

## The CA Video Vices and Voids

Rockers do it. they warm up the kids in the arena before the star takes to the stage. Shopping mall merchants do it, preachers do it, and so does the CA. A video of the CA Hymn was made with Blaney, Carty, and Sharman singing and was power-pointed at the attendees of the CA public hearing. If you have missed it and have 13-minutes to spare, you can take a look at it on the CA Website ([www.citizensassembly.bc.ca](http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca)). The acting is good, but the lyrics are economical with the truth, inviting unflattering assumptions on the objective of the enterprise.

It is not that I do not like videos, for I do, but this one, for some reason, brings to my mind the Bata Shoe empire Hymn. Each plant of the Bata chain had workers trained to sing the Bata Hymn, and they would line up at the entrance to sing it every time Thomas Bata would visit the plant.

Besides the vibes I get from the CA video, I have three major concerns: The first is the mythology in it, the second is the purpose it served, the third is what is left out of it. I will explain:

### **First concern: Ambiguities and Inaccuracies:**

\* The genesis of the CA: Video viewers are left with the impression that "we, the citizens" decided to have a review of our electoral system. Then, we considered how to do it, and decided on a revolutionary, unprecedented and highly democratic way of doing it. Sorry, but this is pure myth deliberately served up as being university-sterling truth.

\* Patting on the back the CA members: The video repeats that false assertion we find peppered everywhere in CA communications, the one about the CA members having "identified" or "discovered" this and that, which is a thinly veiled euphemism for "in the CA boot camp we drilled the CA members" on this and that.

\* Goading the CA members and the rest of us: It is stated in the video that the CA "identified"

three "advantages" in the current system, they being that it a) sends local representatives to the Legislature b) yields party majorities in the Legislature, and c) is simple and does not confuse the voters.

Reply to a): In reality the current system excludes from the Legislature peoples' Representatives and populates it with parties' representatives, the latter being toxic to democracy. These foot soldiers are sent to the constituencies to preach the will of the party and the elected tyrant. (Carty's "friendly dictator")

Reply to b): Party majorities result in substantial, if not absolute, power to the elected tyrant du jour. Why the CA managers drum this up, why they promote it as being an "advantage" of the system, is beyond comprehension. To them I say: come and show me any five years in Canadian history that a government performed anywhere near the level of Mike Pearson's minority government performed - just try it!

Significantly, as I write these lines, Canadians are elated the Martin government the 2004 federal election produced is a "minority" one. Are the CA managers and prominent U-Prof's taken aback by the peoples' euphoria?

Reply to c): I have enormous faith in democracy which translates to a firm belief that the people, collectively, if adequately charged with pertinent information, will make the best decision possible on any problem within their society, at any given time. It saddens me when people in power demean the "ordinary Canadian". You

are mistaken, Blaney, Carty et al,  
when you deem us unable to navigate  
our way through a ballot. Respect for  
the citizens, not disdain, is in order...

\* The Video informs that the CA "learned" in  
boot camp that the current system is well  
balanced. Balancing the aforementioned "three  
advantages" of the current electoral system, is  
an equal number of "disadvantages", to wit: a)  
Lack of proportionality, b) Facilitating the  
dominance of the Legislature by parties, and c)  
The "YoYo" phenomenon, where parties undo  
their opponents legislation to do their own, as  
they alternate holding power.

Reply to a): There is no question  
that, in a party-o-crazy, as contrasted  
to a democracy, securing proportional  
representation in parliament is  
essential. Again, that is in Party-o-  
crazy - in Democracy, the provision is  
redundant.

Reply to b): "dominating the  
legislature" is treason, it is not a  
"deficiency" - I find it objectionable  
that in effect the CA managers treat  
this crime as a tolerable  
misdemeanour. In a Democracy, the  
Legislature is sovereign, for it  
represents the people. If a political  
system allows for the "dominance" of  
parliament, by anyone, whatever the  
system may be, democracy it is NOT.  
Period.

Reply to c): The explanation of this is  
simple and the remedy obvious. In a  
party-o-crazy, especially as it operates  
in BC, the two parties who alternate at  
the helm have different sponsors and  
different ideologies and are, therefore  
listening to different "Masters' Voices".

Hence Dr. Carty's "YoYo". Again,  
Proportional Party-o-crazy will provide  
relief, Democracy will cure the disease.

**Second concern: The Purpose of power-pointing the CA Video at the CA public hearings.**

Playing a video to welcome people to the CA public hearings is certainly nice. But what should be in it? It should introduce the CA, interpret its mandate and inform the attendees on how submissions and presentations will be processed into the final product of the CA. Some of this was done by the Video Contractor's "background voice person" and by Blaney himself, both performing quite well I should add.

Then Carty comes on the screen to lecture the viewers on what he, and the other members of the government-appointed CA Management "learned" to the CA members at the CA boot camp. The promotion of government "stability" and the myth of "accountability" he drums up, it being pure propaganda. It is deliberately misleading, for no U-Poli-Sci Profs could conceivably have missed the superior record of "minority" governments and the peoples' affinity for such. Not to mention deducting, purely in the abstract, that "minority" governments are superior to "majority" governments.

The use of the Video to lecture presenters and participants on what is good and what is bad in the electoral system under review is inappropriate. It was the turn of the people to address the CA, to say their bit, to make their contribution to the process and it is their right to do so freely, without being goaded by pedagogues. The public hearings were to give citizens the opportunity to address the CA, the CA was there to listen to the people. The purpose of the public hearings was not to have Carty recite the curriculum of the CA boot camp.

The purpose of the pre-hearing video is not really different than the purpose of the CA School of Electoral Reform Repair and Maintenance, the CA boot camp. It was orchestrated and shown to set the minds of people along a certain line of thinking and this is inappropriate. If it was intended to inform, it could have been factual, comprehensive, limited to the process, pronouncing no facts" and passing no judgment. This Video was made to sway the mind, to set the mood, to warm the audience up to what the CA management is doing.

Incidentally, there is another video, a smaller one, only 3 minutes long, starring Dr. Blaney solo. This is to invite people to the CA hearings.

### **Third concern: Video Voids**

This is of paramount importance and seems to be part of CA management policy, amounting to a great disservice to the cause of reform. There is no encouragement to creativity, to be found in that video, there no stimulus to thinking the hitherto unthinkable, no setting sail for the Horizon. There is no call to excellence. The CA managers are determined it seems to suppress rather than foster creativity that would lead to novel concepts. They are the "experts" comfortable with the known, sacred to bits of the unknown. They do not want surprises, they do not want citizens challenging their stale world of Electoral Systems, of systems built by politicians, for politicians.

Make no waves, stay in the calm waters of the old lagoon, it is safe and comfy there, we would not let anyone take us out on the open ocean of democracy. Stay there with the old politician-concocted electoral system, where we want you fenced in. That is the message of the Video.

Neither of these videos, nor anything else coming from the CA makes the slightest attempt to stimulate creativity, to put the minds of talented people into gear so that they may pull society ahead of the world in electoral systems. It saddens me and I am sure, it does many others

Tom Varzeliotis.