

« POLITICS »

Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.

All the material and immaterial things that matter, art and science, family and friendships, medicine and manufacturing, can be swept away or rendered impossible to pursue if we get our politics wrong. History is replete with lessons on just how wrong politics can get if we allow power to become concentrated in the few rather than distributed among the many.

Apocalyptic movies and novels foreshadow the worst ways in which we can get our politics wrong. Some of those ways are man-made and some natural. In apocalyptic fiction, when the disaster is man-made, the world comes to a bad end because a terrorist or a dictator has a mindset rooted in bad politics.



It's not much different in the real world. When people are ruled by **prejudice and force**, the result is chaos and instability and the loss of liberty and human rights. When government is established with **principles and choice**, the result is order, stability and individual liberty.

The government of the United States of America is the world's best example of politics based on principles instead of prejudices, people instead of politicians. Democracy is the most efficient, effective way to improve the human condition. It makes every facet of human progress possible because it eliminates the stumbling blocks to freedom. People in a democratic society can pursue life, liberty and happiness in safety, without the violence of anarchy or the chaos of tyranny. Our founding fathers were not saints but they were great statesmen

who deserve the respect and gratitude of every American for creating a government that can balance too little authority (anarchy) with too much authority (tyranny).

Democracy requires a **free** press, the rule of **law**, a constitution that ensures the **peaceful** transfer of power and **informed** citizens. People who have studied history and the lessons it teaches about how to avoid "bad" politics and ensure "good" politics. People who can evaluate local and current issues in terms of global and timeless issues. People able to avoid the "tribal" animosity that polarizes liberals and conservatives into legislative grid lock. People who know the difference between commentators who voice opinions and correspondents who report the facts. The press is not free of fake news if it doesn't maintain neutrality in news coverage.

Socialism

The **goal** of socialism is to eliminate competition and economic inequality so nobody is poor, rich or in between. The government will provide for your every need from cradle to grave, and it's all free!

The **method** of socialism is to manage all means of production and distribution of goods and services through **price** and **wage** controls. The government owns everything so they can control everything. In a socialistic society, there is no such thing as private property. The government owns your home, your business, your car, your income, your health care ... everything!

The **results** are slow economic growth, little or no entrepreneurial opportunities, and little or no motivation for you to improve your economic well-being. If the State owns everything, you don't own the fruits of your own labor. So the **quality** and **quantity** of the things you produce is poor.

Socialism is based on the fallacious idea that wealth is finite so it must be distributed in a zero sum way. If wealth were a pumpkin pie, for example, giving more of the pie to some people would necessarily mean giving less to the others. So the government controls the economy so everyone gets the same-sized slice of pie.

Wealth is not a pumpkin pie. Everyone can earn as much money as they want if they are able to take advantages of opportunities to do so. Those opportunities do **not** exist in a socialistic society. Wage and price controls upset **the balance of supply and demand**. The result is a **shortage** of products and services whether the government sets the price above or below what it would be in a competitive market.

As things go from bad to worse, people begin to starve, go without essential medicines and so forth. The rebellion leads to a **black market** for essential things

like milk, bread, toilet paper and so forth. The rebellion worsens as the government tries to shut down the black market, control riots and so forth. Like all authoritarian governments, it will brook no disagreement. So it seizes control of the press, stifles free speech, arrests dissidents and so forth.

History reveals a tragic irony: every time socialists have overthrown an authoritarian government, they have established an authoritarian regime of their own. Socialists are **dumb-o-crats** preaching a **gospel of envy**. Income equality has nothing to do with well-being.

Socialism promises prosperity, equality, and security but delivers poverty, misery, and tyranny. It makes everyone equal, whether they like it or not. In a socialistic country, everyone is equally miserable. It's a kind of pyramid scheme that looks good in the beginning, then collapses because it gives the government totalitarian power to control prices, property and taxes.

Socialism distributes wealth according to need rather than ability, and that stifles incentives. Socialists say, "Give up some of your freedom and we'll give you more security." If you buy that pitch, you'll end up losing your freedom **and** your security. Capitalism nourishes freedom and security by inspiring and rewarding creativity, thrift, hard work, and efficiency. Socialism looks good to people who are lazy, incompetent and unwilling to work—great until **you** run out of **other** people's money!

Elections

Our democratic way of life is guarded by dozens of checks and balances. Some of them are not, however, democratic; that is, not subject to the **direct** control of the people. One of those non-democratic checks and balances is the Electoral College. When I first heard about the Electoral College, I asked, "Where is that?" The answer is that it's not a place. It's the process we use to elect our presidents. You and I don't vote for the candidate of our choice. Yes, we place a mark on our ballot next to the candidate of our choice. But what we're really doing is choosing an Elector to vote for us.

Our founding fathers established the Electoral College to prevent, or at least minimize, a tyranny of the majority. They worried that people who did **not** own property, a majority in colonial times, could vote in ways that would not benefit people who **did** own property, a minority in the early days of our nation. They also wanted to prevent the tyranny of big states over small states, so they established the Senate to give all states, large and small, equal representation.

Things have changed since then, so it no longer works quite like the Founding Fathers intended. Today, it ensures that presidential candidates draw votes from **every** part of the country by giving as much voting power to areas of **sparse** population as areas of **dense** population. But it makes it possible for the

candidate who wins the **popular** vote to lose the election. So most presidential candidates don't campaign to win the popular vote nation wide. Instead, they develop campaign strategies to win the popular vote in enough states to acquire the vote of a majority of the electors nation wide. Here's how that works.

The number of electors for a state is equal to the total number of its senators and representatives in Congress. Since every state has **two** senators in the Senate and at least **one** representative in the House, every state gets at least **three** electors. Densely populated states have more than three electors. California, for example, has 55 electors. There are currently 435 representatives and 100 senators, plus three electors for the District of Columbia. That's a total of 538 electors. If a candidate wins the popular vote in a state, the candidate has won all the electors for that state. It currently takes 270 electoral votes to win the electoral vote nation wide.

Another aspect of the Electoral College is that candidates spend **less** time campaigning in states that are likely to vote for **or** against them. Sounds odd, but in those states, candidates know their campaigning is not likely to change the outcome because those states have a high percentage of the other party. With or without campaigning, the vote is a done deal. So candidates spend **more** time campaigning in **swing** states where the percentage of both parties is nearly the same so candidates have a better chance of swinging the vote their way. So the next time you cast your vote, vote for the candidate who has demonstrated that he (or she) has the skills, wisdom and experience to **be** the president. You might also consider the value of reading some or all of the books below as a resource for helping you decide what kind of authority you want your government and its representatives to have over your life...

The Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson

The Federalist Papers - Essay 10 by James Madison

The Lessons of History by Will and Ariel Durant

Things that Matter by Charles Krauthammer

Guns, Germs and Steel by Jared Diamond

The Outline of History by H. G. Wells

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

Positive Populism by Steve Hilton

The Bill of Rights - James Mason

Rights of Man - Thomas Paine

1984 by George Orwell
