

Thecuriousmail's Weblog

Politicians and parliamentary democracy: a new direction

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We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. Albert Einstein. Party parliamentary democracy has reached a point of irreversible irrelevance and irredeemable corruption. A lack of accountability and an absence of transparency, fundamentally characterizes western style parliamentary democracies: political will is bought and sold. It is not a temporary aberration. It was inevitable due to the structure, and it is in the continuing interests of the political parties to neither reform themselves nor the process. The obvious question then is how does reform occur? Indeed, how can real reform possibly occur? The political class control the political process, and while token concessions may be made, they will always work to insist on their relevance, and will never willingly relinquish their pre-eminent position.

As history shows, there is actually only one answer. But if the political class are an entrenched part of the problem, how likely are they to proffer a real solution?? As history shows, there is actually only one answer....

What do I see as the future in Australia? It's a thought experiment on my part. It is a conversation all Australians should have, with the goal of arriving at a consensus. This is not intended to be exhaustive.

Have we overcome the 'divine right of kings', merely to replace that with the 'divine right of the political class'? My preference is for direct democracy, and technology exists for that to be possible. As there needs to be no priest between you and God (or that role is informal and shared), there needs to be no political class in governing ourselves. Citizens are always the ones held accountable for the decisions of politicians, without having agreed to a particular decision, or even opposed a particular decision: a politician may leave office with generous benefits, but the country is bankrupt, a politician may make decisions on an overseas armed intervention, even based on a lie, but it is the citizen who suffers retaliatory terrorist attacks etc. That being the case, that the citizen is always held finally accountable, then let that be on what they truly decide. But it might be a step too far at the moment.

Calling it 'representative' democracy is a blatant lie, as the politician represents the interests and goals of the political party, not the constituent. Party politics needs to be abandoned. Decisions in that scenario are made to be consistent with an ideology and agenda (often a secret agenda), not the best decision on available evidence,

and decisions are prone to corrupt influence, and an often absurd short-sightedness (and the answer to the lack of long-term is NOT to put the corrupt in power longer). Transparency is the key to accountability, therefore no secret decisions by government or bureaucracy, and such things as the secret commercial-in-confidence arrangements entered into by governments, cabinet confidentiality, and the withholding of information or proposals from the citizen, must be banned.

Australia, like Britain and America, largely has a two-party system, a duopoly. Parliamentary responses to issues are 1. what party A believes, or 2. what party B believes. However, the correct response –what is consistent with reason, common-sense, and any evidence, and what is fair (which is what the citizen wants)– may mean there should a response 3. a mixture of 1 and 2, or response 4. neither 1 or 2 or 3, but something completely different. Yet responses 3 and 4 are simply not able to be made! As a country, we are intentionally limiting our ability to correctly respond to challenges. For what reason?? We should maintain the current system which promotes graft and corruption, and where decisions are ideological, not rational?? That will not end well.

An alternative: Nationally, 12 people are elected. Term is 10 years, and 1 term only. Their mandate is to be independent, make laws for the long-term interest of Australian citizens, and current and 7th generation (to pick a number) interests are of equal import. Laws are to encourage in all aspects equality, and fairness, and the process to encourage openness, participation, and accountability. Lobbying must be banned. Arguably there must be some kind of forum where citizens are able to argue for a particular position or cause, but lobbying, as it is practised and has been practiced, is an insidious undermining of democratic values and an invitation to corruption and otherwise compromised decisions.

Each of the 12 must provide a written explanation openly available for their decision, the reasoning for their vote. Secret decisions (cabinet, bureaucracy), and decisions without justification or explanation and not consistent with reason and common-sense, are commonplace today. In these situations a corrupt or compromised or just plain ‘bad’ decision is almost inevitable. There must be no party affiliations, no collusion or contrivance as to voting intention, either formal or informal, as what is required is a vote based on reason, evidence and insight, not the ‘party line’ (adherence to benefits the party of course, not the citizen).

Then randomly the vote of only 9 is counted, and a simple majority rules. The random count element is important as it is designed to minimize the potential of vote manipulation. (As i said, all of the 12 must provide openly available written explanations of their vote before the count).

Those that govern, and the governed, is an antiquated distinction. Twice a year citizen sponsored referendum may be proposed. 50% + 1 of the citizen vote means the proposal is to go to referendum, and two-thirds + 1 means the referendum is passed and is law. Ultimate authority does not reside in the state, or institutions, or courts, it resides , always has and always will, in the people.

In direct response to a decision of the 12, to cancel or nullify a particular law a referendum can be held any time, provided the 50% + 1 level is met. If successful, a two-thirds +1 vote, the particular law is over-ruled and null and void.

In all walks of life, there are people in Australia who display our best characteristics, through their intelligence, honesty, empathy, insightfulness, and commitment to a shared future, they are suitable for election as one of the 12. No current ‘politician’, and very few past ones, would qualify. More than half of those in Australian parliaments now are ‘professional politicians’, having previously worked for another politician, or in a political party. In certain circumstances, eg response to a natural disaster, or undertaking a commission of inquiry, such situations where sole authority is necessary, one competent individual can be nominated to oversee and lead our response.

The bureaucracy, the judicial system, and the police service, would need simultaneous reform, and, as it is currently experienced, the capitalist economic system is incompatible with this future. We cannot allow a situation to develop or persist, where a company or corporation, who exists only to make money, and who can be more powerful than a country, is able to thwart the will and intentions of the citizen (remember the lesson of the East India Company).

As true then as of today. The American Declaration of Independence:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. **But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.**”