**PRESS RELEASE**– ***EMBARGOED* until 0001 am on Thursday 16th February, 2017.**

**“THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE” – OR THE WILL O’ THE WISP?**

**Majority voting is the most inaccurate measure of collective opinion ever invented.**

Today’s debate on Europe concerns three options: the UK in the

***A*** WTO,

***B*** Customs Union, or

***C*** EEA.

Therefore last year’s referendum debate (should have) consisted of four options: ***A***, ***B***, ***C*** and

***D*** EU.

Sadly, the question was, in effect, “***D***, yes or no?” So, as predicted,\* ***A***, ***B*** and ***C*** supporters voted ‘no’ – or rather, ‘leave’.

The result was: 48% want ***D***,

x% want ***C***,

y% want ***B***,

z% want ***A***,

and x + y + z = 52%.

If instead of “***D***, yes or no?” the question had been “***A***, yes or no?” or “***B***, yes or no?” or “***C***, yes or no?” doubtless a majority would again have said ‘no’. Binary ballots are inappropriate in multi-option debates. They often produce fake facts. They do not, and *cannot*, identify the will of the people. Logically, mathematically, it is impossible…

Lots of people, however, are “captivated by the mystique of the majority” – to quote the late Professor Sir Michael Dummett. So now comes the next dichotomy, a vote in parliament where {if it weren’t for the whip} ***D*** with (***A*** + ***B***), or (***A*** + ***C***), or (***B*** + ***C***) could vote ‘no’ to Theresa May’s chosen variation of ***C***, or ***B***, or ***A***, respectively. When there’s no majority for any one thing, there might be a majority against everything. Binary voting is a recipe for confusion if not conflict. And as noted by Pliny the Younger 1,912 years ago, it cannot cope with pluralism.

Meanwhile, others too are obsessed with majoritarianism – majority rule by majority vote – not least the US Congress. With Trump and co., however, majoritarianism is not only unfair, it is also downright dangerous. So reform is imperative, lest the forces of populism say ‘no’ to everything, in France, the Netherlands, etc. etc., until we are left with nothing.

**But most politicians do not even consider preferential decision-making, and nor do the Electoral Commission, the Ombudsman, much of academia, and many in media like the BBC.**

Peter Emerson 15.2.2017

\* See our press release of 5.2.2016

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