ABSTRACT OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY’S FEET OF CLAY

Disillusionment with current political life is said to be growing. If so, its causes are old and indeed inherent in the standard practice of representative democracies. Representation can be understood in two ways: either as representation of the real and objective interests of the people, or as representation of the people’s actual felt desires. Burke’s understanding of the old British constitution is an example of the first, and Madison’s understanding of the new United States constitution an example of the second. The issue turns on the fact and conduct of elections which, in contemporary politics both in the US and elsewhere, makes representative democracy to be in fact oligarchic demagoguery. Elections on a large scale and with large electorates have the oligarchic effect of favoring the very few and privileged, and election campaigns on the same scale drastically limit the number of viable candidates and promote demagoguery. Oligarchic demagoguery is representative democracy’s feet of clay. If the system is not to crumble altogether and make way for open despotism, something needs to be done about both the oligarchy and the demagoguery. Suggestions for cures include legally mandated and public screenings and financial audits of candidates and office holders, and the judicious mixing of lottery along with election, whether at the level of electing representatives in the first place or also at the level of the internal organization of representative assemblies.
It could probably be shown by facts and figures that there is no distinctly native criminal class except Congress. (Mark Twain)

Introduction

It was the Ancient Greeks who invented the word ‘democracy’. They meant by it what it says: a situation where kratos or power is in the hands of the demos. By demos is meant, not the people, but the mass of the free poor. By the people in our modern sense we mean everyone, rich and poor and middle class, who has citizen rights, above all voting rights, in a given political state. The Greeks had no word for the people in this sense. They had words for a mass or crowd or host of human beings, but the people are not a mass or a crowd or a host. They are a political body. The closest Greek equivalent to the people is polites or citizen, which does mean everyone with political rights.

Contrariwise we do not have a word for the Greek demos. The closest we come to it is in the phrase ‘the common people’. But we do not use that phrase any more. It carries too many derogatory connotations. It has become politically incorrect. That is why it remains a good equivalent of demos. For demos too has a negative ring to it. The demos are not the aristoi, the best, nor the eugeneis, the well born, nor the plousioi, the rich. They are the lowest, the least distinguished, the least cultured of the inhabitants of a community. In Ancient Greece such people had, for the most part, few if any rights. Oftentimes they were little better than slaves. It was a much resented novelty when they acquired political rights in Athens during the sixth century. And when, in the heyday of the fifth and fourth centuries, they took control of the city, the novelty was a cause of bitter factional strife.
The original idea of democracy is that all are equal, not only in other respects, but especially in fitness for rule, and that anyone, even without prior experience, can rightly exercise political power. This idea, jealously treasured by Athenian democrats, is no longer believed by anyone today, not even by citizens of modern democracies. The reason is not any aristocratic contempt for the masses—how could anyone openly adopt an attitude so politically incorrect?—but the modern idea of representation. This term too has a conflicted sense and its original reference is not the same as its modern one.

Two Ideas of Representation

The original way of taking representation is where what is to be represented is the common good of the whole community, or the real and objective interests of the people. These interests are those of nature and tradition. I say tradition as well as nature because a feature of human existence is that we realize our nature in particular places and times and in accord with particular choices adapted to those places and times. To live in accord with conventions and customary practices handed down from ancestors is natural to man, and one of our natural rights is to have these conventions and customs respected and left undisturbed, provided they are not repugnant to reason or justice and are not imposed against the popular will.

The well representing of the interests of nature and tradition needs persons who, whether by social condition or habit or learning, understand these interests and evince active motivation by them in thought and deed. Such are typically found among the possessors of ancient privilege or high social distinction or traditional authority. That they should be found in the most numerous class or come from the general mass of the
folk is not to be expected. They will be found among the few. But not the arrogant few, nor the restless seekers after gain, nor the mischievous lovers of political novelties, though the upper classes may contain many such. They will be the class of gentlemen, those who, along with enjoying, as it may be, the advantages of birth and privilege, possess also the virtues of moderation and prudence. The fitness of gentlemen to represent the common good of the whole is not bestowed or earned by popular elections. It belongs to them, if it belongs to them, by right of natural, intrinsic worth, though confirmation may, for reasons of political prudence, be sought through the suffrage of their peers.

An example can be found in the Britain of Edmund Burke before the passage of the several reform bills. One special target of these bills was the “rotten boroughs” so called, or areas of the country with a small, rural population where the representative sent to Parliament was the effective appointee of the local squire or of the men of distinction who alone had the suffrage. Burke protested that there was nothing rotten about these boroughs, however small their populace or narrow their franchise, if by representation be meant, as Burke always took it to mean, the representation of the real, common good. The abiding interests of a people or country are not a function of the felt wants of the majority of voters at the time of election. They are a function of the objective needs of human nature as these are historically realized in that nation or people.

A people or a nation is, declares Burke, not a momentary reality but endures through centuries and even millennia. It is a product and a continuing cause of traditions and practices that may be more worth preserving from the point of view of the concrete good of the people than any number of changes that, abstractly considered, are more
rational. To overthrow tradition and custom in the name of an alleged universal reason is, more often than not, neither good nor wise. Men are not robots or computers that can be reprogrammed at will. They are living souls who preserve, as they measure, the passages of time, and who thereby come to love the familiar things of their native land merely because they are familiar. Little there is that so much enchants, even into old age, as the scenes remembered from childhood. Man may be a universal being with a universal nature, but it is part of this nature, and a dispensation of reason too, that he should be formed in the concrete through the accidental and particular circumstances of his birth. To represent this combination of the universal and particular in the political counsels of the nation is neither easy nor simple, and the habits of the ages, as handed down from father to son, likely contain more wisdom, as they surely contain more practical force, than the inventions of a new generation or the nostrums of intellectual fashion. Real appreciation for the concrete good of concrete folk, which is the condition for the proper representation of it, is not to be tested or measured by size of electorate or wideness and equality of the franchise. Such things lie at a tangent to what representation demands. Someone not elected, or not by all but only by a few, can easily be a better representative of the whole than he who has the united voice of the masses behind him.

The second and modern way of taking representation is where what is to be represented, or what at least there is an aim to represent, is the actual, felt desires of the people or of most of the people. The reason for this difference is a revolutionary change in what is meant by interest. The first way of taking representation presupposes, as just discussed, that there is such a thing as objective interest, whether historically embodied or not, and that knowledge of this interest, of its conditions and its realization, while it
will be found in some of those whose interest it is, as the respectable and the gentlemen, need not be found in all of them, as the restless rich or the envious poor. Actual motivation by this interest may be similarly partial and limited. Representation of objective interest may be realized best if some alone and not all determine who shall be the representatives. The second way rejects this understanding. In its extreme form, which also is its most common, it denies there is any objective interest of the sort mentioned that some could know or be motivated by and others not. Interest does not exist as a thing to be determined independently of the actual and felt desires of all the people involved. It is no more than the resultant or combination of these desires, and is only to be measured by taking the weight of each of them and seeing where the preponderance, if any, is found to lie. No one’s desire or knowledge can, in such a case, be adjudged intrinsically superior to that of any other. All count for one and none for more than one. Some may perhaps be better or quicker at discerning what the actual desires are of a given collection of people, and some also may be better at discovering how best these desires or the preponderance of them can be satisfied. But that is all. No representation of these desires can be fair, or is even achievable, unless all of them are fully weighed and unless too the determination of representatives reflects the equal suffrage of those whose desires these are. The majority vote of all is in practice the only means of electing representatives that is just. Where election is not open to all, or where the votes of some weigh more than those of others, there no genuine representation can exist, and a few, in place of all, enjoy the benefits of rule. The “rotten boroughs” were rotten indeed.
The less extreme form of this second way of understanding representation is less extreme in theory only but in practice differs little from the other. There may be, it allows, such a thing as objective interest, for assuredly there are some wants that are common and inescapable for all, as the wants of physical shelter and sustenance, of emotional affection, of family and friends, of education and free expression. Some objective measure also can be taken of these wants and a general determination of the conditions of their satisfaction arrived at. But the particularities and specific modalities of these wants as they exist in this or that group or individual cannot be determined independently of the measuring of actual feelings and preferences. This measuring can in turn not be done save through the register of majority votes in elections open to all. The practical upshot, as well in this case as the other, reduces, then, to the same.

**Representation in the United States**

Elements of representation in this second sense, whether extreme or not, lie ready to hand in the *United States Constitution* as this was interpreted, both then and now, in the widely read and influential *Federalist Papers*. I refer in particular to the teaching about faction presented by James Madison. A faction, as defined by Madison, is a particular interest or the interest of a part in opposition to that of the whole. Madison has in mind, even if he does not say so directly, actual and felt interests, since he means by faction an interest that is actually motivating and inciting to action some particular group of men. An objective or real interest need not be felt nor need it be actually motivating anyone whose interest it is. It may be so or it may be not, but Madison and his interpreters did not delay much to ponder this fact. They focus on actual, felt desires whether or not these desires
are real interests and whether or not there is such a thing as real interest. Only felt interests are politically relevant, at least as regards the workings of the famed checks and balances in the US Constitution. These workings are meant to ensure that what directs US government and which interests politicians and their agents actually aim to satisfy are, as far as possible, not those of any single faction but the combined resultant of the interests of all the many factions operative at the time. These factions are pictured as forces colliding ceaselessly with each other like atoms in the void, forming a multitude of temporary combinations, where the resultant of them all is what necessarily prevails and carries the mass along with it. Madison flatters himself that the US Constitution has been so framed that the resultants and their collisions will, as if compelled by clockwork, carry the mass towards useful and peaceable ends acceptable to the majority. Possibly Madison and his followers thought this resultant a true reflection of the real and objective interests of the country; possibly too their goals were answered if, whether true reflection or not, it rendered harmless the clash of factions. No matter; the result is the same. Representation is only successful, and only legitimate, if it is responsive to the actual interests at play in the body politic and reflects the true weights of each. This it will do, they judge, if the representatives are chosen by the majority vote of all.

We may regard these convictions as the inevitable conclusion to be drawn from the doctrine in the *American Declaration of Independence* that “all men are created equal”. The equality of all men can mean many things. In ancient thinkers it means that all men are the same in nature and have the same end, which is the happiness of virtue and wisdom and which is best achieved if the virtuous and wise, and not anyone, exercise rule. In modern thinkers it means that all men are equal in desire and do not have the
same end because they do not have the same desires. Further, all desires are equal and
none is intrinsically superior or more deserving of satisfaction. No comparative
judgments of worth can be passed on equal desires. Sufficient if one can devise some way
to stop them clashing when they are impossible of joint satisfaction.

Equality of desire, when pushed to its limit, must be taken without any
qualifications. It was not so taken at the beginning under any of the forms of US
constitutional practice. Only since the 1960s has there been a general acknowledgement
that the actual desires of blacks and women are equal, and practice still does not measure
up to theory. The unqualified meaning was nevertheless implicit from the beginning in
those words from the Declaration of Independence that had such an impact on Abraham
Lincoln. If all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with the unalienable
rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, how could it be the case, or long
maintained to be the case, that someone else other than the individual could know or
determine what was his happiness or how he was to pursue it? Happiness has to be
individualized and subjective if its pursuit is a right proper to each that others may not
justly check. American thought and practice has always had this conviction as its deepest
current. Only in Europe, and the parts of Africa and Asia dominated by Europe, has the
view been prevalent or had any impact on political action that happiness is not
individualist but collective, not subjective but realized in objective class divisions. These
collective classes are said to be objective not by nature but by history which, working
through the inevitability of economic changes, determines for each class as it arises its
own special interest. This interest, while objective to the class, is yet, as being the
resultant from the actual wishes of the members of the class, a subjective creation. The
same is true of the interest to be satisfied by the eventual classless society that must ensue from the conflict of existing classes. It will be but the collectivity of the actual wishes of all individuals in society and will be equal for all because no classes will any longer exist to give the members of one class any interest to oppose or oppress those of another.

In the US the theory of classes and class conflict and the coming of the classless society has exercised no attraction worth noting and won no adherents of any consequence. The individualism of the Declaration of Independence has too strong a hold on the minds of the folk to be overawed or overthrown by the prophecies and paradoxes, however startling, of the ideology of class struggle. Representation of all through the device of elections and victory by majority vote, without regard to any of the differences of class, is considered to be sufficient guard and guarantee of the people’s wishes.

**The Faults of Representation by Election**

Such, at any rate, is the theory. The facts often speak otherwise. A first fact is that elections always in principle favor the privileged few, or those who stand out in some way from the crowd and enjoy distinctions that attract attention. Wealth is an obvious instance of such distinction; so also are high social class, prominent family, conspicuous achievement, striking physical beauty. To possess some or other of these marks brings one notice and so puts one among the *notables*, as they may rightly be called. Elections are won by number of votes cast in one’s favor and no one can receive many votes who is not known and admired by many. But the notables are, of their nature, the known, and the marks they are known by are, of their nature, among things admirable. The notables need not be the best, or the wisest, or the most just, though perhaps, because of their
advantages, they are better placed to be so than either the excessively rich, whom arrogance turns into tyrants, or the excessively poor, whom indigence turns into knaves.

A second fact, following on from this first, is that the more numerous the voters the fewer will be the notables who are likely to win any great number of votes. Among a hundred or a thousand there are many, even of a moderate standing, who could enjoy a known reputation; among a hundred thousand likely none of them will; while among a million, let alone the estimated 300 million who live in the United States, only the outstandingly extraordinary would do so. Many cast votes; an extreme minority receives them. All choose; from whom they choose are very few.

A third fact is that for all to choose from few, instead of from all, is, if the few are merely the rich and privileged, a feature of oligarchy. It can be a feature of aristocracy if the few are virtuous and wise. It is not a feature of democracy. That the Founding Fathers of the US Constitution, who were well read in both the classic and modern thinkers, were aware of this fact cannot reasonably be doubted. Rule by the privileged few, tempered by popular election, was what they aimed for and secured.

A fourth fact is that elections are never just a matter of casting votes for whomever one wills, for there is also the advance selection of candidates. When it comes time for the people to choose their representatives, the existing representatives along with their friends and paid retainers (I mean the political parties and their agents) have already determined the candidates for whom alone the people may vote. Most often the existing representative is the chief of these candidates and the obvious favorite to win again. Sometimes the people, or a limited part of them, are also given a say in this determining of candidates (as in the primary elections in the US). But not always is this so, and even
when it is, the people have no say in determining who will compete to be a candidate (there are no primary elections for primary elections). Those who compete to be candidates are self-chosen, if they are already among the wealthy notables, or also chosen by those who are prominent and powerful in the political parties. At no point are the people free or encouraged to choose whomever they wish, for the write-in vote is a mere technicality, being but an empty space on the ballot, and designed rather to give prominence to those named than to the possibility of naming anyone. The people’s choice is delimited; the eligible candidates are carefully chosen for them beforehand.

There is an argument for defending the undemocratic procedure hereby adopted. It turns on the necessity for qualifications among elected representatives and on the phenomenon of political parties. Not anyone is fit to hold office but only he who has the necessary experience and expertise. Rule is a job and requires, as do most jobs, certain special skills, which skills are the more requisite the more the job of ruling itself exceeds in importance. This argument is, in its origin, an aristocratic one, used, at the beginnings of representative democracy, to limit the candidates as well as the voters in elections. Voters had themselves to meet qualifications of wealth and property and even birth. The argument is no longer used to limit voters, only candidates, because if interest is always and only actual desire, and if the actual desires of property owners carry no greater weight nor are more closely connected to the ends of government than those of any other, then all who have an interest, which is to say the whole population, should rightly be counted in determining who is to represent them.

One might wonder, if this is the reasoning, why a reservation is still made in favor of qualifications and skills among the candidates. One might well wonder too what skills
typical candidates have. Given the way they are chosen, one would think their only skills were those of being able to win the support of party leaders and the votes of the people. How are such skills relevant or needful to good rule? The aristocratic argument always appealed to justice and wisdom as qualifications in rulers and thus imposed strict limits on those who were to rule as also on those who were to choose them. The assumption that possession of virtue was mainly a matter of inheritance and class upbringing was a defect in the aristocratic system (for true virtue is not acquired in this way), but the sense that those who were manifestly deprived of the goods of fortune could not be expected to be virtuous, or to have the virtue of rulers, though they might have some of the virtue of subjects, was only too well founded in the painful facts of experience.

The inapplicability of this aristocratic argument to the modern situation shows, by way of contrast, why the ability to win party support and the popular vote is a relevant qualification for office. A party is the fixing or concretizing of Madison’s notion of a faction. It is a special interest like any faction but, in the case of the major parties which are alone of consequence in elections, the special interest is of sufficiently broad extent to embrace within its reach a high percentage of the population. This high percentage forms the settled base among the electorate which the major party relies on and uses to build a majority in the actual voting. A candidate can hardly win an election if he does not first secure some such extensive base, which requires that he first secure the support of a major party. To do that he must profess himself in harmony with the interest that animates the party and makes it influential with the populace; he must also be able sufficiently to articulate that interest in specific policy proposals and legislative action that the party, and chiefly its leaders, will support him and induce as many others inside
and outside the party to do the same. Selecting candidates in advance through deals with the party leadership and through the winning of primary elections among those in the populace who typically vote for the party is, therefore, the rational path to follow. It is the path most likely to ensure that the party’s candidate will win office and that, if he does win, he will act in accordance with the party interest. To complain that such a candidate may not have virtue or skill for rule is both false and irrelevant. If the candidate has the ability to win first the support of the party and then that of a majority of the popular vote, as a successful candidate necessarily must, he has all the virtue and the skill that either the party or the populace want. Moreover, no other sort of virtue or skill could be of any relevance, and least of all the aristocratic sort, which assumes the existence of a real and objective interest, independent of the wishes of people and party, as the measure of virtue and skill.

A fifth fact is that a party is specially organized to manipulate the people and their interests so as to keep them in line with what the party wants. It manipulates the people through determining how they are divided into electoral groupings, and it manipulates their interests through political propaganda.

The manipulation in the first case is achieved through the drawing of the geographical areas which a given representative will be elected to represent. Areas are drawn which, through creative geometry, are designed to catch that portion of the people a majority of whom can, because of their social class or wealth, be relied on always to favor the party drawing the area. Different parties collude with each other in this process and agree to parcel up the people into electoral groupings mutually favorable to each party’s interest. The process is called *gerrymandering*. It is a word not in good odor, but
it is hard to see why. If there are no interests but actual interests, and if representation is
to be of these interests, there can be little sense in not trying to combine those with
similar and compatible interests into the same electoral groupings so that they will be
able to choose a representative who will answer to those interests. To leave interests
arbitrarily distributed, where no harmony or pattern among them can be discerned or felt,
is to ensure that the representation of them will be equally arbitrary, to the annoyance and
frustration of all alike.

The manipulation of interests, on the other hand, consists entirely in the arts of the
demagogue. Passions can easily be stirred by skillful rhetoric, which, through promises
and threats and flatteries, plays on people’s fears and hopes, inducing them to vote or act
as these passions direct and not as reason or calm reflection might direct. Appeals to
reason also may skillfully be mixed in with the excitation of passions, but only if these
appeals are kept subordinate to passion. Reason plain will move but the reasonable, who
are never in the majority and scorn the vulgarity of demagogues. The arts of propaganda
have been much improved in recent times through the time and energy spent in
uncovering the springs of popular motivation and in the inventing of powerful new media
of communication. The old orators would look on in amazement at the sophisticated
skills of the commercial advertising agencies and the devious arts of the psyops folk in
government offices and military camps.

Yet demagogy, for all its modern elaboration, is inherently unstable in its results.
It works on emotion, not reason, and emotions are themselves inherently unstable,
especially among people taken in the mass. Each man’s moods are affected by many
things and the chances and changes of life, over which none has control, exercise an
unpredictable influence. What careful propaganda has laboriously achieved may be undone by a mere alteration in the weather. But, surprisingly, there is, for representative democracy, no great problem here, whether in theory or in practice.

Not in theory because, if all interests are actual interests, the interests, however temporary, that move people under the influence of propaganda are no less their interests than those that move them without such influence. A demagogue who excites an interest and therewith wins an election is as true a representative of the people as any who might have won through some other interest, whether these interests are enduring or pass quickly away or only exist when excited for the occasion. Nor is there a problem in practice, because a clever demagogue can keep prevailing with the people even when other factors intervene and move the passions in some contrary way. Elections are infrequent and the demagogue does not need always to be winning the people’s support but only at set intervals. He can even ignore or openly oppose the people between elections provided he knows how to take advantage even of this when he comes again to solicit their votes. The people can be persuaded that sometimes they are foolish and need to be resisted and to have another lead them, for their own benefit, whither, by themselves, they would not go. They can also be persuaded that government is too hard for them and that they should leave judgment and decision in the hand of their representatives and not always be calling them to account. Provided only the representative can excite the passions to his side again when an election is due, he may act and speak as he will at other times. Clever demagogues can so master these techniques as to stay in office many years. But even if a demagogue fails and loses an
election, he does so but to make way for another to take his place, who will survive, if he survives, only through practice of the same arts.

The system of elections and the demagoguery of election campaigns have managed to ensure that the people’s passing interests are always represented and always satisfied. Their more permanent interests may be often thwarted and for long periods at a time. Yet even here no problem of theory or practice arises. If or when the more permanent interests become so pressing as to overwhelm all other and passing interests, they will themselves be the prevalent interest of the moment and be strong enough to determine the election and the representation. A theoretical problem could only arise if the people had genuine interests that were not a function of their occurrent moods and states and that could be discerned independently and satisfied independently. But modern thought is persuaded that there are no such interests. It is to older and rejected theories that we must return if we would maintain that there are. But who could dare hope to make these theories prevail against modern propaganda?

We must conclude, then, from this analysis that representative democracy, as it currently exists, is really rule by oligarchic demagogues. The actual rulers are the few and privileged and they secure and maintain rule by propaganda. There is only democracy here in the sense that the people, since it is they who by voting determine which of the competing oligarchs will in fact possess office, are the object of the propaganda. There is only representation here in the sense of representation of whatever the current passions of the people happen to be, and even the representation of these passions is subordinated ultimately to the interests of the oligarchs, especially when no election is imminent. Neither this sort of representation nor the oligarchy it really amounts to would seem to be
a decent form of government. Burke’s ideas were better, and so also, despite its faults, was the practice of the British system in his day.

**Some Steps Towards a Remedy**

Far be it from me, however, to counsel a return to Burke’s theory or to old British practice. The return would not be feasible, and we can do better. We should borrow a device or two from one of the few systems of government anywhere that is unanimously adjudged to be democratic, I mean the Athens in the classical period of the fifth and fourth centuries BC. The devices I would borrow are the institution of regular scrutinies and audits of all public officials, and the institution of the lottery. Regular scrutinies and audits imposed by law, the scrutiny to be made before taking up office and the audit at the end of a term, which all office holders must pass if they are to enter office or continue in office or run again for office—or even if they are just to stay out of jail—, would by themselves put an end to a lot of the sheer criminality that politicians now engage in. These scrutinies and audits, to preserve their power, are to be carried out by impartial examiners, not in any way involved in rule or the benefits of office, and fully open to view, though the various media, before the whole body of the electorate.

The introduction of lottery for the selection of officials would also remove the demagogy and the distasteful practices and fraud inseparable therefrom. Lottery has the advantage of being something one cannot campaign for and is notoriously indiscriminate and unpredictable. That also is its drawback, for there are some whom it would never be safe to allow into office. A remedy for this problem is to screen people in advance and let none go forward to the lot who are criminal or insane or beholden to
foreign powers or otherwise compromised. Another remedy, desirable also on independent grounds, is the judicious mixing of lottery with election. An option with much to commend it is to have first an election followed by a lottery. In the election the people would choose a certain number of candidates from among themselves whom they know to be decent men. There would be no pre-arranging of candidates, there would be no names already printed on the ballots, and no one would, on pain of immediate disqualification, be permitted to campaign for votes. The electorate charged with choosing a given representative would first be divided into smaller groupings, say of 5,000 or so adults, according to natural community divisions. These groupings would then each choose, say, five or more candidates by majority vote, and those chosen would all go forward to the next round. At this next round there might be in all some hundred or more candidates, depending on the size of the original electorate, and here lottery would be used to select either one man or, preferably, a group of several men, perhaps twenty or thirty, who would jointly or by set order exercise the functions of representative for the given term. Alternatively or additionally all the representative offices could be collective ones, made up of several persons split into two groups, one of which would be chosen by election and the other by lot. This device might help to ensure that those in office were, considered as a whole, likely to be neither incompetent nor corrupt. For if those chosen by lot lacked skill, those chosen by election would likely possess it; and if those chosen by election lacked honesty, those chosen by lot would likely possess it. The same device would help guarantee a certain continuity across elections if, while those chosen by lot are always changing, those elected often remain the same.
This practice of election followed by lottery could be introduced almost immediately and with very little preparatory effort into the way elected representatives, when they meet in deliberative assembly, now choose their leaders and their committees and their committee chairmen. At present these leaders and committees and chairmen, who have much power over the business and procedures of the assemblies, are chosen by seniority or influence or majority vote where, as is always true of such methods, a few well placed representatives are able to secure a lock on power and to lord it over their less powerful colleagues. The result is that these few make themselves an oligarchy, as it were, within the oligarchy, and the concentration of power, as well as the accompanying criminality and corruption, are needlessly exacerbated.

Ingenuity and study could easily expand these suggestions with many more of like nature to the great advantage of peace and justice in public life and of sanity in public counsels. Perfection will not thereby be secured, and faults and dangers will no doubt remain. But that is inherent in the nature of devices and techniques which, while they can mimic the effects of virtue, can never replace it. The only guarantee for good government is perfect goodness in the rulers, which we can pray for but cannot ensure. One problem we could, nevertheless, consider to be hereby overcome, and that is the difference I have marked between the representation of objective interests and the representation of occurrent passions. For if there are objective interests, they are more likely to be represented by those chosen through a combination of election and lot than by those chosen as oligarchs through the arts of the demagogue. And if there are only actual interests, a fuller range of these interests are again more likely to be represented by such
as are chosen by lot and not only by election. In either case, representation will be both more genuine and acceptable to all sides, regardless of other differences.

**Conclusion**

As things stand, and without the sorts of reforms suggested here, representative democracy, as we now know it, besides being neither representative nor democratic, will remain inherently corrupt. Marvelous and fascinating though it may appear to the modern mind, it will have still those feet of clay which, in the vision of the prophet Daniel, foretold the doom of the ancient empire that stood thereon. Good government needs not, even today, to be democratic; nor perhaps needs it to be representative, or not in any electoral sense, if only it serve those interests which genuinely benefit our communal life. What there needs to be, and what none, I suppose, would demur to insist on, is some requirement, as well in those who rule as in those who appoint the rulers, of honest dealing and decent behavior. That present arrangements are lacking in this requirement ought, on reflection, to be beyond serious doubt. What should exercise our thought is how to apply a remedy.