

# The Alliance For Change

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### BBC AND MAJOR PARTIES DEMONSTRATE CONTEMPT FOR DEMOCRACY

"What do we want?"

"None of the above!"

***Please distribute this demand for proper accountable democracy in the UK today far and wide!***

The General Election, as opposed to the European election, is run on a first-past-the-post system. Each candidate is standing for election in one constituency as that constituency's member of parliament, individually. In this sense, if electors are not given a chance, through the normal media, TV and radio, to see the qualities of the range of candidates standing, they are being deprived of any real democratic opportunity to make a decision on who to vote for.

The Alliance For Change is a concept which allows non-party candidates a description on the ballot paper, as recent changes in electoral law are designed to allow such candidates only the description "independent" on the ballot paper. For further enquiries as to the mechanism for this, please enquire below: but proof of concept has already been achieved with the due registration of three candidates in this manner.

#### **Is democracy dead in this country?**

What better chance to make it live than for the media, in particular public service broadcasters, to allow voters a chance to make informed decisions on who to vote for?

The main reasons for not doing so appear to be to do with the national and regional structure of the BBC and other broadcasters. But of course, if these structures do not allow for democratic coverage of the election, then they should already have been changed.

They have not been.

In the same way, if the postal ballot leads to election fraud, it should be changed. One outrageous present abuse is the practice of the big parties collecting people's postal votes and handing them in to election officials, which should obviously be banned for this election.

It has not been.

Because the BBC operates both locally, in this case in Yorkshire, and nationally, and because there are only so many hours in the day for it to broadcast, it has guidelines which restrict it to only featuring candidates from parties who have a large number of candidates nationally and/or regionally. But this militates against local voters knowing which individual man or woman to vote for.

#### ***Alternatives:***

- Local and regional Question Time-style programmes. With regular programming during a defined election period, the candidates, instead of being made to appear more or less important according to which party list they were on, would be seen simply as the individuals they were.
- The BBC could ask for each candidate to submit a pencil sketch of what they stand for on the BBC or the BBC programme website, or links could be provided.
- Candidates could be invited to make short five-minute videos for download on the web.

I am sure the BBC could, if so motivated, be capable of mustering a few more ideas in a similar vein.

But the fact is, none of this is happening.

My question is: why not? Are we being led, by our media and the so-called mainstream political parties, into contempt for what are called fringe parties? Is the definition of a fringe party: anybody with enough belief in democracy to become involved in the democratic process?

Do not forget, and here I am addressing the actual voters who read this, that one-man-one-vote means you (I obviously include women), and that each candidate you are voting for is first and foremost a human being, just the same as you. If the media is showing contempt for the electoral system as it stands, perhaps it is your business to vote to change this system?

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Notes on British democracy:

*People may think they are voting for parties. They're not. They're voting for people.*

*This is the nature of our one-constituency, one candidate elected democratic system.*

*We have party slates for European elections. The distinction is clear. In European Elections you are first voting for party lists, not individual candidates.*

*But in the General Election, for the democratic system to work as intended, voters have to be able to form an opinion on each individual candidate, not the party they belong to. This is the whole basis for our democracy.*

*Each candidate has the opportunity for one free mail shot, if they can pay for printing, and fund the deposit of £500 to stand.*

*That's it - it's now up to the media to provide the medium, the candidate and supporters to convey their message.*

*If the media gives airtime to big party candidates and policies, it largely excludes independent and small-party candidates from people's awareness, even if there are a great many such candidates standing. The system is already a first-past-the-post system, but this media attitude tilts the balance even more unfairly in favour of big-party candidates than the voting system does.*

*This is no longer one constituency, one set of candidates. This makes certain candidates more equal than others.*

*The public service broadcast obligations shouldered mainly by the BBC oblige it to cover candidates in the elections, but apparently don't allow the BBC to cover them according to the basic democratic principles of fair airtime for a fair vote.*

*We depend on the media to inform our vote. But the media doesn't share the principle of one-candidate, one-constituency, instead selecting which candidates to cover according to the size of their party.*

*The large-party system is based on increasingly centralised leadership, and uses party lists from which to select candidates. Candidates not in major parties are being squeezed out through dirty tricks.*

*Both public service media and large political parties operate on the principal that the larger the organisation, the more attention should be paid to it.*

*It appears that roughly 25% (around 60) of a total of around 240 candidates standing in 62 Yorkshire constituencies in the May 2005 General Election are either independent candidates or candidates from parties which are too small to be allowed any coverage in the normal broadcast media.*

*In effect, the main political parties and the public service broadcast media are breaking their own democratic rules for this election.*