

Vote for real change by not voting at all

19th January 2006

The next station will look....exactly like the last one

Whichever political party I vote for at the next general election, one thing is guaranteed; not a damn thing I really care about will change as a result.

That's because there is really very little difference between the parties. That's not new, it has been the case for decades, and it is not surprising when you think about how the system works.

Political parties have winning elections as their main goal. To achieve this, they seek to make their party "electable". This effectively means the party must:

- a) be reasonably united
- b) appeal to and not offend most parts of the electorate

(b) means that policies are always somewhere in the middle, for all the rhetoric about "right" and "left". The roads may split, but they all run parallel and can be seen from each other. (a) means that innovation and creativity within the party must be suppressed in the name of unity, and the result is inevitably a murky compromise.

This is a bad fit with the real world that politicians must govern when elected. Different people have widely different circumstances. Single policies never can fit well with all, or even most.

Since individuals depend on the party machine to achieve their high office, they come to depend upon it and cannot afford to challenge it. When did you last hear a politician arguing passionately for, or even mentioning, any alternative to party politics?

All change please!

The truth is that this system is fundamentally flawed and outdated. What we need is a more effective - not efficient, it's *effectiveness* that matters - system of democracy that delivers locally. That requires a change at the heart of Westminster, the party machine, and the establishment itself.

No politician you ever see on the voting card will stand for this, or if they do they'll stand alone. So, I believe the best way to achieve change is simply not to vote. Clearly most people already agree, as "none of the above" is a landslide winner. If the process were truly democratic we would not currently have a government, as that would appear to be the will of the majority.

If people continue abstaining from the ballot box, turnouts will fall to levels where even party chairmen will have trouble avoiding the conclusion that fundamental change is needed.

New forms of voting, such as internet-ballots, which aim to "make it easier to vote" - as if the obstacle to turnout is somehow due to the extraordinarily difficult process of voting! - will not solve the turnout problem.

Remember, every time you vote you're telling your political masters that the systems they use are working well and need no real change. Join the no vote party today: there are no party whips, no party lines, in fact no party at all, and registering your vote actually saves you time and effort.