonstrated that voters wanted change, the 1993 election results seriously distorted the change that had occurred. For instance, though Reform and the Tories received roughly similar levels of support, in the range of 16 to 19 percent, Reform gained 50 more seats, giving the impression that Reform was

much more popular. When these distortions were replayed in the 1997 election, people started to notice - journalists, academics, even the voters themselves.<sup>160</sup>

The scrutiny of Canada's national voting system in 1990s was also reinforced by a string of anomalous election results at the provincial level. In three different provinces - BC in 1996, Quebec in 1998 and Saskatchewan in 1999 - the party with the most votes lost the election. While this had happened before - federally in 1979, Saskatchewan in 1986, and New Brunswick in 1974 - it failed then to capture public attention or mobilize dissent within party ranks. But in the 1990s, against a backdrop of repeatedly unrepresentative federal parliaments, the provincial results sparked heated debate about the need for some kind of voting system reform. Reformers started to make headway in nearly all Canadian political parties, barring the federal Liberals. By the end of the decade, parties from left to right were committed to some kind of public consultation over voting systems, with at least one explicitly endorsing a referendum approach.<sup>161</sup> Still, Canada's parties had committed to voting reform in previous eras; convention policy and campaign promises did not necessarily mean much would be done.

As in the US, Canada has seen the emergence of various organizations specifically dedicated to raising public awareness around voting system reform. Their efforts resulted in the founding of a national organization, Fair Vote Canada (FVC) in spring 2001. But in addition to lobbying political and media elites, FVC has set itself the explicit task of mobilizing public support behind a project of substantive citizen engagement with issues like voting system reform, perhaps culminating in a binding national referendum on the issue.<sup>162</sup> Working in their favour is the positive public response to democratic reform issues generally over the last decade. Public surveys on the voting systems in the 1990s and beyond demonstrated that public awareness about the issue was rising, and with greater awareness also came greater support for reform.<sup>163</sup> But what the 'wedge' issue will be that links voting system change to public concerns to party strategies is far from clear.

### **Conclusion**

The varied results of electoral reform in the modern era should make clear that anomalous election results or the existence of longstanding disproportionalities in election outcomes will not, of themselves, bring about a change of voting systems. Political problems can give rise to varied and unpredictable responses. The question is,

why did political problems in Italy, New Zealand, Japan and Britain result in voting system reform as the response?

For all their differences, our four reform cases share some broad similarities. In each of the countries where reform succeeded, the case for change became successfully intertwined with larger reform objectives - increased accountability from government and parties, an end to corruption in politics, or efforts to re-align the party system. In Japan and Italy, public concern about corruption and the role of money in politics coincided with a re-alignment of the traditional party system - voting system reform became the successful interlocutor between them. In New Zealand and the United Kingdom voting system reform became part of a larger process of making government more accountable, amid rapidly shifting party identifications, particularly on the left. In all countries voter discontent with politics was effectively channeled into a heightened public scrutiny of democratic institutions, with the result that efforts by politicians to evade reform later failed. At the same time, political parties were crucial players in making reform happen, even where the decision to change was made via public referendum.

It would appear that successful reform requires the application of both strategies: a mobilized public concerned about democratic institutions like voting systems and their reform, and motivated parties prepared to act on public concerns when they have the chance to do so. But the process does not occur in a vacuum. Public concerns will be shaped by broader social and economic interests, while parties will be focused on office, influence and competition from their opponents. Reformers have to find the space to fit their concerns in amongst all this activity, connecting their efforts concretely to both public and party needs. And a little luck seems necessary as well.

## 4. Citizen Engagement and Electoral Reform

### *Introduction*

It should be clear by this point that voting system reforms have typically engendered little in the way of citizen engagement. Most success has been the product of elite negotiation against a backdrop of highly uncertain social and political struggles. Conversely, citizen-driven reforms accomplished via referenda have proven short-lived and limited in scope. Yet a number of developments over the last three decades suggest that this trend may be reversing. Successive waves of citizen-driven politics have rocked the conventional political systems of Western democracies, forcing greater levels of citizen consultation and participation, either through polling, public forums and/or referenda. Though hardly unproblematic, these efforts demonstrate a keen public interest in democratic participation and a willingness to become informed about complex issues. And these past efforts tell us a great deal about what effective citizen engagement requires in terms of institutional support, resources, and time. If we want to engage citizens about potential voting system reforms today these insights will prove useful in developing an effective engagement process.

Not surprisingly, elite strategies for reform and the methods of citizen engagement have changed over time. Recent voting system reform has exhibited a mixture of old and new strategies. Japan's reforms appeared to replicate the traditional elite negotiations of the past, albeit under a greater weight of media scrutiny and pressure. Of the recent reformers, Japan alone adopted a new voting system simply by a vote of its legislators, with all other countries soliciting public input via referenda. At the other end of the spectrum, New Zealand arguably represents the greatest departure from past practices. Despite elite opposition to reform, the New Zealand process featured a publicly-funded education program, resource support from an independent panel, and a binding referendum on the decision. Italy and Britain fell somewhere between the two, with a greater role played by parties in the referenda process. These recent shifts in elite and citizen strategies around voting system reform, along with the apparent greater success of citizen-driven approaches, require some explanation. The answers can help us sort out which insights from our past and abroad may be relevant to contemporary Canadian circumstances.

With that in mind, we now turn to a more detailed examination of citizen engagement strategies, reviewing the traditional approaches of the early twentieth

century, the revival of citizen participation in the 1960s, and the degree of citizen engagement in the most recent voting system reforms.

### ***Traditional Citizen Engagement***

PR reformers took up a number of strategies to promote their cause, including direct engagement with citizens, lobbying political parties and governments, and using whatever instruments of direct democracy were available. They were tireless advocates at ratepayers meetings, Boards of Trade, Rotary, and any other organizations that would invite them to speak. They were dogged newspaper letter/article writers, and managed to convince local papers to conduct participatory PR elections to demonstrate the workings of their system.<sup>164</sup> At the same time, PR supporters were active in political parties. When Liberal provincial administrations were elected in Canada's four western provinces around WWI, reform-oriented members secured the passage of legislation allowing PR voting in local politics.<sup>165</sup> They were also active in farmer, labour and left parties generally. Referendum legislation in parts of the US and Canada allowed reformers to build campaigns around drives to adopt PR by a vote of the citizens.

It is important to underline that while reformers in the early twentieth century came up with a number of novel strategies to directly engage citizens about voting system reform, their focus on citizens was often more pragmatic than philosophical. In many cases it reflected their failure to make sufficient headway with the political parties. For example, the repeated failure to effect reform at the state level in Oregon before WWI was one factor that influenced the American PR League to focus on civic reform as a more accomplishable alternative.<sup>166</sup> In Canada too resistance from the established political parties moved reformers to focus on city adoptions as a 'first step' toward voting system reform at higher levels of government.<sup>167</sup> Nor were voting system reformers that committed to the use of 'direct democracy' instruments like referenda. Where they could, they were happy to see elected bodies simply adopt PR and avoid a divisive public campaign. In fact, referenda was often their last recourse, resulting from a pragmatic recognition that it would be the only way to circumvent the entrenched opposition to their reform.<sup>168</sup> Reformers also had mixed feelings about citizens themselves, particularly the influence of immigrants and working class voters.<sup>169</sup>

Traditional citizen engagement strategies declined for a host of reasons. Probably the most important was simply that the public judged them to be ineffective. Few citizen-driven PR adoptions survived more than a few years; only one survives in North America today. But direct citizen engagement also declined for other reasons, unrelated

to success or failure. Part of the decline was structural - public meetings ceased to be the main space where policy alternatives could receive public exposure and be subject to debate. Increases in literacy, along with the rise of radio in the 1920s, shifted political debate to more mediated environments and away from direct encounters. Mass meetings gave way to mass parties, which increasingly took on the tasks of channeling public participation into elections and filtering political debate. The rise of television in the 1940s and 1950s only reinforced these trends. Efforts to revive a citizen-oriented PR Society in Canada failed repeatedly in the 1930s and 1940s. Even the once mighty American PR League finally folded in 1950s.

### ***New Citizen Engagement***

The end of the era of direct citizen engagement was hardly mourned by political elites. In fact, the consensus of learned opinion that emerged in the 1950s held that an active citizenry was a positive danger to democracy, opening the way to authoritarian outbursts and the suppression of minorities. Too much citizen involvement was blamed for the twin evils of fascism/communism and the breakdown of European democracy in the interwar period. In this view, democratic regimes could only be maintained with a largely passive citizenry, reduced to choosing between competing elites at election time.<sup>170</sup>

A host of factors contributed to the revival of citizen-oriented politics in the 1960s and 1970s: civil rights struggles, urban renewal, ecological conservation, anti-nuclear protests, local tax revolts, and the arrival of a massive cohort of young adults - the baby boom - into political systems with too few openings. And in a harkening back to previous eras, citizen engagement was not seen as a problem or inconvenience but as an end in itself. An engaged citizenry, it was thought, would better serve the community, lead to better policy and administration, and build strong social support for democratic decisions and accountability. Some sought direct participation for citizens in the development of policy, but others merely wanted policy submitted for public scrutiny, and a possible veto, in regular referendums. Either way, the idea that politics should be the sole preserve of an elected representative was brought into question. Greater public participation was eventually incorporated into city planning, community development, government employment strategies, and the political parties themselves.<sup>171</sup>

Frustration with conventional politics also led to a revival of interest in 'direct democracy', specifically the citizen-initiated referendum and recall. Since the 1970s these methods have been used extensively in various American states to address

issues ranging from forest preservation to limits on taxes.<sup>172</sup> Referendums also made a comeback in Europe, though under the control and direction of governments, not citizens.<sup>173</sup> Even countries which have had little historic experience with referenda have seen fit to utilize them in recent years - Britain on the question of joining the European Union, and Canada on a proposed constitutional settlement. A commitment to 'direct democracy' has featured prominently in the rise of a number of new political parties, particularly on the right.

In retrospect, both academic observers and the participants themselves agree that the instrumental results from most citizen participation exercises were disappointing. Complaints ranged from allegations that the participation was token and without real input to accusations that governments routinely denied citizens adequate resources to participate effectively. Though flawed, the era of participatory democracy did alter public perceptions about what constituted proper political process, particularly with regard to the role of citizens and political parties. Few surveys today report a willing public deference to political parties to lead in all things.<sup>174</sup> In fact, public opinion across western democracies suggests that the range of issues requiring direct consultation should be widened.

As public respect for political parties plummeted everywhere in the 1980s and 1990s, voter support for citizen-driven approaches to politics appeared to rise.<sup>175</sup> That is one reason reformers both within and outside political parties today have turned to referendums on certain policies - they enjoy a legitimacy that parties lack. But when and how the parties themselves will embrace referenda or participatory approaches generally is harder to predict. Though some commentators speak as if referenda are now an expected part of any major democratic change, the reality is more ad hoc and arbitrary. Parties turn to referenda and 'participation' for all sorts of reasons - to act, to delay, to defer, to defeat. Only a closer look at individual cases can reveal the specific reasons why and what patterns exist, if any.

### ***Citizen Engagement and Voting System Reform***

While none of the reforming countries in the 1990s could be described as a model of citizen engagement on the issue, they do fall on a continuum of weak to strong, with Japan at one end, New Zealand at the other, and Italy and Britain somewhere in the middle. Of course, just what constitutes 'engagement' is open to debate. For our purposes, levels of citizen engagement will be assessed by addressing three concerns:

who made the decision to change, who facilitated the process, and what kind of resources were made available to animate the discussion.

Citizen engagement over voting system reform in Japan was, for all practical purposes, nil. Aside from some limited polling and discussion in the news media, what Japanese voters thought about the various specific proposals did not appear to concern the political elites directing the process. And for their part, voters themselves did not seem to have any strong opinions on voting systems. As conventional political forces began to de-align under pressure from changing international and economic circumstances, a vague commitment to 'political reform' remained on the political agenda longer than was typical in the past. But politicians continued to hedge their bets right down to the final moments before change occurred. With little firm commitment to specific reforms, politicians had little incentive to inform or mobilize the public behind them. When the historic non-LDP government came to power in 1993 committed to voting system reform, public knowledge of that specific issue registered well below more general concerns over corruption and the disclosure of campaign finances.<sup>176</sup> Indeed, many commentators blame low public knowledge of the new system for the drop in voter turnout in the 1996 election, the first under the new rules.<sup>177</sup>

The Italian situation offers an example of a limited form of citizen engagement. The process leading to a new voting system in Italy required some measure of public participation to succeed given its strategy involved using Italy's unique 'abrogative' referendum. In Italy, citizens that can gather enough signatures may succeed in putting a question before the voters in a national referendum, though constitutionally potential questions are limited to the repeal of existing legislation. In 1991, voters decisively cast their ballots to repeal a rather obscure detail of the voting system allowing voters to allocate preferences among candidates, and two years later they repealed key sections of their voting system law effectively reducing its proportionality. These campaigns occurred against a backdrop of countless revelations of political corruption and whole-scale political party de-alignment. Whether voters really wanted new voting rules or simply used the means at hand to strike a blow against the existing political class is unclear.<sup>178</sup> However, when subsequent efforts to change the voting system failed, the potentially decisive role of political parties in the process came under scrutiny.<sup>179</sup>

There can be little doubt that the process of gathering upward of half a million signatures toward the goal of a national referendum must engender some discussion and debate on the proposed issue, along with media attention. Of course, signatories need not invest much effort to participate, and in a climate of hostility toward most

conventional political forces, any measure seeming to strike at them would probably meet with a sympathetic public or media response. What is perhaps more telling is the debate surrounding the decision to organize in the first place, and the composition of the forces allied to accomplish the goals.

The 1991 referendum got started by maverick Christian Democrat Mario Segni and in many ways appeared to reflect fairly common internal factional jockeying in the DC. Indeed, the organizations initially gathering signatures had strong and enduring links with the Christian Democrats.<sup>180</sup> Later the reformed communists in the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) also lent support to signature gathering as voting system reform was a key component in their efforts to realign the party system.<sup>181</sup> Clearly then, despite a nominally non-partisan veneer to the reform forces, old-style party mobilization was also key to pushing the referendum process. Perhaps parties mobilized support around the merits of the proposed changes or perhaps they simply called on past loyalties - the degree of actual citizen engagement is unclear. What is clear is that when parties failed to mobilize support for subsequent voting system reforms, they failed. For instance, the new right wing Forza Italia refused to endorse or campaign for the reforms in 1999 and 2000, despite previously endorsing the change, a factor that Sergio Fabbrini credits with lowering voter turnout.<sup>182</sup>

In the United Kingdom discussion of voting system reform went further than either Japan or Italy, emerging from many different quarters seemingly simultaneously. By 1997 British discussions of voting system reform crept into issues of Welsh and Scottish devolution, local government renewal, democratic harmonization with Europe, reform of the House of Lords, and constitutional debates generally. It helped that concern about voting systems had loitered about the edges of British political discussion for three decades, popping up in the Kilbrandon Commission recommendations on Scotland, Conservative government proposals for Northern Ireland, and the Hansard Society Commission on Electoral Reform report.<sup>183</sup> Anomalous election results in 1974 and 1983 only further raised the issue's profile, albeit aided and abetted by the century old Electoral Reform Society.

But it was arguably the long rule of the Conservative party and the radical nature of their government that fueled organizational and public consideration of the voting system. After a third straight Tory election victory, again with well less than a majority of public support, opposition to the Conservatives spilled beyond the confines of party competition to consideration of decentralization and constitutional reform. Groups like Charter 88 attempted to spark public discussion of various proposals that might limit the

arbitrary use of parliamentary power: an entrenched bill of rights, an elected upper chamber, and a new voting system for the House of Commons. In Scotland, various political parties and civic groups initiated a multi-session Constitutional Convention to consider devolution and democratic reform, without sanction from Westminster.<sup>184</sup> And repeated failure finally opened some space in the Labour party for a consideration of democratic reforms, leading to an established working group and wide consultation with academics and community groups. The subsequent Plant Reports would form the basis of Labour's plans for local, regional and European democratic reforms.<sup>185</sup>

With Labour's victory in 1997 the new government acted quickly to test public sympathy for wide-sweeping institutional change. Referenda on devolution and London's local government demonstrated public support for new approaches to government, though the voting system component itself was seldom singled out. Labour did focus public attention on the voting rules however when it created the Independent Commission on the Voting System, headed by former Labour and Liberal-Democrat MP Roy Jenkins. The Jenkins Commission, as it came to be known, departed from Japanese and Italian experience in holding public hearings and soliciting expert advice on possible voting system reforms. Members of the public could present their views to the Commission and their travels within Britain and abroad did generate some media interest and discussion.<sup>186</sup>

Clearly the points of access for public engagement over voting systems in Britain were broader and deeper than either Japan or Italy. But the degree of citizen engagement should not be overstated. Public opinion about voting system reform in Britain has fluctuated regularly over the years.<sup>187</sup> Even the recent referendum victories are less than clear on this score as it is difficult to disaggregate opinions about voting rules from the more general support registered for Welsh and Scottish devolution or a new local government for London.<sup>188</sup> Only the Jenkins Commission focused exclusively on the voting system, but it hardly succeeded as a vehicle of citizen engagement. As is typical for 'commissions' of all kinds, participation tended to be restricted to academics and party representatives. In the end, what public interest existed evaporated in the face of the Commission's patently party-oriented, middling proposals. Debate over voting system reform quickly gave way to questions about just how 'independent' the Independent Commission really was.<sup>189</sup> The promised national referendum on the voting rules for Westminster still remains unfulfilled.

New Zealand's recent public campaigns over voting system reform provides valuable insights for developing a model of citizen engagement around this issue. Key

elements of this engagement process include: an impartial fact-finding commission to inform and set the terms of the discussion, strong civil society organizations to lead public debate and mobilize citizen interest, an independent educational body with adequate public funds to inform citizens through mailings, broadcasts and public meetings, and a clear process for deciding amongst alternative voting systems left to voters in a binding referendum. Of course, New Zealand's recent reforms did not result from a model - they were largely the ad hoc responses of politicians desperate to avoid reform, framed within terms set by expert opinion on the one hand, and the pressures of a mobilized civil society on the other. Clearly then New Zealand's approach to voting system reform cannot simply be reproduced, but their experience can be instructive.

When New Zealand's Royal Commission did not simply endorse the status quo, but opted instead for an independent and open-ended exploration of the existing system and the leading alternatives, politicians and pundits alike wondered 'what went wrong'.<sup>190</sup> But for those concerned with good public process, the question is rather 'what went right'. By any conventional or comparative standards the Commission was unusual in its choice of members, its broad terms of reference, and in its lack of preconceived notions about the topic or potential conclusions. Labour's deputy PM Geoffrey Palmer, the driving force behind the project, fought to keep party representatives and voting system partisans off the Commission. He wanted an open-minded team, one without obligations to particular party interests or strong feelings about certain voting systems.<sup>191</sup> In the end he succeeded and this non-partisan orientation and commitment to open-minded enquiry would contribute later to the high public regard accorded the Commission and its work. Of course, some argue that Palmer could only accomplish this because his colleagues thought little would come of the project.<sup>192</sup> It is telling to compare New Zealand's approach to Britain, where an 'independent' commission was headed by a politician, commission members had strong links to parties, the terms of reference were more narrow, and the media - indeed, everyone in political circles - seemed to know what the Commission would recommend months before their report was completed.<sup>193</sup>

The Royal Commission engaged citizens directly only somewhat. A few made presentations at Commission hearings and many more read or heard about its findings in the media. But the Commission's impact was more profound in its indirect influence, particularly with political parties and fledgling civil society organizations concerned about voting reform. The Commission's report created a headache for the ruling Labour party, fueling constant challenges from the party's rank and file. Struggle within the Labour

party to take up the Commission recommendations forced Labour leaders to respond, contributing to Labour Prime Minister Lange's televised slip-up promising a referendum on their proposals.<sup>194</sup> At the same time, the Commission's report inspired organizational efforts outside of political parties as well. In 1987 a national voting system reform body, the Electoral Reform Coalition (ERC), was established to get the Commission's proposals adopted. By 1992 the ERC claimed 22 branches, thousands of members, and hundreds of local activists. Unlike Britain's expert-oriented Electoral Reform Society, the ERC had an activist orientation.<sup>195</sup> They held countless public meetings, blanketed neighborhoods with flyers, jammed the phone lines of radio call-in shows, and generally intervened in every political venue where voting reform could be talked up. It was primarily the activism of the ERC that kept the issue before the public while the parties stalled, tried to kill the issue in committee, or simply went back on their promises.<sup>196</sup>

After years of broken promises and stalling, New Zealand's political parties finally resigned themselves to the fact that a vote on the voting system could not be avoided. But public opinion about political parties had reached such depths that the government felt the need to hand over the administration of the public education process to a politically independent group, the Electoral Referendum Panel. It was an unusual move, especially considering how much the two major parties, National and Labour, opposed any change.<sup>197</sup>

Equipped with significant public funding, the panel's task was to inform the country's approximately 2.3 million registered voters about the workings of the two-stage referendum process, the choices available to them, and how and when to exercise their voting rights. Three months before the first referendum all voters received a pamphlet describing how the indicative referendum process worked and outlining the options to be voted on. Waves of advertizing supplemented the mail-out, alerting voters about the upcoming vote and directing them to the pamphlet and further information. Special materials were prepared for Maoris, Pacific Islanders, and other visible minority groups. Three television documentaries were commissioned about the referendum and the options, one specifically targeted at Maoris. Speakers were dispatched on request and special videos prepared for use by community groups. The panel also intervened in public discussions to clarify points of fact. Throughout the campaigns, the panel underlined their role as an information body, independent from government and political parties.<sup>198</sup>

Thus far, New Zealand has clearly enjoyed the highest level of citizen engagement with voting system reform anywhere. Recalling our minimum criteria for engagement, New Zealand voters were empowered to make the decision to change, the process was administered by non-partisan bodies, and significant public resources were marshaled to inform the public and facilitate their participation. These efforts were supplemented by a substantial private provision of resources - pamphlets, advertizing, polling - reflecting both pro and con sides of the debate. And political parties were also present, with surreptitious support from Labour members and local organizations, and solid organization support from new parties like the Alliance.<sup>199</sup>

Still, there is much room to build on New Zealand's experience and deepen future efforts at citizen engagement. While well stocked with expert opinion, New Zealand lacked a more citizen-oriented forum where members of the public could participate directly in the discussions. Incorporating citizens into the deliberations themselves would help assure a better translation from elite to mass discussions and vice-versa, and if televised these forums would probably draw more of the public into the process, even if they were not direct participants. New Zealand's experience must also draw attention to questions of campaign finance. If groups with superior funding appear to be able to dominate public debate by their ability to purchase advertizing, the fairness of the overall engagement process will be brought into question.

Citizen engagement on voting system reform has been uneven in our four most recent reforming countries. Japanese voters were limited to consultation by polling or debate in the pages of newspapers. Italian voters had more input, though it was mediated through referenda campaigns with unclear purposes and results. In Britain, the question of voting system reform emerged from a number of sources in civil society and political parties, with numerous bodies consulting the public and interested groups about potential changes. Still, the degree of public consultation was limited, and the reform votes to date have lumped together numerous objectives, making public views about voting system reform difficult to discern. Only New Zealand has had a clear vote on the question, a widely accepted non-partisan approach to administering the process, and some commitment of resources to make public participation realistic.

### ***Conclusion***

The past decade has witnessed citizen engagement strategies worm their way into an arena long dominated by elite negotiation - voting system reform. Though largely a failure in the early twentieth century, citizen-driven approaches to institutional reform

made an aggressive comeback in the 1960s, ultimately shifting public views about the appropriate roles of politicians and citizens. And even after the various 'participatory democracy' movements subsided, their influence remained, informing contemporary struggles over democratic reform. Though uneven in our most recent bout of voting system reform campaigns, citizen engagement is clearly on the rise.

However, public demand for consultation is arguably not the key element that has changed over time. By all accounts, traditional citizen engagement strategies were effective in articulating public concern about being consulted. What has changed is the response of the political parties. In the recent reform campaigns in Japan, Italy, Britain and New Zealand, levels of citizen engagement varied considerably. But what was common to all was the recognition by parties that voter concerns had to be seen to be heard and responded to. Why and how that response shaped up depended on a host of factors: the perceived legitimacy of existing political traditions and institutions, the stability (or instability) of the party system, the emergence and strength of civil society organizations and their interventions, etc. While no political process can be reproduced, recent international experience can be very instructive for Canadians in imagining, structuring, and securing effective citizen engagement around issues of democratic reform.

## 5. Conclusion

In this brief review of nearly two centuries of experience with voting system reform around the world, a seemingly infinite variety of factors and circumstances appear to have influenced the course of events. The struggle for representation, minimal democracy, ideologies of all stripes, and renewed citizenship have all played a role. What lessons from all this can be extracted for our present purposes of helping to inform a citizen engagement process around democratic reform in Canada? Without getting too swamped in the details, seven key themes can be gleaned from the historical record that remain useful to us today.

### 1. Voting systems are historical accomplishments.

Particular ways of voting have emerged in particular places because political and social actors have struggled to put them there. This may sound obvious but it bears repeating. There are scholars and pundits who talk as if different voting systems come into being to reflect different cultural approaches to politics. Plurality is alleged to respond to an 'adversary' approach to politics, PR to a consociational one. But the historical process set out here demonstrates that the particular state of political competition in any given country, rather than culture, has had greater influence on voting system choices. Britain very nearly adopted PR system at one time, and a host of European countries nearly didn't. Success or failure reflected the relative strength of political and social forces, the legitimacy of existing institutional arrangements, and the impact of largely unpredictable historical events.

The history of voting system reform can be broken up into two broad periods, the first dominated by the struggle for minimally democratic regimes, and the second by the continuing crisis of legitimacy in modern democracies. The first period was characterized by elite negotiation over voting rules, negligible or ineffective public input, and the determining influence of the political fortunes of the left. The second period has been marked by greater levels of public influence and participation, party system and ideological instability, and processes of change triggered by scandal, duplicity, and party self-interest.

### 2. Existing institutional arrangements matter.

The existence of an abrogative referendum process in Italy helped channel voting system reform efforts there in a certain direction, i.e. toward repealing aspects of the

existing voting system. New Zealand's highly majoritarian Westminster system and publicly accepted traditions of 'mandate' campaigning helped focus public attention on the means by which parties wielded governing power. Similar examples could be produced for Britain, Japan and the previous historical era of voting system reform. The point is that existing institutional arrangements form the terrain upon which reform efforts will be fought and they are different from country to country. The existence of certain institutions do not determine their use - for instance, Italians could have tried other methods to change their voting system. But mapping out a country's particular set of political institutions can help anticipate where opportunities for reform and citizen engagement may or may not emerge.

### **3. Mobilization of public opinion matters.**

Most people in Canada do not know what a voting system is. Unless key political parties take up the issue, increasing public knowledge of voting systems and their potential effects will be crucial to getting - and keeping - reform on the political agenda. In New Zealand, mobilized public opinion helped keep voting system reform alive as a political issue, despite the hostility of the major parties and their best efforts to suppress it. Even the temporary victories of North American reformers in the early to mid-twentieth century demonstrate the potential power of public education and the mobilization of that public opinion behind reform campaigns.

### **4. Political parties matter.**

In mobilizing public opinion, reformers must be careful not to allow their campaigns to become focused against parties, or deny a proper role for parties in the process. Parties matter. Parties represent a considerable mobilization of resources and people. And despite recent complaints, many observers see parties as both a necessary and advisable component of modern democratic process. In a complex world where representative democracies often consist of millions of voters, parties can act to facilitate democratic participation by giving shape to political issues, translating between expert opinion and common sense, and marking off clear choices of policy. In fact, most scholarship agrees that voters support parties and can distinguish between them.

Historically, party behaviour has been a key factor in voting system reforms. The rise of programmatic left parties shifted how all parties behaved electorally, and gave impetus to the first wave of voting system reforms. The lack of party support for new voting systems in the US and Canada led to their rapid repeal. Even where voting rules

appear entrenched, they are usually only kept in place by tacit major party agreement. For instance, Alberta and Manitoba quickly dispensed with their mixed voting systems, despite decades of use and no public demand for change, when the dominant party or parties saw fit to do so. Germany nearly changed from MMP to plurality in the late 1960s when both major parties decided to act together. Even Britain, long the most shrill defender of plurality voting, blithely ignored history and took up a host of semi-proportional voting systems recently for different levels of government because a governing party committed to do it.

Parties matter in another sense, beyond their support or opposition to reform. The state of party competition and the nature of political coalitions at any given time can also be an opportunity for reform. In all of the countries recently embracing voting system reform, struggles within the party system to either break up or remake existing parties created space for the consideration of new voting systems.

#### **5. Civil society organizations matter.**

New Zealand's ERC was a dynamic, activist-oriented coalition that moved into every public space to promote voting system reform. They knocked on doors, they haunted the halls of parliament, they appeared on television and radio phone-in shows, and generally acted as a sharp spur in the side of political elites and parties to keep their issue on the agenda. By contrast, Italy's COREL was a coalition of organizations with strong links to political parties, organized primarily to gather signatures for referendums - they had little presence as an independent organization. Obviously the former approach holds out more promise of effective citizen engagement.

Voting system reform organizations have taken all forms. The British Electoral Reform Society, and more recently the American Center for Voting and Democracy, have tended toward expert interventions and policy research. While valuable, civil society organizations must also focus on citizen and organizational outreach if they are going to effectively connect a mobilized public opinion around the issue to the opportunities that may arise to move forward.

#### **6. Methods of citizen engagement matter.**

The choice of citizen engagement strategies can be either broad or limited. Britain's Independent Commission on the Electoral System offered some space for citizen involvement, but its 'expert' orientation and the fact that its members had close links to political parties limited its appeal. On the other hand, Italy's referendums offered

citizens a direct role in giving the voting system shape, but provided little in the way of resources to inform the process. Only New Zealand offered both a direct role for citizens in choosing the voting system and a public process to ensure citizens a realistic chance of effective participation.

It is worth underlining the positive aspects of the citizen engagement experience in New Zealand, even if we admit that they emerged in an *ad hoc* way and for largely pragmatic rather than principled reasons. Three elements stand out: an impartial fact-finding commission to inform and set the terms of the discussion, an independent educational body with adequate public funds to inform citizens through mailings, broadcasts and public meetings, and a clear process for deciding amongst alternative voting systems that is ultimately left up to voters in a binding referendum. One could easily add to this list a series of citizen forums where voters could participate directly in the discussions.

#### **7. Unpredictable opportunities matter.**

In Italy a series of judicial investigations into corruption triggered a process of political unraveling that ultimately remade the party system and furthered the effort to reform the voting system. In Japan too corruption fueled a largely insincere voting system reform initiative as a means of avoiding more thorough-going reforms. But in the end voting system reform couldn't be avoided. In New Zealand a televised slip-up by the Prime Minister shifted the centre of the campaign from a debate over *whether* to *when* action would be taken, specifically in the form of holding a binding referendum on the question. These events were unpredictable, but with hindsight we can see them as important catalysts in the campaigns for voting system reform. Reformers must be alert to the opportunities wherever they may appear - and they will seldom announce themselves as such.

In other words, there is no real formal process for reviewing and reforming voting rules, and the events that have occurred in other countries and other times may be instructive but can seldom be repeated. The case for reforming Canada's voting system will be wrought from Canadian circumstances and argued in terms of the details of Canadian political institutions and traditions. History and comparative examples help in suggesting how to do this, or where to start, but they do not provide a blueprint. The catalyst for a thorough re-evaluation of Canada's voting rules may already be present, or it may be still to come; either way it is the task of reformers to find it and build a campaign around it.

## **Appendix One: How Voting Systems Work**

The voting system is easily defined: it comprises the distinct subset of election rules that concern how votes will be translated into representation.<sup>200</sup> Voting rules determine if votes are counted in local constituencies or totaled across the country as a whole, what kind of marking must be made on the ballot, and how winners are established. Voting rules also tend to point to what is supposed to be represented: party interests, regional concerns, or local ridings. In many European proportional systems political parties are the main focus; in the United States the single member plurality system (SMP) gives more prominence to candidates and local areas. Though Canada too uses SMP there is less agreement about what exactly is supposed to be represented - some say party, some say locality, some say individual. Recently, the question of identity has been added to the debates around representation and voting systems have been compared on the basis of how well they reflect a society's diversity, particularly as concerns gender.

All voting systems consist of three components: voting formula, district size and ballot structure. Voting formula refers to how votes are added up to determine winners. With a plurality formula, the candidate with the most votes wins, regardless of what proportion of the overall vote she has. With just two candidates, a majority is likely, but with three or four a winner could have just 34% or 26% of the vote and win. A majority formula seeks to correct for this by insisting that a winner gain 50% +1 for election. PR formulas broadly convert votes into seats so that the proportions of seats awarded roughly mirror the proportions of the votes cast. Each formula is applied to votes within a geographical area or district, which can vary in size from a single to multi-member constituencies. Thus plurality can be combined with single member districts, as for election to the Canadian House of Commons, or multimember districts, as in the elections for Vancouver's city council. Ballot structure refers to the manner in which voters mark their preferences on the ballot - nominal or ordinal. A nominal ballot involves one choice - usually an 'X' - for an individual candidate and/or party, or a number of choices of equal voting weight in multimember contests. An ordinal ballot allows voters to rank candidates by number - 1,2,3 - from their most to least preferred.

When these three elements are combined in different ways, they create specific voting systems. However, there is considerable academic debate about the appropriate way to classify voting systems and a variety of typologies have been constructed reflecting these different views on the subject.<sup>201</sup> For instance, some lump plurality and

majority systems together, or distinguish between PR and what they call 'mixed' voting systems.<sup>202</sup> Without getting into the fine points of this debate, for our purposes it makes sense to organize a voting system typology in terms of the results they produce. This is, in fact, how reformers, politicians and citizens have generally sorted them out historically.

With this results-oriented voting system typology, there are then three broad types: plurality, majority and proportional, with another hybrid group comprising semi-proportional systems. The plurality system is a 'winner take all' approach that, as mentioned above, can be combined with either single or multimember constituencies - both are plurality voting systems. Single member plurality, also known as 'first-past-the-post' or the simple majority system, is used for most Canadian and American elections. Multimember plurality is usually referred to as bloc voting or 'at large' and remains in use municipally in a few North American locales. A majority system can be organized like the French double ballot, where votes are cast in two rounds (one to narrow the field and the second to elect someone), or by using a transferable ballot, where voters number their choices (low vote-getters are eliminated and ballots redistributed until someone has a majority). The latter system, also known as the alternative vote, is used for lower house elections in Australia. Finally, proportional voting systems come in all kinds of combinations, based primarily on single or multimember ridings, with either transferable or non-transferable balloting.

It is worth looking a bit closer at the three most basic forms of PR: party list, single transferable vote (STV), and mixed-member proportional (MMP). Party list has multi-member ridings, nominal voting (voters choose a list *in toto*, though sometimes they can alter the candidate order), and a proportional formula (there are different formulas that tweak the level of proportionality). Party list is used in many European countries, particularly in Scandinavia. STV also uses multi-member ridings and a proportional formula but utilizes transferable balloting to determine which individual candidates will be elected. STV has been used in Ireland, for the upper house elections in Australia, and for some provincial and municipal contests in Manitoba and Alberta from about 1920 to 1960. MMP combines single member plurality elections with top-ups from party lists to create an overall proportional result. Some call MMP a 'mixed' electoral system rather than a proportional one, but as the results are usually proportional it makes sense to consider it a form of PR. It is used in Germany and New Zealand.

Another group of voting systems do not fall neatly into any of the above categories: semi-proportional systems. The limited vote, single non-transferable vote,

and cumulative vote are basically variations of multi-member plurality voting, while others combine single member plurality voting with proportional party lists, though the overall results are not proportional. The latter systems have recently become popular with electoral engineers in Japan, Russia and Mexico. Semi-proportional systems get their name because they usually assure a degree of minority representation but fall well short of proportional representation.

## Appendix Two: Tables

### Voting Systems in Directly Elected Lower Houses: Adoptions by Date

Country	Plurality	Majority	PR	Mixed
Australia	1900	1918	n/a	n/a
Austria	n/a	1873	1919	n/a
Belgium	n/a	1831	1919	1899
Canada	1867	n/a	n/a	n/a
Denmark	1849	n/a	1920	1915
Finland	1863	n/a	1906	n/a
France	1848 1871	1817 1853 1874 1927 1958 1988	1945 1986	1919 1951
Germany	n/a	1871	1918	n/a
Italy	n/a	1861	1919	1993
Japan	n/a	n/a	n/a	1925 1994
Netherlands	n/a	1850	1917	n/a
New Zealand	1853 1912	1908	1993	n/a
Norway	n/a	1905	1919	n/a
Sweden	1809	n/a	1907	n/a
Switzerland	n/a	1850	1918	n/a
United Kingdom	1265	n/a	n/a	n/a
United States	1776	n/a	n/a	n/a

#### Sources:

Andrew Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe* (1980)  
M.S. Shugart and M.P. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Electoral Systems* (2001)

Responsible Government/Full Male Suffrage/PR:  
Adoptions by Date

Country	responsible government	full male suffrage	PR/partial PR adoption (lower house)
Australia	1900	1900	n/a
Austria	1918	1907	1919
Belgium	c. 1831-41	1893	1899
Canada	1867	c. 1885-90	n/a
Denmark	1901	1849	1915
Finland	1917	1906	1906
France	c. 1821-71	1848	1919
Germany	1918	1871	1918
Italy	1860	1919	1919
Japan	1952	1925	1994
Netherlands	1868	1917	1917
New Zealand	1892	1879	1993
Norway	1905	1897	1919
Sweden	1917	1909	1907
Switzerland	1848	1848	1918
United Kingdom	c. 1688-1840	1918	n/a
United States	1776	c. 1830	n/a

Sources:

Stein Rokkan, *Citizens Elections Parties* (1970)

Andrew Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe* (1980)

Klaus von Beyme, *Parliamentary Democracy* (2000)

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Thanks must be extended to Larry Gordon and André Larocque for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of the paper, and to Richard Swift and Steven Bittle for their extensive editorial suggestions. These have greatly improved the final product. However, any mistakes or problems that remain are solely the responsibility of the author.
- <sup>2</sup> For the purposes of comparison with Canada, our 'lessons from around the world' will be restricted to industrialized countries in Europe, North America, Australasia, including late twentieth century Japan.
- <sup>3</sup> Klaus von Beyme, *Parliamentary Democracy: Democratization, Destabilization, Reconsolidation, 1789-1999*, (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 5.
- <sup>4</sup> Andrew McLaren Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980).
- <sup>5</sup> Beyme, *supra*, note 3, at 26-7.
- <sup>6</sup> For an in-depth treatment of this process, see Stein Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, (New York: David McKay Company, 1970).
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, at 241.
- <sup>8</sup> Beyme, 16-7; C.B. Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 23.
- <sup>9</sup> Jon Roper, *Democracy and its Critics: Anglo-American Democratic Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 149-50.
- <sup>10</sup> Ruth Berins Collier, *Paths Toward Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 89-90. It has been common to credit reform in Belgium to concern about 'minority' representation, specifically language and religion, but this work either ignores or underplays more sweeping social mobilizations; see Rokkan, 157.
- <sup>11</sup> Carstairs, 112-3; Robert Lee Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Nebraska, 1964), 115.
- <sup>12</sup> Collier, *supra*, note 10, at 78-9.
- <sup>13</sup> Rokkan, *supra*, note 6, at 157-8.
- <sup>14</sup> Carl C. Hodge, "Three Ways to Lose a Republic: The Electoral Politics of the Weimar SPD," *European History Quarterly*, 17 (1987), 174.
- <sup>15</sup> Michael Mann, "Sources of Variation in Working Class Movements in Twentieth Century Europe," *New Left Review*, 212 (July/August 1995), 25-7.
- <sup>16</sup> Rokkan, *supra*, note 6, at 157-8.
- <sup>17</sup> Kenneth Mackenzie, *The English Parliament*, (Hammondsworth: Pelican, 1951), 89.
- <sup>18</sup> Though the Lords' power was seriously curtailed by 1911, they continued to exercise considerable influence until 1947; see Graham Wilson, "British Democracy and Its Discontents," in M. Heper, A. Kazancigil and B. Rockman (eds.), *Institutions and Democratic Statecraft*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 63.
- <sup>19</sup> George Brown Tindal, *America, A Narrative History, Volume One, Second Edition*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 284, 408.
- <sup>20</sup> Peter Argersinger, "Political Representation in the Gilded Age," *The Journal of American History*, 76:1 (June 1989), 65.
- <sup>21</sup> Alexander Brady, *Democracy in the Dominions, Third Edition*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 68, 141, 266.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, at 71.
- <sup>23</sup> Martin Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace, 1906-18*, (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1978), 158, 163-6.
- <sup>24</sup> Dennis Pilon, "The History of Voting System Reform in Canada," in H. Milner (ed.), *Making Every Vote Count: Reassessing Canada's Electoral System*, (Peterborough: Broadview, 1999), 114.
- <sup>25</sup> Clarence G. Hoag and George Hallet Jr., *Proportional Representation*, (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 196-271.
- <sup>26</sup> Keith Jackson and Alan McRobie, *New Zealand Adopts Proportional Representation*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 38-9.
- <sup>27</sup> Ben Reilly and Michael Maley, "The Single Transferable Vote and the Alternative Vote Compared," in S. Bowler and B. Grofman (eds.), *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the Single Transferable Vote*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 42.
- <sup>28</sup> Colin Hughes, "STV in Australia," in S. Bowler and B. Grofman (eds.), *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the Single Transferable Vote*, 155.
- <sup>29</sup> Pilon, *supra*, note 24, at 114-5.
- <sup>30</sup> Minor changes were made to allocation rules in the Netherlands in 1921, 1923, and 1933; Norway in 1930, Sweden in 1921; Germany in 1920; and Austria in 1920, 1923. See the relevant chapters in Carstairs, *supra*, note 4, for details.

- <sup>31</sup> Walter R. Sharp, "The New French Electoral Law and the Elections of 1928," *American Political Science Review*, 22:3 (August 1928), 684-7; Hartmut Ullrich, "Historiography, Sources and Methods for the Study of Electoral Laws in Italy," in S. Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms: Origins of Voting Systems in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990), 327-8.
- <sup>32</sup> Herman Finer, *The Case Against PR*, (London: Fabian Society, 1935);  
H. Orliffe, "Proportional Representation?" *Canadian Forum* 17(February 1938), 388-90.
- <sup>33</sup> Jenifer Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 226, 237, 240-4.
- <sup>34</sup> Jackson and McRobie, *supra*, note 26, at 38-9; Dennis Pilon, "Proportional Representation in Canada: An Historical Sketch," Paper presented to the Canadian Political Science Association Annual General Meeting, St. Johns, Nfld., June 10, 1997.
- <sup>35</sup> *National Municipal Review*, 21:6 (June 1932), 376.
- <sup>36</sup> Mark Roseman, "Restoration and Stability: The Creation of a Stable Democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany," in J. Garrard et al (eds.), *European Democratization since 1800*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 151.
- <sup>37</sup> For just one example see Douglas J. Forsyth, "The peculiarities of Italo-American relations in historical perspective," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 3:1 (1998), 1-21.
- <sup>38</sup> Mario Einaudi, "Political Change in France and Italy," *American Political Science Review*, 40:5 (October 1946), 903.
- <sup>39</sup> Peter Pulzer, "Germany," in V. Bogdanor and D. Butler (eds.), *Democracy and Elections*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 93.
- <sup>40</sup> Merith Niehuss, "Historiography, Sources and Methods of Electoral and Electoral Law Analysis in Germany - 1871 to 1987, in S. Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms*, 157.
- <sup>41</sup> Pulzer, *supra*, note 39, at 93-4.
- <sup>42</sup> Susan Scarrow, "Germany: The Mixed-Member System as a Political Compromise," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 63.
- <sup>43</sup> Pulzer, *supra*, note 39, at 94-7.
- <sup>44</sup> Belle Zeller and Hugh A. Bone, "The Repeal of P.R. in New York City - Ten Years in Retrospect," *American Political Science Review*, 42 (December 1948), 1133.
- <sup>45</sup> Carstairs, *supra*, note 4, at 159.
- <sup>46</sup> Robert G. Neumann, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," *American Political Science Review*, 45:3 (September 1951), 742-3.
- <sup>47</sup> Roy Pierce, "The French Election of January 1956," *The Journal of Politics*, 19:3 (1957), 420-1.
- <sup>48</sup> Maurice Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front, Second Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 270.
- <sup>49</sup> Eckhard Jesse, "Electoral Reform in West Germany: Historical, Political and Judicial Aspects," in S. Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms*, 375-6.
- <sup>50</sup> Carstairs, *supra*, note 4, at 171-3. Germanic enthusiasm for voting reform spilled over the border to Austria as well in 1966 where the CDU's equivalent there made an election pledge to introduce plurality voting. However, the rationale for the Austrian reforms evaporated when reformers won an outright majority under the existing PR rules.
- <sup>51</sup> Dennis Pilon, "Making Voting Reform Count: Evaluating Historical Voting Reform Strategies in British Columbia," Making Votes Count Conference, Vancouver, BC, May 13, 2000, 10-13; see also Thomas Michael Sanford, "The Politics of Protest: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and Social Credit League in British Columbia," (Ph.D. thesis: University of California, 1961).
- <sup>52</sup> Bob Hesketh, "The Abolition of Preferential Voting in Alberta," *Prairie Forum*, 12:1 (Spring 1987), 123-144.
- <sup>53</sup> Arend Lijphart, "The Dutch Electoral System in Comparative Perspective: Extreme Proportional Representation, Multipartism, and the Failure of Electoral Reform," *The Netherlands Journal of Sociology*, 14 (1978), 124, 128; Rudy B. Andeweg, "Institutional Conservatism in the Netherlands: Proposals for and Resistance to Change," *West European Politics*, 12:1 (January 1989), 50.
- <sup>54</sup> Joseph Zimmerman, "A Proportional Representation System and New York City School Boards," *National Civic Review*, (October 1974), 472-474, 493.
- <sup>55</sup> Carstairs, *supra*, note 4, at 136; Kris Kobach, *The Referendum: Direct Democracy in Switzerland*, (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1993), 25-6.
- <sup>56</sup> Kobach, *supra*, note 55, at 22-30.
- <sup>57</sup> Leon Weaver, "The Rise, Decline, and Resurrection of Proportional Representation in Local Governments in the United States," in B. Grofman and A. Lijphart (eds.), *Electoral Laws and their Political Consequences*, (New York: Agathon Press, 1986), 140-1.
- <sup>58</sup> Hoag and Hallett, *supra*, note 25, at 196-274; see also Kathleen Barber, *Proportional Representation and Electoral Reform in Ohio*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1995).
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, at 189.

- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, at 196-201, 204-8.
- <sup>61</sup> Weaver, *supra*, note 57, at 141; Douglas Amy, *Real Choices, New Voices: The Case for Proportional Representation Elections in the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 220-1.
- <sup>62</sup> Evidence that political parties matter can be gleaned from the long use of the semi-proportional cumulative vote (CV) in Illinois. Adopted in 1870 for state-wide legislative elections with bipartisan support, CV was only repealed in 1980 when one party changed its policy. See Leon Weaver, "Semi-Proportional and Proportional Representation Systems in the United States," in A. Lijphart and B. Grofman (eds.), *Choosing an Electoral System*, (New York: Praeger, 1984), 198-9. On the other hand, Irish party efforts to remove PR by referenda twice failed. See Enid Lakeman, *Power to Elect: The Case for Proportional Representation*, (London: Heinemann, 1982) 90.
- <sup>63</sup> Amy, *supra*, note 61, at 217-8.
- <sup>64</sup> Pilon, *supra*, note 24, at 115.
- <sup>65</sup> Pilon, *supra*, note 24, at 113-7; more in-depth treatments of Canadian experience, though with slightly different interpretations, can be found in Harry Charles John Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada, 1874-1974," (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Western Ontario, 1976); Harold Jansen, "The Single Transferable Ballot in Alberta and Manitoba," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Alberta, 1998); and J. Paul Johnston and Miriam Koene, "Learning History's Lessons Anew: The Use of STV in Canadian Municipal Elections," in S. Bowler and B. Grofman (eds.), *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta under the Single Transferable Vote*, 205-47.
- <sup>66</sup> Though municipal use of PR continued until 1961 in Calgary and 1971 in Winnipeg, St. James and St. Vital; Pilon, *supra*, note 24, at 118-9.
- <sup>67</sup> Pulzer, *supra*, note 39, at 102; Carstairs, *supra*, note 4, at 159.
- <sup>68</sup> Of course, long before the 1970s southern Europe and Latin America, as well as developing areas like Africa and South Asia, had also seen struggles for representation and democracy, as well as much voting system reform. For some insight into these struggles see Mark P. Jones, "A Guide to the Electoral Systems of the Americas," *Electoral Studies*, 14:1 (1995), 5-21; Andrew Reynolds, *Electoral Systems and Democratization in Southern Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Bernard Grofman et al (eds.), *Elections in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan under the Single Non-Transferable Vote*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
- <sup>69</sup> Jordi Capo Giol, "To Reform the Electoral System in Spain?" in S. Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms*, 408-9; Mark P. Jones, "A Guide to the Electoral Systems of the Americas," 12.
- <sup>70</sup> Luciano Bardi, "The Harmonization of European Election Law," in S. Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms*, 512-3.
- <sup>71</sup> Arend Lijphart, "The Demise of the Last Westminster System: Comments on the Report of New Zealand's Royal Commission on the Electoral System," *Electoral Studies*, 6:2 (1987), 103; see also Jonathon Boston, "Electoral Reform In New Zealand: The Report of the Royal Commission," *Electoral Studies*, 6:2 (1987), 105-114.
- <sup>72</sup> In a bid to split the right and shore up support for his left coalition, French president Mitterrand moved the adoption of PR nationally in 1986. Yet just two years later parliament voted to return to the country's traditional majoritarian double ballot. See Andrew Knapp, "Proportional but Bipolar: France's Electoral System in 1986," *West European Politics*, 10:1 (January 1987), 89-114; Byron Criddle, "Electoral Systems in France," *Parliamentary Affairs*, 45:1 (January 1992), 108-116; Patricia L. Southwell, "Fairness, Governability, and Legitimacy: The Debate Over Electoral Systems in France," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 25 (Winter 1997), 163-185.
- <sup>73</sup> Arend Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 19.
- <sup>74</sup> David Denmark, "Choosing MMP in New Zealand: Explaining the 1993 Electoral Reform," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems*, 71.
- <sup>75</sup> Jackson and McRobie, *supra*, note 26, at 12.
- <sup>76</sup> Denmark, *supra*, note 74, at 72-3.
- <sup>77</sup> Denmark, *supra*, note 74, at 75-6.
- <sup>78</sup> Jackson and McRobie, *supra*, note 26, at 40.
- <sup>79</sup> Denmark, *supra*, note 74, at 85.
- <sup>80</sup> Jackson and McRobie, *supra*, note 26, at 95-9.
- <sup>81</sup> David Denmark, "Political Accountability and Electoral Reform in New Zealand," *Australian Quarterly*, 68:4 (Summer 1996), 99-100.
- <sup>82</sup> Denmark, "Choosing MMP in New Zealand: Explaining the 1993 Electoral Reform," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems*, 82-3.
- <sup>83</sup> Jack Vowles, "The Politics of Electoral Reform in New Zealand," *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995), 100-1.
- <sup>84</sup> Jackson and McRobie, *supra*, note 26, at 12.

- <sup>85</sup> Jackson and McRobie, *supra*, note 26, at 42-5, 108. However, some might argue however that Palmer was not terribly principled when he accepted the premiership in 1989 and went on to defend Labour's position in breaking its promise on voting system reform.
- <sup>86</sup> Jackson and McRobie, *supra*, note 26, at 122.
- <sup>87</sup> Jackson and McRobie, *supra*, note 26, at 46-8.
- <sup>88</sup> Denmark, *supra*, note 74, at 89.
- <sup>89</sup> Vowles, , *supra*, note 83, at 103.
- <sup>90</sup> Peter Aimer, "From Westminster Plurality to Continental Proportionality: Electoral System Change," in H. Milner (ed.), *Making Every Vote Count*, 151.
- <sup>91</sup> Jack W. Lamare and Jack Vowles, "Party Interests, Public Opinion and Institutional Preferences: Electoral System Change in New Zealand," *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 31:3 (1996), 330-1.
- <sup>92</sup> F. Barker et al "An Initial Assessment of the Consequences of MMP in New Zealand," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems*, 321-2.
- <sup>93</sup> New Zealand Electoral Commission, "MMP Review Committee Decides to Stick with the Status Quo," *Electoral Brief*, 20 (September 2001), 1-2. However, polls did register considerable voter dissatisfaction with the new system in the years after the first PR election in 1996, due in large part to the erratic behaviour of a new party, New Zealand First (NZF). However, in 1999 NZF suffered a dramatic loss of support and voter surveys now reflect more support for PR.
- <sup>94</sup> Patrick McCarthy, "The referendum of 9 June," in S. Hellman and G. Pasquino (eds.), *Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 7*, (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1992), 11.
- <sup>95</sup> P. Corbetta, and A. Parisi, "The Referendum on the Electoral Law for the Senate: Another Momentous April," in C. Mershon and G. Pasquino (eds.), *Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 9, Ending the First Republic*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 76.
- <sup>96</sup> P. Furlong, "Political Catholicism and the strange death of the Christian Democrats," in S. Gundle and S. Parker (eds.), *The New Italian Republic: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to Berlusconi*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 65.
- <sup>97</sup> Simon Parker, "Electoral reform and political change in Italy, 1991-1994," in S. Gundle and S. Parker (eds.), *The New Italian Republic*, 45-6.
- <sup>98</sup> Gianfranco Pasquino, "A Postmortem of the Bicamerale," in D. Hine and S. Vassallo (eds.), *Italian Politics, A Review, Volume 14, The Return of Politics*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 102.
- <sup>99</sup> S. Fabbrini, "Has Italy rejected the referendum path to change? The failed referenda of May 2000," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 6:1 (Spring 2001), 40, 52.
- <sup>100</sup> Gianfranco Pasquino, "That Obscure Object of Desire: A New Electoral Law for Italy," in S. Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms*, 479.
- <sup>101</sup> Stefano Guzzini, "The 'Long Night of the First Republic': years of clientelistic implosion in Italy," *Review of International Political Economy*, 2:1 (Winter 1995), 27-61; M. Bull and M. Rhodes, "Between crisis and transition: Italian politics in the 1990s," *West European Politics*, 20:1 (Jan 1997), 1-13; Phillips Daniels, "Italy: Rupture and Regeneration?" D. Broughton and M. Donovan (eds.), *Changing Party Systems in Western Europe*, (London: Pinter, 1999), 72-95.
- <sup>102</sup> Pietro Scoppola, "The Christian Democrats and the Political Crisis," *Modern Italy*, 1:1 (1995), 19.
- <sup>103</sup> Giuseppe Di Palma, "The Available State: Problems of Reform," in Peter Lange and Sidney Tarrow (eds.), *Italy in Transition*, (London: Frank Cass, 1980), 152-3.
- <sup>104</sup> Review of the debate can be found in G. Pasquino, "That Obscure Object of Desire,," and G. Pasquino, "Reforming the Italian constitution," *Journal of Italian Studies*, 3:1 (1998), 42-54.
- <sup>105</sup> Stephen Gundle, "The rise and fall of Craxi's Socialist Party," in S. Gundle and S. Parker (eds.), *The New Italian Republic*, 90.
- <sup>106</sup> Stephen Hellman, "Italian Communism in the First Republic," in S. Gundle and S. Parker (eds.), *The New Italian Republic*, 82-3.
- <sup>107</sup> Guzzini, *supra*, note 101, at 51-2.
- <sup>108</sup> Mark Donovan, "The referendum and the transformation of the party system," *Modern Italy*, 1:1 (1995), 58-9.
- <sup>109</sup> Pasquino, "Reforming the Italian Constitution," 42-4; Fabbrini, *supra*, note 99, at 48-50, 54.
- <sup>110</sup> Rei Shiratori, "The Politics of Electoral Reform in Japan," *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995), 92.
- <sup>111</sup> Stephen Reed and Michael Thies, "The Causes of Electoral Reform in Japan," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems*, 169-70.
- <sup>112</sup> Raymond V. Christensen, "Electoral Reform in Japan: How It Was Enacted and Changes It May Bring," *Asian Survey*, XXXIV:7 (July 1994), 598-601.
- <sup>113</sup> Reed and Thies, *supra*, note 111, at 152; Hoag and Hallet, *supra*, note 25, at 49-50; Lakeman, *supra*, note 62, at 27; Harry Charles John Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada, 1874-1974," 106-10; and Amy, *supra*, note 61, at 217.
- <sup>114</sup> J.A.A. Stockwin, "Japan," in V. Bogdanor and D. Butler (editors), *Democracy and Elections: Electoral Systems and their Political Consequences*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 210.

- <sup>115</sup> See Haruhiro Fukio and Shigeko N. Fukai, "Pork Barrel Politics, Networks, and Local Economic Development in Contemporary Japan," *Asian Survey*, XXXVI:3 (March 1996), 268-286.
- <sup>116</sup> The debates amongst Japan's political class over the effects of SNTV stretch back to the early days of American occupation following WWII. However, except for some minor tinkering with the size the districts between 1946-7, the system survived countless efforts to change it over the following decades. See Masaru Kohno, *Japan's Postwar Party Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 39-47.
- <sup>117</sup> Reed and Thies, *supra*, note 111, at 158-9.
- <sup>118</sup> Gerald D. Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics; Leaders, Institutions, and the Limits of Change*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 147-8.
- <sup>119</sup> Reed and Thies, *supra*, note 111, at 161.
- <sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, at 161-2.
- <sup>121</sup> Curtis, *supra*, note 118, at 21, 139.
- <sup>122</sup> Reed and Thies, *supra*, note 111, at 163-5.
- <sup>123</sup> Curtis, *supra*, note 118, at 92.
- <sup>124</sup> Reed and Thies, *supra*, note 111, at 167.
- <sup>125</sup> Curtis, *supra*, note 118, at 159-60.
- <sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, at 116.
- <sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, at 168.
- <sup>128</sup> Kubota reports 42 political scandals between 1955-1993, at a rate of at least one major scandal per year; Akira Kubota, "A Genuine Reform? The June-August 1993 Upheaval in Japanese Politics," *Asian Thought and Society*, XVII:53-4 (May-December 1993), 112.
- <sup>129</sup> Curtis, *supra*, note 118, at 198.
- <sup>130</sup> Particularly from the US; Curtis, *supra*, note 118, at 199; see also Gregory W. Noble, "Japan in 1993: Humpty Dumpty Had a Great Fall," *Asian Survey*, XXXIV:1 (January 1994), 19-29.
- <sup>131</sup> Curtis, *supra*, note 118, at 21, 43, 52, 88.
- <sup>132</sup> Christensen, 596; Eugene L. Wolfe, "Japanese Electoral and Political Reform: Role of the Young Turks," *Asian Survey*, XXXV:12 (December 1995), 1070-73.
- <sup>133</sup> Reed and Thies, *supra*, note 111, 171.
- <sup>134</sup> Keiko Tabusa, "The 1996 General Election in Japan," *Australian Quarterly*, 69:1 (Autumn 1997), 22-3.
- <sup>135</sup> Stephen Reed and Michael Thies, "The Consequences of Electoral Reform in Japan," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems*, 388-9, 392.
- <sup>136</sup> David Farrell, "The United Kingdom Comes of Age: The British Electoral Reform 'Revolution' of the 1990s," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems*, 525.
- <sup>137</sup> Farrell, *Ibid*, at 521.
- <sup>138</sup> David Butler, "Electoral Reform and Political Strategy in Britain," in S. Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms*, 457.
- <sup>139</sup> Pippa Norris, "The Politics of Electoral Reform in Britain," *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995), 72-3.
- <sup>140</sup> Hart, *supra*, note 33, at 284. For instance, the 1983 Campaign for Fair Votes, an eclectic group of Liberal and Conservative politicians, gathered over one million signatures calling for a referendum on PR, to no avail.
- <sup>141</sup> Even hoping for a 'hung' parliament was far from a sure thing. The third place Liberals had supported a minority Labour administration twice in the past (1929-31; 1976-9) but failed to extract any concessions on voting system reform. See Hart, *supra*, note 33, at 244-5.
- <sup>142</sup> Though LCER was formed in 1976; Hart, *supra*, note 33, at 285-6.
- <sup>143</sup> Norris, *supra*, note 139, at 74-5.
- <sup>144</sup> Farrell, *supra*, note 136, at 528.
- <sup>145</sup> Paul Webb and Justin Fisher, "The Changing British Party System: Two-Party Equilibrium or the Emergence of Moderate Pluralism?" D. Broughton and M. Donovan (eds.), *Changing Party Systems in Western Europe*, (London: Pinter, 1999), 24-5.
- <sup>146</sup> David Denver et al, *Scotland Decides: The Devolution Issue and the Scottish Referendum*, (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 33.
- <sup>147</sup> Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour*, (London: Verso, 1997), 237, 250-7.
- <sup>148</sup> In a move that seemed to confirm this view, few of the critics were re-nominated and two were even expelled from the party; see Andrew Reynolds, "Electoral System Reform in the United Kingdom," in H. Milner (ed.), *Making Every Vote Count*, 172-3.
- <sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, at 173-4.
- <sup>150</sup> Farrell, *supra*, note 136, at 537.
- <sup>151</sup> Amy, *supra*, note 61, at 218-21.
- <sup>152</sup> Amy, *supra*, note 61, at 217-18.

- <sup>153</sup> Echoing the strategy of the American PR League, their ancestor organization, CVD has expended much of its recent effort at the municipal level but with ambiguous results. For more information, see their website: [www.fairvote.org](http://www.fairvote.org).
- <sup>154</sup> Alan Cairns, "The Electoral System and the Party System in Canada, 1921-1965", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 1 (March 1968), 55-80.
- <sup>155</sup> F. Leslie Seidle, "The Canadian Electoral System and Proposals for Reform," in A. Brian Tanguay and Alain-G. Gagnon (eds.), *Canadian Parties in Transition, Second Edition*, (Toronto: Nelson, 1996), 292.
- <sup>156</sup> Proposals included the Pepin-Robarts Task Force on Canadian Unity, federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent, and William Irvine, *Does Canada Need a New Electoral System?* (Kingston: Queen's University Press, 1979). For a comprehensive review up to 1985 see William Irvine, "A Review and Evaluation of Electoral System Reform Proposals," in Peter Aucoin (ed.), *Institutional Reforms for Representative Government, Royal Commission on Economic Union Research Volume 38*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 71-98.
- <sup>157</sup> Donley Studlar, "Will Canada Seriously Consider Electoral System Reform? Women and Aboriginals Should," in H. Milner (ed.), *Making Every Vote Count*, 125.
- <sup>158</sup> Henry Milner, "Obstacles to Electoral Reform," *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, (Spring 1994), 39-55.
- <sup>159</sup> Weaver, "Electoral Rules and Electoral Reform in Canada," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems*, 557-8.
- <sup>160</sup> A sample of these opinions can be found in two special issues of *Policy Options* devoted to voting system reform; November 1997, July-August 2001.
- <sup>161</sup> Louis Massicotte, "Changing the Canadian Electoral System," *IRPP Choices*, 7:1 (February 2001), 21-2.
- <sup>162</sup> Basic information about Fair Vote Canada and their activities can be found at [www.fairvotecanada.org](http://www.fairvotecanada.org).
- <sup>163</sup> Paul Howe and David Northrup, "Strengthening Canadian Democracy," *IRPP Policy Matters*, 1:5 (July 2000), 14.
- <sup>164</sup> Hoag and Hallett, *supra*, note 58, at 196-234.
- <sup>165</sup> Dennis Pilon, "The Drive for Proportional Representation in British Columbia, 1917-23," (Masters thesis: Simon Fraser University, 1996), 29-31, 34.
- <sup>166</sup> Hoag and Hallett, *supra*, note 58, at 188-9, 192.
- <sup>167</sup> Pilon, *supra*, note 165, at 34.
- <sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, at 40-2.
- <sup>169</sup> See Daniel T. Rogers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History*, 10:4 (December 1982), 113-31.
- <sup>170</sup> Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 1-5.
- <sup>171</sup> Joseph F. Zimmerman, *Participatory Democracy: Populism Revived*, (New York: Praeger, 1986); Allan Cochrane, "Community Politics and Democracy," in David Held and Christopher Pollitt (eds.), *New Forms of Democracy*, (London: Sage, 1986), 54.
- <sup>172</sup> Cochrane, *ibid*, at 70.
- <sup>173</sup> Michael Gallagher and Pier Vincenzo Uleri (eds.), *The Referendum Experience in Europe*, (London: Macmillan, 1996), 230.
- <sup>174</sup> Howe and Northrup, *supra*, note 163, at 29-35.
- <sup>175</sup> Gallagher, *supra*, note 173, at 249.
- <sup>176</sup> Reed and Thies, "The Causes of Electoral Reform in Japan," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems*, 170.
- <sup>177</sup> Keiko Tabusa, "The 1996 general election in Japan," *Australian Quarterly*, 69:1 (Autumn 1997), 26.
- <sup>178</sup> Richard Katz, "Reforming the Italian Electoral Law, 1993," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems*, 98.
- <sup>179</sup> Sergio Fabbrini, "Has Italy rejected the referendum path to change? The failed referenda of May 2000," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 6:1 (Spring 2001), 38, 45-8.
- <sup>180</sup> Mark Donovan, "The Referendum and the Transformation of the Party System," *Modern Italy*, 1:1 (1995), 59.
- <sup>181</sup> Mark Donovan, "The Politics of Electoral Reform," *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995), 58.
- <sup>182</sup> Fabbrini, *supra*, note 179, at 45, 54.
- <sup>183</sup> Farrell, *supra*, note 136, at 525.
- <sup>184</sup> Denver et al, *Scotland Decides*, 32-6.
- <sup>185</sup> Farrell, *supra*, note 136, at 527.
- <sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, at 531; various contributors to the special 'Plant Report' edition of *Representation*, 30:112 (Winter 1991-92), 59-112; Michael Dummett, "Toward a More Representative Voting System: *The Plant Report*," *New Left Review*, 194 (July/August 1992), 98-113.
- <sup>187</sup> Stuart Weir, "Waiting for Change: Public Opinion and Electoral Reform," *The Political Quarterly*, 63:2 (April-June 1992), 197-221.

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- <sup>188</sup> Charles Pattie, David Denver, James Mitchell and Hugh Bochel, "Partisanship, national identity and constitutional preferences: an exploration of voting in the Scottish devolution referendum of 1997," *Electoral Studies*, 18 (1999), 305-22.
- <sup>189</sup> Farrell, *supra*, note 136, at 531, 537.
- <sup>190</sup> Some dubbed it a 'runaway commission'; Jack Nagel, "What Political Scientists Can Learn from the 1993 Electoral Reform in New Zealand," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 27:3 (September 1994), 526.
- <sup>191</sup> Jackson and McRobie, *supra*, note 26, at 101-108.
- <sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, at 98-100.
- <sup>193</sup> Farrell, *supra*, note 136, at 533, 537.
- <sup>194</sup> Jackson and McRobie, *supra*, note 26, at 51, 61
- <sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, at 165-6.
- <sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, at 197.
- <sup>197</sup> In fact, Jackson and McRobie declared that "[a]s far as we are aware, no other government has ever provided funding for a mass public information and education campaign while, at the same time, surrendering total responsibility for its content and presentation to an independent, non-partisan body.>"; *Ibid*, at 234-5.
- <sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, at 234-6, 240-2, 247.
- <sup>199</sup> Denmark, *supra*, note 74, at 91.
- <sup>200</sup> This section is adapted from Dennis Pilon, *Canada's Democratic Deficit: Is Proportional Representation the Answer?*, (Toronto: CSJ Foundation for Research and Education, 2001), 3-4.
- <sup>201</sup> Andre Blais, "The classification of electoral systems," *European Journal of Political Research*, 16(1988), 99-110.
- <sup>202</sup> Louis Massicotte and Andre Blais, "Mixed electoral systems: a conceptual and empirical survey," *Electoral Studies*, 18(1999), 341-66.