

Summary:

Fact Sheet #2 - The 14 CA “Fact Sheets” must be tested in debate before being used to mold the CA decision. Tom Varzeliotis of [www.alcyonenes.ca](http://www.alcyonenes.ca) challenges these “Fact Sheets”.

## FICTION IN FACT SHEET #2

The title of CA Fact Sheet #2 is: **“Assessing Electoral Systems”**.

The first paragraph of FS#2 is a preamble

The authors of FS #2 continue drumming the discovery that there are “trade-offs” to be made between the various electoral systems. Next they go into the mantra about “what kind of politicks” we want to see played out on the political stage.

Then, under the title: **“Various electoral systems have different impacts on: the System of government (and on) Voters”**, they list nine “*criteria and questions ... for assessing electoral systems*” . The rest of FS#2 is given to elaborating on these “*criteria*” and, I in turn, will follow suit.

FS #2 Criterion 1 is: “**Stable**” government.”

The FS authors define government stability as follows: “*government stability refers to how secure the governing party is in power.*” It is a strange definition, it is warped as it is, one presumes, to accommodate whatever is to follow.

Dictatorships result in government stability and are secure in power, often for a long time. They do not make for pleasant living conditions, but they trigger celebrations upon their demise.

Significantly, Democracy exists to destabilize governments. Election is a means specifically designed to enable the citizens to destabilize the government in power at the time of the election. The purpose of the CA is to reform the electoral system so that it enhances the facility of the people to destabilize the government, as and when, we the citizens, may deem it necessary or simply desirable.

Next, the FS writers play, once again, the *Government Stability* mantra, which they have been chanting for a long time to the members of the CA and everyone else within earshot. “*The more tenuous the government’s hold on power, the more difficult it may be for it to make hard decisions and move quickly when necessary...*” they say.

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One may easily and pragmatically assess the FS assertion in that mantra, by looking at our own political history. Consider the five years of the Pearson "minority" governments, who had no "hold on power", and compare it to any other period of our history - you will discover that no one can match the number and the importance of the Pearson government's achievements, or even come near its rich, nation-building legacy. Indeed, one would not be surprised if we were to find that the achievements of the "minority" Pearson government are more in number and rate higher in importance for Canada than the output of all "majority", "stable", governments did over all the long years the nation endured them, combined.

In a democracy, the government is appointed by and governs at the pleasure of parliament, indeed, the government is purposely made perpetually "unstable", it is in the nature of democracy. The people's representatives in parliament may change the government as they see fit, at any time and for any reason. And, pedagogical convention aside, it is to neuter the people's parliament control over the government, that "elected tyrants" assemble their platoon of mercenaries who march to the party drummer, assault democracy and maintain perpetual, "parliament confidence" in the government.

Evidently the FS authors confuse the issues. In a democracy, "government stability" is a function of the confidence the people have in the government. **That is what democracy is all about, it is to spare society the pain of being governed by a government sustained in power by means other than the pleasure of the people.**

The FS#2 culminates in a question on how much we are willing to degrade parliament in exchange for such divine "government stability". One feels the need to solicit divine mercy for this nation of fools that we are, being elated as we are from coast to coast by the "minority" aspect of the Paul Martin government.

**FS #2 Criterion No 2 is: "Electoral accountability - for parties and individual representatives"**

"Elections are about choosing representatives and governments" one reads in this part of FS#2. This "fact" directly contradicts another "fact", one they present in paragraph 7 of FS#1, Paragraphs 2 and 4 of FS#3 and elsewhere, it being that the people elect the parliament who, in turn, appoint and control the government! Which then is the "fact" and which is the myth?

In a representative democracy people choose the parliament and give it proxy to select and appoint the government and to control it on behalf of the people. Or so it is meant to be.

Then, the reader is informed that "In order to make elections about a choice of government, it is necessary that:" certain three conditions be met.

I do not know what "to make elections about a choice of government" means,

but, whatever the case may be, do we really want to do it? How? Why?

In any case, the three criteria are: Voters must recognize who has done what to them; parties and candidates must divulge in advance of the election their post-election coalition plans; and that politicians can be held accountable. I do not understand anything, I am confused.

After the three conditions are outlined, as I just mentioned, the FS "criterion", somehow, culminates into the question: "*What kind of accountability does a particular system provide?*"

All questions should be answered. The answer to this one is that fusing candidates and parties all but excludes meaningful government accountability. I have touched on this in a previous article in [www.alcyonenews.ca](http://www.alcyonenews.ca) and plan to revisit the subject, for the CA managers have become very tedious on "accountability".

### FS #2 Criterion No 3: "**Parliamentary check on government**"

The opening salvo is: "*One of the key tasks of a legislature is to scrutinize the work of the government.*" Yes it is, indeed it is more than that, the legislature is to control the government.

FS#2 present the "fact" that "*the ability of a legislature to do this (scrutinize the work of the government) will depend largely on the rules and procedures it adopts, and the degree and kind of discipline that exists within the political parties.*"

Well, it does not take much science to deduce that things being as they are, the "*rules and procedures the legislature may adopt*" cannot conceivably be potent. This because it is the parties' mercenaries who will "*set the rules and the procedure*" and Party Whips will crackle sharply on the backs of any party mercenary who would contemplate giving the legislature means to meaningfully scrutinize the government.

Worse than that, really. Party mercenaries have brought parliament under the control of the government and maintain it so. Even Prof. Carty has insinuated this elsewhere in the CA literature.

It appears that FS#2 cleverly attempts to ease the reader into some kind of false security, about parliament "scrutinizing" the government. The result, be it intended or inadvertent, may contribute to perpetuation of the stranglehold the parties have on the peoples' parliament.

Then comes the FS question: "*what is the best balance between*

*parliamentary checks and stable, accountable government?"*

This "fast" approaches the farcical. Note the repetition of that doctrinaire association between "accountable" and "stable" government. Since the "Prophs" have associated "stable" with "majority" government, the choice they lead the FS reader to becomes discernable.

Note also that they focus on the "best balance" of power, leaving out, altogether, the possibility of full parliament control over the government. They are distancing the discussion from democracy, they steer it, sort of, to "politics".

FS#2, Criterion No 4 is: "**Fair representation of parties and groups**"

The authors of FS#2 split this into three parts.

The first one is about wasted votes. The way they phrase it is interesting. "Under some electoral systems, the vote of someone who supports a losing candidate does not contribute to any candidate being elected." they write. The votes in question could be salvaged and cleverly recycled through some form of proportional representation. The parties would combine the recycled votes from many districts, combine them and use them to "elect" some party disciple to parliament. Presto, all votes count, no votes are wasted!

This would be worth considering if we were to give up hope for democracy and resign to being ruled by party-o-crazy. In a democracy, the voters elect their representative in parliament. In situations other than election by acclamation, not all of the candidates can be elected. Indeed, Democracy is based, for many good and valid reasons, on the "majority" and demands no universality. This does not mean that the minority who did not vote in an election for the successful candidate "wasted their ballots". More light on this will be shed in the review of the next "fact".

Second in this group of three is: "*Proportionality and representation of minority groups.*"

This issue is complex and a very serious one and I shall discuss it sometime in a future article devoted entirely to the subject. The way the authors of the FSs present it, we must decide between suffering party-o-crazy or make things worse by degrading the system to group-o-crazy,

It parallels the routine appointment of three, no more, no less, Quebec judges to the Supreme Court of Canada! Justice is depicted blindfolded in that statue of Themis adorning, in the Courthouse Square, because it is thoroughly impartial. If the decisions of the Supreme Court are to be made by judges pulling

and pushing for their regions, we are in really on a slippery slope.

The same with parliament. Democracy runs on Reason and it is to ascertain the Reasonable that Democracy canvasses the majority of the citizenry, the latter being the appropriate determinant of the reasonable. Democracy will be seriously handicapped if parliament is to be delivered to special interest groups. The House is a place for debate in a search for reason - it must not be degraded into a cock-fight ring where militant groups peck at each other.

Are the Hells Angels group and the women-genital-mutilations group deserving a voice in parliament by virtue of being what they are? What about the Roman Catholics and the Greek Orthodox? Should the loggers and the tree-huggers battle across the aisle of the nations parliament?

Democracy facilitates the elevation of the most reasonable citizens into parliament, it produces a parliament composed of individuals, of a number sufficient to ensure that all possible perspectives find expression in the House. This is much broader than could conceivably occur in a House where the members are straight-jacketed into party ideologies, where the parliamentary agenda is firmly controlled by the elected tyrant. It would be awful in a group-o-crazy where "true believers" fight the battles of their respective groups' peeves on the floor of the House.

The third sub-criterion of this "criterion", or "fact" as the case may be, is definitively stated in the FS as follows: *"some electoral systems seem to produce more diverse legislatures than others, with better representation of all sectors of society including minorities and women."*

In the courtroom this would be deemed a "leading question", certain to elicit a frown from his Lordship, or Ladyship, if not something more severe. Don't you want "more" diversity, don't you want "better" representation, don't you stand for "diversity", for "inclusiveness", for "motherhood"? Of course you do, so come aboard the bandwagon, ask for the electoral system we want you to "freely choose"!

FS #2 Criterion No 5 is: **"Democratic political parties"**

Let's read the "fact" on the FS: *"Given central position that parties have in electoral competition, their basic features have a direct impact on the nature of a community's politics."*

With due respect to the CA Profs, I will remark that the cause-effect relationship in that statement of "fact" is thoroughly unclear. I do not know what else to say.

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The next "fact" under that heading is comprehensible but its purpose is in doubt: *"An important aspect of assessing an electoral system is how it affects the number and nature of the parties."*

Well, the advent of the electronic burglar alarm affected thieves, the invention of the safety razor impacted barbers. Restoring democracy will impact parties. There is no doubt that a parliament comprising peoples representatives will be different than one populated by party mercenaries driven by Party Whips. The people want democracy, the parties want to dominate the parliament, who is to prevail? Parties are not sacrosanct, democracy is.

Again, this skirts around the primary question, it being whether the parties or the people should elect the parliament. Again The FS poses a "leading question" more than presenting a "fact", as it seeks to associate parties with democracy, party-o-cracy with "competition" and so on.

#### FS #2 Criterion No 6 is: "**Voter choice**"

According to FS authors, three options are offered by electoral systems and they are: *"choosing among candidates from different parties, choosing among parties, or choosing among candidates from the same parties."*

Missing is the option of "choosing among candidates", plain, unencumbered candidates, offering themselves to represent their fellow citizens in the parliament of the society. Candidates who have not compromised their principles, persons who refuse to sell their integrity to party sponsors, persons who refuse to shift their loyalty from the people to aspiring elected tyrants, persons who would rather serve the people than obey a Party Whip. What the authors left out of FS#2 is democracy.

The inclusion of party representatives in the ballot is arguable. What is not arguable is the option of citizens to offer themselves meaningfully for election, "meaningfully" being the key word, that is to say, to run on a level with the party mercenaries.

Incidentally, the third option listed in FS#2 that of choosing from among candidates from the same party, was practiced in the communist world, where only the communist party was operating.

*"How much and what kind of choice should an electoral system offer voters?"* the FS#2 authors ask. A democratic electoral system opens the field to all willing to serve and maintains it level, so that the people will give their trust to the candidate they deem will best represent them in parliament. Conversely, an electoral system that allows parties to choke the choice of the people, is a corrupt

electoral system and should be abolished.

**FS #2 Criterion No 7 is: "Identifiable representative"**

*"Elections allow voters to choose how they will be represented in the legislature. Under some systems, they choose an individual (as in BC); under others they choose a party."* the Parentesis original to FS#2.

No, elections do not do that, elections is a means for people to choose who is to represent them in the legislature. Under the system presently in force in BC, we are supposed to elect persons. Although the Fswrites say nothing about it, we are forced to vote for the "lesser evil" party. Other systems, FS#2 informs, ask voters to choose a party.

Then at issue is whether we want to be represented in parliament by individual human beings or by mushy organizations, i.e. political parties. Do we want a parliament of peoples' representatives, or one made up of parties?

The latter, choosing between parties, would be legitimizing the existing system, under which the parties subjugate parliament and rule society. Were we to opt for abandoning democracy so as to legitimize party-o-cracy, it would be appropriate to do away with members of parliament altogether, to the relief of the public treasury. Party leaders would have power proportional to the votes they received and would exercise it directly, rather than through mercenary members.

Of course this is ridiculous, and so it is to pretend that the low quality of government we experience is not attributable, to a substantial extend, to that party-o-cracy has displaced democracy.

To restore democracy is the mission of the CA and this it must do even if it displeases the politicians who let the cat out of the bag believing they would control it by means such Fact Sheets.

**FS #2 Criterion No 8 is: "Encourage participation"**

"Voter turnout rates are falling", the authors of FS#2 ring the alarm bells. Yes indeed the numbers of citizens casting ballots is plummeting and the forecast is for more of the same till the system is made fair. The prescription offered by the doctors in FS#2 is: *"Aspects of electoral system that could affect voter participation are: clarity, simplicity and choice."*

The Rt. Hon. Joe Clark would be indignant at such lack of "specificity"! What *clarity*, what *simplicity*, what *choice*? How much of each? And how are they to set voters on the way to the polls? Pray tell!

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Participation in any enterprise is a function of one's perceived effectiveness. When parties control the agenda, it matters little who the people vote for and this alienates voters. Arbitrating which party will get to the public trough is not an inspiring enterprise. If the system was to be democratized, people would vote for their representative because choosing a democratic government is meaningful.

Things being as they are, there is a sure-fire way to get citizens lining up to vote: Respect the democratic right of the voter to reject the parties' candidates, that is to say, include NOTA (None Of The Above) on the ballot. Plain and simple. In fact one wonders why the Prophs skirt around it. Incidentally, if you missed it, read the article on NOTA in AlcyoneNews.

FS #3 Criterion No 9 is: "**Equality of the vote**"

No, this is not what you think it is. It has nothing to do with denying the vote to the literacy-challenged, or giving 10 votes to each Poli-Sci Prof. It has to do with giving the vote to inanimate real estate, which has become a practice in our party-o-crazy due to the opportunity it presents to pluck a seat or two the easy way.

In any event, if the authors want to question the one-voter-one-vote principle, let them say so, and then complete the process by raising the issue of whether geography, or other criteria, should determine voting power differentials.

This concludes our review of FS#2, thanks for your attention,

Tom Varzeliotis

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