

Do You Hate Politicians?

James Hutchings

Kerry Packer: a media baron

John Howard: the Prime Minister of Australia

Pauline Hanson: a racist politician — the reference to her theory about Aboriginals eating people is from a book her followers put out.

The Eureka Stockade: a rebellion by miners last century

These are tough times.

Every day we can see rising prices, unemployment, racism, environmental destruction and poverty. Many people are afraid that their kids will never be able to find jobs. A lot of the jobs there are, are underpaid, frustrating and pointless. Someone once said that no one ever dies wishing they'd spent more time at work, yet people are encouraged to think about nothing but making money.

No one seems to know what to do. The Liberals contradict themselves. On the one hand they say that the world economy has changed so that full employment isn't possible any more, on the other they say it's the fault of unemployed people. In other words, they blame everyone but themselves, even though they're the government. The Labor Party has become more and more like the Liberals. Some people say ALP should stand for Another Liberal Party. Once their leaders came from the working class, now they seem to be middle class trendies or even rich business people. As for the various Communist groups, the less said about them the better.

Most people don't think much of politicians. And with good reason: politicians don't seem to have any answers to unemployment, rising prices, child abuse, the environment or anything else. They can't create a proper public transport system let alone solve the big problems. Most people also see them as arrogant and out of touch. Even councils, which are supposed to help local communities, can be like this (as you'll know if you've ever tried to get them to do anything). [note: It's important to remember that ordinary council workers aren't responsible for this, any more than factory workers are responsible for the actions of factory owners.] The one thing politicians are good at seems to be making excuses.

Governments are supposed to allow the best people to make decisions: the experts in other words. But if the government is out of touch with everyday life, how can they be experts on it? How can a community know less about itself than a collection of people who've probably never even been there? The experts are not the political hacks and their hangers on. When it comes to your own life and your own community, you are the expert.

Then there's the argument that we get to choose our government. But we don't choose the judges, the police or the political advisers. We don't choose the ministry or the party leaders — that's done behind closed doors by political factions. And we don't, most importantly, choose the people who have the real power in our society — the upper class.

In law, everyone has exactly the same rights as millionaires like Kerry Packer. If you want to sink millions of dollars into a major media network, then you have the right to. However, this doesn't mean much. It's obvious that society is divided into people who have wealth and power and people who don't. It's also obvious that most people don't. Most of us are pretty much in the same boat. We either work to make someone else rich (or, if we work for the government, to make some politician look good), or we try and get by on the dole. Either way, we aren't our own boss: we have to take shit from bosses, case managers, supervisors etc. This is the situation that most people are in, whether you're a blue collar worker, office worker, shop assistant, unemployed, housewife or whatever. Your basic position in society is also called your social class. The people who are rich or have power, the John Howards and Kerry Packers of this world, are called the upper class. People with a bit of power, for example managers, are called the middle class. The people who have none, most people, are called the working class.

A lot of people are surprised to hear themselves called working class. A lot of people think of themselves as 'middle class', because they've got a decent house or a slightly better job. People who work in offices often think of themselves as 'better' than people who work with their hands. People who have jobs often look down on the unemployed. Male workers often resent women workers. But all this is absolute rubbish. The differences between us aren't nearly as important as the similarities. We all have the same basic position in society, we all have the same basic problems, and we all have the same enemies.

We're supposed to live in a democracy, where we have the same rights and the same say as the rich and powerful. But it doesn't work that way. Politicians ignore the wishes of ordinary, working class people in favour of the wishes of the rich and powerful upper class. There's one law for the rich and another for the poor: if you want justice you have to pay for it. Working class people don't get a say, because the TV and radio stations are all owned by members of the upper class. When money talks freedom is silent.

People and communities won't be able to control their own lives and solve their own problems as long as the rich and powerful can lord it over the rest of us. We think that the only way to solve our society's problems is to stop having politicians and an upper class altogether. We want to replace rule by politicians with direct democracy — everyone having an equal say in things that affect them. In fact this is the real meaning of democracy: 'rule by the people'. We also want an end to inequality of wealth. Instead of some people having everything and the rest of us having to struggle just to get by, we want everyone to be able to do an equal amount of work and get an equal reward.

A lot of people would say that all this is a nice idea but it could never happen. In other words, they say we're idealists or dreamers. But really, the dreamers are the people who think that the current system can be made to work for the people. Do you think that the rich are going to give away their money? Do you think that politicians can run your life better than you can? Communities based on equality and freedom have been set up and run before, for example in Paris and parts of Spain. It's always taken the guns of the wealthy to tear them down. And it isn't a thing of the past either. Today, a Mexican group called the Zapatistas is putting these ideas into practice, taking on their government and that of the United States — and they're winning. Of

course, since the rich own the TV stations etc, they don't tell anyone about any of this, so most people don't know about it.

Ordinary people might not realise that they can win, but the upper class certainly does. They spend a lot of time and money trying to stop this happening. They mostly try to 'divide and rule'. They'll encourage snobbery, especially against the unemployed. They'll say that anyone who stands up for themselves is a ratbag and un-Australian, as if the Eureka Stockade happened in some other country. They'll encourage white people to blame other races. Pauline Hanson is of course the current master of this. As if BHP closing down the steelworks in Newcastle was caused by refugees, as if banks sending farmers bankrupt is caused by Aboriginals, as if the stock market crashes because of immigration — her latest brilliant theory is that Aboriginals eat people! You can believe this if you like. To us, it just shows that politicians will tell any lie to get power and support.

The upper class has a lot of power and a lot of wealth, and they won't give up without a fight. But we think that the things we're fighting for are right, and are in the interests of most people. We also think we can win. If the other team's a lot bigger, we'll just have to play better. Will you help us?

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