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Make Votes Count Newsletter – December 2007

*Make Votes Count is the campaign for a more representative voting system;
based on the principles of fairness, greater voter choice, accountability and a modern democracy.*

“ Don’t marginalise those of us who don't live in marginals ”

Politicians like telling us that they never hear anyone on the doorstep or in their mailbags talk about electoral reform. What they fail to realise is that people all the time are; just phrasing it in different ways or voicing many of the symptoms that our First-Past-the-Post system is responsible for. “Voting never changes anything”, “they are all the same”, “I feel ignored” and many other of the comments and concerns regularly raised are intimately connected with the reform debate.

The targeting of a handful of specific constituencies and types of voters necessary to win elections under our current voting system is destroying our politics and creating unnecessary polarisation and disincentives to getting involved. No wonder many people feel politicians and political parties are not listening to them. The message seems to be ‘they are not’; or at least not compared to voters in those key marginals.

83

SEATS – the number the survey company ICM considers as having an impact on the election outcome and so worth polling. 83 out of 649 constituencies. Only 13%. That deems everyone else – so 5/6 of the electorate – as insignificant.

8000

VOTERS – all it would take to switch allegiance for Labour to lose its overall majority, according to research published by the Electoral Reform Society.

£ millions

MONEY – funnelled towards campaigning in those most competitive (marginal) seats, giving the impression that money can heavily impact on election outcomes.

It is no surprise that this all has a negative impact on the quality of representation and on levels of democratic engagement for everyone who is not lucky enough to be living in a marginal constituency.

Instead of this postcode lottery, it should be an enshrined right for your vote to stand a reasonable chance of affecting the outcome of an election.

We urgently need a better electoral system that encourages parties to compete for votes in all constituencies, and gives voters a stronger stake in our political system, no matter where they live. People need to feel that their vote counts and that they are being listened to.

If you would like to explore the arguments and join in the debate, please get in touch or log on to
www.makemyvotecount.org.uk



Taking the campaign forward

Shake up Politics



The voting system affects the type of politics we have and the type of campaigning that takes place. As importantly, the society we live in and our expectations of the political process have moved on, but our institutions have not. We need a modern constitution and politics; reflecting our more diverse society and changed needs.

A more proportional voting system would shake up elections. It would help:

- Make politicians more accountable
- Make political parties take you more seriously and compete to get your vote
- Give you greater choice at the ballot box
- Make your vote really count at elections
- Modernise our democracy

Help us get these messages across ... and make politicians and the media see how integral our campaign is to the process of re-engagement and the constitutional reform programme being put forward.

The Government will shortly publish its review of the electoral systems it has introduced in Scotland, Wales, London and for European elections. Ask the Government to open up this 'desk-bound' review, and ask for a commitment that the review's findings be considered in future Ministry of Justice's consultations.

Promoting the campaign more widely

- host a debate or education session on electoral reform with a local community group or at a community event
- distribute literature on voting reform
- sign up supporters on a campaign stall
- write letters to your local newspaper
- blog or podcast for reform
- recommend our website and blog, which is updated almost daily to highlight the dynamic nature of the campaign.

Make Votes Count can offer campaign advice and supply materials to help you engage and involve others. MVC may also be able to provide a speaker or suggest possible people to ask.

'Talking with Tatchell'

– 18DoughtyStreet electoral reform special

MVC's Chris Huhne MP and Mary Southcott were interviewed by Peter Tatchell on the subject of electoral reform. The programme was broadcast on internet television station www.18doughtystreet.com And you can view or download the programme anytime via our website or the link below. Watch it and encourage others to do so too. Or use it as a starting point for discussion at a meeting.
<http://doughty.gdbtv.com/player.php?channel=205>

Make Votes Count

The campaign for a more representative voting system

Supported by: the Christian Socialist Movement, Conservative Action for Electoral Reform, Electoral Reform Society, Fawcett Society, Green Party, Liberal Democrats, Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform, Plaid Cymru, Unlock Democracy and X-Change. MVC also has over ten thousand individual supporters.