

## **To Make Honest Men and Women out of the Politicians**

*The financing of electioneering is an unending subject. One could easily write tomes on it, but having done five articles on it, I must move on to other facets of Election Systems - The next facet to review is as amusing to contemplate, as it is fundamental to Democracy.*

It is not only possible but also easy to eliminate the influence bazaars where politicians sell some of the society's well-being for money with which to buy themselves re-elections. That is to say, it would be easy to devise and implement an honest election financing scheme, if one could overcome the roadblocks to democracy politicians have constructed to protect the status quo.

Indeed, there are already in existence many schemes for financing democratic elections, some of them serving societies governed with advanced democratic systems. Any of these schemes may be imported, modified, adapted and applied to facilitate the democratic governance of our society. And of course, new and better schemes can be devised and would materialize were we to tap the minds of creative citizens.

As an example of a public election financing scheme consider the following: Each candidate could be given the appropriate vehicle to ride through the election campaign trail gratis, paid from the public treasury. It will be not a Cadillac, nor a Rolls, but it would be the optimum vehicle to deliver the message and the personal merit picture of the candidate. It would consist of radio and television airtime, newspaper space and page-space in a booklet that will be distributed to all voters of the realm. Perhaps a reasonable expense account of out of pocket expenses, such as traveling in a rural riding, should be entertained, too. This would be the same package for all the candidates, and no other contribution would be allowed.

To prevent a deluge of candidates, the system must be equipped with appropriate safeguards two of which come to mind:

1. Demand a bond to an amount reflecting the cost of the election package provided each candidate by the Treasury. The bond shall be returned only to the candidates attracting a certain percentage of the vote, say 5%.

2. Demand a certificate of having challenged successfully an examination based on a book selected or commissioned by Parliament. It should cover basic notions such as the role of the Bank of Canada, government ethics, parliamentary procedure, a rudimentary knowledge of the Constitution and other such topics.

The examination should be available at regular intervals in all communities and anyone contemplating running for an elected office would need take it only once in a lifetime. Compelling aspiring politicians to learn some rudimentary aspects of governance would not hurt them, nor would it detract from democracy, not at all.

Political parties, for as long as they exist, should also be provided with appropriate venues to communicate their platform. This could be a package similar to that provided to individual candidates. Of course the package should be identical for all the parties. Again, a bond will be required to an amount reflecting the cost of the package and it would be returned only to parties attracting a given percentage of the vote.

Perhaps some provision should be made to compensate for the disadvantage to which political party electioneering will cause to independent candidates. For they must not be handicapped because of their refusal to flock and be shepherded by party whips to uphold a party line. Indeed, for this they must be rewarded. Let's not forget that "groups", be they political parties or other, are only managerial bodies - ideas are born to individuals.

No, I do not say that this sample scheme of election financing the best we can do, I am certain that were we to put our minds to it we could come up with variations and that over the years we would develop a near perfect system. What is significant is that we cannot conceivably go wrong with any system that would free society from the cancer of private control of the Electoral system.

We are not an impoverished nation - we can easily afford democracy. We are not beggars - we have never begged the establishment to sponsor our democracy. It is they who discovered profit in bribing politicians and stole the electoral system from the people. We are proud people, we want to pay our way, we do not want them to finance our democracy. I believe I am speaking for the vast majority of Canadians in making these statements.

In closing please let me recap some points from this five part series of election financing:

- \* Conducting Influence Bazaars in the Temple of democracy is sacrilegious and highly toxic to self-governing of the citizenry.
- \* The existence of the influence bazaar corrupts fine citizens who are ready and willing to serve the society and who would stay honest if not thus corrupted.
- \* Private financing of elections is blackmail. It leaves no choice to citizens aspiring to serve society other than to sell out their integrity, or stay away from politics.
- \* Control of the electoral process by private interests results in an enormous cost to society, both directly and indirectly, the latter incurred due to the poor governance of society by bribed corrupt politicians and the loss of the good leadership honest citizens would provide, if not driven from public service by the stench of "dirty politics."
- \* Partial public financing of electioneering, does not democratize the political system, as much as it subsidizes private interest buying control over the electoral system of the society.
- \* The struggle of society to free the State from the Church needs be repeated now against the current interlopers of our nature-given freedom to govern ourselves. The challenge we face is to separate the State from Megabusiness. To paraphrase the famous Demosthenes's line:

*There is an ardent need, Ye fellow Canadians, to separate the State from megabusiness, for unless we do it, there is no hope of governing our society democratically as we must if we are to be free.*