



## EJN Newsletter #13: MONEY, POWER, CONTROL & DEMOCRACY

### **Summary:**

- This analysis originated from a discussion with a friend about electoral reform, explaining how a leading PR (Proportional Representations) advocacy organization has functioned as 'gatekeeper'—restricting the forms of PR considered for adoption, and controlling the leadership and strategy of the YES-PR campaign.
- In particular, it was noted that their endorsed PR alternatives (MMP, STV and derivatives) have been proven losers in previous PR campaigns. Nonetheless, their present recommendations remain essentially unchanged—while they arbitrarily blocked consideration of a superior and stronger alternative (now called "Citizen's Vote Empowerment") which would enable a much more effective campaign strategy.
- The question was posed as to whether a "Trojan horse" might be involved. This resulted in an invitation to present an analysis outlining how the power of money controls democracy and blocks electoral reform, which was published in the [April 2018 edition of Common Ground magazine](#):

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### **Analysis:**

#### **Money, Power, Control & Democracy**

##### *How Money controls Democracy and blocks Electoral Reform*

In Canada, we're told we have Democracy. But do we?

Lincoln defined democracy as "*government of the people, by the people, for the people*". Ours works more like "*government of the people, by the political power-brokers, for their wealthy patrons and themselves*".

Here's how the real world runs:

##### **Money + Power = Control**

So how does this reality trump democracy? After all, we do have '*free*' elections, don't we?

No! Our elections aren't free—they're very costly. Money controls who runs—especially who wins. Money controls the winners, and what they do with their temporary grip on political power.

Does Money control politics through simple corruption? Rarely. It's mostly Money sponsoring those who've pledged allegiance to Money, and they always need more Money for their next election.

How does Money control politicians? Lobbyists are the 'guns for hire' who work on behalf of Money, often via backroom deals in the leader's office.

Canada still suffers under its British colonial electoral system called FPTP (First-Past-The-Post). Citizens have a single vote for a local Representative. Because any vote for a losing candidate is ‘wasted’, FPTP coerces many voters (about one-third) into voting for a ‘lesser of evils’, trying to block a party they really don’t want.

The people do not elect ‘their’ Government. The Government is elected by the Assembly of Representatives, based on the number of seats won by each party, always disproportional to their vote-share. Under FPTP, the Government is always a distortion of the ‘will of the people’. FPTP also produces other distortions, gives the winning party an unfair advantage matched by an unfair disadvantage to losing parties.

The two most undemocratic consequences of FPTP are: (1) the ‘two-party’ system (any number of parties can run—but only two have any chance of winning (the others doomed to the role of ‘spoilers’); (2) FPTP distortions routinely produce ‘false-majority’ Governments, more than half the seats and total control with much less than half the votes.

Supreme power still resides in the monarch, but the monarch delegates control to a Prime Minister or Premier. That leader appoints a ‘cabinet’, a committee of Representatives chosen to sit as an executive body, each controlling a department of Government. So, the leader controls the cabinet, and decisions of cabinet become the decisions of Government, which are presented for the Legislature’s approval—effectively a ‘rubber stamp’ under majority government.

This is the true system of power and control operating under the guise of democratic process.

**Since FPTP always cheats a large majority** of voters, candidates and parties, a call for electoral reform periodically arises—usually when a party that was victimized by FPTP wins. But as winners, they’ve become beneficiaries of FPTP distortions, so a promise of electoral reform becomes an inconvenient conflict of interest. Their usual recourse is a fake (made-to-fail) study and/or referendum process.

The political power-brokers know that most people have no interest in electoral systems, and can easily be duped by a negative campaign, run by political pros/lobbyists to exploit public apathy and raise anxiety about changes.

It’s never asked: ‘Who benefits from preserving the status quo?’ The political power-brokers under FPTP’s two-party system are obvious beneficiaries—as FPTP enables their shared stranglehold on power. But those players are only short-term employees of a permanent enterprise—the ‘Money-Power-Control’ conglomerate, owned and operated by ‘the Establishment’.

Who are ‘the Establishment’? Formerly called ‘the Oligarchy’, it began with kings and the aristocracy, later adding the landed gentry and the moneyed class. In our day it’s dominated by leaders of the banking/financial institutions and great corporations. They—not the politicians—control the nations and their economies. They hire the lobbyists who do their backroom deals. Their perpetual control is facilitated by FPTP with its false-majority governments—but would be impeded by PR under its minority governments.

As to a referendum on PR, the public is oblivious to these realities. But the Money-Power-Control gang(sters) are vitally concerned and determined to protect their interests. So what are the chances that a referendum on PR would somehow be sabotaged?

What are the chances that a YES campaign might be infiltrated by a ‘Trojan horse’, an ancient strategy of duplicity? Without dirty tricks, the YES campaign might inconveniently serve up an alternative that the NO campaign could not defeat!

Considering what’s at stake for the Money-Power-Control cabal, can you really expect a PR referendum campaign to be an honest exercise in democracy—or covertly manipulated in the interests of Money and Power, to preserve their Control?

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### **Conclusions:**

The question of duplicity as a possible factor working against the achievement of electoral reform cannot be proven—nor dismissed. Certainly the story of the ‘Trojan horse’ is evidence that subterfuge is not a modern invention. But a modern era descendant, known as ‘astroturfing’, has become a common practice of obstruction used against many activist causes trying to win the battle for public opinion; it’s defined as:

“**Astroturfing** is the creation of a fake grassroots organization to pretend there is popular support for the agenda of an industry, firm or political elite. Such organizations may have deceptive names with terms such as “citizens for ...”, “committee” and “project.” It is also common for the name of the organization to contradict its goals.”

Clearly there are wealthy and powerful interests whose wealth, power and control are facilitated by the present electoral system—but would be reduced under any form of electoral reform. Such vested interests are closely coupled with those who exploit astroturfing as an effective strategy to mislead the public—in order to protect their wealth and power, by obstructing grassroots campaigns for progressive reforms. And given that electoral reform presents such a direct threat to vested interests, should one not suspect that the proven strategy of astroturfing would probably be used against the electoral reform movement?

It would be only logical for powerful interests to exploit every means possible to maximize their control of any electoral reform initiative—ideally by controlling both sides of the electoral reform ‘sock-puppet’ debate, making it as confusing and as negative as possible so as to turn most people off, and restricting the choice of PR alternatives to proven losers that the NO campaign has a playbook to defeat.

PS: As corroboration of this analysis, the following link reports:

*“An astroturf group headed by Nick Kouvalis, who previously managed Kellie Leitch’s controversial Conservative leadership campaign, says it’s working to sway the outcome of British Columbia’s upcoming electoral reform vote.”*

<http://pressprogress.ca/astroturf-group-run-by-ex-kellie-leitch-campaign-manager-targets-bcs-electoral-reform-vote/>

*“In a recent e-mail blast, the group **Keep Voting Simple** tells its supporters BC’s upcoming electoral reform referendum is an “obvious attempt to confuse and manipulate voters” as part of a scheme to “transform BC’s electoral system”.*