

Monarchy and Politics

Clearly, Royalty is tired. Tired, at least, of the bleatings of Prince Charles and Princess Di, and the washing of their bedsheets in public. Millions of people the world over, their gossip-metres pulsing frantically, can barely control those pesky images of Princess Di in the stables with her teacher, in a wild state of undressage, the straw flying everywhere. Or cheeky Prince Charles in his stocking feet, tripping lightly up the back stairs on his way to another difficult bout of infidelity with mistress Bowles.

In a bid to end it all, the Duke of Edinburgh sighed in a widely reprinted *Economist* article, that "a republic is a perfectly reasonable alternative to a constitutional monarchy." By the term republic he meant a country free of monarchy and controlled by the people. *The Economist* agrees with the Duke. It is "against" the monarchy which, it solemnly declares, is "the antithesis of much of what we stand for: democracy, liberty, and reward for achievement rather than inheritance."

Both statements are hard to swallow without a lot of chewing. For a republic is as much opposed to monarchy as could be imagined. Even more strange is to hear those words about democracy, liberty, and achievement. For Neither England, nor Canada, nor the USA is a true democracy. We seldom vote directly on issues. The first two are constitutional democracies under a weakened monarchy. And a graph of the past century would show that liberty and local control has retreated everywhere in the "free" world as monarchy has declined. Finally, to speak against inheritance is to speak against achievement itself, because people work hard and burn with pride mostly to help their families and offspring. A child's breakfast is a form of inheritance.

Meanwhile, the whole fabric of our civilization is politically, and socially inextricable from monarchy, the fundamental purpose of which is plain. A European statesman explained it best when, in reply to Theodore Roosevelt's question: "What is the role of a Monarch?" he answered: "to protect nations from their governments." If we fail to see this, we see nothing.

For a monarchy can save democracy from what Austrian scholar Erik von Keuhnelt-Leddihn calls the "collective self-worship" that tends to blind us to truth, making democracy ripe for tyranny and eventually dictatorship. I am indebted to E.K.L. for his many observations. As he warns, any number of nations in history, starting with Greece itself - a democracy so alien to liberty it executed Socrates and exiled Aristotle - have swung wildly from democracy to tyranny, to monarchy, and back again.

And the first modern expression of democracy - the French Revolution - included the beheading of King Louis XVI, and ended with the massacre of a quarter million innocent French citizens, by then described by their own government as the "internal enemy." Louis was put to

death - democratically, in the name of the General Will of the people - by an extremely divided assembly that voted 387 to 334 in favour of beheading him. There was nothing general about it.

Part of the difficulty is that we have learned to equate democracy with liberty. We should not. Democracy is merely a technique for allocating power, and as such it has often been used to impose oppressive regulatory regimes (our own), or even elect despots. Hitler was an example. While no system is perfect, defenders of monarchy argue it has much to recommend it as a method for containing just such excesses.

Unlike a democracy, which is based on divisive struggles for supremacy, and at every election becomes what E.K.L. calls "a solemn manifestation of division," (often producing "leaders" with only minority support), monarchy is above party rule. It is a unifying social as well as political principle for the whole nation, its people, and all political parties. Hence the phrase "Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition." After all, one cannot be loyal to Parliament itself, which is inherently fractious.

The primordial model for monarchy, of course, is the natural family, the basic hierarchical social unit of all civilizations, and (despite the musings of the United Nations this year) the farthest thing from a democracy. This model forms a triad for all Christian societies of Holy Family, Royal family, secular family. And it is no happenstance that a coronation is a religious sacrament, for the most important forgotten truth about the divine right of kings is that monarchs were guided by publicly acknowledged duties to God and the natural law, and were severely limited by church and people to those duties. The reasoning here was that God cannot be fooled - but the people can.

But democracy is the reverse. Democracy derives its authority not from publicly acknowledged transcendent ideals, but from shifting ideals and anonymous, secretly voting masses, on a purely numerical basis; on the quantity of decisions, not their quality. Thus we arrive at history's first mass cult of irresponsibility, in which elected officials can easily blame the people for their failed mandates. And so - EKL again - for the first time in history, we get "the immoral idea of making whole nations responsible for the misdeeds of their rulers, whether they had majority support, or not."

Hence the spectacle of self-righteous leaders plunging nation's like Canada into bankruptcy and then receiving, not a jail term, but gold-plated pensions.

Perhaps we should think twice before we nuke the Duke.
(Note for Duart Farquharson. Here is my letter-to-the-editor response to the fellow from Statscan, October 17.):

Mr. de Silva of Statistics Canada correctly faults me for citing the Canadian Centre For Justice Statistics as a source of the claim that only 5 legal handguns were used in homicides in 1991.

In fact, that number was based on Statistics Canada's own Juristat data.

Statistics Canada distinguished between homicides with legal and illegal handguns for the thirty year period 1961-1990 - the average was only 4 per year - when it suddenly stopped doing so.

The number 5 for 1991 was an estimate created by Professor Gary Mauser based on the 30-year average. He increased it by 1, or a full 25%, to be safe. In any event, there are not many homicides in Canada at the business end of legal handguns.

Cynics argue that Statistics Canada stopped publishing the distinction between legal and illegal handguns to better serve the cause of banning them all. I think they ought to revisit this distinction, and if they stopped because their methods were unreliable, improve them. The public deserves the truth.

Sincerely,
William D. Gairdner

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