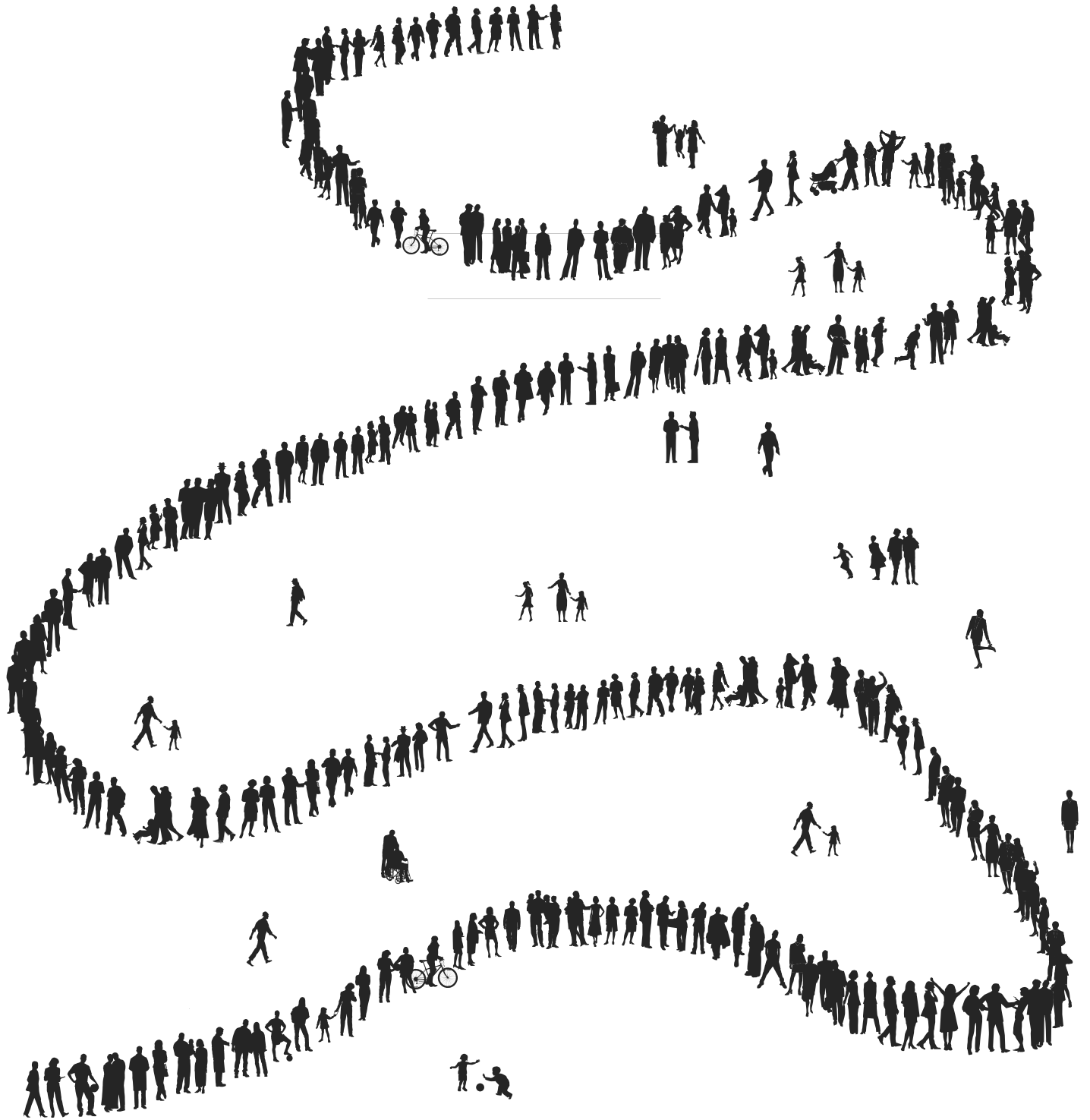


the
WeighBridge

OCTOBER 2018

ISSUE 1: ELECTION FEVER



WEIGHING IDEAS THAT BRIDGE CONTINENTS

Election Fever is not Contagious

Judging by the turn-out in the lowest two age brackets (18-19 and 20-25 years of age), you would have little idea how long citizens aspired to vote and the sacrifices they made to reach “universal suffrage”.

2018

In Zimbabwe, elections were held that seem to have validated the “bloodless coup” there last year.

In the USA, mid-term elections are coming up. They are expected to validate – or otherwise – the status quo. A book was written about Donald Trump by a long-time Canadian friend of his – Conrad Black. It is ambiguously called A President Like No Other. It remains to be seen which way that goes.

2019

Canada goes to the polls. Will Justin Trudeau survive the trending that Brexit and Donald Trump started? A number of European countries are following suit, and the province of Ontario in Canada recently elected a Conservative government too.

South Africa faces a historical election too, one which could reduce the ANC to minority status, thus ushering in a new age of Coalition governments. Since the municipal election of 2014, this prospect has been touted, because the ANC lost its control over the four big Metros, and with them, a significant part of spending (read: purchasing power). Was that just a scare message sent by the voters for the ANC to clean up its act? Or will the majority of South Africans for the first time since 1994 vote against the former liberation movement?

The age of voters is always significant. In the Brexit referendum, older people voted in favour and younger people against. In most settings, the turn-out to vote of younger people is lower than that of older citizens. This is ironic – because

younger people will be affected by Brexit for far longer than the older folk.

This issue of The WeighBridge is meant to stir things up, to whet the appetite, to shake the cage, etc. We want it to awaken Youth to get out and vote.

To achieve this, we try to bridge the ocean and capture a “bird’s eye view” of Democracy. We hope that young voters will be inspired by the history of Democracy. We hope that voters from both sides of the ocean will understand and appreciate their own Constitutional Democracies better – in the light of our broad perspective.

Graffiti is Democracy. It is expressive, it is anonymous, it is participative.

But nothing beats voting. That should be the ultimate high of power. Casting your vote, secretly.

H. L. Mencken put it this way: *“Democracy is the art and science of running the circus from the monkey cage”.*

On a more serious note, Abraham Lincoln wrote: *“No man is good enough to govern another man without that other’s consent.”*

Plato summed it up well: *“These, then, will be some of the features of democracy... it will be, in all likelihood, an agreeable, lawless, parti-colored commonwealth, dealing with all alike on a footing of equality, whether they be really equal or not.”*

It is time for all of us (rich and poor, regardless of race, gender or creed) to get over the fatigue and cynicism born of “rigged elections” and “foreign interference”, and to get back that Election Fever – in time to make a difference - to the outcome of the elections.

Viva Democracy viva! ■

Who Invented Democracy?

By Chuck Stephens

Ancient Athens faced a problem similar to many countries, organizations, churches and homes in Africa today.

At that time, from Greece all the way across Mesopotamia and India to China there were great civilizations. But they were ALL ruled by despots. Concurrent to this golden age of Greece, when Socrates emerged as the icon, were contemporaries like Isaiah in Mesopotamia, the Buddha in India and Confucius in China. It is called the Axial Age.

But only one of these illustrious elite was so Just that he declined to become the despot, even when it was offered to him by the citizenry. The Athenians asked him to rule over them, and he declined. Solon was a judge who was so admired by citizens for being Just, that they had invited him to take over the mantle of Despot, to rule over them.

This resonates with people living in South Africa today. The likes of Thuli Madonela, Mogoeng Mogoeng and Moseneke are far more revered than any of their contemporaries in the sphere of politics.

Rather, Solon decided to design and try a new system by which the *people rule*. Not despots, not oligarchs, not the military. But the *majority*. To make a long story short, Solon designed this new system and got Athens to agree not to change it for 10 years. Then he went abroad traveling (to Egypt, Cyprus, and other Greek city-states). This was the birth of Democracy. It did not go well, I have to admit. Solon's experiment did not last long. Soon it was corrupted. But he started a fire that no one has ever extinguished, with something he called a Constitution.

Let me go deeper to the problems that Athens was facing when it turned to a Wise Judge for leadership. Economically, Athens was plagued with something called Debt. There were rich and poor, and in those days you could not mortgage your land, because it belonged perpetually to the clans. So if individuals suffered business losses and fell into personal debt they could only

indenture their children, then their wives, then themselves. Yes, slavery. Not whites enslaving blacks. Greeks enslaving other Greeks. Older people enslaving youth. Men enslaving women. But the rich insisted that this was the only way to protect their business interests. This was a Debt and Mortgage crisis – in about 600 BC!

Solon decided that the only Just way forward was to erase all Debt and to outlaw Slavery. To proclaim freedom to the captives. This was a kind of liberation, but in a Greek city-state.

He reckoned that no one despot, no matter how powerful, could stand against the rage of the private sector if they undertook the Economic and Structural reforms alone. But if the majority ruled, the Moral high ground could be held – as long as no one tampered with this new system for a decade while the dust settled and it began functioning.

We need a Solon in South Africa today. The economics have hardened, too much wealth is concentrated in the possessions of too few. And our Inequality is akin to the Slavery of Athens, not just along the fault lines of colour, because there are wealthy blacks in the Middle Class, numbering about as many as the whole white population. And because about 15 percent of whites are now among the poor. Even though most of the poor by far are black. *So this is not about Race, as much as it is about Morality.*

Democracy literally means “people-power”. Here is a structural flaw - just like wealth has become too concentrated, so has power. It also needs to be re-distributed. Into other parties and into coalitions.

You don't have to be as wise as Solon to figure that out! Even in the world's leading Democracy, oligarchy has been creeping in with families like Bush and Clinton in an Elite Establishment where money talks louder than morality. The jury is still out on whether Democracy ended with Trump, or if he is the “wise guy” who can save it from ending? ■

The Greek African: George Bizos

Excerpts from a speech he gave in April 2015

“The xenophobic attacks that we have seen resuscitated recently have shocked many South Africans, me included, to our cores. It is unfathomable to me how, in a country that has worked so hard to overcome the hatred and indignity of the past, South Africans can show such unimaginable cruelty to our brothers and sisters from other parts of the continent. However, I think the word “xenophobia” is misplaced. This isn't about fear of foreigners. This is far more malevolent than that: rather, we are dealing here with the hatred of foreigners – as the Greeks would call it, *mísos gia tous xénous*.

“I know all too well what it means to be a foreigner, living in a place that is unfamiliar, speaking a language that is not your own, far away from your friends and loved ones. I came to this country as a refugee, as did members of my family. But fortunately for us, we were welcomed into this country – in school, university and professionally – and South Africa quickly became home to us.

“President Mandela would have been ashamed of what we are seeing in the country today. However, even amidst the horrors of these attacks, we see glimmers of hope. We see people giving shelter and refuge to their neighbours; people assisting to set up temporary living quarters for those who have been displaced from their homes; and various organisations and individuals banding together in marches, vigils and social media to say no to the violence.”

George Bizos arrived as a refugee in South Africa during World War II. He could not speak any South African language at the time, but he overcame that and emerged in 1963 as one of the lawyers defending the Treason Trialists. George Bizos is now a household word in South Africa. ■



Introducing... Our Core Team

Each issue of The WeighBridge will contain a debate, in order to provide a balanced analysis of its theme. Thus our core team is composed of a conservative, a liberal and a moderator.

Do you remember the song *Abraham, Martin and John*? It became a hit because it appealed to everybody - Republicans (Abraham Lincoln), Democrats (John Kennedy) and Civil Society (Dr Martin Luther King Jr.) Two were white and one was black. On our core team, one was born in Europe, one in North America, and one in Africa. One in the North, one in the West, one in the South. Please welcome *Ken, John and Chuck* - who offer plenty of food for thought!

Who is Ken Godevenos?

One answer to this question is that he is the only writer in The WeighBridge who was born in the birthplace of Democracy – Athens.

Ken is known as a speaker, facilitator and seminar leader. He is an active member of WorldatWork, having served as Canadian President, American Board Director, and Chairman of the International Committee. He has served on the Board of Directors for: the Human Resources Professional Association of Ontario; Gideons International in Canada; and Hepcoe Credit Union Limited (now Meridian CU). In addition, he has been a member of the Employers' Committee on Health Care in Ontario (ECHCO). Ken's previous experience also includes that of a fact-finder and mediator for the Education Relations Commission of Ontario.

Ken is also an author. He wrote Human Resources for the Church: Applying Corporate Principles in Spiritual Settings, a 432 page handbook for Pastors, Executive Pastors, as well as Church Board - and HR Committee-members. The book was published by and is available through his company.

Through *Accord Resolution Services Inc.*, Ken and his wife provide services to an ever-increasing

number of clients in industries including those related to retail, insurance, health care, public sector, hospitality, high-tech, manufacturing, and communications, along with a growing practice with non-profits.

We cherish Ken for being an outspoken conservative who is willing to articulate that side of the debate. There are Christians who lean both Left and Right and part of the remit of The WeighBridge is to give them equal time to express their views. In one of his roles as a negotiator/reconciler in marriage disputes, Ken recognizes that *“we don’t always have to think alike, but we do always need to think together”*.

Who is John Deacon?

It took a grandchild for John Deacon to write a book worth publishing. He has tried before with his signature piece ‘Marnie’s Place’ still in circulation thanks to iuniverse.com. So he is now finalizing a book of children’s stories.

Currently in the throes of learning how to retire from a career in the insurance business, John feels the inner stirring of other books to come. In the meantime, he is the main contributor to the blog ‘A Visitor’s Guide to Street People, many without a home’ (www.homelessguide.com).

His political opinions are entirely shaped by the sermon on the mount, although his living out those words of Jesus are so compromised, that he takes no offence to being called a hypocrite.

We recruited John to be the “Contrarian” to Ken, articulating the Left-of-centre perspective. There have always been strong voices like *Sojourners* expressing these views. No balanced debate of Christian perspectives is complete without them.

John even recommends a book by Steven Semple entitled *The Contrarian’s Guide to Leadership*. In this book, the argument is made for a positive rendering of “Contrarian” as in one who does things differently. Christianity has often been a counter-culture within its “host cultures”. Daniel Berrigan coined the phrase “a witness against the

culture” and taught that “radical action begins with radical contemplation”. We make space for radical views.

John’s hope for this magazine is that it is characterized by two contrary opinions within the same cover... laying the groundwork for people of contrary opinions to talk to one another, and to disagree respectfully. The WeighBridge tries to weigh up different views, and to bridge the ocean between them.

Who is Chuck Stephens?

Chuck is the editor and moderator of this new think-tank called The WeighBridge.

He was born and raised in Africa, then spent a couple of decades living in Canada. Then he moved back to Africa where he is now a permanent resident.

Chuck writes Op-Ed (opinion editorials) comment for several media platforms in South Africa. These are released under the UNEMBEZA Desk of the Desmond Tutu Centre for Leadership. (“Unembeza” is the Zulu word for “conscience”.) He has also written and self-published several books.

He is a permanent resident in South Africa, and thus calls himself a “Canadian-African” – in the same vein as “French-Canadians” or “African-Americans”. One concern he has is that often Canadians don’t “get” what he writes about Africa, because they are not in daily contact with African news. The same is true of African readers who do not know (or even want to know) how issues that affect them play out in the North.

Chuck’s belief is that there is a rich inter-play of the same policy issues on both sides of the ocean, affording a golden opportunity to learn from one another. ■



Needing Free and Fair Elections is Easier Than Getting Them

By Ken B. Godevenos

If you are into politics, you cannot avoid elections. The hype around them seems to go on for eons. It culminates when a major television network declares someone or some party the winner. Unless of course someone challenges the result and demands a recount. Then you could be waiting weeks as was the case in the 2000 American presidential election between Al Gore and George W. Bush. The latter won the election after a bitter legal battle over disputed vote counts in the state of Florida.

And the next day, it seemed, the parties commenced to campaign for the next federal election, four years away. Such is the “thing that an election is made up of”. What politicians actually accomplish between elections is secondary. The scandals they are embroiled in; the gaffs they make; the promises they did not keep, are all easily forgotten by the time the next election comes around – and in the case of some, even their achievements are discarded like those of past presidents who were racists or owned slaves.

But are those elections free and fair? Certainly, two decades into the twenty-first century, especially in the West, the answer should be a resounding 'yes'. But, alas, it is not.

We can also ask, “Why even bother with elections?” Can't we just find a just man or woman (or a whole slew of them) who can govern us and want to, and let them do so? Well, no, we can't.

People are people. Even if they start off as benevolent rulers (let alone dictators – which some will need to be, to get hold of the power they

will exercise over us), they don't remain benevolent for long and certainly not forever. They die, and their offspring are not always like the apple that falls under the apple tree.

So instead we have elections. We need them. We need to be able to throw out the bad apples on a regular basis once they rot. And rot they do. We call it democracy.

But even democracy can be made fairer. Unfortunately, many elections today can only accommodate candidates that are rich and/or have rich backers. Those who are poor should be free to run and have a chance of being elected.

In addition, they have to have a modern media (read photogenic) personality that knows when to laugh, when to be serious, when to push, when to remain silent, how to dress, and oh so much more. If the liberals and progressives in our society want change, they need to work on helping our nations come up with ways to overcome these non-essentials to what makes a good practical leader. Those who are not glamorous should be free to run and stand a chance.

Today's elections are also not fair because usually one of the candidates is backed by the media (usually the more liberal one, the more so-called progressive one). Perhaps we need laws against the media picking (indirectly) our winners. Their influence is getting way out of hand. Unless stopped, the media will be electing our leaders more and more. Those who go against the common thinking of the Fifth Estate should be free to run and stand a chance.

Winning elections in some countries has tended to run in the family. The Bushes and Clintons in the U.S. and the Trudeaus in Canada are two dynasties which come to mind. There's nothing wrong with that as long as there are checks and balances for ensuring that the younger generations or the spouses of former leaders are truly worthy of election on their own merit and are not riding on the laurels of their surname.

Lastly, elections can be fairer when we all learn to accept that a person's true religious faith (as compared to a political ideology that hides under a religion) is not a reason to reject a candidate for office, but rather something to be desired in a candidate. Christians who are not ashamed of admitting their allegiance to Christ, are the prime victims here. Those who are people of faith should be free to run and stand a chance. Only then can we have freer and fairer elections. It's not about collusion with foreign countries or election

interference. We live in a global economy. The entire world can influence anything and everything. The onus is not on them to stop interfering in our elections. The onus is on us to provide the safeguards that minimize it, just like a good firewall and other security measures protect the databases of our corporations. Let's not blame the culprits – let's stop them.

Without these changes, systemic problems that seem unfair to many will continue in our societies. Populism (the support for the concerns of the ordinary people by those who have the quality of appealing to, or aiming at, ordinary people) will continue to emerge as a viable alternative to the status quo. And no matter what the left, liberal, progressives may want us think, all populists that are ready to upset the apple cart or to drain the swamp are not Nazis or racists. In fact, some are anything but.

Response to Ken by Contrarian John

By John Deacon

"Germany's foreign Minister told his fellow country folk Sunday they're too lazy when it comes to battling racism and fighting for democracy. "We have to get off the couch and open the mouth," Heiko Mass told a newspaper."

(from The Associated Press - September 3, 2018)

Ken's excellent article on Fair Elections rightly highlights the adverse effects that any of money, the media or those of celebrity status have on the fairness of our democracy.

Add to that the insidious maligning of an opponent by colluding with outside adversaries, which the U.S. has a dark history of employing in countries like El Salvador and Guatemala, and one realizes that even the most developed democracies can behave quite un-democratically! Which brings to mind two quotes on democracy attributed to Winston Churchill:

"Democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

"The best argument against democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter."

Stating it in the negative highlights how vulnerable and yet demanding democracy is.

For democracy to work well it requires its citizenry to become well informed, highly engaged and to advocate accordingly.

It means taking the time to hear the other voices, the voices which differ from ours, people with whom we share both neighbourhood and community, but maybe little else.

It is the repeat of the biblical mandate which insists that each of us are unique, that each of us has some unique gift to contribute to the 'common good' of all, to whom we all belong.

But it's hard. Democracy can be long-winded, the 'arc of justice long' quoting Martin Luther King Jr. The extent of consultation needed to ensure everyone is heard from can be wearying.

Nor is democracy immune from pontificators, men of bombast, and bureaucrats. Its survival not only depends on politicians of moral stature, but on a deeply investigative press, and a vibrant and ethical legal system. Power, if not held in check by good people in office together with good laws and open communication, makes for tyranny and oppression.

Democracy can be taxing and one wonders with the recent influx of autocrats into North American politics whether we have become weary of its slow pace and have instead opted for quick solutions, devoid of accountability and transparency, to attach ourselves to populists like Trump who insist that *'I alone can fix this.'*

But if democracy is in decline here in North America, it is for reasons other than its loudmouths and provocateurs. As Robert Hutchins wrote: *'The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination or from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference and undernourishment.'*

In other words, it is up to us to make democracy work. It is not only to vote, it is to be fully engaged

between elections. We are not only to resist apathy and indifference, we are to peaceably rebel against *'a worldview defined by the temptations of mass consumption, a disdain for the weak, and a contempt for culture, historical amnesia, and the relentless competition of all against all.'*
(from Stephane Hessel's 'A Time for Outrage')

'Democracy dies in darkness' is the slogan adopted by the Washington Post in February 2017, words initially attributed to the U.S. Federal Judge Damon J. Keith.

The darkness of half-truths, falsehoods and fake news drain the lifeblood of democracy. Only truth can revive it again. Only the truth can set its citizens free. Only the truth brings light.

Rarely is the truth a politician's best friend, it simply costs too much. But when it is, that's when our democracy becomes invigorating and progressive, whether in its renewed recognition of the equality of all persons or in the taking hold of a common good like health care or education, housing and truly gainful employment; common goods where no one is left out.

Now Ken's Response to Contrarian John

In the column above, John Deacon responded to my thoughts on the difficulty of getting Free and Fair Elections. He takes little or no issue with my points but suggests all too often "even the most developed democracies can behave quite undemocratically". On that we can agree. He proposes that a major problem with democracy is the lack of voter awareness of the issues, brought on by their apathy.

He believes true democracy "means taking the time to hear the other voices, the voices which differ from ours." But he neglects to tell us that all we have done for the last several decades is live our lives selfishly, and raise the future generations to be the same, but also to expect instant gratification because their video games respond instantly and require minimal attention.

I'm afraid we have to leave our governing to those who reach elite status by simply recognizing the opportunity to govern and thus rise above the masses, getting themselves elected.

Deacon contends that to succeed under current circumstances, democracy depends on "politicians of moral stature", a "deeply investigative press core", and an "ethical legal system". Many liberals today believe the first of those three ingredients is missing in the United States on the part of the current President.

But many more conservatives believe all three ingredients are missing. The system is broken. They see politicians on both sides saying whatever they want, and trying to get re-elected without concern for the truth. They see the media

picking and choosing its pursuits. They see the justice system protecting its favorites.

Democracy needs to be revived again. Its outcomes have ruined the country. How that is to be done is indeed up for question. The Left thinks this can happen with protests, blockage of Supreme Court nominations and those of other posts, attacks on cabinet members in restaurants, and the like.

Lord Conrad Black, echoing the feelings of many conservatives, believes America needs a second civil war, bloodless in nature, that will bring

about the necessary changes. I think he's right. When no one is prepared to work together, in a bipartisan fashion, to fix what is wrong with America, then contrary to what John Deacon says, the system and the country need someone who is forced to say, "I alone can fix this."

And that is exactly what the present 'regime' in the U.S. is doing.

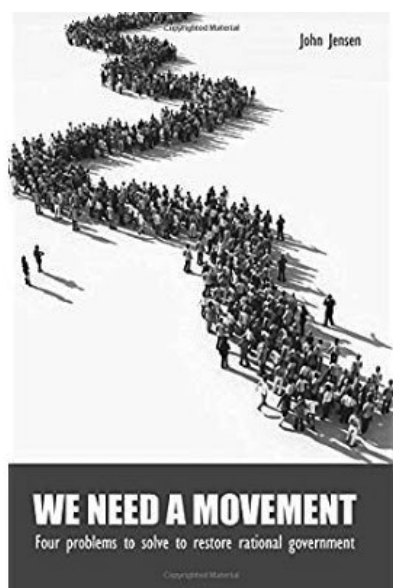
As long as it has the people behind it, with the help of the electoral college votes, it will continue to be successful and democracy may once again become a positive concept. ■

Book Review • Book Review • Book Review

We Need A Movement: Four problems to solve to restore rational government

Author: John Jensen

Self-published, San Bernardino, California, 2017



Book Review by Ken Godevenos

The book's title intrigued me enough to agree to read it and review it. Certainly, many would agree that the West has lost any vestige of rational government. We'd also agree we want to fix the problems that result from such a loss. And I thought Dr. John Jensen, a clinical psychologist, educational consultant, and a former Catholic priest, would lead us through the waters of social

change to the promised land we crave. He certainly made a valiant effort.

His book is broken down into four main sections (really, they're chapters). These cover the four problems he believes need solving -- Meaning, Selfish Power, Mediocre Thinking, and Organization.

While he offers many gems of wisdom, the organization of his material leaves much to be desired. For starters his four chapters are each, on average, 70 pages long. He engages points and subpoints, and bullets and sub-bullets to the point that the material becomes tedious for the reader. Nevertheless, he is bang on when it comes to describing why we're in the societal mess we are in – and clearly, to Jensen, we are in a mess. Our economic and success models are geared to raise one up at the expense of many others – sometimes unintentionally, often while unaware of doing so, and regularly, quite intentionally.

Early in his book he lists many issues and then asks, "Is it right?" But he's very careful to only include issues of the political left, not the political right. For example, he raises concern for global warming, high rates of teen death and child poverty, poor child care, high rate of incarceration, inequality in education, inequality in the justice system, an over-funded military, etc. But there's no mention of issues like abortion,

euthanasia, broken marriages, single parenting, etc. So right away he alienates his conservative readers.

He also uses words that are polemic to some. For example, on his dedication page he warns us of only using 300-word quotations from the book, but it appears that “activists’ use of the text for promoting ideas outlined within” is totally okay, with no limit. Jensen does many things well. For example, he explains the necessity for great care when we seek freedom from government interference, pointing out that if the government is not in control, others rush in to fill that gap. He warns that many democracies have been or are ruled by autocrats and that Hitler took over his homeland when German democracy was ineffective.

I must admit Dr. Jensen may think he is writing an apolitical book, but his examples seem quite one-sided for one who follows American politics these days. In fact, he has a unique way of criticizing the Trump phenomenon on several occasions. He writes things like, “We must not design society to violate justice and respect.” And yet, to a conservative reader who believes he is a proponent of the left, he seems to be totally missing the fact that this is exactly what the side he favors is doing. He makes a discrete point for increasing or widening the voter base, but in so doing, he speaks directly against what most Americans want – voter identification. He writes, “Every attempt to exclude individuals, demographic groups, or regions from the electoral process by making their participation harder, longer, or more confusing degrades democracy and leaves a minority in control.” He lost me ideologically after that.

Sticking with his desire, Jensen identifies the issue before us as simple: “The issue,” he says, “is basic. Can society grow efficiently and profitably and still account for everyone? The data do not say. It appears to be a matter of choice.” But while he gives us lots of details on how to change that society step by step, person by person, it’s not clear as to how successful such a process would be. After all, there were many community and societal organizers (Saul Alinsky being one)

before Jensen came along and look where we are. He himself writes, “A ten-foot ladder does not free us from a twenty-foot hole.”

The author wanders into the issue of refugees and ethnic groups and objects to our seeing them as being our enemies simply because of where they were born and where we were born. Unfortunately, while as a Christian like him, I can, and I must love individuals from any part of the world, I don’t believe I can realistically expect everyone not to see some groups as enemies when they want to kill us.

The book has many redeeming values. For example, there is a myriad of great lines. Here’s one with regard to expecting assistance from those who know a crime has been or is being committed: “To turn in a family member (*terrorist, murderer, etc. to the authorities*), people must commit to the values of a society that values them (*the people doing the informing*).” (Italics mine.) He includes a great deal of detailed instruction for almost each step of a movement’s creation and implementation. Those are most helpful to anyone working on any cause. His list of “analytic tools” and their use is top-notch. As an example, there is a list of 153 questions to use in having a discussion when challenging people with your ideas.

There are also some great and very useful insights into how to argue with extremists. If you don’t mind the author’s slant, even though he tries to hide it well, this is a great book for how “to do” what needs to be done to start any kind of movement, let alone a social one.

Jensen also seems to miss the real purpose of the Church instructing his readers on how to infiltrate it for your cause. (He calls it ‘appealing to the churches’, I call it ‘manipulating the Church’ based on the social teachings of Christ.). In so doing, ex-Father Jensen misses the higher calling of the Church – the salvation of mankind. Nevertheless, I intend to keep it on my shelf as a reference not only to use when running discussion groups or formal meetings, but also to remind me of how political and social activists operate. ■

Premonitions – not Polls

Here *The WeighBridge* has put its three writers on the spot. They are asked to predict the way the next elections will go: in the USA (John), in Canada (Ken), and in South Africa (Chuck).

Can Donald be Trumped?

By John Deacon

On November 6th, 2018, Americans vote in what is referred to as their 'mid-term' elections, 'mid-term' because they take place 2 years after US Presidential elections which occur every 4 years. In November 2016, Donald Trump was elected 45th President of the United States, a surprise result to most political pundits, many of whom had predicted that Americans would elect Hillary Clinton as the first woman to hold that office. Hillary did indeed win 48% of the popular vote over Donald Trump's 46% but Trump won the electoral vote 306 to 232 and thus the Presidency.

The upcoming mid-terms will be to elect all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives (i.e. Congress), whereas only 35 of the 100 seats in the Senate are up for election this year.

The early betting – and my bet - is that the Democrats will gain control of the House of Representatives, where currently 241 members of the House are Republican and 194 are Democrats.

If Democrats are successful, it will end the Republicans' majority hold on Congress that began in November of 2010. According to [The Economist](#) the Democrats currently have a 72% chance of gaining majority status in the House. (see www.graphic-detail/2018/05/24/whos-ahead-in-the-mid-term-race), but the betting goes against the Democrats when it comes to the Senate. That's my premonition too.

The current margin of Republicans over Democrats is by the slightest of margins, 51 seats to the Democrats 49, so one would think the Democrats are well positioned to take over the Senate as well.

However, of the 35 Senate seats up for election, 26 of the incumbents are Democrats, 10 of whom represent States which Donald Trump won

handily in 2016. Particularly vulnerable are the Democratic senators running in West Virginia, Indiana, North Dakota, Montana and Missouri. For Democrats to gain majority status in the Senate, they must not only win the 26 seats they have already but hope to gain 2 Republican seats in any of Arizona, Nevada, Texas or Tennessee, all of which were big Trump supporters in 2016.

The U.S. mid-terms will be in part, a referendum on how Americans judge Trump's Presidency. To the majority of his constituents, he has delivered. Big-time! Tax cuts, Muslim immigration bans, trade tariffs, near unabated economic growth, massive de-regulations on everything from the stock market to environmental protection measures... Plus the appointment of Supreme Court candidates hostile to abortion, gay rights, gun controls and the separation of church and state, all make Trump, their candidate despite his legal woes.

Although Trump's current approval rating among Americans is just over 40%, the core of his supporters include people with deep pockets who love his tax cuts, preachers with big pulpits who love his anti-Muslim rants and good-old white Americans concerned that they are the real target of racist propaganda. They are indeed a hard core group not likely to budge from their allegiance to Trump regardless of the headlines.

Those hoping that Trump is severely rebuked in the upcoming election by the loss of majority status in either the House or the Senate point to the incendiary nature of his Presidency. Not only does the Mueller investigation reveal a growing list of unscrupulous associates running Trump's 2016 Presidential campaign including Michael Cohen, Michael Flynn, George Papadopoulos, Paul Manafort, and Rick Gates; many political observers regardless of political bias are decrying

Trump's Presidency since being elected as the most undemocratic, if not the most unethical in U.S. history.

His disdain for former allies like Germany and the UK; his infatuation for despots like Russia's Putin and North Korea's Kim Jong Un, and his ongoing tirade complicating trade negotiations with Canada are just a few examples of how deeply unsettling Trump is on the global stage.

Justin is No P.E.T.

By Ken Godevenos

"The 43rd Canadian federal election (formally the 43rd Canadian general election) is scheduled to take place on or before October 21, 2019. The October 21 date of the vote is determined by the fixed-date procedures in the Canada Elections Act but the Act does not preclude the Governor General of Canada from issuing the writs of election at an earlier date." (Source: Wikipedia)

It is an election that many (inside the country and beyond) are looking forward to. Like the American mid-terms that come this November 6th, 2018, it will really be a single-issue election – the suitability of the current Prime Minister or President, respectively, to lead their respective countries.

Let me make two very early predictions for the price of one. By the way, CNN and Fox don't dare do this until late into the night of any election. Here they are (and remember, you read about them first in [The WeighBridge](#)): President Trump will succeed in keeping and possibly growing his support with the American elections; and Justin Trudeau will lose his job. I'll leave it to others to either argue with or support me on the American prediction but let me give you my rationale on the Canadian one. Justin Trudeau is no Pierre Elliot Trudeau (P.E.T.). The apple didn't exactly fall right under the tree in his case. The senior Trudeau, who had a flamboyant personality, rose to prominence as a lawyer and intellectual. He was widely recognized as a Canadian statesman who first became prime minister when he was 49 years old – a man of experience. He had been

Lastly, the chaotic nature of how the White House is being run, let alone the country, documented in books like Bob Woodward's [Fear, Trump in the White House](#), have many Americans concerned that their democracy is being hi-jacked by a demagogue whose only real agenda is self-aggrandizement.

Regardless of where Americans stand on Trump, one thing for sure: the upcoming election is one of the most important in America's history.

Lester B. Pearson's Parliamentary Secretary, then his Minister of Justice. He had political acumen that even his opponents acknowledged. He brought the country together at a time Quebec was itching to say "au revoir". He came out victorious during a Quebec terrorist crisis that gave the whole of Canada a renewed sense of identity and nationalism – which in turn allowed him to bring the country its official bilingualism, patriation of the Constitution from England, and its own Charter of Rights and Freedoms (although many years later many Canadians do not thank him for any of these, especially the Charter).

Those that opposed him, saw him as being arrogant, unable to properly manage the economy, and centralizing decision-making (away from the provinces). I personally, had no argument with him on his economic measures or centralization. He was re-elected twice. But, yes, he was arrogant.

Thirty-one years after he left office, his eldest son, Justin Trudeau, became the 23rd and current Prime Minister in 2015. At only 34 years of age, Trudeau II became the first prime minister to be a descendant of a former prime minister. Now, next year, he is up for re-election. But he won't win. And here's why.

This man is no intellectual or lawyer – he's a drama teacher by profession. He never completed the engineering program he started,

nor a master's program he was enrolled in. He's way too young to be a statesman, so he gets no points there for some of us older Canadians that look for statesmanship in a prime minister. His personality is flamboyant like his father's, but it knows no bounds – as he recently has been accused of sexual harassment (although I grant you it is a different age). His foreign experience is nil, and it shows with his international trips where the media coverage he attracts is more about his costumes and his dancing in the various countries he visits than anything else of value. He has been found wanting on his expenses including inappropriate acceptance of vacations and trips. His positions with respect to open borders, refugees, and treatment of terrorists have divided, not united, the country.

His political acumen is in the negative range having botched up his efforts in several areas:

- His carbon tax proposal is being fought by several provinces
- His budget deficits are not decreasing
- His \$10.5 million settlement with Omar Khadr is a sore point with many
- His handling of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline, which he purchased for the Canadian public is now basically rendered useless
- His inability to fix the federal payroll system, Phoenix, leaving thousands in dire straights

- His navy warship purchase project is experiencing problems
- His inability to provide for Canada's veterans as well as he provides for Canada's refugees
- His blatant and exhibited intolerance for those who disagree with him (incl senior citizens)
- His mishandling and losing big-time in the negotiations of a new NAFTA deal with the U.S. and Mexico (and recently left out at the negotiating table)

Did he have some successes? Well, I can think of two which could go either way, depending on who's doing the rating:

- Canada's reputation in the world – he thinks he improved it; many think he's caused us to be the global laughing-stock, and
- Gender-balanced cabinet (a good move for the few remaining “politically correct” Canadians, but not one that has resulted in better decisions).

While most honest Americans will admit their President has brought about many good things for the country, they are clearly split on his character. The odds are that his actions and desired results will carry the day. In Canada, Canadians seem to be saying, this Trudeau just “ain't got it” – no actions, no results, and his judgment and character aren't that hot, either. He's about to get ousted.

2019 Is Looking Like a Three-Way Race that No-one Can Win

By Chuck Stephens

Although there are numerous parties already in existence, and others in gestation, the 2019 elections in S.A. will basically offer voters a choice between Holding the Centre, Radicalizing to the Left, or Consolidating on the Right.

It is very possible that this polarizing to both Left and Right could even split the ANC, which has been suffering from a serious Identity Crisis. The antidote that the ANC has been using to treat this malady is strong doses of “Unity”.

But the pull to the Left into RET and land expropriation without compensation is going to

erode a lot of ANC support on the Red side. The shifting allegiances in the Nelson Mandela Bay and Tshwane coalitions seem to be an effort by the Reds to woo the ANC to swing Left. The “fight-back” campaign within the ANC is ironically lined up with this courting – imagine Malema wooing the Zuma faction!

The DA has always had a sword of Damocles hanging over it in the three big metros that it governs through coalitions. But do not underestimate the gravitational pull that its mantra of the Rule of Law will have on those ANC voters who are law-abiding citizens, not rabble-rousers.

Here is a summary of the shifting political spectrum, from left to right:

	LEFT ←			CENTRE	→ RIGHT	
	BFLF	EFF	SACP	The ANC's fight-back faction (hold-outs)	The ANC's true DNA	DA
<i>Look-alikes</i>	PAC		SAFTU, Emerging Labour party	UDM	COPE Agang	Afriforum
<i>Land redistribution</i>	Without compensation	Invade unused land	Focus is industry and mines	Willing sellers	Phase out whites Phase in blacks	Black & white co ownership
<i>Affirmative action</i>	Radical re-distribution	White members are rare	BEE	BEE	Review BEE	Discard BEE
<i>Non-racialism</i>	Anti-white	Some ugly rhetoric	A truly mixed-race team, based on a shared ideology	A black clique	Ramaphosa has white staffers and a mixed Cabinet	Maimane is in a mixed marriage
<i>Constitution</i>	Ignore it	Revise it	Abide by it	Lip service	Devoted to it	Devoted to it
<i>Parliament</i>	No seats yet	High esteem reflected in its SONA ejections	High esteem	An inconvenience – keep all voting out in the open	High esteem – stay in power but give it some teeth	High esteem reflected in its SONA walk-outs
<i>Judiciary</i>	Contempt	Esteem by its use of the courts and demand of secret No-confidence vote	Esteem	Lip-service	Esteem for balance of powers	Constantly using courts to defend democracy including MPs voting in secret
<i>Malfeasance & waste</i>	Andile was recruited by the Guptas to write about WMC	Tough talk – claim to have shed the DNA inherited from the ANC	Tough talk indicating zero tolerance	Culture of looting	Supra, Abrahams, Ntelemeza and Bhengu are down.... Zondo is on a roll	Zero tolerance – send them to jail
<i>Civil society</i>	Intolerant	Collaboration based on a common enemy	Respect for this social space	So-called “dangerous NGOs”	Respect for this social space	Collaborators (e.g. friends of the court)
<i>Trade unions</i>	Urban work force may not really want farm land	Supports unions that leave the ANC	The foundation stones – urban, middle class	Divisive (half the unions have left) and	Wants to keep the “broad church” status quo	Labour should be part of Business sector, not in government
<i>Trending</i>	Are rural, land issues really predominant?	No track record at all in governance	Ready to contest elections alone	Despotic democracy	Starting to talk tough	Disciplining Zille and de Lille indicates a shift of internal power

Table 1: Will the hold-outs be able to tip the balance?

Assuming that both the DA and the EFF will continue to grow their “market-share” in the 2019 elections, then the ANC will be caught in this squeeze. This will put even more pressure on its Identity Crisis, and may result in a split. Perhaps only a split of allegiances, not a formal divorce? Maybe the ANC factions can still live together in Luthuli House, while sleeping in different bedrooms?

The prospects of a Red-Blue alliance are dimming as the DA challenges the removal of Trollip as mayor of NMB. And as world opinion may be shifting to sympathize with the white African tribe - that could soon become South Africa’s Rohingya.

Instead of joining the coalitions after the 2014 municipal elections and getting some hands-on experience at governance, the EFF stayed aloof and is now shuffling the deck, so to speak. This could cost them dearly in 2019 as voters see them as inexperienced power-mongers.

They have achieved their objective of getting Land Reform onto the front burner. But now they look a bit redundant as the inertia of public and world opinion starts to harden around them.

Parties like IFP and COPE are just not going to buy into a radical Red leftist agenda. It is a mistake to think that most citizens think like that. They will vote for stability and experience. Changing the Constitution is no longer a prerequisite, which empties a lot of EFF’s assumptions about its own self-importance. It has become a legend in its own mind. It certainly does represent a minority of voters, but just that – a minority. Its treachery in turning on the anti-ANC coalitions will not sit well with many voters. By far the majority of citizens do not want those looters and plunderers back in power, at least until Project Re-capture has fully succeeded.



Plebiscites - the Cousins of Elections

By Chuck Stephens

Plebiscites also involve voting – but not for a person or a party. Instead, you are voting for a platform.

In Canada, two plebiscites have been held in the province of Quebec – to try to legitimize the platform of “independence” (i.e. secession). Canada answered by holding a national referendum on whether voters wanted Quebec to remain in Confederation or to let it go.

We have seen similar scenes more recently in Spain, with a referendum on Independence by the region of Catalonia. Before that, there was a referendum in Scotland about whether to remain in the United Kingdom or not.

“Brexit” was similarly voted on – not really secession – but to validate the government's remit to withdraw from the European Union.

When F.W. de Klerk took over as leader of South Africa, he organized a referendum of sorts – it was only among whites, and he found that 2-to-1 whites were in favour of ending apartheid and negotiating with the ANC. A plebiscite can be a real game-changer.

The word Plebiscites comes from a Greek root from which we also get the word “plebian” in English. Meaning the ordinary people. The Latin word is referendum – which is basically has the same meaning.

This kind of voting may be reduced to a simple “Yes” or No”. But this can be tricky – a lot hinges on the way the question is worded. Beware.

After the Brexit vote, it was found that the older the voters, the more that they voted “yes” to leave the European Union. Younger voters preferred to stay in. The irony is that the younger people will have to live with the consequences of the vote for longer.

Referendums are used frequently in the USA at State-level, but are not allowed in federal politics. If push comes to shove in South Africa, it might be

a good idea to hold a referendum on whether to change the Constitution to allow for expropriation of land without compensation. At first blush, one would expect it to pass, simply because blacks outnumber whites 9-to-1. On the other hand, many political parties are against it, and not all blacks are in favour of risking the conflict that it might provoke. The images of land

confiscations in Zimbabwe are still vivid, and a reminder that even when the Policy may make sense, its Implementation can so easily be corrupted by greed and bitterness.

For example, COSATU says that it supports land expropriation without compensation - on the proviso that politicians may never receive expropriated land! ■

Déjà vu from the Life of Lincoln

By Chuck Stephens

In his whole life, he spent less than a year in a classroom. He grew up on the frontier, moving from one rural setting to another as his father tried to find better land to farm. The law obliged him to work for his father until he was 21 – even though his Dad was abusive. He left home the day he turned 21 and years later refused to attend his own father's funeral. It was a strong statement. Some people interpret his unusual empathy with African slaves as deriving from his father's abuse and exploitation of him.

Abraham Lincoln taught himself how to read and write and he borrowed books whenever he could. After he left home, he wandered. He urbanized, he worked in different jobs. He kept studying and after three years he obtained his license to practice law. He was ambitious and determined to overcome the disadvantages he had grown up with. He joined a law firm and started a family, in Springfield, the state capital of Illinois.

I have to admit that this narrative resonates a bit with the upbringing of Nelson Mandela. The difference being that Abraham Lincoln, arguably America's greatest president, was not born into a royal family with any privileges at tribal level. Lincoln was the quintessential self-made man.

During a war with a local Indian tribe, he enlisted in the militia. His troop of men chose him to be their leader, an honour which he later said meant more to him than any other. Suddenly he had a

taste of leadership and those militia skirmishes would be his only military exposure prior to taking on the mantle of Commander in Chief at the outset of the bloody American Civil War.

He dabbled in local politics, gaining some experience in debate and public speaking. His first great policy challenge was to debate that Democracy was incompatible with Slavery. This was because some of the new territories to the west of Illinois were debating whether to legalize Slavery or not. He served two terms in the provincial legislature and one term in Washington, as a legislator, for the Whig party.



My Vote Counts congratulates
The WeighBridge
on its pilot issue.
It is so important
that South Africa's youth
are made aware
of social justice issues.

Editor's Note: Thank you to My Vote Counts and we look forward to hearing from MVC in future issues as well!

Then he ran for the Illinois seat in the Senate, but lost. It looked like the end of his political career; like he would have to be content with his law career.

But two years later, he managed to win the nomination to run for president under the newly formed Republican party. He won on the third round, as a compromise candidate, in Chicago.

He was physically awkward, ugly and so rural that he was considered too informal. Even after he moved into the White House, he would receive people at times in his bare feet. But he was so affable and honest that ordinary people could relate to him.

His first presidential race was against three other candidates. Fortunately for him, they split the vote, to the extent that he won - even though he had only garnered 39 percent of the votes. This election was virtually a referendum on the expansion of Slavery into the new states in the West. His victory stopped that. But it riled up the southern states, whose economy was based on Slavery.

In 2019 in South Africa, we can expect the elections to basically be a kind of referendum on another question - land expropriation without compensation. The debate is raging about that policy issue now, just as the expansion of Slavery issue was a raging debate in the years before Lincoln was elected.

His analysis was that Democracy was unfairly contrived because representation in Washington was disproportionate. This is because slaves were counted at three-fifths of a person (60 percent human) which gave the southern states an edge in the number of seats, that in turn perpetuated the status quo. As a lawyer and a politician, Lincoln took exception to this, much like the citizens of South Africa objected to the structural injustices of colonialism and apartheid, and to contrivances like a tricameral Parliament. In those days it was a two-week train trip to travel from Illinois to Washington. While making his way to there, for his inauguration, Lincoln learned that one state had seceded from the Union. Others followed,

and soon they joined in a Confederacy. To Lincoln, this was illegal and treacherous, as the Union had even preceded the Constitution.

South Africa needs to think through the “repercussions” of what will happen if land is expropriated without compensation, particularly if the Constitution is changed to streamline that. For there could be knock-on effects - on bankings, on foreign investment, on race relations, and so forth. At the root of this is the notion of private property, which to some citizens is sacrosanct. That is not my personal belief, for I believe that all land belongs to God. I therefore endorse proactive Land Reform, but always in the context of the Rule of Law, and in a way that bonds different races together - not one that shakes Non-racialism. There are such strategies, though some regard these as too “moderate” and not “radical” enough.

One can see an evolution in Lincoln's thinking over time. The American Civil War began as an attempt to keep the Union intact, preventing any states from seceding – an act of treason. In fact, Slavery was still legal in four states of the Union which Lincoln could not dare to lose. But in the early years of the war, it went badly for the North. They started with superior troop numbers, but these were depleted by very heavy casualties. Then Lincoln took a step that was not even considered at the beginning of the Civil War. He started to enlist black troops. He racially-integrated the army.

This inspired him to return to his arguments against the expansion of Slavery into new states in the West. That had not make him an “Abolitionist” back then, when he had been prepared just to contain it in the states where it already existed. But when he composed the Emancipation Declaration in the middle of the Civil War, it was a game-changer. He moved the goalposts from keeping the Union intact, to liberating slaves. This position was controversial even in the North. In fact, it was a white supremacist in the North who assassinated Lincoln, soon after the war was won.

Meanwhile, Lincoln managed to pass the Thirteenth Amendment, freeing the slaves. He managed to win the war after four years of bloodshed on a scale never seen before. And he managed to win a second presidential election. Only to be assassinated soon thereafter.

Looking back, Lincoln was elected with very little education and almost no experience in the executive branch of government. Nor did he have any military experience to speak of. Yet he led the Union to victory on the battlefield, thereby keeping the Union intact. The republican experiment in America got a new lease on life. On the way, he freed the slaves, a moral and social victory on top of his military and political successes. And he was only 56 years old when he was assassinated by an extremist.

South Africa seems to want to elect leaders who are already in their sixties or seventies, even though life expectancy here is only 50 years for

men. So many competent young cadres are being overlooked. It seems almost silly for Zimbabwe to elect a 75-year-old to start a new era.

Lincoln was thrifty and honest. These are not virtues that come to mind in South Africa, where leaders have two distinct vices – waste and corruption. Waste is not illegal, it is just immoral in a country with so much poverty. Corruption is illegal, and is a cancer that weakens the country's economy and morale.

Above all, if Land Reform is an imperative – and I believe that it is – why can't it evolve slowly like Lincoln's thinking? Why do we suddenly need to amend the Constitution? Certainly the Abolition movement was active, but Lincoln himself was no radical. He was a lawyer, a politician and ultimately a statesman. This takes patience and moves with glacial slowness at times. Slowly but surely. Sequentially. Cautiously. *“When you want to go fast, go alone. When you want to go far, go together.”*

The Divine Right of Parties?

By Chuck Stephens

In his book *Wide as the Waters*, Benson Bobrick tracks “the story of the English Bible *and the revolution it inspired.*” He writes a painstaking history from before the Protestant Reformation (Wycliffe) on. Through the plethora of Bible translations that emerged from the diverse strains of the Reformation, on to the “Authorized Version”.

This was not only a great version in technical terms, but an effort to synthesize previous work and thus find a *Via Media* between the Catholic counter-reformation on the conservative side, and the Non-conformists on the radical side.

The struggle between the “divine right of kings” and emerging Democracy is at the core of it. Certainly the emergence of nation-states like Germany had made it possible for Martin Luther to translate Scripture into the vernacular.

Conversely, his translation had the symbiotic effect of unifying the language and thus the culture.

Centuries later, the same thing happened with Afrikaans in South Africa. It was really a “creole” mixing Dutch, French, Portuguese, and local terms until the Bible was translated. Over a period of several decades, this hardened the creole into what is now the youngest language in the world. The Afrikaans Bible Museum in Paarl captures this more recent story.

In England, King James I, who authorized the “King James Version” had Non-conformist inclinations, deriving from his earlier years as king of Scotland. When Elizabeth I died, she being a royalist as well insisted that he was the legitimate heir to the throne. But he embraced the *Via Media* which Elizabeth I's long reign had embedded in British life, following her father Henry VIII's “nationalization” of the church.

At first this was for his own private reasons, but it aligned with the Protestant Reformation and thus Bible translation was suddenly encouraged

instead of outlawed. There were too many swings of the pendulum to relate here. Some monarchs brutally reinstated Catholicism, others endorsed the Via Media, and some made more space for the Non-conformists. Some writers at the time compared this to the stories of good kings and bad kings recorded in the two Books of Kings in the Old Testament.

The real show-down came when Charles I ascended to the throne and tried to re-assert Catholicism. Over a decade passed without the king even convening Parliament. But by this time, the combined inertia of the Via Media and the Non-conformists was just too great. So they both eventually raised armies, and England plunged into all-out Civil War.

The monarch was defeated – and beheaded. Oliver Cromwell emerged as Lord Protector of a republican government. For three generations, England tried to make it without a monarch. This even took martial law at times. But alas. Again, the inertia of the Via Media was just too great, and Bobrick attributes this to the fact that the population had become “People of the Book”.

To be British was neither Catholic nor radical Non-conformist, it was the Via Media that combines them both. So the monarchy was reinstated under Charles II whose son James II was foolish enough to try to bring back Catholicism! The backlash was to invite William of Orange to come over from the Low Countries, for he was married to a legitimate heir to the British crown. His armies landed and made short work of it.

But when he arrived in London, to popular acclaim, he refused to accept the crown by virtue of military victory. Instead, he insisted on Parliament being convened and inviting him to be monarch. The rapprochement of that moment has remained in place ever since. Of course Parliament has gained strength as Democracy matured, and kings have become but figureheads. But this synthesis can be traced back to the Protestant Reformation rejecting the authority of Rome, and to the translation of Scripture - that liberated the laity.

The Seeds of Revolution

During this period of foment in Britain, two other things were happening. First, the Age of Exploration had passed (it was roughly concurrent with the Protestant Reformation) and Colonization had begun. Especially in North America, across the Atlantic from Britain, the 13 colonies were beginning to gel. Many of these were populated by radical Non-conformists, who noted that even Britain had rejected the monarchy for a protracted period. Only one of these (Maryland) was founded on Catholicism, although in South America it was a different story. The mainly Spanish colonies were very Catholic.

(Let’s remember that the Cape Colony was established by the Dutch, which had liberated themselves from Spanish hegemony and where Non-conformist doctrines were also paramount. This DNA passed on to the settlers in South Africa, which included the Heuguenots – basically the Protestant refugees run out of France by the Catholic counter-reformation.)

Second, philosophy was being influenced by the likes of John Locke and Thomas Hobbes who were moving political science onto new horizons. Their thinking greatly influenced American thinkers like Thomas Jefferson, who drafted both the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution.

This was a huge example of an Ocean Bridge. To a limited extent, political theory was secularizing. Humanism was emerging from its roots in Christianity. Even Erasmus, one of the first Bible translators, who influenced Martin Luther, is remembered as one of the earliest Humanists, in the earliest stages of the Protestant Reformation. But now the radical rejection of Rome’s authority was coming home to roost. The words of the king who remarked “No bishop, no king” had become prophetic.

This Ocean Bridge was crossed (from the Old World to the New World) by four fundamental new piers:

1. *Self-evident laws of nature* – reason and conscience were replacing theology as the foundations for rights, justice and Democracy

2. *Common law* – While the debate about the authority of Scripture (Protestants) versus Tradition (Catholics) was on-going, Law evolved a way of internalising a respect for previous decisions

3. *Separation of church and state* – with religious tolerance came space for pluralism and the fight against bigotry and xenophobia evolved a “melting pot” approach to immigration

4. *Classless egalitarianism* – America rejected both the monarchy and the aristocracy and adopted the notion that all men are created equal. This was rooted in the Imago Dei

The American Revolution of course resulted in a formalized social contract: “We the people...”

To quote Broderick: “As long as Scripture could mean as many different things to as many people as read it, the deeply thought-through conclusions of the Church down through the ages were allowed no more stature than the cloudy revelations of individual minds. And insofar as those revelations prompted actions, chaos might result. No democracy, in fact, could fail to destroy itself without some restraint imposed upon liberty – as governing action – in this sense. There had to be a frame.

“The great unwritten Constitution of England, and the arguably greater Constitution of the United States, with its Bill of Rights, took the theological place in Civil Society of the Received Wisdom laid down by the Church councils and preserved in Creeds.”

Then this new commitment to life, liberty and property crossed the Ocean Bridge again. Americans assisted to the French Revolution and received a gift from France thereafter – the Statue of Liberty.

Shift of Focus to Free and Fair Elections

This revolution kept eroding at the ever-evolving status quo. The Anti-Slavery Movement, the Suffragettes, the Liberation Struggle against Colonialism, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Civil Rights Movement, and the latest push for LGBTI+ rights can all be seen as chapters of Democratization.

This Ocean Bridge brought change to African colonies as well. The Union of South Africa was the first nation on the continent to gain independence, but it was only the European men who then ruled. Racial and gender equality followed slowly. At first only white men voted. Later in the era of apartheid came a Tri-cameral Parliament. Finally to be replaced with free and fair elections in 1994.

Democracy has evolved from a confrontation with the “divine right of kings” to a Party system, with so much focus on electioneering. As the executive power of kings faded (except in eSwatini, of course), the focus of Democracy changed to elections. Although Democracy is much more than that, it has come to be defined as that.

The “look and feel” of George Washington was not unlike that of an executive monarch. The party system has not yet evolved. That would come a generation later in the huge debates between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. A century later you had Republicans contesting elections with Democrats. But only men were voting still. The suffrage was not universal. In Britain the contest was between the Conservatives and the Liberals, as the monarchy waned in terms of executive power. Parliaments and Prime Ministers squeezed the royals out of executive power. However, the House of Lords retains some power for the aristocracy. But the House of Commons reflects the engagement of all citizens, and is where the real power lies.

On the other side of the Ocean Bridge, in the republican USA, there are also two Houses in Parliament – the Congress and the Senate. But as a class system did not really exist, this dichotomy

does another balancing act – between proportional representation and equality of all the states. It is hard to imagine Rhode Island and Texas on a par, but the bi-cameral structure helps to level out that disparity. Whereas high density urban areas can elect more Congressmen (and now Congresswomen) than sparsely populated states “out west”. The Senate gives power to States with few votes.

The Electoral College” system in America was introduced to try to further level the playing field. But in the elections of John Kennedy, George W Bush and Donald Trump, the elections were extremely close. It is possible to win the Presidency while losing the popular vote in this curious electoral arrangement.

To date, no woman has been elected President of the USA. Maggie Thatcher was the first woman in Britain to become Prime Minister. Barrack Obama was the first African American to be elected President. But what really marked a historical change was when Nelson Mandela was elected President of South Africa.

Elections everywhere now require independent “observers” to validate that they are free and fair.

This is the new “procedural” focus of Democracy, perhaps to the detriment of the other institutions that keep Democracy from falling apart – like the Judiciary, the other levels of government (provincial, ombudswomen, state, municipal), the Media and Civil Society.

Across this Ocean Bridge, many key people and ideas have crossed back and forth. The interchange of ideas keeps evolving Democracy and its focus.

Democracy needs to sink into organizations and families as well. Bishops can be despots and fathers can be abusive. Decision-making at all levels of society needs to be inclusive and participative. It has often been said that “a family that prays together stays together”. Certainly, biblical literacy can do no harm and could do a lot of good. Reformation doctrines like “the priesthood of all believers” have shaken authority

and challenged bishops, kings, parliaments and families to involve all those who are affected by a decision in the process of making it. That is probably the essence of Democracy and in our Open Society the Ocean Bridge has been widened.

The Divine Right of Parties?

From the “divine right of kings”, to a forum where all those affected by decision should speak into the related decision-making (Parliament or *Indaba*), to a Constitution with entrenched rights, and on to sophisticated election machinery, Democracy has evolved and been refined.

Over the past century, though, the Voter has been diminished in some Constitutional Democracies by the Vanguard. Karl Marx introduced the notion of a Vanguard Party, that forges ahead and scouts out the terrain. The people follow.

‘All we like sheep’... It almost seems that such systems have come full circle from “the divine right of kings” to “the divine right of parties”. To be “free and fair”, voting should be secret, individual and from the conscience – neither coerced nor purchased. ■

Sneak Preview

Issue #2 of The WeighBridge is already in the pipeline. The theme of the next issue is Streamlining Democracy...

With special focus on “the PR System”.

Basically, which configuration of voting makes your vote count most?

Stay tuned for more thought-provoking insight for young voters.

REPRINTS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST
As this is the maiden issue of The WeighBridge, the initial print-run is limited. However, if you need extra copies for your youth programing (in-school or out-of-school), or voter registration please do not hesitate to order via: unembeza@C4L.org

the WeighBridge

Weighing pros and cons
Bridging partisanship
Bridging oceans
Seeking the Truth that emerges
From frank and open dialogue
In safe deliberation

Rules of Engagement

No demonizing allowed. You or I may be wrong, but we are equally human, equally loved, equally God's children, seeing some things more clearly than others and vice-versa, but in the main, we are in the dark, not seeing it all.

No one is ever dead wrong, except in issues where one's position means that someone other than he is denigrated to being something less than human, someone less to be loved and cared for than anyone else.

No name calling. It doesn't help. It derails the debate. It undermines the civility it takes to find the truth let alone live it.

If the debate is political, suspicions do creep in, if the party or politician one sides with can never be wrong. It is likely that person has lost their capacity for critical thinking, which true wisdom relies on.

We are all prone to coming under the spell of influential people, and when we do, the likelihood of being objective, let alone discerning, goes out the window. Our positions become parroted ones rather than those originating in us.

It helps to approach every person in leadership as though a member of their loyal opposition. Loyal when in your opinion the other is right and opposed when in your opinion the other is wrong. It helps keeps populists and dictators in check and ensures the compasses we are relying on aren't skewed by bigger than life personalities.

Whatever our rank and status in life, we are no more nor any less than brothers and sisters. God has no grandchildren.

Sponsors

