**Electoral System Essay**

**Evaluate the effectiveness of an electoral system you have studied in providing fair representation.**

The Additional Member System (AMS) is an electoral system used in Scotland, Wales and the London Assembly. AMS is a combination of two different electoral systems; the First Past the Post system (in which voters mark an X next to the candidate they want to represent them in their constituency) and Proportional Representation (where voters select from a list of candidates for each party who represent a larger regional constituency). However, whilst AMS combines the best of two different systems to achieve fairness, and often succeeds, not unlike any other electoral system, it has its downfalls. This essay will focus on the fair and just elements of the AMS but will also scrutinize and explore the drawbacks in this system, particularly in regards to a fair representation.

The AMS allows for a much larger diversity of views and opinions to be conveyed than other voting systems.

For example, due to the way the First Past the Post voting system is carried out, the larger parties -such as the Conservative Party and the Labour Party- predominate the system and simultaneously eliminate any possible chance of smaller parties having a fragment of power within it. However, under the AMS said smaller parties -for instance the Greens- have managed to acquire representation. Without the AMS, smaller parties such as these would gain very little power and have possibly no say in what happens. Furthermore, the diversity of opinions within the parliament would remain rather small and possibly one sided.

As a result of this, it is clear that , when it comes to having a diversity within MSPs, AMS provides an excellent opportunity for a fair representation within the parliament. The public can choose to vote for parties which hold their values and interests at heart and know that their vote has an impact on the party and how much power it will be able to have , no matter the size of said party.

Whilst the AMS may provide a greater representation and larger diversity when it comes to parties, it gives voters little to no chance in deciding the particular candidates within the party itself as the party decides in which order it wants to rank its prospective candidates. Within the majority of constituencies, being allotted a position any lower than the 3rd or possibly 4th on the party list means that the probability of getting elected is extremely low. Despite the fact that a candidate may be very popular within the public and that the public would like to vote for the person, if the person is deemed not favourable enough to his or her party, they will not get elected. This was apparent in Margo MacDonald's case back in the year 2003. Regardless of the fact that she was very much favoured by the public, due to internal paty squabbling, she was placed 6th in the party list; making it impossible for her to be elected. Thus, she made the decision to become an Independent and resign from the SNP and consequently won, not only once but twice more in the elections in the years 2007 and 2011. However, she was able to do this pertaining to the fact that she was a very well known personality within Edinburgh, other candidates would not have had such a high likelihood of being successful.

This shows that whilst the AMS gives a fair representation for the parties, it does not fairly represent the candidates within the parties themselves. The candidates do have a chance to become Independent however depending on their popularity and how well they are known, this may raise their chances of being elected or completely obliterate them. Thus, both the public and the candidates in parties have a lesser chance of getting what they want or what they have been working for, making the system less effective.

The AMS creates a much higher chance at a coalition government, thus creating a much higher chance for more than one parties' views to be fairly represented within parliament. A coalition governent can be a very effective form of government in which the government is more willing to listen to different perspectives and bring about new changes which would not have been possible under a majority government as the government would not have to listen to the views or consider the ideas of any other party other than its own. For example, the Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition in the Scottish Parliament (beginning in the year 1999 through to the year 2007) made it possible for a radical change such as the introduction of the law to end tuition fees for Scottish university students. This would have most probably not been possible as the view is a stark contrast to the one of Labour controlled Westminster.

Thus it is clear that as the AMS provides a higher chance for a coalition government, it also provides a fairer representation for more than one parties views, making it much easier to bring about new, positive changes for the country and increasing communication within the government.

However, whilst a coalition government may be great in some instances, it is never directly voted for by the voters themselves. When a party does not have a large enough majority of MSPs to form a working government, they may decide to either run the election all over again, or they can decide to partner up with another party and work together. This is called a coalition government. This form of government may be an opportunity to represent the views of more than one party, but it does not necessarily fairly accomplish what the public wanted. To further complicate matters, the AMS system can be quite difficult to understand and knowing how exactly to vote can be quite difficult for a number of individuals. This may largely decrease the voter turnout and thus the views of the entire public which are eligible to vote are not represented.

Thus, we can see that the AMS can be faulty in multiple aspects and that making sure that the public's views are fairly represented does not always work as planned due to a majority of factors as a coalition government -which is outwith the public's control- and the fact that it is reasonably confusing how the voting system actually works and how to vote in order to get the highest chance of what you want and wish for your country.

In conclusion, we can see that whilst the AMS can be very effective in getting the opinions of not only the public but numerous different parties across, there are certain aspects of it that limit the public and make particular parts completely outwith their control, thus affecting the fairness in which they are represented.