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EFFECTIVE VOTING

Showing how bad government results
when nearly half of the people are
denied representation in parliament

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In Single Member Electorates
nearly half the votes are not counted to elect a candidate.

Many votes have NO VALUE
- making "democracy" a farce.

In Multi-Member Electorates
(*Proportional Representation*)
nearly all votes are counted to elect a candidate.

To the maximum extent possible,
each vote has EQUAL VALUE
- making "democracy" work.

Australia's Electoral Systems
with few exceptions are not consistent with
The UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

United Nations Declaration 1948

" everyone has the right to take part in the
government of his country, directly or through
freely chosen representatives' and that 'the
will of the people shall be the basis of the
authority of government; this will shall be
expressed in periodic and genuine elections
which shall be by universal and equal suffrage
and shall be held by secret vote or equivalent
free voting procedures.' "

Ratified by Australia 1980

1. From time to time election procedures within the Commonwealth are subjected to a broadside of complaints on the score of who should be allowed to vote, preferential treatment of sparsely settled areas, plural voting and property qualifications in Local Government,* and the method of keeping boundaries in line with population growth.
2. The witch hunting is strictly confined to determining who shall vote, and to keeping the ratio of electors to politicians in some sort of uniformity. The real purpose of DEMOCRATIC elections, however, to enable the greatest possible number of people to be represented in government, appears to be entirely overlooked. Unless the elector's vote helps to elect a candidate of his choice, that vote is wasted and the elector is disfranchised. Yet almost no one expresses any concern that NEARLY HALF THE VOTERS IN SINGLE MEMBER ELECTORATES ARE DISFRANCHISED AT EACH ELECTION.
3. The most familiar catch cry is "One Vote One Value", which is generally heard when the opposing party has had an unsuccessful election result, despite having gained more votes as a proportion of votes cast than the elected government.
4. It will be found upon investigation that there is a common denominator underlying all complaints:-

Firstly, single member electorates are always involved. An electoral system of this nature is loaded with temptation for the ruling party to alter boundaries and create additional electorates for its own advantage. History records how certain political leaders employing such methods have kept their parties in office for years even when on occasions the government has received fewer votes than the opposing parties. The British Parliament, for example, only once since the turn of the century, has been elected on a majority of votes cast. On all other occasions it has taken about five times as many votes to elect a Liberal candidate than to return either a Labor or Conservative member to parliament.^f

Going back some years in Queensland, electorates were gerrymandered to such an extent that the Labor Party seemed certain to remain in office forever. It was only by an internal split among power-drunk politicians that Labor brought about its own downfall. The new anti-Labor government immediately set to work gerrymandering the boundaries for its advantage and did such a diabolically efficient job that, in turn, it became virtually unbeatable.

* It has been the practice in Local Government to allow land owners with large holdings to have extra votes. This practice was a recognition that the expenditure of rate revenue serves land rather than people. What use each particular land holder makes of the services provided is his own business. Provided the rates are assessed as a measure of the value of the exclusive possession of each site and are in the nature of compensation to all others served by the local authority, there is little to complain of. The payment of a higher proportion of rates for the more extensive use of valuable land implied an added responsibility and additional voting power seemed fair and reasonable. The conditions which apply today are in one respect quite different. Land speculation has become big business and yields a far greater return for the effort expended than does the actual use of land. It would therefore be highly dangerous to allow extra voting power to those who deal in land only for the purpose of avoiding work and exploiting others.

It was hailed as a great democratic achievement when multiple voting recently was abolished in Western Australia and the catch cry "One Vote One Value" was to be heard. The fact that in single member electorates about half the electors are disfranchised did not even register.

^f As a proportion of the total vote.

One example after another could be quoted to demonstrate the extent to which the will of the people has been subverted in single member electorates. While approximately fifty percent of the people are disfranchised at every election, it is idle to talk about a democratic franchise and bleat about "One Vote One Value".

Secondly, the discerning voter will have noticed that, wherever such a travesty of democracy exists, the two party system of government will remain and, furthermore, that such ostensibly opposing parties will in essence have but one policy; differences will be more apparent than real and amount only to a matter of degree.

In the United Kingdom, the Liberal Party (originally known as the Whigs), which was a power in the land for about a century and had included in its ranks intellectual giants such as Gladstone, Asquith, and Churchill, was eclipsed by the emergence of the Labor Party. A similar split is now appearing in the Labor Party but, because of the electoral system, there is little prospect of the breakaway element becoming a third powerful party. It will either supplant the Labor Party or, as with the Liberals, become just another ineffectual party - a monument to its disfranchised following.

In Australia we have the Labor Party and the Liberal coalition; the United Kingdom has Labor and Conservatives; in the United States there are the Democrats and the Republicans.

- All parties subscribe to taxation systems which deny the right of private property without which there can be no real personal liberty.
- All parties subscribe to the private appropriation of the community-created rental value of land (economic rent) which is the government's natural revenue.
- All parties believe in a government-controlled fiduciary currency, practice deficit financing, and balance budgets by deliberate inflation, which is the ultimate act of tax robbery, sparing none and savaging most, the poorer classes and those on fixed incomes.
- All parties subscribe to a swollen over-privileged bureaucracy, impoverishing the working people and interfering with human rights at every turn.

The Labor parties of Australia and the United Kingdom - also the Democratic party of the United States - practise higher rates of taxation, inflation and expansion of the "Public Sector".

Liberals, Conservatives and Republicans believe in more moderate rates of taxation and inflation, and at times make some attempts at curbing the growth of the Public Sector, but essentially there are no fundamental policy differences.

Concerning the failure of all political parties to collect the rental value of the people's estate for revenue, it is interesting to speculate why Labor and Liberal parties both oppose any measure of land reform; here at least one would expect a real difference in policy, because working people, supposed to be represented by the Labor and Democratic parties, have everything to gain by collecting the community-created value of land for revenue and abolishing taxes, and nothing to lose by preventing the rewards of land speculation supporting an idle class which, as such, lives upon the labour of others. As a matter of conjecture, the writer is driven to what seems the only feasible conclusion why Labor and Liberal parties should have a common policy on the conditions of land tenure.

liberals, Conservatives and Republicans, so-called, have a tender regard for the interests of land dealers and speculators, whose operations are bleeding untold billions of dollars of unearned increment from the earnings of the working community. Labor parties throughout the world are, to a large extent, under communist influence, seeking eventually to gain power by a "coup d'état", based on a discontented and militant work-force and the demise of democratic government. The last thing they wish, with this objective in view, is a thriving and contented following. With the collection of "economic rent" for revenue and with taxes abolished, undreamt of prosperity would be the lot of working people, who would speedily lose interest in the ambitions of communist party bosses.

Under a democratic voting system, such strange bedfellows, Communists and liberals, would soon learn the folly of lying together. With a variety of political knowledge represented in parliament, the absurdity and incongruity of such behaviour would be exposed.

Thirdly, all so-called opposing parties tolerate the tragedy of unemployment with its secondary effects, inseparable from involuntary idleness, of drug abuse, rising crime rate, vandalism etc. The palliatives of the welfare state, unworkable as these have proved to be, are the common reaction of both political parties, neither of which can comprehend that hand-outs are not a substitute for justice.

Fourthly, all parties tinker with a fiduciary currency as a means of redistributing incomes and financing a hand-out style of government, totally ignoring the inherent rights of producers to the product of their labour.

Fifthly, all parties subscribe to trade restrictions, tariffs, quotas, embargoes and the like. Such attempts as are made towards a liberalisation of trade are quite impracticable when there is a hard core of unemployment - 11% plus in the United Kingdom, 8% in the United States and about 6% in this lucky country, loaded as it is with an abundance of natural resources.

Sixthly, there does appear to be some difference in the method of socialising industry. In the United Kingdom, the major industries have been nationalised and denationalised with monotonous regularity when there is a change of government. Insolvencies are the inevitable result.

It appears to be quite unknown that taxation, the nationalisation of profits, is a much more effective form of socialism than the government takeover method, which in effect has only one real difference: government ownership results in the nationalisation of losses as well as profits, if any. Under the tax method of socialising industry, private enterprise does all the pioneering, takes all the risks and then hand over the profits to the socialist government; under whatever name it has been elected.

Seventhly, and most importantly, both political parties appear to believe that wages are paid from capital and therefore that governments must continually relieve producers of their "surplus" capital by taxation and embark on national public works and subsidisation of industry to relieve unemployment. If this were true then each person employed would deprive another of a job. From this nostrum flows the demands for shorter hours of work, sacking of married women, early retirements, restricting immigration, fear of technology, and similar stupid and defeatist policies.

Wages are paid from production, each worker advancing a week's or a month's work, or even a year's work in the case of a farmer, before being paid, and that loss of production means lack of employment for someone. Basic production is labour applied to land in agriculture, forestry, mining or fisheries. Secondary production and service industries, therefore, can only exist from the surplus products of the basic industries.

Neither the left-wing Labor socialists or the right-wing Liberal socialists will face the central truth that when some valuable land is withheld from use to serve speculative interests some workers must remain unemployed.

5. The reader is probably wondering, even if the foregoing is accepted as a rational explanation, how a different method of voting to ensure that each vote cast has the maximum effect in electing a representative of the voter's choice, can make possible such needed and revolutionary, though peaceful, changes in the art of government. Unless it can be demonstrated how effective voting will result in better and more efficient government, there is little point in being concerned with the method of electing politicians and representatives to Local Government. A rational explanation has been attempted to show how an undemocratic electoral system can wreck such havoc to the economy of a nation, demoralise time-honoured institutions and the basic principles of conduct. It now remains to be seen how a democratic system of voting CAN make possible the restoration of decent, orderly and efficient government.

6. Firstly, a word of explanation as to how such a system would work. The mechanics of the method known as Proportional Representation are quite simple. Let us take a hypothetical example of a state, the people of which are represented in parliament by 52 members, each elected from separate (single member) electorates.

Let it be assumed that there are two major political parties (as at present) with the voting strength of each being evenly divided, not only in total but in each electorate. It would then require, say, 51% of the votes cast in each electorate to elect a candidate, which would mean that 49% of electors had not cast an effective vote; that is, their votes had not been counted to elect a representative of the voter's choice. One vote, no value?

In Australia the number of electors in country constituencies is considerably less than in metropolitan areas. This was introduced deliberately in the first instance as a measure of compensation for the vast areas involved and the sparse population density; also because tariffs etc disadvantage rural folk to a greater extent than city dwellers. Add to this situation trade union monopolies which impose further handicaps on those who live in the country. The effect has been to cause a drift of population to the cities and consequently worsen the unequal representation as between city and country electors.

This disproportionate representation can easily result in a majority of voters being disfranchised. The position is even worse in England where there is no exercise of preference and the "first past the post" system applies. It can happen that if voting is fairly even: say, Labor and Liberals each receiving 33% of the votes - the Conservative candidate will be elected on a 34% vote and 66% of electors will have cast votes which have no value.

7. Under Proportional Representation, taking the same example, the state would be divided into four thirteen-member electorates. Each candidate would require a quota of one-fourteenth plus one of the votes cast in each electorate in order to win a seat. Surplus votes would be distributed according to the elector's preference, recorded on the ballot paper. When all candidates who have achieved a quota (after accounting for surplus votes) have been elected, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated and his votes distributed according to preferences to other candidates. If preferences are cast in favour of candidates already elected then the next preference is taken. The process continues until all thirteen vacancies have been filled. In this example less than one-thirteenth or about 8% of votes cast have failed to elect a candidate. Compare this with up to 66% of electors who can be disfranchised in "first past the post" voting as in the United Kingdom or up to 50% by the preferential systems in this country.

8. Compulsory voting for all candidates on the ballot paper is not necessary but it is advisable that each elector should express as many preferences as there are candidates to be elected, in order to avoid wasting his or her vote.

The multi-member constituency is not restricted to thirteen members as in the example. Any number of members from, say, five to thirteen, as expedient, following the same procedure may be elected from each multi-member constituency. An odd number is preferable to avoid the possibility of a deadlock. The greater the number of seats in one electorate, the fewer voters will be disfranchised.

9. In the event of a substantial population increase in any of the multi-member electorates, additional seats may be created without altering boundaries, if desired.

Under this particular example of Proportional Representation, there can be up to thirteen shades of political thought represented in Parliament; not just two - right-wing or left-wing socialism - as at present.

10. Gerrymandering is almost impossible under Proportional Representation as boundaries defining only the multi-member electorates are involved and it would be extremely difficult to alter these to the political advantage of any party or candidate. Under this system, pre-selection of safe party hacks, selected only because they can be trusted not to get out of step with the party line, would be a dangerous procedure, and statesmen capable of progressive and independent thought would gradually begin to appear in Parliament.

11. Other advantages of the multi-member electorate are as follows:-

- i) It is virtually impossible for prominent leaders of recognised ability to lose their seats at election time. This often happens in single member electorates due to population increases or changes within the electorate or by concentrated effort of "the opposition" to defeat a formidable opponent.
- ii) Candidates with little ability but with great financial strength or past masters in political intrigue can never be elected unopposed as at present often happens in local Government.
- iii) A casual vacancy can be filled without a by-election simply by examining the ballot papers and appointing the candidate who was "runner up" at the last election.
- iv) Interest would be revived in politics and local Government when electors had such a wide choice of candidates, one of whom they, most certainly, would like to represent them. How often do intelligent people fail to record a vote when faced with a choice of known incompetents - products of the party pre-selection system? A multi-member election for the complete Council every three years in local Government would become a well-advertised event, attracting wide interest especially when a council is failing to serve the interests of ratepayers. A real protest could then be registered. There is little or no redress under the present system when only one-third retire and of these the majority, in safe single member seats, are elected unopposed.
- v) The city councils of Sydney and Melbourne have been sacked by the governments of New South Wales and Victoria in recent years because of malpractice, and others only remain in office because of weakness or disinterest by the State Governments concerned. New South Wales has since adopted a substantial measure of Proportional Representation to ensure responsible local Government for the future.

- vi) Proportional Representation gives voting power to minorities according to their numbers. It is well known that the great majority are not the best informed members of the community and are easily swayed by propaganda. The intelligent section of the community, those equipped for leadership, are always in the minority.
 - vii) Proportional Representation has brought peace to Southern Ireland. The single member electorates of Northern Ireland have denied the Catholics even the semblance of fair representation and hundreds have died in consequence.
 - viii) Proportional Representation is not an experiment: it is used in many parts of the world - for the Australian senate elections and for state elections in Tasmania. Even though unnecessary complexities have been introduced, the franchise has been restored to nearly all electors.
 - ix) It should be noted, however, that in some European countries a distorted form of Proportional Representation known as the "Party List" system is used. Under this method votes are cast for parties and not for individual candidates. The parties are then entitled to select and appoint members to the parliament according to voting strength.
- On no account should this system be used. It does not comply with the true concept of democracy or give electors the right to vote for the candidate of their choice. Votes cast under such conditions cannot be said to have real value, when the worst features of the party pre-selection system are perpetuated.
- x) Proportional Representation is not a cure-all for social disorders but it would give political power to the people and representation to minorities. By so doing, it would restore interest in politics and good government. The introduction of truly representative government would pave the way for urgently needed reforms which are virtually impossible under a two party, one policy, system. If the people so desired, they could break the power of vested interests which are driving Australia to the left in an uninformed and blind reaction to injustice. Communist or fascist rule will only be accepted in this country when representative and efficient government ceases to exist. History records that any form of dictatorship, once established, is almost impossible to dislodge without a counter-revolution. A multi-member electoral system is a powerful safeguard against a totalitarian form of government ever gaining a foothold.

Conclusion

The art of government consists in doing only those things for people which they cannot do for themselves. The prime function of government is to provide equality of opportunity for all. Land which is the storehouse of the natural resources from which all people must live is the field of endeavour to which all opportunities within the sphere of government relate. Administration of the people's estate, therefore, is the basis of government, not only to safeguard the rights of this generation but to preserve the utility of land for all future generations.

When half the people have no voice in government it is so much easier for vested interests to usurp what rightly belongs to all people and to deny the right of access to land, without the payment of tribute. This is the cause of unemployment and poverty which in turn has spawned the Welfare State and the bureaucratic socialist form of government which is strangling productive enterprise in this country. In consequence, limitation of the power of government has become the greatest problem of modern times.

Each person is born with natural human rights. Majorities, no matter whether democratically elected, or otherwise, have no warrant to deprive individuals or minorities of their inherent rights. Such rights are not bestowed by government and what the governments cannot give they have no warrant to take away. Over-government is a natural result of, and in turn results in, a denial of basic human rights.

Democratic forms of government will not necessarily work miracles of justice and genuine reform. There is, however, a chance when half the people including minorities, which usually represent independent thought, intelligence, culture and enterprise, are no longer disfranchised. Having denied about half the people, including those most qualified, the right to an effective vote, we then make voting compulsory. There is nothing more fraught with danger than a fool with a ballot paper being forced to cast his vote. Democracy has not yet been tried for the central power structure of this country. What passes for democracy has, in fact, resulted in a hotch-potch of varying degrees of socialism with governments continually increasing taxation and grabbing more power in areas in which they have no legitimate function, yielding to the power of pressure groups to exploit the people, and then dispensing largess to shield men from "the effects of folly" which, as Herbert Spencer said, "... is to fill the world with fools ..." penalising those who work, denying some the right to work, and through the welfare state rewarding those who are encouraged not to work.

Such policies cannot endure. Why not give real democracy a trial? There is nothing to lose and everything to gain.

For full information read -

Your vote - effective or wasted?

Proportional Representation Society of Australia

Proportional Representation Manual.

Proportional Representation Society of Australia

How Democracies Vote.

Enid Lakeman, Faber, 4th Ed. 1974

Mirror of the Nation's Mind.

J. F. H. Wright, Hale & Remonger 1980

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