

HISTORIANS AGAINST AV

Dear Sir,

Our nation's history is deeply rooted in our parliamentary democracy, a democracy in which, over centuries, men and women have fought for the right to vote.

That long fight for suffrage established the principle of one man or woman, one vote. The principle that each person's vote is equal, regardless of wealth, gender, race, or creed, is a principle to which generations of reformers have dedicated their lives. It is a principle upon which reform of our parliamentary democracy still stands.

The referendum on 5th May which threatens to introduce a system of 'Alternative Voting' – a voting system which will allow MPs to be elected to Parliament even if they do not win the majority of constituents' first preference votes – also threatens to break this principle.

For the first time since 1928 and the granting of universal suffrage, we face the possibility that one person's casting ballot will be given greater weight than another. For the first time in centuries, we face the unfair idea that one citizen's vote might be worth six times that of another. It will be a tragic consequence if those votes belong to supporters of extremist and non-serious parties.

Twice in our past, the nation has rejected any threat to the principle of one citizen, one vote. The last time, in 1931, Winston Churchill stood against the introduction of an Alternative Vote system. As he argued, AV would mean that elections would be determined by "the most worthless votes given for the most worthless candidates". He understood that it was simply too great a risk to take.

The cause of reform, so long fought for, cannot afford to have the fundamentally fair and historic principle of majority voting cast aside; nor should we sacrifice the principle which generations of men and women have sought: that each being equal, every member of our society should cast an equal vote.

For these reasons, we urge the British people to vote "No" on May 5th.

Yours faithfully,

Professor David Abulafia

Dr. John Adamson

Professor Antony Beevor

Professor Lord Bew of Donegore

Professor Jeremy Black

Professor Michael Burleigh

Professor John Charmley

Professor Jonathan Clark

Dr Robert Crowcroft

Professor Richard J Evans

David Faber

Professor Niall Ferguson

Orlando Figes

Dr. Amanda Foreman

Dr. John Guy

Robert Lacey

Dr. Sheila Lawlor

Lord Lexden

Simon Sebag Montefiore

Professor Lord Norton of Louth

Dr. Richard Rex

Dr. Andrew Roberts

Professor Richard Shannon

Chris Skidmore MP

Dr David Starkey

Professor Norman Stone

D.R. Thorpe

Alison Weir

Philip Ziegler