

## In FACT SHEETS #4 AND #5

### **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 pompously labeled the CA "Fact Sheets".

They serve a dual purpose. One is to align 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 exposed otherwise these Fact Sheets to scrutiny. 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

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### FICTION IN FACT SHEET #4

The title of Fact Sheet #4 is: **Electoral Experimentation in BC**

It is my pleasure to report that FS#4 appears being "factual". It relates the history of vote counting in B.C. and Alberta.

I have no comments on FS#4. To avert the impression that I missed it, I combined it with FAS#5, which I review following.

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### FICTION IN FACT SHEET #5

The title of Fact Sheet #5 is: **"Why electoral reform?"**

The preamble of FS#5 is titled, again, "**Why electoral reform?**"

In the preamble, the author of FS#5, sings once again the Ode to the System: "*This system has generally produced stable majority governments with clear electoral accountability and identifiable local representatives.*" It has become tedious, methinks.

Following the singing of the Ode, there are five "facts" in FS#5, numbered consecutively 1 to 5.

The 1<sup>st</sup> "fact" in FS#5 is: "**1) Should all votes count equally?**"

This is about gerrymandering. The FS authors raise the old issue of electoral boundary manipulation for political purposes. This was practiced extensively in the past and, over time, has gained some acceptance, at least insofar as rural vs. urban ridings go.

A classic example of such electoral boundary manipulation was "Gracie's finger" where Ms. Grace McCarthy added a finger-like extension to her Vancouver riding which was ringed with Sacred voters certain to vote for her.

Another classic example, this being of the consequences of riding size manipulation, is the 1983 election of All Passarell in Atlin with 1,600 votes while Ernie Hall lost his seat in Surrey although he got 34,000 votes.

The former example is not cited in the FS but the latter is. McCarthy was suspected of gerrymandering, Passarell and Hall were not - politicians must not be cast in a bad light, one presumes.

Since then, FS#5 informs, things have been made right by setting the districts so that the number of voters in all of them are within 25% of the average.

25% deviations may result in some votes being 70% more potent than others. I have not seen convincing argument for allowing such a discrepancy. Cleverly done, "riding sizing" may by itself "elect" a government, even if the 25% rule is meticulously respected.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> "fact" in FS#5 is : "**2) Artificial majorities**"

"Artificial majority" is a euphemism, for the violation of a most fundamental principle of democracy, namely that the will of a minority must not be imposed upon the majority.

Of course, the obvious reason for the prevalence of the Majority is that in a situation where the will of some people has to be subjugated to the will of others, it is proper to minimize the number of citizens who have to endure the will of others. But there is more to it than that.

In any situation where the approach to an issue must be chosen from two or several, the majority, if adequately charged with pertinent information will likely make the best decision possible at that particular time, in that particular society, the best for the well-being of that society. This is a fundamental principle of democracy. When we pride ourselves in being democratically governed, we affirm our belief in that principle.

Please note that I carefully avoided the common expression "the majority rule". This because in a democracy neither the majority nor a minority "rules" - democracy is the "regime of reason". It is it, "reason" distilled into law, that gave rise to the "rule of law", which is commonly tightly associated with democracy. Democracy is deficient when other than the "majority" prevails over the society. To the extent that an election system facilitates or allows that to happen, that system is subversive.

Under the current system, frequently governments get "elected" by minorities. This "fact" makes it imperative that the electoral system be changed. It also makes inappropriate the suggestion, frequently made in the CA literature, including the "Fact Sheets", that the system facilitating the prevalence of minorities upon the majority remain under consideration - it is sad, indeed.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> "fact" in SF#5 is : **"3) Wrong winners"**

What is the difference between "2) Artificial majorities" and "3) Wrong winners"? There is no substantive difference between the two, they both refer to one and the same problem. I will not be repetitive I will instead direct the reader to the review of the previous item.

Here, I will comment only on the attitude of the FS authors, showing well in this item. Such commentary as I present is essential for people who

are not geared to the subject or have not the time or the background to analyze these "Fact Sheets" may be misled by the pompous title and the academic background of the authors. Indeed, the potential of these Fact Sheets to mislead is substantial and the consequences wherefrom too severe for the whole society, for a long time into the future.

The "election" of governments by a minority of the voters, does happen, the FS authors reveal. "This is normal - but infrequent - consequence of the system" the Profs pronounce!

A tempest in a teapot? Where is the "fact"? Normal? Infrequent?

Well, it is not infrequent, at all. It happens more often than not, I believe, at least in recent times, both nationally and provincially. In any event, it should be deemed to be too frequent even if it happens once in a blue moon. It must never happen.

Very interesting is that the authors of the FS would not measure the "infrequency" they attest to. This would be easily done with a table or a graph and its absence does nothing to shore up their credibility.

Then "normal"? Are they suggesting it is "normal in the system", but it is the system that is not normal? What would it take for the FS authors to declare it "abnormal", what it would take, over and above that assertion they make, which amounts to that Democracy is being raped in broad daylight? Pray enlighten us!

Democracy relies on the majority to arbitrate conflicting views on the governance of the society. Democracy depends on a real, not an "artificial" majority. Joseph Stalin was not a despot because he lacked a "majority" in parliament; he was as despised as he was, only because his "majority" was "artificial". One may say that an "artificial majority" government is really an aggressive "minority" government, one who have no qualms about masquerading as a majority so as to deceive the people. Not unlike the Wolf disguised in sheep skin in that delightful, albeit "violent" story of Little Red Riding Hood.

The clever displacement of a real majority with an "artificial majority", existing only because politicians control the electoral system, violates

democracy and therefore, endorsement by the CA, the first time the matter is in the hands of the people, would, euphemisms aside, amount to treason.

There must be no tolerance for a system that produces, “artificial majorities” and “wrong winners”.

The 4<sup>th</sup> “fact” in FS#5 is : “**4. Oversized governments**”

Evidently the FS writers mean “oversized MLA majorities” rather than “oversized governments”. Commonly, the former refers to the number of seats in the house, the latter to the number of portfolios in the Premier’s cabinet. The former may be relevant to the CA enterprise, the latter is not.

The “fact” at issue here is that “The plurality electoral system used in Canada, tends to create artificial majorities and, by the same token, tends to produce weak opposition”.

This is part and parcel of the fact that this system produces “artificial majorities” and “wrong winners”, as the authors of FS#5 have already attested to. Sometimes the system “outperforms” its potential for impropriety, resulting in situations more than usually conducive to “corruption by power” – that is all.

What makes MLA “majorities” objectionable is that they are subservient to the elected tyrant who deploys them to neuter parliament. The greater the army of mercenaries the elected tyrant commands, the less meaningful parliament becomes.

In a true democracy, the more parliament supports a government has, the better it is. For in a real democracy the parliament is beyond the control of the government, while the government is under the control of parliament. In a democracy the support for the government reflects merit, in the system under discussion it measures the discipline the Party Whip commands.

Indeed, support by the entire parliament for a government is an ideal to wish for, providing always, that the government earns the support at “arms length”, so to speak. What is reprehensible is government supported by a parliament consisting of bribed individuals, of persons who trade support for the government for their re-election to the trough, under an

electoral system that has been seized by the parties and used to produce "dependent", subservient, MLAs.

One is skeptical of whether the FS authors are suggesting that "artificial majorities" and "wrong winners" are acceptable, as long as they produce no "oversized governments". But the size of the majority is not the sole determinant of government arrogance. After all, there have been governments sustained by very small "majorities" who have done seriously displeasing "governing" upon the people.

In FS#5 the authors cite five examples of obscenely artificial majorities occasioned by the current system. Three in PEI, one in New Brunswick and the Campbell government of BC. This is followed by a graph showing the relative size of government and opposition seats in the BC legislature for the past 50-year period.

The usefulness of the table and the graph are questionable. Even more questionable is the "fact" that the writers did not produce a graph showing the frequency of "artificial majorities" and "wrong winners". Nor have they a graph here to indicate what percentage of the votes produced in their sample of "oversized governments". Must we take such serious omissions as being merely inadvertent oversights by the CA seasoned Profs?

In any case the graph embedded in FS#5 is of questionable relevance to the subject. This is because the size of a government "majority" and the corresponding opposition "minority" do not measure the "artificiality" of the result of the election that produced them - the "artificiality" is measured by contrasting percentages of MLAs to percentages of votes. The ratio of the number of government MLAs to that of the opposition would be not an issue if the elections that produced them were thoroughly fair.

The 5<sup>th</sup> "fact in FS#5 is : **Under-representation of women and minorities.**

Of course, it is desirable to have the best leadership talent in parliament, irrespective of other considerations or attributes. How to do it is the question and since in a democracy the majority makes the decision it should be left to democracy to make things right. It will do that, if given the chance.

It appears that proportional representation favours more, or obstructs less if you will, the election of women than does the plurality vote counting system. This, may be because proportional systems give more control to the parties in determining who become candidates, they take more women as candidates and this, in turn results in more women being elected.

This is a divisive and otherwise undesirable approach of doubtful potential, to boot. Instead of further strengthening party control over elections, the CA should seek to lessen it or to eliminate it. When parties are not allowed to control who the candidates are, when any citizen may offer himself/herself to serve society, and, in turn, when all candidates seek the trust of the electorate on an equal footing, in a level electoral field, then women will get elected and eventually the proportions will hover, one anticipates, at about the 50% mark. This is democracy; parties imposing or leveraging women or other identifiable group members is despotism.

It is not a "fact" that strengthening and/or enlarging partyocracy would solve the problem of a parliament representative of all the people. A fact is that such a move will hurt democracy, which in turn, would be bad for all concerned, all around.

I would suggest that the best way to achieve this is to deny the parties the facility to control the menu of candidates for election.

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