A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

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The Price of Freedom is Eternal Vigilance

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Can We Govern Without the Party System? By Neville Archibald

Life is to be lived. While it can take many forms, our own interpretations of who and what we are shapes not just us, but the very people we live with. It shapes our family, our community and on a grander scale, our world.

Whether our world view is small or expansive, we must realise that we do make a difference. How much of a difference truly does not matter, for just as the last straw make break the camels back, so too does the capstone, that singular last stone out of over 2.3 million, complete the final structure. Key blocks during the build are also such, that if one or two were missing, the structure may well be at risk of falling down.

In society it is no different, it takes only a few to destroy the faith we have in our systems and unless we are astute enough to set in motion the actions needed to amend, or deal with, these faulty few, the result can be complete collapse. The ones who work outside our considered systems, who use phrases like, 'it's only business', or those who avoid being a part of a community while taking out huge profits, are the hedonistic, out for themselves types. Their considered world view is at odds with the very reasons we developed our social structure.

Because these few do it and get away with it, others follow. They see no way to combat it, so they join in. Those of us with greater ideals than that, are left to pick up the pieces as others suffer. If we do not rise to the occasion and sort out the sins against our philosophy, then we see larger and larger numbers fall prey to the destruction of all we have been striving for. We see tolerance, fairness and equality of opportunity, wither and die. We see virtual slavery and a wider division between people in the community, leading to anger, frustration and a descent into the very class warfare we were so keen to rise above.

If we look at history (and we must), we see that civilization has moved forwards and backwards over the centuries as this cycle has repeated. The defining points have always been when the collective voices of the community have aligned with a greater purpose. The arguments between religion and state, or religion and kings, has wavered back and forth, with the high points being when a balance has been achieved. This high point just ending (unless we can arrest it in time) has allowed us to end slavery and create a society whose very concepts lie within the 'love your neighbour as yourself' attitude of Christianity.

As the Roman empire fell from within due to a largely hedonistic population, forgetting and ignoring their previous higher callings, so too are we heading in that same direction. How we govern ourselves is at the crux of the matter, for our laws and direction are decided by the method we use to bring about these discussions and then make decisions on them. If we divorce ourselves from this procedure, we allow others to choose direction and as a consequence, we also forget what it was we were really aiming for.

The party system has been one of those problems. Every direction, every argument has been packaged up for us and presented as if it were one thing. Two parties - two things. Yet our lives consist of a myriad of decisions every day, each with sometimes far more than just that one answer.

We have been tricked into believing that this is the only way to 'win' government. In reality, it seems we are not 'winning' at government, but that government is winning over us.

So are there alternatives?

Here it would be good to reflect on what has been before. The main purpose of history, I contend, is to learn from it, such that we do not repeat the same mistakes again. We often find today's versions of history are cheapened and viewed as entertainment or a competitive overview, like a game. The true lessons are rarely discussed. The criticism of the party system in our governmental process is not a new one, it has been mentioned and lamented in many a book before. Astute writers and politicians themselves have warned of it's destructive nature. First though, if we are to consider replacing it, we need to have a recap on the structure of government we have developed, the one that we are trying to recreate.

This from Baron Lord Acton's book *Essays on Freedom and Power*. In chapter 3, The History of Freedom in Christianity, available here:
https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Acton%20-%20First%20Baron%20-%20Essays%20on%20Freedom%20and%20Power.pdf

he writes:

> *'In the height of their power the Romans became aware of a race of men that had not abdicated freedom in the hands of a monarch; and the ablest writer of the empire pointed to them with a vague and bitter feeling that, to the institutions of these barbarians, not yet crushed by despotism, the future of*

the world belonged. Their kings, when they had kings, did not preside at their councils; they were sometimes elective; they were sometimes deposed; and they were bound by oath to act in obedience with the general wish. They enjoyed real authority only in war. This primitive Republicanism, which admits monarchy as an occasional incident, but holds fast to the collective supremacy of all free men, of the constituent authority over all constituted authorities, is the remote germ of parliamentary government.'

'Feudalism made land the measure and the master of all things. Having no other source of wealth than the produce of the soil, men depended on the landlord for the means of escaping starvation; and thus his power became paramount over the liberty of the subject and the authority of the State.'

Here we see a comparison today with companies. The land is no longer the biggest employer or influence on the public. Companies, both large and small are the new landlords. The 'land' originally being all important to produce, has been changed by technology to be production by whatever means, even unto vague and amorphous output. The small have far less impact than the large (multinationals) as they must work within the framework that the bigger can successfully buy into, or lobby for; BUT we are reliant on these new 'landlords' (production lords) for our daily bread, our very existence. Productivity of a Nation is now so entwined with these big businesses that all monetary policy is connected to it. Even the noblest of these are now so captive of the system (the collective of the production lords) that the control of money and it's scarcity is the leash by which we are released or reeled in. As Acton then said, it became a clash between the feudal hierarchy and the ecclesiastical one. In our case the rights of our developed Parliament under our Christian Constitution ('humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God' and on the institution of the Monarchy to rule according to the customs and traditions of their people.) and the collective of International interests (WEF, IMF etc).

Every baron, said the French maxim, is sovereign in his own domain.
The nations of the West lay between the competing tyrannies of local magnates and of absolute monarchs, when a force was brought upon the scene which proved for a time superior alike to the vassal and his lord.
In the days of the Conquest, when the Normans destroyed the liberties of England, the rude institutions which had come with the Saxons, the Goths, and the Franks from the forests of Germany were suffering decay, and the new element of popular government afterwards supplied by the rise of towns and the formation of a middle class was not yet active. The only influence capable of resisting the feudal hierarchy was the ecclesiastical hierarchy; and they came into collision, when the process of feudalism threatened the independence of the Church by subjecting the prelates severally to that: form of personal dependence on the kings which was peculiar to the Teutonic state.'

Under our system of government, we recognise the right of the people to sanction the decisions that effect them: democratic election of representative government. The key word here should be representative. This derives from the Greek concept, 'Vox Populi Vox Dei', 'The voice of the people is the voice of God.' Not to suggest that the madness of the mob may be considered so, but the early expression was largely to do with choice of Kingship. Who would be ruler. The people themselves: speaking as to who they wish to be and whom they consider would best represent this wish.

Acton says on pg62:

> *'And this doctrine of the divine right of the people to raise up and pull down princes, after obtaining the sanctions of religion, was made to stand on broader grounds, and was strong enough to resist both Church and king. In the struggle between the House of Bruce and the House of Plantagenet for the possession of Scotland and Ireland, the English claim was backed by the censures of Rome. But the Irish and the Scots refused it, and the address in which the Scottish Parliament informed the Pope of their resolution shows how firmly the popular doctrine had taken root. Speaking of Robert Bruce,. they say: "Divine Providence, the laws and customs of the country, which we will defend till death, and the choice of the people, have made him our king. If he should ever betray his principles, and consent that we should be subjects of the English king, then we shall treat him as an enemy, as the subverter of our rights and his own, and shall elect another in his place. We care not for glory or for wealth, but for that liberty which no true man will give up but with his life."*

And so we have seen this development brought forward into our Parliamentary form, where we were expected to choose the representatives best acquainted with our lives and desires, to be a part of the determination of National direction (or local or state). If our Parliament, behaves as to betray our principles, then we too, should elect another in it's place. If the options of that other are little different, as we are seeing, then it is up to us to push for a change.

Again from Acton:

> *'Here are the sentiments of the most celebrated of all the Guelphic writers: "A king who is unfaithful to his duty forfeits his claim to obedience. It is not rebellion to depose him, for he is himself a rebel whom the nation has a right to put down. But it is better to abridge his power, that he may be unable to abuse it. For this purpose, the whole nation ought to have a share in governing itself; the Constitution ought to combine a limited and elective monarchy, with an aristocracy of merit, and such an admixture of democracy as shall admit all classes to office, by popular election. No government has a right to levy taxes beyond the limit determined by the people. All political authority is derived from popular suffrage, and all laws must be made by the people or their representatives. There is no security for us as long as we depend on the will of*

another man." This language, which contains the earliest exposition of the Whig theory of the revolution, is taken from the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, of whom Lord Bacon says that he had the largest heart of the school divines.'

The force opposite of the Guephic (the Church) at that time, were the Ghibelline (the Imperialists). Acton writes of them: *'The ablest writer of the Ghibelline party was Marsilius of Padua. 'Laws,' he said, 'derive their authority from the nation, and are invalid without its assent.*
As the whole is greater than any part, it is wrong that any part should legislate for the whole; and as men are equal, it is wrong that one should be bound by laws made by another. But in obeying laws to which all men have agreed, all men, in reality, govern themselves.' '

So this development has continued apace to this point. Acton, writing this historical overview in the late 1870s, is a really good start to understanding our governmental development. This chapter from which I am quoting, sets up the reasons why it is important to know just how this came about. It also gives a clear insight on why we have seen a rise and fall over history.

'Looking back over the space of a thousand years, which we call the Middle Ages, to get an estimate of the work they had done, if not towards perfection in their institutions, at least towards attaining the knowledge of political truth, this is what we find: Representative government, which was unknown to the ancients, was almost universal. The methods of election were crude; but the principle that no tax was lawful that was not granted by the class that paid it – that is, that taxation was inseparable from representation – was recognised, not as the privilege of certain countries, but as the right of all. Not a prince in the world, said Philip de Commines, can levy a penny without the consent of the people. Slavery was almost everywhere extinct; and absolute power was deemed more intolerable and more criminal than slavery. The right of insurrection was not only admitted but defined, as a duty sanctioned by religion. Even the principles of the Habeas Corpus Act, and the method of the income tax, were already known. The issue of ancient politics was an absolute state planted on slavery. The political produce of the Middle Ages was a system of states in which authority was restricted by the representation of powerful classes, by privileged associations, and by the acknowledgement of duties superior to those which are imposed by man.'

Later speaking of the French philosopher Charron, Acton sums up:

'In a passage almost literally taken from St. Thomas, he describes our subordination under a law of nature, to which all legislation must conform; and he ascertains it not by the light of revealed religion, but by the voice of universal reason, through which God enlightens the consciences of men. Upon this foundation Grotius drew the lines of real political science. In gathering the materials of international law, he had to go beyond national treaties and

denominational interests for a principle embracing all mankind. The principles of law must stand, he said, even if we suppose that there is no God. By these inaccurate terms he meant that they must be found independently of revelation. From that time it became possible to make politics a matter of principle and of conscience, so that men and nations differing in all other things could live in peace together, under the sanctions of a common law.'

For the Nations of the world to live together peacefully, we must all agree on our right to self determination. The Nations of the west have a rich history to learn from and a responsibility to see that the advances thus far made, are not lost by lethargy or the pursuit of hedonism over true purpose. Freedom comes from exercising this right regularly. It stays, when we are continually aware and active in our involvement in the process. Abdicating this responsibility to a party or other such proxy will only lead to lessening of these freedoms, as those others clamour to use that process to further their own interests. We have been given a glimpse (some would say many) of what the future looks like if we do not start to address these problems now. As I said at the beginning, others have made comment on what we might do. The following authors give insight and potential for returning to true representative government that lessens the input of Party politics; but, all finish with the basic presumption that it is only when enough of the population are active in their future that it truly starts to be seen.

I will go through some of these suggestions next week. In the meantime you need to go over where we came from, to understand where we are going. Remember that if we do nothing; it is guaranteed nothing will change. ***

Further reading:

https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Belloc_Chesterton-The_Party_System.pdf

https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Bernays%20E%20-%20Engineering_of_Consent_1947.pdf

https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Guthrie%20J%20-%20Our_Sham_Democracy.pdf

https://alor.org/Storage/Library/Initiative%20Referendum%20and%20Recall.htm

https://alor.org/Storage/Library/PDF/Dobbs_G-Responsible_Government_in_a_Free_Society.pdf

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