

Kosemehmetoglu, Ozi (REPS)

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Sent: Wednesday, 16 September 2009 6:27 PM
To: Committee, LACA (REPS)
Subject: Submission To Referendum Inquiry
Attachments: signature.jpg

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Submission No 003

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16 September 2009

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Submission to:

Inquiry into the machinery of referendums

Summary

Because it better reflects the *Will Of The People*, federal MPs have opted for optional preferential voting for federal elections. But for national referenda, voters have to make do with primitive first-past-the-post Yes-No voting. This can result in a rigged referendum.

How the Republic Referendum was rigged

A former leader of the Australian Republican Movement, Malcolm Turnbull, had a rapid rise through Howard Government ranks (from a safe Sydney seat to Cabinet Minister) after he wittingly or unwittingly allowed a Royalist - John Howard - to divide and conquer Republican voters in a Yes-No referendum.

Many years ago, Federal MPs rejected first-past-the-post voting for federal elections (in favour of the fairer system of optional preferential voting) but they retained the Yes-No Binary Fallacy for national referenda - on national issues such as whether Australia should have a British Monarch as Head of State.

What's the Binary Fallacy?

It's when a question is posed in a way that contains a false assumption that there are only two valid answers - a ruse that eliminates other equally valid and logical answers.

For instance, when a bar attendant asks "Do you want one or two raw eggs in your Tomato Juice" the answer can be One, Two, None or Three.

But the way the question was posed (as an either-or Binary Fallacy) misleads the hangover sufferer into thinking there are only two (when there are four) equally valid hangover cures.

How elitism seduced Malcolm Turnbull

When John Howard wanted an elitist Convention to choose a Republican model to run against the Monarchy, he somehow convinced the then leader of the Republicans that the Binary Fallacy was fair and in the national interest.

If Malcolm Turnbull had not been an elitist, when John Howard proposed an elitist Convention (to choose a Republican model to run against the British Monarchy) a less divisive response would have been:

"This issue is far too important to be determined by an elitist Convention.

"Australian voters should determine how they are governed in an optional preferential referendum in which (as in federal elections) electors choose - in descending the order of their preferences - the Monarchy, or Republic Model A ,or Republic Model B, etc..."

But from the moment that Malcolm Turnbull (wittingly or unwittingly) fell for the Yes-No Binary Fallacy - the trap was sprung and the Howard wedge went into action - to split the Republican vote - thus ensuring a Royalist win.

The trap hidden inside the Binary Fallacy:

No matter which main Republican model the elitist Convention picked - the only way that supporters of an excluded model could express their dismay (at being disenfranchised) was by voting "No" in a Binary Referendum.

The Howard ruse worked - the Howard wedge split the Republican vote - and the Monarchy won a two-horse race from which all other contenders had been scratched.

Recommendation:

Despite the injustice of a rigged referendum, it's unlikely that a second referendum (on the same issue) will be held any time soon.

But in the national interest, let's not (falsely) assume that a Yes-No Binary Fallacy is the best and fairest way to run future referenda - when members of this committee prefer to be chosen by an optional preferential vote - because it better reflects the *Will Of The People*.

As far as I know, there is no Constitutional prohibition on optional preferential referenda - for questions that have more than two answers.

Yours sincerely,



Graham Macafee.