

FACT SHEET #14

GLOBAL CONTEXT

Fiction Wrapped in Fact Sheets.

There are 14 of them posted on the CA website. In hard copy they are distributed at the CA public hearings and elsewhere I presume. They are the CA “Fact Sheets”.

They serve a dual purpose. One is channeling the thinking of the CA members to that of the Fact Sheet authors. The other is to “soften the target”, that is to say, to make the public receptive to the verdict the CA will concoct by following these “Fact Sheets”.

The authors have not expressly claimed infallibility, yet they have neither invited debate nor have exposed otherwise to scrutiny these Fact Sheets. Yet, the need to test the “facts” served on these sheets is pressing, for their potential to mislead is large and the consequence of that grave.

Alcyone News has emerged as the voice of “Opposition” to the CA Managers and from that position will challenge the factuality of these Fact Sheets. This series of articles we will call “Fiction Wrapped in Fact Sheets”

Tom Varzeliotis

The title of Fact Sheet #14 is: **“Global context”**

This is the last of the FSs. It is instructive and contains useful information about the popularity of electoral systems world-wide. But, in perusing the chart and the tables in the FS#14, bear in mind that all of the electoral systems they refer to have been devised by and for politicians. Treat them like lawyers and judges would treat "Precedent" emanating from Kangaroo Courts.

FS#14 does not contain the "Additional Resources commercial" to which FS readers were treated in the preceding eight FSs. In its place there is a piece titled : "Electoral Systems -lessons from global experience". These "lessons" are credited to Professors Farrell and McLeay, the former from England the latter from New Zealand, who addressed the CA as invited lecturers. Significantly, Prof Farrell wrote the course text book used at the CA School and which figured in the "Additional Resources commercial".

The two Profs teach us four lessons and these I will review in the following.

1st Lesson: "Do not expect a new electoral system to cure all of the political system's problems."

No, of course not, no reasonable person would expect "a new electoral system to cure all of the political system's problems." We are level-minded, reasonable people, therefore we expected a "new electoral system" that would dispose of the problems originating with, or sustained by, the current electoral system. We also dreamed of the benefits from the best electoral system creative people could produce.

The past tense intentional. This because many people, after reading: the "Preliminary Statement" issued by the CA management at the conclusion of the Boot Camp; the curriculum taught the CA members at the CA Boot Camp; the 14 FSs and other CA management literature; viewing the PowerPoint presentation shown at the opening of each of the public hearings held by the CA, many people not longer "expect", we pray, instead.

Incidentally, the guest Profs, equate "electoral system" with "the way votes translate into parliamentary seats", like the CA resident Profs do. Evidently, they are oblivious of practices such as the "buying" of elections, the "bribing" of politicians with financing their careers and otherwise getting them "elected", the political parties running mercenaries in the elections so that elections result in parliaments composed of party disciples to the exclusion of peoples representatives. The Profs do not notice the influence peddling bazaar, and the other manipulations of elections and, of course, do not see this malaise appertaining to the electoral system. I digress.

2nd Lesson: "Be patient with a new system; allow voters, parties and legislatures and political systems to adjust to a change in electoral system."

Although I have some reservations to the suggestion, I will agree. We have to allow the time change requires to materialize. But so what?

The advice is premature for we do not know if we have a change of electoral systems. Then, if we get to change the electoral system, the earliest it can kick in is after the 2009 general election, five years being a long time to retain the advice!

3rd Lesson: “It is impossible to predict all the effects of electoral system change - there will be some unanticipated consequences.”

Doris Day sang that one a long time ago: “Que sera, sera, whatever will be will be, the future is hard to see, que sera seraaaaa!” A nice tune, quite a hit, it was!

4th Lesson: “When considering a change in electoral system, factors to consider include:” five factors

These are identified under this heading and I will go through them in the order they are suggested.

1st Factor is: “*Government Stability*”

A recurring problem of confused definitions. What the Profs, local and distant, preach, is “government stability” affected by electoral systems. This is distinctly different from government stability affected by good governance. Indeed, the availability of the former is detrimental to the latter as the Lord, Acton of course, expressed in “power corrupts”.

The Profs want the government to remain stable when the people want to throw it out. This is not nice, it is the exact opposite to the fundamental reason for democracy.

Democracy exists to destabilize governments. Parliament appoints and removes government at will, on behalf of the citizenry who parliament represents. It is the “Dictatorship family”, if I may borrow the expression from the Profs, that results in *government stability*.

Political parties are a means of overcoming democracy. They pre-manufacture “parliamentary approval” by cramming the election ballot with party mercenaries, by deploying professional mind-manipulators to “fool the people” and by other means alien to democracy. Society suffers badly for that.

Please, learn it, one and all, once and for all: **Government stability is not something to secure through the election system - it is to be earned by the government.**

2nd Factor: *Incorporation of minorities.*

Do they suggest a society should incorporate into an election system a mechanism with which to incorporate minorities into parliament? If so which minorities?

Society is composed of countless minorities, the number of them being many times the number of available seats. Then, how do you select which minorities to “incorporate”? What about the others? How do you cope with concerns of discrimination?

Once you select some minorities to include, how do you incorporate them?

Once you incorporate them into parliament, what good would it do in situations other than when such minorities “hold the balance of power”? At all other times it is the PMO , the Prime Ministers Office who, for all practical purposes, dictates what the “peoples’ parliament” decides.

Who dictates to the majority the “incorporation of minorities”, if the majority objects to it? If the majority does not object to it, is there an issue?

Is the precept of “majority” wrong? If so, where does it leave democracy, considering “majority” is fundamental to democracy?

Irrespective of the pros and cons of “affirmative action”, it is fundamentally wrong to extend it to Parliament. This is so for many reasons:

- * A society must strive to get the very best in Parliament;
- * The secret ballot concept may be compromised
- * A fundamental tenet of democracy , that citizens need not explain or otherwise justify to anyone their choice of vote, may be violated;
- * It will encourage substitution of “power” for “reason” in the House. .

Joseph Stalin used this system, albeit to its limit, by providing for the communist minority to get elected. Let us not start the society on such a downward slide, let’s not “open the door” to groups, no matter who. Democracy is associated with majority like “horse and carriage” in the Frank Sinatra song. Leave it alone.

Significantly, a parliament consisting of peoples’ representatives, as opposed to party ideologues, is bound to include people from “all walks of life”. Even more significant, members of parliament free of “party discipline”, will be receptive to all the concerns of the members of society. This is the best and most foolproof way to ensure that all issues are aired in parliament and to prevent anyone from excluding issues from the Floor of the House.

3rd Factor: - *link between politicians and voters.*

I presume this says: Do not abolish local representation, add to it if you wish, but keep it as part of the electoral system. If so, the Profs speak from their ivy towers. They take the involvement of parties in the election process as being a “given”, yet they talk about local representation as if the two are compatible.

Our experience is that parties are intolerant of peoples’ candidates. Indeed are intolerable of free-thinking individuals, they love those who deny everthing alien to the party line to devote themselves to the parties like monks to religions. Parties ensure that elections do not result in peoples’ representatives in the parliament but, instead, result in party agents who will flog the elected tyrant’s gospel to their constituencies.

Rapport between citizens and their representatives in parliament is essential, members of parliament are *representatives* of the people, or so it must be, this being important part and parcel of *representative* democracy. It is the parties who get themselves in between the people and their representative, it is the parties who bribe and corrupt the peoples’ representatives. Distancing parties from the electoral process

will eliminate the problem and politicians will meaningfully bond with their constituencies to live happily thereafter.

4th Factor. “- the need to keep it simple”

Wise advise. Like Einstein said, do not put your right hand behind your head to scratch your left ear, do it from the front. In this instance, clear the stage; let people nominate themselves; provide a forum for all candidates to expose themselves to the electorate. No parties, no party sponsors, no smoke-filled backrooms, no party hidden agendas, nothing of the sort. Leave the election stage to the individuals who offer their leadership talent to serve society. Very simple.

5th Factor “- trade-offs between features of various electoral systems”

Give up before we even try?

Have the Profs discovered that we have reached the Zenith, that all electoral systems have already been discovered, that there is nothing left to discover? Have they determined that there is no system to be discovered that is free of “side effects”, are they telling us that searching for a better system is futile?

That is what they appear to be saying, all of the Profs on the CA stage. I just cannot believe we cannot do better than the existing, in any field of human enterprise - I am an incurable malcontent, I guess. And I am baffled at their gall at proclaiming we cannot do better than what they teach.

I for one, believe that we need not rehash the old systems, that we want a brand new electoral system to dazzle the world with, I have faith in the creativity of British Columbians, surely we can create a bold one that would out to rest the “five families”.

Thanks for the advice Drs Farrell and McLeay, thanks a lot, but no, we would rather not do horse trading, we would rather uphold democracy..

FS#14 is the last in the series. Surely we can do better than these FSs....., we can find the facts of the matter if you out our minds to it. Indeed, for the shake of the future, we must!

Tom Varzeliotis.