Funding the Future

Democracy: an afterword

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It is rare that I find running this blog difficult. Yesterday was an exception. I definitely found some of the reactions to my post on why I still believe in democracy quite difficult.

The post itself came out of a comment from a quite experienced commentator on the blog saying they had no time for democracy any more. I presumed that they were an isolated case. It appears not. I found some of the comments posted quite shocking.

The contempt for the idea of universal representation was what shocked me most. The idea, both implicit and sometimes explicit, that those with the time or inclination to participate should end up with the greatest say reminded me of nothing less than feudalism.

The suggestion that sortition might be appropriate is, to me, indicative of the indifference of so many on the left to the condition of others, arising for so many reasons, which suggests that those differences are not an issue of concern when they should be at the epicentre of that concern; there was on display an assumption of uniformity amongst people that simply does not exist. To presume it does is arrogant and indifferent.

The use of citizens' assembles was defended by suggesting that they might shape policy, and on occasion they might, although I would suggest that the experience of politics by focus groups should make us wary. But those saying so never answered the question of who actually decides because these assemblies are simply not fit to do so, precisely because they are as likely to be unrepresentative as the worst forms of democracy but without the accountability.

But perhaps what shocked me most is the fact that I have been platforming people who do not innately believe that we are all, despite our differences - which are many and real, and which need to be respected - equal. For all its faults that is the idea implicit in democracy with a universal franchise.

Democracy is undoubtedly under threat from corporate interests, a deeply biased media, the capture of political parties, and the design failures that have resulted in two party politics.All of them need reform, but the idea that democracy might be got rid of is to me utterly unacceptable.

I believe in the equality of all people, in all their diversity. If you don't, this is not the place for you.