



WE Party Conference

15 – 18 October 2020

Title: Use fairer voting systems for internal Women's Equality Party elections

Proposed by: Leeds Branch

Proposer: Holly Rothwell

Type of motion: Business Motion

Motion text:

1 WE adopt the use of fairer voting systems for internal party elections, specifically the use of
2 Alternative Vote (AV) where the position is for one post (e.g. Party Leader/Policy Committee), and
3 Single Transferable Vote (STV) where there are a number of positions available (e.g. Steering
4 Committee).

5 This does not affect those selection processes that have not historically used voting as their
6 mechanic e.g. nomination of candidates for elections, nor affect branch officer roles.

7 The Constitution should be amended to reflect this change. Additional words are in *italics*, deleted
8 words are ~~struck through~~.

9 A clause is added to Article 7 "Party Organisation"

10 *7.11: All internal elections for posts within the Party, if contested by more than two people, should*
11 *be carried out under the system of Alternative Vote where the position is for one post, or Single*
12 *Transferable Vote where there are a number of positions available.*

13 Existing clauses are amended thus:

14 7.1.3: The Leader shall be elected either by a general Membership vote or at Party Conference.
15 The method to be used will be determined by the Steering Committee before each leadership
16 election *in accordance with section 7.11*

17 7.5.2 The Steering Committee is chaired by the Party Leader or another chair elected by the
18 committee ~~by a simple majority vote in accordance with section 7.11~~

19 7.5.12 (iv) ten WE Members, who shall be elected individually ~~by a simple majority vote, in~~
20 *accordance with section 7.11*, by a vote of Party Conference



21 7.6.1 The Policy Committee shall consist of the Leader, as Chair of the Committee, and 18 Members
22 elected individually ~~by a simple majority vote~~ *in accordance with section 7.11*, at Party Conference

Motion rationale:

23 WE currently use a simple majority voting system for internal elections. The voting system WE use
24 matters because it affects the behaviour of potential candidates and voting members. This
25 behaviour, in turn, either promotes or frustrates the Party from achieving the diverse, inclusive and
26 representative politics it aims for.

27 Majoritarian voting systems privilege 'lowest common denominator' candidates. Consider how the
28 first-past-the-post system "suppresses political diversity"^[1] and works against minority
29 representation^[2] in British politics.

30 Thus, the Party's use of a majoritarian voting system may be counterproductive to the
31 achievement of its values. WE are not immune to reproducing systems of exclusion that exist in
32 the outside world, whether by design or default. This motion examines the status quo and aims to
33 embed the possibility for diversity and inclusion at the heart of Party structures.

34 It proposes using a) STV for multi-seat elections and b) AV for single-seat internal elections.

35 STV is a proportional voting system designed to achieve or closely approach proportional
36 representation through voters ranking candidates in multi-seat elections.^[3] AV uses a similar ranking,
37 quota and vote transfer system but produces the one-person result needed for single-seat elections.
38 In both systems, everyone's vote matters with no wasted votes. This removes the 'need' for tactical
39 voting.

40 STV has been consistently shown to be more proportional, and thus perceived as 'more fair' than
41 other electoral systems. It is used in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Malta, Scotland and
42 Australia for this perceived 'fairness' and its ability to soothe societal divisions.^{[4][5]} The Liberal
43 Democrats^[6] and Labour recently adopted STV for their internal elections, ostensibly to heal internal
44 factions^[7].

45 These examples illustrate that these systems are legitimate and suitable for internal elections.
46 Ultimately, they show our peers acknowledging the pivotal role fairer election systems play in
47 representational politics. If WE are calling for representative politics, WE should urgently follow their
48 example.

49 The key benefit in adopting fairer electoral systems will be an increase in the overall diversity of our
50 elected representatives.

51 STV facilitates minority representation^[8] and can foster supportive environments which empower
52 non-traditional candidates to stand. In electing minorities to internal roles, WE offer development
53 opportunities for a wider cohort. This unlocks career paths to local/Parliamentary elections and may
54 lead to a more representative Parliamentary politics.

55 Internally, Party policy and decision-making stands to gain from increased diversity: diversity is vital
56 both for tolerance and trust building, but also for robust debate and nuanced policy development.



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Fairer election systems encourage collaborative politics ^[9]. In the public realm, STV allows the Party to demonstrate intersectional feminism by electing the most diverse possible cohort to public facing roles.

References

- [1] <https://www.makevotesmatter.org.uk/first-past-the-post>
- [2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single_transferable_vote.
- [3] Detailed explanations for how STV/AV work here:
<https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/voting-systems/types-of-voting-system>
- [4] <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/voting-systems/types-of-voting-system/single-transferable-vote/>
- [5] Coakley, J. and Fraenkel, J. (2010) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228480804>
- [6] https://www.libdems.org.uk/committee_election_regulations
- [7] <https://leftfootforward.org/2020/07/this-small-change-in-labours-internal-elections-could-make-waves/>
- [8] Bowler, S., Farrell, D.M. and Pettitt, R.T. (2005) <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13689880500064544>
- [9] Grofman, B. and Bowler, S. (1996). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00344899608522985>