

## Chapter 6

### American Democracy Stinks

#### Boycott money, to save democracy

- Dick Cheney was one of only two US Congress members who voted against a resolution calling for the release of Nelson Mandela from prison

- Dick Chaney voted against the Equal Rights Amendment which stated “ *Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex.* ”

- Dick Chaney repeatedly opposed economic sanctions on apartheid South Africa in 1985, 1986 and 1988.

Dick Chaney is now the Vice President. How could almost half of voting America support such a man for the 2nd most powerful position in the US, maybe the world? Easy. Because he is:

- Rich
- Powerful
- Has strong corporate support especially from powerful oil companies
- Able to hire top advertising companies to make him a saleable product, regardless of his past

We are helpless to do much about this and at this rate, even worse than Cheney is likely to follow. The sad fact is that the presidency and democracy have been overthrown by the king, and the king is money. Yes, corporate money has rendered real democracy virtually obsolete. Campaign reform, third party, etc., to rescue our democracy do not stand a chance against money. Not only do they not stand a chance, they will not make the slightest dent. The sad fact is that more and more in America today, anyone who is rich enough can run for political office and win regardless of their public record.

## Boycott Money And Save Your Soul

In 1996 the average cost of winning a US senate seat was \$4.7 million. Jesse Helms (R-NC) ran the most expensive race of the year at \$14.6 million. To run for a US House of Representatives seat that year, the average cost to the winner was \$673,000 with the highest being Newt Gingrich at \$5.6 million. Compared with 1994:

US Senate	1996	1994
Average winner spent	\$4,692,110	\$4,569,940
Average loser spent	\$2,773,756	\$3,426,509
Most expensive campaign	\$14,587,143	\$29,969,695

  

US House of Representatives	1996	1994
Average winner spent	\$673,739	\$516,126
Average loser spent	\$265,675	\$238,715
Most expensive campaign	\$5,577,715	\$2,621,479

So more and more our political leaders will be the rich and powerful or agents of the rich and powerful that buy them. We will be controlled by a minority consisting of a mere few rich and powerful people.

This is ironic as this is precisely what democracy was set up to prevent. Throughout history ordinary people have had to struggle against the domination of a small minority of powerful people. Sometimes it was kings, feudal lords, aristocrats, rich merchants, landowners, industrialists, etc.. For example:

- A king or a feudal lord had the right to help himself to the wife or daughter of any of his subjects for his sexual pleasure. He had that right and the ordinary man could do nothing about it.
- A rich industrialist once had the right to hire children to work 7 days a week from dawn til dusk for pennies. He had that right and the ordinary man could do nothing about it.

Democracy grew out of these injustices and gradually people fought for these rights until they achieved the

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democracy of “*government of the people, by the people for the people*”.

This democracy did not come easy. It is a historical fact that the rich powerful minority with the rights and privileges did not and still do not want to share them or give them up willingly. Political parties originated in this fight for democracies, this fight for equal rights, equal justice, equal protection under law and all sort of protection from the greedy ruthless rich and powerful minority.

### **Money and Political Parties**

The evolution of democracy is basically the fight to gain equality from the rich and powerful. Today this rich and powerful minority is fighting back – *and winning!*

So rich and powerful people have always had all sorts of rights and privileges. Ordinary people did not and were generally exploited by the rich and powerful, be it king, feudal lord, wealthy landowner, millionaire industrialist, etc. Political parties arose basically to fight against this exploitation and provide rights for ordinary people.

So rich and powerful people had no need for political parties or democracy. Instead they saw political parties as a threat to their wealth, exclusive rights, power and privileges. The graduated income tax! They opposed that then and do so even now. Without political parties there would be no ban on child labor, no minimum wage, no overtime pay for examples. These are examples of political parties fighting the rich and powerful for the rights of ordinary people. Once upon a time only landowners could vote. Women could not vote. Blacks could not vote.

Political parties worked to make government strong enough to stand up to this rich powerful minority, to enact laws so that the government could protect the ordinary people from abuses by them. Democracy’s finest hour in two party systems was when these parties competed to protect the rights of the ordinary man from the rich and powerful. That was how it was supposed to work. Now the rich are doing everything to weaken and undermine government so that once again it will

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not be strong enough to stand up to the rich and powerful on behalf of the people.

However, since these political parties became a threat to the rich, what could they do? In time they have learnt that they can't beat them so they join them, well not really them but one of them. All over the world where there are two-party systems, there is the "rich" party and "real" party. The "rich" party is an advocate for the rich. The "real" party is true in the real sense of political parties, the advocates of ordinary people

### **The "mighty rich" party.**

In America there is not much doubt which is the rich party. It is undisputedly the Republican party.

- No one joins this party to preserve the environment. *"We will make more money if we drill in the arctic preserve."*
- No one joins this party to increase the minimum wage.
- No one joins this party because they are concerned about rising health costs and the millions without any health insurance at all.

Traditionally one of the most privileged groups here in America has been white men for which they have enjoyed the economic advantages it bestowed. Attempts to level the playing field so that all might share these benefits such as women and blacks have been opposed by the "mighty rich" party.

- So if you want to fight for equal rights for women, you do not join the "mighty rich" party.
- So if you want to fight for the civil rights for blacks, hispanics or any other minority, you do not join the "mighty rich" party.

The fact is this rich party has no issues at all. Their sole purpose is to preserve and increase their wealth. But, that sounds too selfish to admit. But, how can they gain public support without real issues?

Simple..... distort the issues and legitimate concerns of the "real" ordinary-people-oriented party. With big money,

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they are able to bombard the media with their distortions so that it gains credibility.

### **American Democracy stinks**

Democracy is a thing of the past. It does not exist anymore. The influence of money has degraded it and it is completely in control of the mighty rich minority, the very same money pushers. In any event and many will consider this sacrilege, but democracy has always been a nice theory which has not worked well in practice anyhow. Goodwillies cannot depend on democracy and the two-party system because they are essentially failures.

### **Democracy divides and polarizes people**

As I mentioned several times before, one of the worst problems the entire world faces is the polarization of the world based on differences such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion and so on. Democracy makes that problem worse by polarizing people along political party lines and often with no less hostility than these other differences. These political differences often run deeper because they will even separate friends and families.

In Jamaica in some areas whole communities are physically divided on the basis of political allegiance and wage virtual war with each other resulting in death, destruction and violence so much so that emergency police stations have to be set up between them. Jamaica is not unique as all over the world, national elections take place in an atmosphere of violence, terror, deaths and destruction.

All over the world political parties are aligning themselves with the ethnic, racial and other differences that separate us to make the divisions worse. When freedom and democracy finally came to India, the first thing they did was to split into India and Pakistan on the basis of religious differences. When democracy kicked communism out of Yugoslavia, the polarization of the people brought the horrors of ethnic cleansing .

One notable exception – South Africa.

### **Democracy creates cult-like following**

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Democracy is capable of creating cult like followings in their allegiances with disastrous consequences. Such followers will vote for and support with great passion their leader even though their leader pursues a policy that will victimize or has victimized them. For instance:

In Liberia, orphans of murdered parents were known to chant, *“You killed my ma. You killed my pa. I’ll vote for you!”*

In recent US elections:

- people without health insurance voted against the candidate who promised them health coverage
- underpaid people voted for the candidate who campaigned against the living wage
- mothers and fathers who saw their sons or daughters killed or maimed in the illegal Iraq war, a war based on Bush lies, voted for Bush

*“You killed my son. You killed my daughter. I’ll vote for you.”*

*“You killed my ma. You killed my pa. I’ll vote for you.”*

### **Voting is not a right**

Do you realize that in our American democracy:

- Americans have no constitutional right to vote.
- Any citizen who has committed a felony does not have the right to vote in 14 states. Regardless of whether they have paid their debt to society and served their time and have even become model citizens and a credit to their community – they are deprived of their right to vote forever.
- Citizens of the capital of the United States of America, Washington DC, do not have the right to vote for a US senator or congressman. How ironic it is that the USA is probably the greatest proponent of democracy, but there is no democracy in its heart, Washington DC. They do have the right to vote for a mayor and city council but they are pretty much toothless as they cannot raise taxes, enact new laws, and carry on similar city responsibilities without the approval

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of the US congress. Specifically it is ruled by special congressional committee lead by a chairman who rules the city like a despot. He is not answerable to the DC residents often making decisions totally against the wishes of the residents.

Recently they really stuck it to DC by revoking a DC law outlawing the selling and ownership of AK47 assault rifles. For another example of their domination, in recent years, the city conducted a referendum at great expense, on the legalisation of marijuana. The outcome? We will never know. The city was forbidden by the US Congress to even reveal the results of the referendum much less do anything about it! Make no mistake, Washington DC is a colony. There is no legitimate democracy there. It is a shameless fraud. The license tags of DC automobiles do not say "*Taxation without representation*" for nothing.

### **Democracy can be subverted by the ruthless**

In many countries, democracy is vulnerable to a ruthless opposition. In countries like Haiti, Venezuela, Guyana and Jamaica, opposition seek to create constant unceasing turmoil and unrest in order to make the country ungovernable. This worked to overthrow democracy in Haiti in 2004.

### **Misinformed electorate**

The success of democracy is dependent on an informed electorate. Media talk show propagandists and a biased press make sure that a large percentage of our electorate is misinformed. That is why according to a poll conducted by the Washington Post, nearly seven in 10 Americans still believed that ousted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the Sept. 11 attacks over two years after the attacks took place. These media propagandists that are deliberately misinforming the electorate are obviously undermining democracy, but they enjoy enormous salaries, prestige and great public popularity for their misdeeds.

## Only 30% of the people vote

More and more people don't even believe in democracy. If they did they would vote but typically in elections here in America only 30% of the people vote. People don't believe their vote matters. If they believe that then they don't believe democracy works.

## Negative campaign prevails

These democratic political races are not to the honest, the most capable, the fair, the compassionate and the just. Those races are more likely to the rich, the ruthless, the cunning, and the ones with the best spin doctors money can buy. Instead of rational open-minded debate on the most crucial of issues, we often get partisanship, distortion, emotionalism, flag waving and downright lies the deciding factors. Why fight fair and lose when you can fight dirty and win?

May the best man win. I don't think so. Elections usually boil down to the lesser of two evils. The best man does not stand a chance and does not even dare to run. The reality is that merit has less and less with the election of candidates. For example, for the highest elected position in the land, the president of the United States of America, we have two candidates.

Candidate A has dedicated his entire life to protecting the consumer.

Candidate B inherited great wealth and power, has probably not worked a day in his life and has been an advocate for the rich and powerful corporations.

Which would you select? The American people made their selection. They selected Candidate B, George Bush. They rejected Candidate A, Ralph Nader, and decisively.

Is it surprising that people do not respect politicians? They are perceived as dishonest, ruthless and completely lacking in integrity. Unfortunately too often all politicians get lumped together in this category. But, there are good politicians, who are dedicated to serving the people fairly instead of selling out to moneyed interests. They stand on principle and because of this they are more vulnerable to the

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well-heeled dirty-dealing disreputable politician. But, the politicians are not to blame. It is the system that penalizes good politicians and rewards the bad that deserves the blame. And, that system is the democratic system.

### **Tyranny of the majority**

French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau warned about democracy degenerating into the tyranny of the majority. Our American democracy has moved or is fast moving in that direction. In America today, we see more and more the Republican Party appeals to the white majority by scapegoating Arab-Americans, blacks, latinos, immigrants, the poor and even women. Of course this is quite subtle and at the same time they pretend otherwise, paying a lot of lip service to diversity. Nowhere was this more evident than in 1994 when the impressive victory of the Republican Party in national elections was due to the support of the now famous angry white men. **Newsweek** reported that 68 percent of white males voted Republican. White males overwhelmingly swept the Republicans into the U.S. Congress, governor races, and state houses. The white male vote caused one of the greatest political landslides in American electoral history. It worked then. It continues to work now and is a bastion of the winning Republican party strategy.

Of course this is not unique to American democracy. It is typical and even worse all over the world. Historically, when we look back at the advent of democracy to colonial India. The country split asunder on religious differences into Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India.

### **Alternative to democracy**

*“So if democracy is so bad what do you propose that is better?”* My answer is that I have none but it does not matter. If we got the best minds in the world to devise a new political system that overcame these glaring problems of democracy, it would not matter. That is because regardless of how good the new system would be, it would not be accepted. If that new system was good then it would not permit the

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domination of the election process by the money pushers. But the acceptance of the new system would depend on the approval and support of this very same group. Not only would they not give their approval and support, but they would fight it tooth and nail with all the power they could muster. So an alternative system would be for academic purposes only. Even without the opposition of the money pushers, democracy is so revered that any alternate system would not receive serious consideration and even if it did, implementation would take centuries. That is the reality so attempts to find a better system than democracy is a waste of time.

The democratic political system like most of our other institutions, has become so corrupted by money that it is no longer part of the solution to the ills of our society, but it is a big part of the problem. It has become a red herring used to give people the illusion that they have the power. The fact is that the current democracy is keeping us powerless. People do have the power to make positive change but not by the present toothless money-serving democracy.

The answer is a revolution, the goodwill revolution, a personal commitment to the goodwill revolution, a personal commitment to the down-with-money-up-with- people revolution. The Goodwill revolution uses cultural change to make political change. It will take the Goodwill Revolution to rescue democracy.