**PRESS RELEASE**

**IMMEDIATE, 6th May.**

**BREXIT: ALL OPTIONS ON THE TABLE, BUT ONE OF THEM IS NE’ER DISCUSSED:**

**AN INCLUSIVE POINTS PREFERENTIAL ‘PREFERENDUM’.**

***Majority voting can be divisive but indecisive; preferential voting can be inclusive and conclusive.***

To devise a binary choice to satisfy (almost) everyone is probably impossible; drafting a multi-option referendum would be only difficult.

Democratic decision-making should cater for (almost) all; therefore, in parliament or a referendum, the ballot should be multi-optional, with options on the EU, the EEA, a Customs Union, the WTO, whatever. Accordingly, let an independent commission as in New Zealand in 1992, or a citizens’ assembly as two years ago in Ireland, draw up a balanced list of, say, five options.

***Politics is the art of compromise; preferential voting is its science.***

The democratic process should allow voters to compromise. At the very least, therefore, the vote should be preferential so that each voter may cast, not only a 1st preference but also, if they so wish, a 2nd and perhaps other preferences as well. In this points system,

+ he who casts only a 1st preference gives his favourite 1 point;

+ she who casts a 1st and a 2nd preference gives her favourite 2 points (and her second choice 1 point);

and so on; thus, in a five-option ‘preferendum’,

+ he who casts all five preferences gives his favourite 5 points (his second choice 4, his third 3, etc.).

A 1st preference is never, therefore, devalued by a 2nd or other preference. This Modified Borda Count, MBC\* encourages both the voters to cast their compromise option(s) *and* the protagonists to campaign positively among their erstwhile (majoritarian) opponents.

The result is the option with the highest points score. At best – if everyone casts full ballots – this is everyone’s highest average preference and, therefore, their best possible compromise.

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Majority rule divided Northern Ireland. Brexit divided England. And “all the wars in the former Yugoslavia started with a [binary] referendum,” (*Oslobodjenje*, Sarajevo’s newspaper, 7.2.1999). Instead of seeking a solution with yet more division, let us use a more inclusive, more democratic MBC which, to quote the late Professor Sir Michael Dummett, “is the soundest method of identifying the [option which] is most generally popular… or at least the most acceptable.”

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\* The MBC was invented in 1770. In a ballot on *n* options, a voter may cast *m* preferences. So *n ≥ m ≥ 1*. Points are awarded to (*1st, 2nd … last*) preferences cast according to the rule *(m, m-1 …1).*