A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

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The Price of Freedom is Eternal Vigilance

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An Alternative to Parties By Neville Archibald

As mentioned last week, this week I am going to look at what we could do to stop the huge influence that the party system of politics has over the common man.

We have seen in the last few weeks, continual party political maneuverings. Are the Coalition filing for divorce? Who has custody of the kids? Who is jumping ship to join the next big thing? Media has focused almost exclusively on these Machiavellian manipulations as the players of this game seek to increase their chances of re-election. To be seen as being in the right group, the right team.

Sadly this attitude flows on into public discourse as well, with each person looking at team scores and agreeing or disagreeing with the players being picked for the coming competition. Their "dream team". Buying into this whole charade is what they want you to do! Pick a side and reap the rewards! Or as we have been seeing time after time, pick a side and end up with the best of the worst. Or in other terms, choose from the almost indistinguishable differences by one or two variations in otherwise almost identical policy sets.

While we are comparing the theatre of political opposition, we miss the point of the existence of politics in the first place. It is essentially there to represent the people! The election of each individual member is solely the responsibility of the electorate they are supposed to represent. Each federal electorate averages 120,000 registered voters, I state it again, they are the sole reason for that member being there! Forget the party nominations, or the machinery of selecting a candidate, the purpose is given in the first sentence of section 24 of our federal constitution.

***"24.** The House of Representatives shall be composed of members directly chosen by the people of the Commonwealth,"* it then goes on to talk of numbers and relationships between those numbers and the population statistics and Senate elect numbers. Nowhere does it mention party pre-selection or the party system at all. The sole responsibility of the member, is to his constituents!

If we look at Senate members we see a similar intent.

In Section ***"7.** The Senate shall be composed of senators for each state, directly chosen by the people of the state, voting, until the Parliament otherwise provides, as on electorate."*

Again no talk of party interference in this process!

The first mention of party political interference has then been inserted in the following section **15.** under the casual vacancies ruling added in 1977.

This effectively says that if there is a vacancy of a given senator (through resignation or death etc.) then the 'party' to whom they were a part, would then have the right to replace them with one of their own. In this way the 'party' retains it's seat. There is quite a section added at this point. Of the 18 clauses in the whole section describing the Senate, this addition (made in 1977) occupies almost as much space as the other 17 combined. That in itself dismays me, what could be said simply in the past has ballooned under this style of politics to be wordy and confusing. It was a simple concept previously, as the whole of our original constitution is, in this case the voting population chooses the Senator, full stop. People calling for a 'new Constitution', do so thinking something is wrong with it. They don't seem to equate the verbose additions (Which I believe, is one of the most insidious ways of changing intent) as the actual problem. To me, corruption creeps in with every word added to legislation. Original intent becomes codified and multiplied and full of variations to the point of making that original intent, capable of any interpretation, by who ever can afford to pursue it. That seems to be the sad reality that many overlook when following the call to reform.

This is why the previous reading suggested is important. Knowing the reasons and outcomes of the development of these intents is a crucial part of understanding why we need to be not only careful, but understanding of the philosophies behind them. They are the very binding glue that holds a society together and allows us to find that common ground. To operate successfully as a Nation.

So when we look at what has been said about the problem of 'party' involvement, we can see what needs to change.

Under the heading of "Political causes of the American Revolution", which is chapter 7 in his book of essays, Lord Acton presents the writings of many statesmen, on the actions of using a 'party' system in representative government.

None had anything nice to say.

Joseph Story (American lawyer, jurist and politician), writing of the development of American political systems in 1818, says this:

> *"A new race of men is springing up to govern the nation; they are the hunters after popularity; men ambitious, not of the honour so much as of the profits of office, the demagogues whose principles hang laxly upon them, and who follow, not so much what is right as what leads to a temporary vulgar applause. There is great, very great danger that these men will usurp so much of popular favour that they will rule the nation; and if so, we may yet live to see many of our best institutions crumble in the dust."*
>
> *On the 18th February, 1834, he (Story) writes of Jackson's administration: "I feel humiliated at the truth, which cannot be disguised, that though we live under the form of a republic, we are in fact under the absolute rule of a single man." And a few years later, 3d November, 1837, he tells Miss Martineau that she has judged too favorably of his country: "You have overlooked the terrible influence of a corrupting patronage, and the system of exclusiveness in official appointments, which have already wrought such extensive mischiefs among us, and threaten to destroy all the safeguards of our civil liberties. . . . .*
> *You would have learned, I think, that there may be a despotism exercised in a republic, as irresistible and as ruinous as in any form of monarchy."*
>
> (Lord Acton page 234)

These are comments about the powerful grouping arising from the formation of these 'teams of representatives', rather than the arising of a single person to represent the people who elected them. Calhoun (a New England judge) also commented on the despotic nature of any government when it concentrates it power in the system itself, rather than the people. English pamphleteer, journalist and politician, William Cobbett said much the same thing, having lived under a republican government in Pennsylvania for eight years.

> *"Channing (Unitarian minister and abolitionist) touches on a very important point, the influence of European liberalism on the republicanism of America: "Ever since our revolution we have had a number of men who have wanted faith in our free institutions, and have seen in our almost unlimited extension of the elective franchise the germ of convulsion and ruin. When the demagogues succeed in inflaming the ignorant multitude, and get office and power, this anti-popular party increases; in better times it declines. It has been built up in a measure by the errors and crimes of the liberals of Europe. . . . I have endeavoured on all occasions to disprove the notion that the labouring classes are unfit depositaries of political power. I owe it, however, to truth to say that I believe that the elective franchise is extended too far in this country." In 1841 he described very accurately the perils which have since proved fatal:*

"The great danger to our institutions, which alarms our conservatives most, has not perhaps entered Mr. Smith's mind. It is the danger of a party organisation, so subtle and strong as to make the government the monopoly of a few leaders, and to insure the transmission of the executive power from hand to hand almost as regularly as in a monarchy ..... That this danger is real cannot be doubted. So that we have to watch against despotism as well as, or more than, anarchy." (Lord Acton, page 235)

Is this not exactly what we are witnessing? A Few leaders who pass on the very same policies and more importantly, the philosophies, that have previously failed to make change for the better. We elect one of two, in a series of actions more like throwing one out than actually going for something better. The system is passed from one to the other but never really altered at that crucial point, the one that ensures it will reflect our wishes and not that of a party elite.

So, given the recognition of the corrupting influence of the party system on true representative government, what can we do about it?

Recognition that we must deal with it, is paramount. Unless the voting public can see the need to change their ways, they may feel it is too hard. For far too long they have abdicated their true responsibility. The first step in this change would have to be to lead by example. To start small with achievable goals in your own locality, like taking back control of local government. Many politicians have started in local government before moving on to state or federal. It is the same with anything you wish to achieve in life. You crawl before you walk to gain both confidence and experience.

To read about this and the experience of a true representative parliamentarian, I recommend the works of Ted Mack.

https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Mack_T-Beyond_Representative_Government.pdf

and ***https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Mack_T-Henry_Parkes_Oration.pdf***

Also the works of Mr Graeme Campbell MHR. Who says of the uni-party,

"Governments, Liberal or Labor, are like Mr Rowe - aground on the barren rock of rational economics. So beguiled are they that they have not realised rational economics is not an economic theory but the political ideology of big business to control world trade."

Commonsense writing on the issues confronting us are his forte. He tells us that the forces we are battling are between nationalist and internationalist, but describes the 'nationalist' completely different to that of the skewed version sold by those competing to push the internationalist end. His words that cannot be denied by anyone who is looking clearly at the problems we face: *"In this battle, the internationalists have the support of big business, big governments, the media and our sick academia, most of our supine politicians and the banks."*

Both of these men made good their days in parliament by doing the very thing the constitution expects of them: re-presenting the will of their electorate! Campbell, who started out as a Labor member, lost endorsement when he continued to oppose the expected party position where it conflicted with his electorate. Because of this, he resigned before he was removed from the party and became an independent, winning the election despite being dis-endorsed.

Ted Mack, started in North Sydney council, where he was a proponent of Citizens Initiative Referendum and Recall. Basing his ideas on both the Swiss concept and that of several US State versions. His push for this was, in part, due to the real need for accountability to ratepayers. He was to follow this through into both state and federal politics, using office to promote this idea that we, the people, should have a better say over what we do and don't want. As an addition to the Constitution it would enable the voters themselves to put a halt to bad legislation, and even initiate some. Recall could be used to oust a member who no longer had the support of his constituents.

When I consider the role of the Parliament, I expect the 'will of the people' should prevail; however, the member should also be able to vote as his conscience dictates. A person of strong conviction (for this will be what is needed to make this change) should not be expected to compromise their faith. When a conflict like that arose, the population would either have to put up with it, or ask for resignation. One hopes that this would be a lesser issue than some paint it. If the election of an honest person is considered best, then such an occurrence need not be the worry it is made out to be. For surely the direction of votes as it presently stands in parliament, is increasingly at odds with the peoples desires, as we have seen. Jeremy Lee sets this out succinctly in his book, *Conscience Voting*.
https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Lee%20J%20-%20Conscience%20Voting.pdf
Another, more in tune with Ted Mack's accountability drive, is Jeremy's book, *Impact Voting* ***https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Lee_J-Impact_Voting.pdf***

Both of these books offer advice on how to proceed, with references on past actions and possible new methods to try. As with all of the information linked here, it will only be of benefit if you actually read and disseminate it. Only if you take action yourself to make it available in your local circles of influence. Copies of all these items are available at reasonable cost to take that action.

Another series of observations and suggestions are made in a book from 1911. Hilaire Belloc and Cecil Chesterton, *The Party System*.
https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Belloc_Chesterton-The_Party_System.pdf
on page 17, they write:

> *"Either the representative must vote as his constituents would vote if consulted, or he must vote in the opposite sense. In the latter case, he is not a representative at all, but merely an oligarch ; for it is surely ridiculous to say that a man represents Bethnal Green if he is in the habit of saying " Aye " when the people*

of Bethnal Green would say "No." If, on the other hand, he does vote as his constituents would vote, then he is merely the mouthpiece of his constituents and derives his authority from them. And this is the only democratic theory of representation. In order that the practice may correspond to it, even approximately, three things are necessary. First, there must be absolute freedom in the selection of representatives ; secondly, the representatives must be strictly responsible to their constituents and to no one else; thirdly, the representatives must deliberate in perfect freedom, and especially must be absolutely independent of the Executive."

Here we see the alterations that need to be addressed in our current system. Even though this was written in 1911, and of the English Parliament, it still applies here. Freedom of selection, means just that, no pre-selected candidates arrived at by a few party political interests. Few enough put their name forward now, we do not need to winnow, or whittle down the numbers, especially when it is done by outside influence, just allow them to step forward. There will be no vague promises of loyalty conferred in this manner. Other collusion or vested interests behind a candidate would be punishable by existing law, if they should be made known or come into the light of day. The 'expected coercion' by party ties would not be adding some form of legitimacy to this practice.

Secondly the 'strictly responsible to their constituents and no one else', part need only be modified to allow the genuine person to not compromise on their personal principles, which I imagine would have already been made known in the debate or discussion prior to the vote (in the 'get to know your candidate' stage.) discussed more thoroughly in Jeremy Lee's book, "Conscience Voting".

The third part, is even more important, in that there can be no pressure exerted unduly from the executive arm of government. Considered debate, consultation and investigation must be allowed to take place. Gagging of debate, pressure to conform, or incentives in the form of promises made, should be considered an undue influence. This does not mean that deals can not be struck or that true debate would not be able to change a position, it means that time to go back to the electorate and confer with any new information that may come into play, can be a part of the process.

It is here that time for consideration must also be addressed. The late night or rushed sittings to force something through need to be curtailed. Emergencies may crop up, but much of the posturing and parading to garner votes that causes this knee jerk reaction in the first place, would be out. Nothing decided in haste is ever good. The old proverb, "decide in haste, repent at leisure" is true far more often than not.

In chapter 7, (The Party System)"Can it be mended?" other ideas have been put forth as to how to limit the influences of the party system. A Mr Jowett, M.P., makes a suggestion to abolish Ministries per se, and substitute departmental committees of the house. This would see a "minister' as just the chairman of a committee, where a number of parliamentarians make up the body itself. Instead of having only party representatives push a 'party line', the committee would be open to input from all who wished to partake. This would be especially important, given that some electorates are far more impacted by decisions that they also know something about. It would be 'horses for courses', in that those with the first hand experience of that particular item being considered would have a better understanding of both the workings of, and the desire of the people in those industries. If you were looking at parliament as a business, surely you would expect no less! Parliamentary committees now in place are often the point of exposure for departmental flaws or failures. Just one sincere member can raise important questions that may well otherwise risk of being be swept under a festive rug. Senator Gerard Rennick, Senator Alex Antic and Senator Malcolm Roberts, among others, have been successful in this manner, when active on these committees. More of the same, but on a ministerial basis, can only help, surely? What do you think. We need to consider and expound on these possibilities. Anything that will bring us more accountability can be considered.

The most interesting point I can make here is that when you look at the loss of actual true representation that has occurred since full on party involvement, it makes you realise just how few of us are a part of any decision. Democratic elections have become mere words to give the illusion of participation. Selected individuals (all toeing the one line) are put to us to choose from. After we choose, they then either participate to a small degree (if it agrees with party ideology) or sit out the decision making process on the side lines with little or no input, until it is time to vote. They then vote, but knowing full well the party in control already has the numbers to pass, all worked out beforehand via deals and backscratching. Less than half the participants have any say, and even less than that make policy. That is reflected back at us, in that only a small portion of electorates have a member who actually has a say. Even then it not necessarily the true say of the electorate, it is the party interpretation; and there are only a few policies that make the difference in elections. The majority of these policies are just brought along for the ride and rarely feature in the decision to elect in the first place.

Anyway you look at it, it is representative government in name only!
This is what we must change.

The other significant addition to our system would be the Referenda process (C.I.R) laid out here: ***https://alor.org/Storage/Library/Initiative%20Referendum%20and%20Recall.htm***
and commented on here:
https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Walker%20G%20de%20Q%20-%20The%20Peoples%20Law.pdf

It is also in the works of Ted Mack MHR, as previously mentioned. A man who took this seriously and endeavoured to use it in his own North Shore Sydney council. Practical applications and experiences already proven. This eight page read gives clarity and insight into just how it operated quite successfully in the 1980s. ***https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Mack_T-Beyond_Representative_Government.pdf***

Once again, participation of the public must be encouraged first. The apathy and disinterest shown in previous times has become less of a problem now, as the successive governments we have had, ride roughshod over our various freedoms. The awakening multitude must be given encouraging and relevant material to show that it is possible to sort this out. Dissatisfaction with party political division should be acted on; in whatever form would best help. If we are talking corruption, point it out, even if the media does not. If we see a politician walk from public life directly into a job he helped to create while in office, point that out too. For too long voting on particular issues has not been mentioned. It is published in the parliament record, Hansard. Much should also be made of this, especially when the prevailing electorate desires the very opposite. Voting by your elected candidate should be common knowledge in your area. How else are people to know whether they are actually trying to represent their interests or not.

Ignorance leads to lack of action and apathy. Both knowledge and awareness of the less than desirable practices by party hacks, can only push us towards a more independent and therefore more representative form of government. People will eventually stop supporting those who do them wrong! Mistakes are one thing; but continued failure, whether intentional or not, should not be allowed to go unnoticed and without comment. We all need to be more active in our public life, when it concerns politics. It must be pointed out to all voters, that if we don't take an interest, the same people will continue to change this country until it is unrecognisable. As was pointed out in the last article, the times that have reflected public satisfaction and prosperity, have been the times that people have actively participated. We need to encourage this and from there we can push for the changes needed.

In the current media scrabble to point out differences and difficulties within party unity, for all parties, the one real issue being missed, is the one that created the rift in the first place. The quiet around the potential impact of the hate speech legislation is conveniently forgotten. This is the impact of Party politics showing. It is all about the puppetry, the show, the distraction around personalities, and not about the damage they are inflicting on us. More of the same will follow until we set about reducing or removing it's influence. Check the mentioned works, work out a plan and begin to make that change. In whatever way suits you best. ***

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