

Global Mistrust of Political Elites /or Politics Anyone?

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I have recently returned from an around-the-world journey which involved stays in France and USA, two countries that have recently had political events which seemed impossible 2 years ago.

I was in France when the party created about a year ago called *La République En Marche* won an overwhelming victory which delivered a parliamentary majority to newly-elected President Emmanuel Macron. At 39 Macron is the youngest-ever President of France. The traditional parties polled very poorly with both far right and leftist groups relegated to minor party status with none having enough delegates to form a credible opposition. I call this a *radical centrist* government. It seems that the British vote to exit the European Union and the election of a complete novice as USA President alerted the French to both danger and possibilities. They want change and anyone with a charming smile would be alright as long as that **anyone** was outside of the current political elites who are no longer trusted.

Macron promises to address some of the issues people have been grumbling about for decades, like government assistance to migrants and restrictions on landowners. He will NOT take the French out of the EU or disturb trade relations.

In the USA people are still shaking their heads in disbelief that Donald Trump is President. An old adage holds that America is a country where **anyone** can grow up to be President. Donald Trump has proved this to be true: this **anyone** has no qualifications or capacity to do the job. Surely a nation with more than 300 million people could find someone better. Trump has no experience in government – at any level – and has very little interest in serving anyone apart from himself and maybe a few favourites. State and city authorities are distancing themselves from President Trump on the issue of climate change. They intend to steer a sensible course of emission reduction without help from the US Federal government.

The situation is roughly the same in France, Britain and everywhere the **corporations rule** - and that is just about everywhere on Earth. The rise of political elites which rule on behalf of the corporations can be called a *corporatocracy*. They are people who have credentials, are educated and represent a belief that if you work hard, get a good education and cultivate the right alliances, then **anyone** can succeed. Let's call this *meritocracy*.

Attitudes have changed from the days when leaders like Churchill and Roosevelt led the world in a fight to the death against fascism. Gone is the notion that a social contract between the people and their government produces solidarity and a stable society. Modern governments are somehow alien to the average person and are regarded with both animosity as well as a belief that only government

can protect us from threats such as terrorism. This **paradox** accounts for much of our modern angst. Government is seen as inefficient and unresponsive (bad) while private companies are capable (good) and responsible for every improvement in our lives. Theories which came to dominance during the 1980s when Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan held sway known as *Reaganomics* have emerged as orthodoxy and there are few willing to oppose. There is considerable evidence that the **profit motive of capitalism** is both less efficient and more harmful than the **service motive of government/unions/clubs/etc.** The truth is hidden by capitalist propaganda so that nearly everyone believes in this *Brave New World* (as forecast by Aldous Huxley in his 1932 novel of that name.)

We see this in Australia as the government sells off of public assets and investment of government funds in “infrastructure” such as a railway for foreign coal mining company **Adani**. There is **no** talk of bringing back passenger trains to the Northern Rivers but a *rail trail* is proposed so that the corridor can be sold out from public ownership – and the public is not even made aware of this rort ! Some of us will lose our telephones entirely because there is no longer a “service obligation” as required when Telstra was owned by the people. Banks? Which bank was once entirely owned by the people and therefore accountable?

I want to end on a hopeful note: Everywhere I have travelled nearly everyone agreed on one thing - even those who hold political opinions contrary to mine: **There is no Planet B.**

Anyone who cares even a little about the future concedes that we need to effectively stop the pollution which is damaging/destroying our world. In other words, we need to have a liveable planet in order to have a sustainable future. People who have attachments to younger generations want them to have good lives and that means controlling **climate change**. All other policy decisions need to be secondary to that. Marriage equality, for example, will not matter much if there are no humans left on Earth.

So we have a starting point for agreement: something needs to be done to make the rich and powerful accountable to the rest of the bios. Let us all work towards a sustainable future.