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EDITORIAL

FPP or MMP, that is the question. Unfortunately for New Zealand, neither one of the two choices on how to elect our Members of Parliament is any good. On November 6, New Zealand is simply being asked to decide which of the two political systems might be the lesser evil.

Despite smacking of dictatorship, FPP (First Past the Post) might be favoured by many New Zealanders simply on the premise that it is better to stay with the devil you know than side along with the devil you don't.

On the other hand MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) may seem to many to be

the step in the right direction towards the path of true democracy. The cynical ploy by the present administration to increase the number of MP's from 99 to 120 under MMP, with all its additional costs involved, will make that decision much harder for many New Zealanders. Forcing the voters to compare apples with pears shows clearly the level of contempt the present administration has for the public at large.

During all these arguments between supporters of FPP and MMP, other countries were often mentioned: Germany as a shining example how successful MMP can be and Italy as the most dismal proof how MMP can bring a country to the brink of disaster. The fact that FPP has also

brought New Zealand to the brink of disaster is cleverly overlooked by the defenders of FPP.

New Zealand has an uncanny habit of comparing itself with nations like the USA, Great Britain and lately with Germany and Italy, nations that are much larger than New Zealand and whose problems are totally different from ours. It has never occurred to New Zealand to look at countries much closer to its own size and population such as Denmark and Switzerland for example and to seek inspiration from these countries' experiences.

Despite the success of these countries' political systems, neither Denmark nor Switzerland have ever been mentioned during the whole debate about FPP and MMP. This is quite understandable because, despite the very reluctant inkling by some of our politicians to move towards a slightly more democratic system of government, not one New Zealand politician can wholeheartedly embrace or accept a political system that gives the voters a right to have a say in the running of the country by means of Binding Citizens Initiated Referenda. The idea of allowing the citizens to make decisions concerning their own life and future is as foreign to our New Zealand politicians as life on Mars.

Therefore, when looking for a possible new political system for New Zealand, the name of Switzerland as the best example of true democracy has been avoided at all costs by our politicians.

MMP might be a long way from true democracy, but at least it could be a step in the right direction, provided our politicians would give it a fair go. But going by past experiences, great doubts must be expressed that such a situation will ever arise. In fact, should MMP be forced upon our politicians, they will do everything in their power to scuttle it, simply to prove to the nation that the near dictatorship under FPP is the only workable form of government for New Zealand. True democracy will only come to New Zealand once the principle of a Swiss type of binding citizens initiated referenda is adopted, but that is still a long, long way off.

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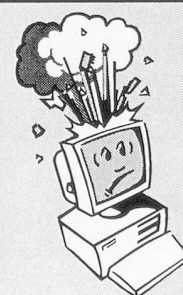
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Friedrich Hebbel



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