

# The Elite and the Electorate

By  
Fulbright, Mendes-France, Clark, Hailsham, et al (1963)

Summarized by cleangov

## **Senator J. William Fulbright:**

Self-government by the people is not likely.

The history of the past 150 years demonstrates that the ideals put forth by the founders of the country, that self-governing democracies are capable of dealing with the problems facing us today, are not borne out in reality.

The folks in 1776 already had one of the freest countries on the planet, which stemmed from British law and tradition.

It's practically impossible to build a free society, and man is not capable of constructing working institutions of government through reason alone.

It was public opinion, not the will of the elite, which set the terms of a peace after WWI which were very harsh toward Germany, and it was public opinion, not the will of the elite, which sat by and did nothing while Germany came back to life and armed itself, and finally woke up to a WWII that never should have happened.

Because politicians need to be reelected, they must of necessity bend to public opinion, and not necessarily adhere to principle or what is right.

We need to educate our electorate, but we don't and that is shameful.

The goals should be set by the citizens, but the elite should be left in charge of how to achieve those goals. Democracy is better than dictatorships because it doesn't let ruling elites make the key moral and value decisions.

Basically, man wants to be free, and this is the basis of classical liberalism. This is valid.

It is up to education to prepare the citizen to govern himself, and to participate in self-government.

Freedom needs some order created by, or held in place by, the State, in order to be free.

We need to give more power to the Executive Branch of government and take away power from the Legislative Branch when it comes to formulating and executing foreign policy, because the factors of dealing with the nations of the world are so complex and things happen so quickly, that the Legislative Branch is incapable of acting promptly. Plus, legislators are subject to pressures stemming from sometimes irrational public opinion.

## **John Courtney Murray:**

I agree with the two main idea put forth above, that the original democratic ideals have been proven false in their basic assumptions about the character of man, and those ideals have been demonstrated to be unable to lead to a society which is viable, free and just, and which has a "political order, economic order, cultural order, and so on."

This first idea above is not today questioned by anyone of intelligence.

One big problem is that the original democratic ideals have not been recognized formally as being false.

Classical democratic ideals didn't say that education was the key. It said that only a population that is ethical can be free. Therefore, if it is true that the liberal ideals of democracy are in decline at present, it is because of a decline in personal ethics, social ethics, and political ethics.

I agree with Senator Fulbright's second idea that we need to construct newly a philosophy of self-government. Many factors here. The main thing we must hold fast to is the idea that the people have the right and the duty to judge, direct and correct the actions of the king, or in our case, the government. So, the problem is to somehow encourage among the people the ability to exercise political judgement, to have some idea of what is right and wrong with government.

### **Charles Frankel:**

I agree the basic ideas of democracy we have had for so long need to be revised. But I don't think we do as badly as some might think. Madison didn't think that people would magically agree on things and it would all go smoothly. He knew that the government created provided the framework wherein the various power interests in the society can argue and negotiate and work things out relatively peaceably.

In my opinion the word elite may give the wrong idea. The real thing is that trained technical professionals are needed to make the wheels of government turn, and that even amongst those trained professionals, one does not always have harmonious agreement of what to do or how to do it. They have different opinions. The wheels of government have to have some way of accommodating these different points of view.

Because there are so many different fields of knowledge required to understand all the different aspects of problems today, no one can be an expert in all of them. What is needed in decision makers is something like wisdom, common sense, and a willingness to look elsewhere when needed to get the facts needed. This is even more true when dealing with morals. "There are no experts in morals."

There are many different groups of citizens, some of which have power and some of which have less or very little power.

Can citizens judge candidates accurately? Not always accurately, but they haven't made that many mistakes. Also, they can only choose between programs presented to them by their leaders, and can only choose between candidates presented to them by the elite groups.

The voters must understand issues at least generally, they must have a basic understanding of science and history and must be able to see beneath the surface of the arguments of the day to see where they come from.

The biggest failing in democracy is the discouragement of people to be willing to become leaders in the political process, for whatever reasons, whether it is unwillingness to endure the pressure or the attacks or is it the perceived lack of ethics in politics, or a lack of satisfaction in political life?

A sad thing about democracy is that many people are unable to find a way to communicate with their various governments, or at least feel they are unable to communicate effectively.

### **Pierre Mendes-France:**

Democracy demands various vested power groups that contest against each other and serve to hold each other in check.

In our modern democracy, there are so many complex issues facing us that the average person cannot be expected to grasp all the factors involved. But it isn't healthy for the citizen to surrender responsibility and control of the process to one individual or one small group, even if they are "experts."

We must adapt our democratic ideals to solve the technically complex problems facing our country and the world today, but we must not abandon the basic principles of democracy which have lost none of their truth.

Technology must serve the cause of "human freedom, dignity and happiness through democratic processes."

### **Senator Joseph S. Clark:**

Government must of necessity expand and will continue to expand. There is no other choice if civilization is to survive.

Jefferson was wrong. Government is NOT best which governs least.

To be effective on the world stage requires a strong government.

The expansion of government does NOT lead to the reduction of individual freedoms.

In the main, the force of government has been on the side of the Bill of Rights and individual freedom.

I can't think of a single example of government interfering in our private lives, except the exercise of police power and the income tax and the need to preserve an organized society.

The national government has been subsidizing education since the Northwest Ordinance of 1784, and it hasn't harmed anyone and has done much good. The same is true for social security, housing, urban renewal and government plans for health care for the aged.

To counteract the powerful influences of the labor unions and big corporations requires a powerful government.

I hope to see government power increase in five areas in the next ten years:

- 1) Complete disarmament, enforced by an international Peace Force.
- 2) An international agency, financed with money no longer needed for weapons, to assist underdeveloped nations get up to self-sufficiency.
- 3) A world currency, backed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.
- 4) Trade agreements between different parts of the world, "stabilization of raw commodity prices" and reductions of tariffs and quotas.
- 5) "An international attack on the population problem." [No details given on the problem or the solution desired.]

The main barriers to achieving the above are the policies of Russia and China, and Communism generally.

Fiscal policy no longer depends upon ethics or morals, but is today only an economics matter. Deficit spending on the part of governments is only to be judged by "economic consequence." [No details given on those consequences.]

The Founding Fathers intended the government to be unable to act quickly, until such time as a compromise resulted in some sort of a consensus. That was right in its day. It is wrong today.

The Legislative Branch of government is the area where democratic government tends to break down. "This is where the vested interest lobbies run riot, where conflict of interest rides unchecked, where demagoguery knows few bounds, where political lag keeps needed action a generation behind the times, where the nineteenth century still reigns supreme in committees, where ignorance is often at a premium and wisdom at a discount, where the evil influence of arrogant and corrupt political machines ignores most successfully the public interest, where the lust for patronage and favors for the faithful do the greatest damage to the public interest."

[Whew!]

". . . the legislatures of America, local, state, and national are presently the greatest menace to the successful operation of the democratic process."

1) The executive should be strengthened at the expense of the legislature. At all levels of government, local, state, and national.

2) Legislative customs, manners, traditions, rules, and procedures should be reformed in the interest of expediting action.

3) Legislative districts should be reapportioned.

4) Pay and perks should be improved for public servants, to attract talented people.

5) The sinister influence of political machines . . . must be destroyed.

6) We must somehow create a climate of public opinion that stops deriding politicians as second-class citizens.

### **Robert C. Weaver:**

Government at all levels faces enormous problems, requiring huge expenditures to deal with.

### **Adolph W. Schmidt:**

I agree with much of what Senator Clark has said about the executive and the legislature. I agree that we need more and better planning. I have done a lot of it. I only regret that many things did not turn out in any way as we had hoped.

The prospects for democracy in the future are not very good.

The American people are not interested in education, but only in marks, grades, credits, examinations, diplomas, degrees, jobs and status.

We need to form a great new Atlantic Common Market with Europe.

### **Viscount Hailsham:**

The technological revolution has killed classical Marxism stone dead.

The rich are more numerous than before, but the poor have also become much richer too, and are even showing signs of no longer being poor.

The time may not be far off when the technological revolution will have created such an increase in education and in living standards that it destroys for the first time in human history the distinction between the elite and the electorate.

“No nation, not even Russia, and far less China, has willingly embraced Communism, and only fear, force, or fraud holds nations within the Communist embrace. As education and wealth and modern industrial techniques progress there, the logic of the technological revolution may be expected there also to produce comparable results.”

America needs a career civil service which is trained, competent, not corrupt, and politically neutral.

Government is not taught on the same scale as business administration.

The survival of the political party is a necessary condition of any form of freedom. A healthy democracy is one which has two parties, but, I would add, an efficient democracy is one which has not much more than two great parties. The electorate, like a computer, works best on the binary system, and parliamentary elections are best fought on the law of contradiction.

... by definition a party is an unofficial organization for capturing the official machinery of government...

Parties must have a way of raising funds, must have an independent research department, and must engage in political education to party workers.

The national leadership of a party must keep a small central office of experts, a sound political library, and a small public relations organization. I believe that a party operating professionally in such a manner is not only an adjunct to democracy but one of the essential ways in which it can be made to work.

It's a question whether or not a world order based on democracy and consisting of independent sovereign states is really a possibility. ...I am quite certain that a definitive answer to this vital question has not yet been found.

In any alliances, the US must be careful not to tread too heavily on the rights or sovereignty of other less powerful countries. That is, do not take advantage of them, simply because one is able to. It will come back to bite you.

## **End of Summary.**

### **Summarizer's Comments and Opinions:**

Some of these guys really don't think democracy will work. Pretty eye opening.

All of them are trying to solve the very real problems of how do you make government work? how do you make democracy work in the real world, with real people, with their sometimes selfish or destructive impulses pushing things in the wrong direction?

I think Senator Fulbright and some others give lip service to democracy, but really want to see the "elite" given even more power than they presently exercise. He ignores the actual causes of WWI and WWII which were caused by members of the elite camp, not the average Joe.

I think an electorate that is very well and broadly educated is important. I think an electorate that is ethical is important. I think both of those goals have been greatly sabotaged by supposed "experts" in the field of education, that is, by people of a psychological or psychiatric persuasion, but more on that elsewhere.

I think it important that more citizens find ways to educate themselves on important issues of the day, and I think this website (fastbookx.com) is a very good step in that direction. I support it.

I think it important that more citizens realize that they CAN understand various areas and they CAN engage in communication with the various parts of government and CAN have an influence on government.

I think parts of what these guys said has some merit, actually, and is worth considering and talking about.

The original that I read was published by the “Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions” (Box 4068, Santa Barbara, CA, no zip given) and the copyright is 1963 by “The Fund for the Republic, Inc.,” (133 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, 22, New York) which states “there are no restrictions on the use of this material.”

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