

## Why Democracy Fails You

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Politics is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is thought necessary.

- Robert Louis Stevenson

In theory, the representatives of the people in a democracy should be from the people, in order to best represent the values and beliefs of the people. In the USA, a government "of the people, by the people and for the people" should have representatives who share similar lives to the majority of the people. Or the majority of people in a given jurisdiction at least.

Not only does this not happen, it may be an impossible ideal in today's world.

First of all, electors do not select from among a group of individuals like themselves. They select from a group of candidates who have already passed through a selection process as part of a political party whose platforms best represent the special interests and the money invested by their respective party members. This selection process itself precludes the possibility that a candidate for office will be like the average person in the constituency.

As the level of representation gets higher, such as in a senate, the likelihood of a candidate having much in common with the average voter is even lower.

By the time you consider party leaders, prime ministers and presidents, the elite from which these people are chosen have little in common with the lifestyle and personal life trials of the average person in a different economic, social and even health advantages class. A healthy and wealthy senator, for example, will likely have little empathy for a poor person who has become impoverished due to expenses related to multiple sclerosis, cancer or who lives in a roach hotel.

Because the lives of electoral candidates are nothing like the lives of many of the people he or she hopes to represent, there is a disconnection between the electoral process and the eligible voter. The eligible voter believes he has nothing to vote for because no one represents the values, the beliefs and the lifestyle he leads. He doesn't necessarily believe that his one vote will not count, but that there will be no one on the ballot who understands his life. Why vote for a stranger who has nothing in common with you and will not likely start once elected?

The most popular vocation of elected representatives in democracies is lawyer. Given the reputation of members of the legal profession, we should not wonder that voters want to stay away from the polling station.

Lawyers at one time (in the very early years) represented people in most kinds of legal matters, from real estate sales to barrister to corporate law and lawyer for governments. Today they specialize as much as doctors do, such that a lawyer from one specialty knows relatively little about the law of another specialty. So the laws under consideration in a legislature will not likely be within the area of expertise of a lawyer who was elected to office most of the time.

A lawyer elected to office knows how to do one thing well: what lawyers do best in his own specialty of the profession. Not much else.

Newly elected members of a legislature--men and women with no experience in the chamber or house--will undergo a training session. These last from one to three days, depending on the office. In other words, most of the newly elected officials know little more about how the system of government operates for their office than the average person on the street who pays some attention to political matters.

So we end up with elected officials who have little in common with their electorate, who have little understanding of the lives and lifestyles of the people they represent, who come from a different socio-economic background, who know precious little about the chamber in which they will be working at least some of the time and who will be taking orders from their party whip or leader in the chamber in any case.

We call this democracy. It's like voting for the best commercial on television or your favorite contestant on "Idol." Only the people behind the best commercials and the top Idol contestants have a much better grasp of what their

audience wants than political representatives. And they know how to produce more later.

But then, all the politicians need to do is to follow orders. And outside, smile, shake thousands of hands, kiss babies and promise to represent the interests of the constituent to the best of their ability. A promise most are unable to keep no matter how hard they may try.

A revolution is not in order. A rethink of how the process works may.

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