

Democracy for Whom?

If you live in Canada, Australia, USA or EU, consider yourself fortunate. You pride yourself in having more freedoms than most anywhere else. You live in a democratic republic that ensures basic human rights for individuals and minorities. If you don't like the current leaders, you can vote them out of office.

Let's take a closer view of how things work in the real world. Prosperity is driven by big corporations. Everyone knows the standard of living has improved because of the new technologies ushered in by inventive corporations. Without corporate products there would be slim pickings at your local retailer. Each nation cherishes its homegrown corporations.

Take Canada and USA for example. Over the last 35 years they've spent millions of dollars in the form of subsidies and tax barriers... all this money has gone to native carmakers to keep them in business. Yet the money has apparently gone to waste because consumers have elected to buy foreign-made models. Two of the homegrown darlings have made partnership deals with foreign competitors. The third stumbles on, like a prize fighter with cuts in both eyes.

Let's take a look at corporate output versus employee income. In the USA, the CEO-to-worker ratio is 354 to 1. I suspect a similar disparity exists in other countries. What this means is the guy in the executive suite earns 354 times more than the guy on the assembly line. Likewise the CEO earns 354 times more than the gal who answers the phones with a cheerful voice soothing irate customers.

What does the CEO do that makes him so very important? My guess he comes to work no earlier than 10:00 a.m. He takes a two-hour lunch and spends the afternoons on the golf course. Of course, both lunch and fairway outings are done in the interest of corporate business. The CEO earns bonus stock options if his company generates greater profits. If not, he can collect his golden parachute and/or exercise his visa to the Cayman Islands in case the shareholders get ugly.

Again I'm quoting from figures in the USA. The upper 20% of the population holds 84% of the common wealth. The lower 40% of the population holds just 0.3% of the common wealth. These figures may be an extreme example, but most democratic republics show similar disparities in personal income and wealth. I won't bother to mention that EU suffers from lingering class consciousness, where folks are prejudged by whom their parents and grandparents were.

Nowadays, we have a whole generation of young folks who have grown accustomed to using throwaway gadgets. This is certainly true of digital devices which are guaranteed to become obsolete two years after they're introduced. No one cares about repairing stuff anymore. It costs too much time and effort to make self-repairs or to find someone qualified to do the same, so folks buy brand new whenever the old breaks down. This wasteful attitude got its start after WWII. Today's consumer mania is like an epidemic gone viral. It has put great strains on the natural environment. Yet our so-called prosperity rests on the same consumer mania.

No doubt, great challenges and tough decisions lie ahead, else the air becomes too dirty to breath, the water too foul to drink and fish

go belly-up across the oceans.

But just remember, lots of folks have less freedoms and choices than you do.