Campaign For Democracy

Aims and opportunities.

Campaign for Democracy (CfD) is not about politics, it's about people. The systems we campaign for have proved successful in one of the happiest, healthiest and wealthiest countries in the world, Switzerland, but we go beyond the Swiss system and give you the tools you need to challenge the vested interests that wield so much power behind the scenes and whose political games have caused so much damage to our country.

Politics can be defined as the pursuit of power, but to understand why our system is fundamentally wrong we need to extend that definition in a way that explains what politics really is. Politics is the pursuit of power over other people. Expressed in this way it is obvious that politics is essentially immoral. No one should be pursuing power over others. We will give you the power you need to take our country beyond politics.

CfD adds two new processes to our political system that allow people of all viewpoints to work together for the common good. The first is a reform process that allows people to reform our political system and the *influences* on the system. To be genuinely open it must be accessible to all and so it must allow people to initiate binding referendums on political reform without having to obtain the consent of politicians or bureaucrats. It was realised that the introduction of this process would inevitably lead to the use of the system for all legislation and so an I & R system (the Initiative and Referendum system) based on the Swiss model was added to the campaign's demand. The Swiss system forces politicians to work together for the good of the country and has forced the Swiss political parties to form a coalition government that has lasted over fifty years.
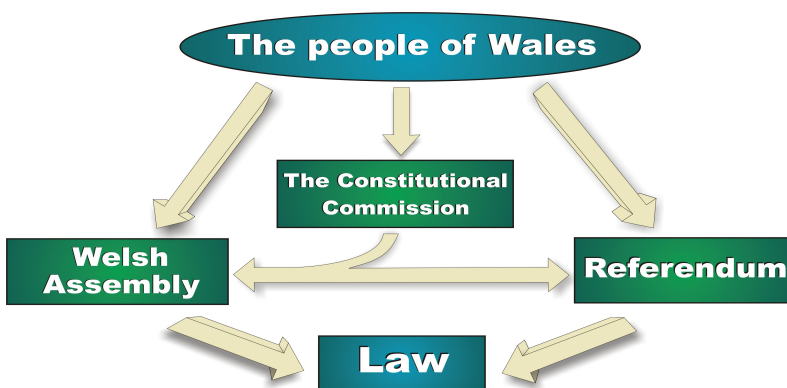
We ask voters to pledge to vote only for parties that will give us these systems and we concentrate our efforts in seats where we can have the maximum political impact, or that will get us publicity. We target floating

voters, people with no strong party allegiance, living in marginal seats, the seats where the result is close. Election results depend on the votes in these seats and campaigning in them maximises the pressure we can put on the parties, however most voters support our aims so the campaign can be run in almost any constituency. Should the parties ignore this we will use this block of votes to unseat sitting Assembly Members.

The most important part of our system is the reform process because the system we have simply does not work. The most dramatic example of this failure is a huge national debt that is still increasing, yet Britain is an oil producing nation. This debt is entirely due to failures in our political system, failures in the control of spending and failures in bank regulation but it is not enough to reform politics. We must be able to challenge those who influence our politicians. Big business and the unions pay for politics in Britain and we know that newspaper owners and media corporations also have influence. Our elected representatives should be answerable to the people of Wales and Britain, and no one else. Our reform process will turn this ideal into reality.

Both parts of our system will require the supporters of a referendum proposal to collect a set number of signatures from registered voters to prove that there is public support for the proposal before it can go to referendum. In Switzerland proposals must get 100,000 signatures before a vote is held. The Swiss electorate is larger than the Welsh electorate so in Wales we suggest that the number of signatures needed should be between thirty and forty thousand.

The problem with proposals for political reform is that the subject isn't very exciting. Proposals could also be quite technical and these things could make it difficult to get a referendum on a proposal if the signature barrier is set too high. The other side of that problem is that if this barrier is set too low the system will be swamped with impractical proposals. The answer to this problem is to set the signature barrier low, perhaps around ten thousand, but have a filter to take out any unrealistic proposals.

This filter will be a commission of twelve people selected by a combination of lot and election. Our suggestion is that at every election two people are selected by lot from each constituency to give us a panel of eighty. Some will be willing to do this work and others will not. They will select twelve people from the eighty to be commissioners for two and a half years, and when that period is up select another twelve for the remainder of the term. This will give us a truly independent commission, but they're not going to be busy. Few poor proposals will get the required number of signatures and good proposals will be adopted without going to the commission. If

you have a reform proposal you don't start by collecting signatures, you take your proposal to your elected representatives. If they reject good proposals and force people to go to the effort and expense of collecting signatures and running referendums unnecessarily it will cost them votes at elections. This also applies to proposals for ordinary legislation because voters will punish parties that refuse to support good initiatives.

There are two unusual parts of the Swiss I & R process we include in our system. The first is the facultative referendum. If the Swiss government passes a law the Swiss people don't like the people can force it to go to referendum by collecting fifty thousand signatures in one hundred days. The second is a counter proposal system. Referendum proposals can be polarising as voters can only say yes or no to a proposal but Swiss voters have a wider choice. If the government believes a proposal goes too far the government can put forward a counter proposal. This gives the voter more choice, the adoption or rejection of the proposal, or the adoption of what is usually a more moderate government counter proposal.

The most important result of this is that party politics as it is done in most countries becomes pointless. If people want something done and the government doesn't do it people do it themselves. If the government does something that people don't want then people can stop that happening. This has made ordinary concepts of government and opposition pointless and this is why the Swiss government has been a coalition of the four main parties for over fifty years.

The Swiss system cannot be compared directly with ours because Switzerland is a federation of Cantons. The Cantons are independent states and they have never transferred many responsibilities that states have to the Swiss federal government, nevertheless there is more that we in Wales could learn from the Swiss system. For example, all their Parliamentarians are part timers. The Swiss Parliament only meets for three weeks in every three months and their MPs spend the rest of their time in proper jobs. There's not a lot of status attached to being the President of Switzerland either. The Swiss equivalent of our Cabinet is the Swiss Federal Council and this is made up of seven MPs chosen by the parties. One member of the Federal Council is president but only for a year, after which someone else gets the job.

What comes out of this system is a stable and successful economy and a people who are always at or near the top of international tables about health, wealth and happiness. CfD offers you these same systems, systems that have a record of success.

That's an amazing offer but we go much further than that. Our reform process is designed to be very powerful, and that power will be placed in your hands. We give you the opportunity to create any system or society you want, and we give you the power to challenge anyone or any organisation that might try and stop you creating that society. We give you a fresh start, free from the politics and ideologies of the past that have been so destructive.

At CfD we believe that the systems we create should be founded on our understanding of two things, our evolved behaviour and good decision making processes. It should be self evident that any system that is not built on these foundations will fail but just how complicated are these subjects? Are years of study needed before you can understand them? The reality is that you have been learning about them for years. You understand human behaviour because you are human and if you are of voting age you've been that for at least eighteen years. You've also been making decisions, both on your own and with others for as long as you have been alive, but we'll start by looking at behaviour.

The first question that needs to be answered is whether or not we are a moral animal. If we're not this isn't going to work so we need to understand why we have evolved as a moral animal, the limits of morality and what promotes and suppresses moral behaviour.

The source of morality is our empathy, and our empathy has evolved from our need to cooperate in order to be successful as a species. Cooperation requires that we evolve a deeply rooted bias towards unselfish behaviour and the ability to imagine ourselves in the position of others. Selfishness exists in some but the bias in the population is towards generosity. On a spectrum with selfishness and unselfishness at either end experiments show that about 75% of the population tend to act generously and this includes about 10% of the population who always act altruistically. At the other end of the spectrum about 25% of the population tend towards selfishness and this includes 10% who always act selfishly. That is how we are and it's not going to change, but what we can do is look at how these traits affect our behaviour in groups, and societies, and how different systems damage this bias towards cooperation.

Academics who study behaviour have developed a series of games that allow them to do this in controlled conditions. One of these games is called the public goods game. In this game a group of people are each given tokens representing a small sum of money, perhaps $10 and the rules of the game are that players can put some or all of that money into a pot. The money in the pot is then doubled and shared out equally between

the players. If there are ten players and they all put in $10 the pot is $100, which is then doubled to $200. When this is shared out everyone gets $20, but there's a catch. If someone doesn't put anything in then they keep their $10 and still get a full share of the $180 that is in the pot. Everyone else ends up with one tenth of the pot, $18 and the selfish individual gets the $18 plus their original $10 so they end up with $28, more than everyone else.

The game is usually played over ten rounds and what happens is that most people put in all or most of their money in the early rounds, but as they see that some are not contributing they contribute less as each round is played. By the end of the game hardly anyone is putting anything in because contributing only benefits the selfish. Instead of everyone doing well out of the game a selfish minority have wrecked something that would have been good for all. In real life the same rule applies. Any group, or society can be damaged or wrecked by a selfish minority that acts only in it's own interests, but that can be changed. In the game this is done by making two simple adjustments and these are the addition of information about selfish behaviour and letting other players punish the selfish.

In this version of the game players can see how much each player has contributed. They can also punish those who don't put money in by using some of their money to deprive the selfish of some. The effect is immediate. The selfish start contributing and everyone is better of, but as always there's a catch. In the last round the selfish can't be made to contribute because there is no eleventh round in which they can be punished, and so in this round they don't contribute and end up with more.

This simple game tells us much of what we need to know about behaviour and systems. For societies to be successful the selfish, who are always with us, have to be kept in check. This can only be done by making sure that any information of any significance is freely available, and that there is immediate and effective sanction of those who behave badly. For this to work there is one more requirement that is a key part of CfD's systems. There needs to be an equality of power between people. If that doesn't exist then those who have more power than others can put themselves beyond punishment, and eventually bring the system down.

The majority of people are generous and considerate and systems that give us good information and include an equality of power create a foundation on which to build, but can we make good decisions? To answer this question we'll look at a real decision and see how good processes can bring people together.

Many years ago I was a member of a scuba diving club that had boats that members would tow to dive sites. One day one of the members doing the towing ran into the car in front and because he had not told his insurers he used his car for towing they refused to pay the bill for the damage to the other car. It had not occurred to him that this would be a problem when he took out the insurance. Many members felt that the driver had been treated badly by the insurance company and that the club should help him financially. A few took a different view. They believed that if you drive into the back of a car you are responsible for the accident and that no help should be given.

The range of views covered both extremes and the matter was raised at the club's AGM. The discussion was expected to be divisive but the solution turned out to be simple. It was suggested that two votes should be taken. The first was to decide whether or not we should help, and if it was decided that help should be given then everyone would write down what they thought was the right amount. We would then calculate what the average was and vote on whether or not to give that amount.

Everyone agreed this was a fair process. The matter was discussed and the first vote was taken. As most would expect people decided to help and so we worked out what the average of the suggested amounts was. Half the people in the room thought it was too much so when the vote was taken we should have been evenly divided, but that didn't happen. About ninety per cent of the people in the room voted in favour of it even though forty per cent thought the amount to high, so what was going on?

Firstly, we had all agreed to use this process because it was a fair process and if you've accepted a process as fair you can't complain at the result. Secondly no one was ignored. Everyone had an impact on the average.

The forty per cent of the people in the room who thought the amount too high didn't just abstain. They voted in favour of the award but they weren't voting in favour of a particular sum of money. They were voting for a process, a process that created unity instead of division, because it was seen to be fair.

We see from both examples, the public goods game and the diving club's decision that process is central to creating and maintaining social cohesion. Good processes allow people to reach across divides and find solutions to shared problems, and that is why the fundamental aim of CfD is concerned with creating processes that allow people to come together to solve the problems we face.

This makes sense but it doesn't fully answer the question about whether

or not people make good decisions. For that we need to take one more step and remember that two decisions were made, one about whether or not to help, the other about how much to give. What we see here are two different types of decision, the moral/empathic decision about whether or not to help, and what we will term a technical decision about how much to give. As empathic animals we are equipped to take moral decisions, it's part of our evolutionary inheritance, but in some cases we won't all be equipped to take technical decisions. In the diving club case there was a simple solution, take an average. In other cases many of us will not have the expertise needed to take a technical decision, but politicians are in the same situation. If they have to take a technical decision they get advice, and that's exactly what we will do. What is certain is that there is more technical expertise outside our Parliaments and Assemblies than there is inside them. What politicians know about is politics, the pursuit of power, and we don't need that.

In the diving club example there were no hidden agendas, no strings being pulled, no financial supporters to satisfy and no media to keep happy. It was just a group of ordinary people with diverse views sorting out a problem. For the people of a nation the problems will be different but the principles and rules that are needed to take us from the problems we face to the solutions we need are no different.

The first and most important principle is a form of equality that has already been mentioned, an equality of power. If systems make imbalances of power possible the selfish will pursue it, and use the power they acquire to control others. CfD's systems have at their heart the initiative and referendum system, a system where the amount of power each member of a society has is exactly the same, one vote. Our system allows the moderate majority to use the CfD reform process to make sure that the power that is in the hands of corporations, media businesses or unions cannot be abused.

That's important but the campaign is about more than this. It's about making the relationship between personal authenticity, good decision making and pluralism clear. Authenticity is about individuals being able to live the lives they want to lead and is one of the fundamental sources of human happiness. That people think differently and want to live in different ways might at first seem to be a source of conflict, but the truth is very different. If you have a complex problem to solve then you need to be able to look at a variety of solutions in order to find the best solution for that particular problem. For that choice to exist there must be people with different views that can put forward different solutions.

Our system of government in which one party is usually dominant reduces the variety of ideas that a government will examine, and sooner or later that government is going to be applying second rate solutions to serious problems. The view might change when those in power are changed but you just end up with a different, but equally narrow range of solutions.

Pluralists recognise that people from every part of society have something to contribute. This is essential in decision making as it ensures the full range of solutions are available to solve a problem. What is also required is the equality of power that is at the heart of the campaign. Where this exists none can be excluded, or alienated, and this is essential both in good decision making and for the creation of a successful society.

We have been remarkably successful as a species and our evolution as social animals has been central to this success. We are not especially adaptable as animals but what we have been very good at is adapting and creating environments to meet our needs. Our ability to do this has depended on our ability to find the right solution to each problem we have faced. Our success has come about not just because we are moral animals, but because we are essentially pluralistic. We are tolerant of others with different views and we enjoy communicating. It is our ability to listen, learn and cooperate in applying the knowledge gained from sharing our experiences that has made us successful as a species.

Politics divides us. Politics is a poison in our world. The antidote is pluralism and pluralism is what CfD is all about. We give you the chance to move beyond politics because politics as we know it must end. The ultimate outcome of politics, the pursuit of power over others, is war and the wars of the 20th century have cost more than 150 million people their lives. Some believe there will always be war, but there is another way and the Swiss show us how our world could be.

The French speaking, German speaking and Italian speaking people who live in the four countries surrounding Switzerland, France, Germany, Austria and Italy have had ten million of their people killed in two world wars.

In Switzerland those same German, French and Italian speaking people have lived in peace for over 150 years.