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Numerical Electoral Justice

Last week I spoke about the fact that a very small percentage of voters vote from top to bottom. But a much higher percentage take voting seriously until the 4th or 5th preference and then vote haphazardly from top to bottom anyway.

For this injustice to be addressed I suggested that the first row in the list should belong to no particular candidate but to the Party. Candidates start voting from the second row to the bottom.

Later, I also suggested that, the numbers corresponding to the alphabetical order (corresponding numbers) all count as a second preference (2). That any 4s that happen to be next to the name of the 4th candidate on the list, i.e. in the fourth row is counted as if it were a 2nd preference.

This would mean that after counting the first preferences of a particular elected candidate, instead of only the candidates being given a 2nd preference after the elected candidate benefitting from a second preference, all candidates having obtained a preference corresponding to their row on the list will also benefit from his votes as if they were 2s.

That is, if candidate A is elected and Alex Vella is in the twelfth row and 200 voters wrote 12 next to his name after the elected candidate, all these 12th preferences should have the same value as 2nd preferences.

Obviously, this will not in any way reduce the amount of 2nd preferences (2s) that do not correspond (the non-corresponding 2s). That is, if someone voted 2 to the candidate in the sixth row, the candidate in the sixth row will still benefit from the 2nd preference anyway.

With regard to the party itself, this could be very benificial. This is due to the fact that non-elected candidates of the party who 'inherit' any elected candidate usually 'inherit' only a few votes or a few tens of votes. According to such a system, they would 'inherit' many more. Therefore, in case a party gets a big majority, such electoral advantage will lead to more candidates of the same party being elected with an obvious advantage for the party when it comes to parliamentary seats.

But what if not even row 1 is dedicated to the Party itself? That is, that the first candidate avails himself of all the 1s placed next to his/her name (assuming that the majority of these votes have been marked intentionally and the remaining few solely because of the alphabetical order), the candidate in the second row avails him/herself of all the 1s and 2s next to his/her name, the candidate in the sixth row avails him/herself of all the 1s and 6s next to his/her name and the candidate in the 10th row avails him/herself of all the 1s and 10s next to his/her name?

Although I am of the opinion that the lower down in the list you are, the less the meaningful votes and the more the haphazardly given votes, it is possible that although the first row is not dedicated to the party itself (i.e. not being given to the first candidate in the list), a fair electoral system would thus be created because each and every candidate reaps all the votes of those who voted for him/her intentionally as well as those who voted for him/her just to make sure to fill in the ballot paper!

It could also be that this ensures that the ballot paper itself lasts longer. Because until a non-elected candidate is eliminated the party would have benefitted not only from all their ones, twos, threes and fours but also from more additional preferences (i.e. from the preference corresponding to their row on the ballot paper and further preferences as well i.e. all the sixes and sevens of a non-elected candidate on the sixth row).   In the same way, even the ballot papers of elected candidates last longer for the same reason.

And apart from the personal advantage for candidates at the bottom of the list, such a system could possibly also solve the anomalies between number of no. 1 vote preferences obtained by a party and the number of seats gained by a party which occasionally arises in Malta. Could it be, that due to such a system the number of elected candidates reflects better the number 1 votes a party obtains? Could it be that the anomalous situation which came about in the 80's wouldn't have arisen? Could this have avoided the crisis which Alfred Sant's government faced in 1998 and which Gonzi faced in 2012? Or that of the present government where two additional seats were added by the Court after the election? Could it be that it is in Joseph Muscat's interest to introduce such a system more than in Adrian Delia's interest?