

CA FACT SHEET #6

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

NB: FS and FS#x stand for Fact Sheet and Fax Sheet #x, respectively

FICTION IN FACT SHEET #6

The title of Fact Sheet #6 is: “**Understanding electoral systems**”

The 1st group of “facts” in FS#6 is: “**Democratic electoral systems**”

It starts with a definition of Electoral systems: *“At one level they are deceptively simple: Politicians compete for public support. Voters respond on election day by indicating who they prefer. The votes are tallied and translated into seats in the Legislature. And the electoral system organizes , shapes and governs the process.”*

This describes elections, more or less, as elections ought to be, but differs significantly from prevailing realities. Perhaps that is why the FS authors inserted that “at one level” qualifier. But are there more than one “levels” to it? What are in the other “levels”? These questions are begging answers.

In reality, the elected tyrant selects the most favourable day for himself and the most unfavourable for his opponents and calls the election. Party

sponsors pour money into the party war chest, in exchange for influence and profit. To cover all eventualities, sponsors pay money to many parties, thereby excluding “government by the people, for the people”. The parties pick potential mercenaries and nominate them as their candidates. Then the parties unleash their “hidden professional persuaders” upon the people. The party leaders perform theatrics to which they are drilled and otherwise behave as coached by the party merchandisers to generate images different than reality. The whole process is geared to run like the Stanley Cup sports, even turning voters into fans.

Come election day, citizens are invited to scratch an “X” on a ballot, thereby expressing support or acceptance (the lesser evil) for one of the candidates. The candidate whom more of the voters approve of, or of whom less disapprove if you will, is declared “elected” by the CEO (Chief Electoral Officer).

The key requirement is that he/she has more approval “X”s than the others. Since there are, invariably, more than two candidates running, one may get elected with a minority of the votes. If there are three candidates one may get elected with as few as 34% of the vote; if there are four candidates, one may get elected with 25% +1 of the votes and so on. This system supplants “divide and rule” for democracy. It violates the fundamental principle of democracy, it being that no minority prevails upon the majority.

Because parties control the elections, citizens unwilling to compromise their principles so as to succumb to party discipline, cannot present themselves as “credible” candidates. Of course they may “also run”, but that is about as far they may go. Those who do run under such conditions play right into the hands of the establishment, for they help sustain the myth about elections being open to all citizens.

The FS writers bridge the gap between what elections ought to be and what they are, without making the slightest reference to impropriety: *“So while electoral systems may appear simple, upon closer examination they can differ in a multitude of ways, with decidedly different effects.”*

The impression they generate is that there is variation to the theme, rather than rot in the system. This sets the mind to thinking about choosing between the various systems, to contemplating checking them systems over and picking one, like we do when choose a watermelon at the supermarket. FS authors are doing PR work for the system, the smockscreen its rotten part and goad us to look at the variation, “the spice of life”. Well, no!

The electoral system has been manipulated by politicians to suit their own need for power. The systems in use, all concocted by politicians, are tailored to the needs of politicians. “Corrupt”, is not too harsh a word to describe elections played on uneven and badly tilted fields, where “fairness” is a foreign word. No

“two-bit” sport team would ever consider playing another team, under conditions other than equal, save on a field tilted to a slippery slope like the field elections are played on.

Before departing the preamble to FS#6, I should respond to another assertion made there, which is: *“Some electoral systems may even create barriers to certain types of candidates.”*

This is vastly understating the reality. The fact of the matter is, that for all intents and purposes, parties exclude all citizens from being meaningful candidates in an election, save for their own nominees, save for those who pledge their faith to the party, those who offer unfailing subservience to the party leader. Only people willing to compromise their principles, to submit themselves to being driven by Party Whips, to vote on command Yea or Nay, to perpetually affirm their support for the party leader, may apply - people valuing their freedom of thought and its expression, individuals who cannot bear to become courtesans to aspiring “elected tyrants” are for all intents and purposes deprived of the opportunity to serve society and society is denied the services of such true leaders.

“Electoral systems are fraught with subtleties and complexities” FS#6 informs. And rife with fraud, the authors of FS#6 ought to have said, so as to make the “fact” factual.

The 2st “fact” in FS#6 is: **“Characteristics of electoral systems”**

“To understand electoral systems, three basic dimensions must be considered: District Magnitude, Ballot structure and electoral formula”, FS#6 asserts. These notions are explained in some detailed and certainly are constructive to understanding the electoral systems in existence. These explanations make up the 3rd, 4th, and 5th “facts” in FS#6. After noting that these items are “technicalities” of existing systems, I will comment no further on these.

The 6th “fact” in FS#6 is: **“Questions to consider”**

Question #1 is: *“If elections are a contest, who are the contestants? Political parties or candidates?”* That is the question the FS writers ask - I will pose some questions of my own, prompted by theirs.

Where is the Fact Sheet “fact” in that question?

Is it a fact that elections are “contests?”

If “elections are contests” and if “contestants are political parties”, is the system of governance remaining a “democracy” or has metamorphosed into

party-o-crazy? If the transformation has occurred, do we want to live with it, or do we want democracy?

If it is party-o-crazy, and if it is to remain so, why not abolish parliament altogether and recognize the “Supremacy of the PMO”, (Prime Minister’s Office?)

If, on the other hand, the answer to Question #1 is that “*candidates are the contestants*”, is it appropriate to allow the political parties to control who the candidates are to be and to pay for their “election” in exchange for subservience to the party?

If “*candidates are to be the contestants*”, should the political parties not be removed from determining who the contestants are to be, thereby removing from the parties the facility to control entrance to parliament, thereby restoring parliament to the people? Must not citizens stepping forth to serve their society, be shielded against being blackmailed by political parties?

We shield police, judges and other officials against bribing and blackmail. Must we allow the political parties to tell aspiring leaders: “you either submit to us or you will not be elected”?

If democracy is to displace party-o-crazy, FS #6 Question #2 is irrelevant. Questions #3 #4 and #5 retain some meaning, Their status is low, they refer to technicalities, they are nowhere near the significance of Question #1 and I will not waste time to reviewing them.

Instead, I will say what the FS authors have not said and likely will not tell, I will delineate the task of the CA, for once this is understood, any meaning the FS “*questions to consider*” may have, fade away.

In the final analysis the purpose of CA is:

To make the election playing field even and level and to see that is to be maintained in that state, so that all citizens willing to serve in the parliament of the society have ample and equal opportunity to present themselves to the electorate.

That says it all. It must be done, for unless it is, whatever the system of government may be, it will remain short of being democracy.

In FS#6, the CA managers introduce a new feature, which they repeat in the next eight FSs i.e. from FS#6 through to FS#13. Then, in FS#14, it is replaced by highlights from the lectures delivered to CA by two invited Profs, one of who is David Farrell. This is “advertising”, so to speak, promoting books and websites supportive of the “facts” in the FSs and the general thinking of the CA management.

The new feature is presented in a rather large text box titled “*Additional Resources*”. These are three books and a couple of websites beamed in from Australia.

This is interesting in more than one way. To begin with, the FS publishers have inserted a definitive disclaimer, which reads:

“The Citizens’ Assembly does not endorse the following books and articles or their projections.”

- * Among the books in question is the D. Farrell book, issued to the CA members as “course textbook”, at the CA School of Electoral system Repair and Maintenance.
- * This “advertisement” is reproduced, without variation, in nine of the 14 Fact Sheets, in question.

Now, if that is not endorsement, what would endorsement be?

Then, the publication of the disclaimer manifests that the CA managers were aware that endorsing ONLY the material in question, to the exclusion of others, is inappropriate. Especially so considering their exclusion of resources that would generate debate of the issues.

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