

POM Causes Tyranny

POM nations often have elections. But there appear to be some problems with most of those elections. Many elections are shams. The outcome is decided by those in power in a number of ways. They may control the counting of the ballots and announce whatever results they like. They may have only one candidate for each office. They may assassinate rivals who appear to have a chance to win. The motive is to control money and the means is by hiring people to carry out these actions.

In nations which have real elections in which the votes cast are actually counted and the candidate who receives the most votes wins, even in these nations there are often problems. The lists of voters may be purged of people who might "vote the wrong way". There may be requirements for eligibility to vote which are unfairly administered (as in the literacy tests in the South a few decades ago). People may vote early and often and the "graveyard vote" may exceed the number of living voters. Again, the motive is to control money and the means is to hire people to do these things.

Beyond these types of cheating there are campaigns which seem to go on forever and the "issues" often have little or nothing to do with the candidates' qualifications for office. Candidates for office may declare that they are seeking the office months or even years before the party in which they run conducts a primary election. This is because the candidate who is "leading" in the polls can get more campaign contributions. The motive is money and the means uses money to hire campaign workers and buy advertising.

But perhaps the greatest problem with these real elections is that people make gifts of money to the candidates to use in their effort to get elected. The candidates realize that without substantial amounts of money they will not be able to advertise their candidacy to the public. The more money one has the more ads one can put on TV, the more staff one can hire to work in the campaign, the more travel the candidate can do from place to place. Therefore these contributions of campaign money are very important to the candidates, so important that candidates are quite likely to show their gratitude by favorable actions to the donors when they are in office. In fact, one suspects that such donations do more than just get the elected official to listen to what the donor has to say but to also take actions that are not in the best interests of the people who elected that official. Thus campaign donations are a form of bribery. Again the motive is money and the means use money.

Some candidates are rich enough to spend lots of money on a campaign

without needing contributions from others. Therefore, the wealthy are more likely to win public office over better-qualified opposition. In fact, the poor are excluded from office no matter how well-qualified they may be.

This brings us to the campaign itself. As any student of political science or history can attest, there is a lot of lying by the various candidates and their supporters. Some of the lying is blatant and obvious. But a significant proportion of the lying is by more subtle means. Lying by omission or by using words creatively is almost required for most candidates to have a chance to win. Politicians are known for their ability to talk for hours without saying anything meaningful. The high-sounding "sound byte" that is a staple of our current TV coverage of campaigns rarely has any real meaning. There are also "code phrases" that sound innocent but are really a call to bigotry and intolerance. Symbols are flourished and spectacle is paraded before the voters. Babies are kissed and free beer is provided. But very little of the whole campaign is useful for or intended for revealing the true nature and character of the candidate. The motive is money and money provides the means.

The result is that if a good person who can and will do a good job in office gets elected it is mostly by accident.

Yet when we compare the democratic nations with those which don't bother with elections we see that even as imperfect as they are, elections really do help prevent some of the worst abuses of tyranny.