

[This annotated copy of Mr Fred Perry's piece in *The Union*, that took my 14jan12 column [‘The Devil in Democracy’](#) to task, contains my detailed response in the indicated square-bracketed, highlighted paragraphs that begin with ‘GJR’.]

Re: ‘Devil in democracy,’ by George Rebane

By Fred Perry (published in 21jan12 *Union*)

Upon reading the lead “Ideas and Opinions” column in *The Union*, Jan. 14, I am wondering why George Rebane, who wrote “The devil in democracy,” didn't suggest any alternatives to democracy. If democracy is only proper to reach “a mutually beneficial outcome” among “fairly similar outcomes,” what form of government is proper now that we need to decide upon the least painful outcome among wildly diverging and undesirable alternatives? Rebane's rejection of democracy is defeatist, if not treasonous. I would suggest that our republic needs a fresh injection of democracy, not less.

[GJR – my entire 14jan12 column made the case for a return to the Republic that our Founders bequeathed us. That alternative was apparently missed by Mr Perry. As to my “rejection” being “defeatist, if not treasonous” suggests that Mr Perry does not do well with multi-paragraph articles or the Constitution's First Amendment.]

When political partisans repeatedly talk about the failures of democracy and the injustice of equality, it is time to apply the smell test to their Orwellian, agenda-tainted screeds. While they advise a “real [sic] firm grip on your wallet and your liberties” in the face of democracy — as though democracy is to blame for what they fear from the Democrats — they conveniently ignore the losses we have seen to those same possessions under partisan Republicans.

[GJR – Mr Perry's ideology has no room for what state enforced equality has in store for its citizens. Equality and liberty are at opposite ends of a see-saw. For simple socialists, this notion is out of reach.]

They seem to satisfy their own deficient desire for cogency by using vague, undefined and prejudicial terms like liberal, progressive, socialist, populist, far left, minorities, and patriots; and by reference to a 2,000-year-old failed democracy — as if no republic has ever failed nor a democracy seen success — as if democratic republicanism is an oxymoron. Our founders were obviously aware of the problems. I doubt that the case could be made that apocalypse is unavoidable because they stumbled blindly into the same old trap.

[GJR – Again we encounter the collectivist proclaiming that “liberal, progressive, socialist, populist, far left, minorities, and patriots (sic)” are “prejudicial terms”. No counterpart to similar terms describing the Right are available – we seem to take pride in being called ‘rightwinger,

conservative, free marketer, capitalist, ...'. I made no claim that "no republic has ever failed", but I do challenge anyone to find a democracy that has been a success; our Founders couldn't. Mr Perry seems unaware of American history; our Founders explicitly did NOT "stumble blindly into the same old (democracy) trap." We were not given a democracy but "a republic if you can keep it." (Benjamin Franklin)]

Equality of opportunity and representation are being trampled in the name of the condescending statement that, of course, we're all different. Fairness and compromise are being mocked as signs of weakness, rather than appreciated as benefits of a functional society.

[GJR – not cited in the article that I authored.]

This devilishly cheap piece of partisan hackery was submitted by a self-proclaimed ruminant — although it is not clear what he has been chewing on. One might argue that his use of "occupied" and "unions" somehow conveys the same sneer he applies to democracy.

[GJR – I have never been "proclaimed" as a "ruminant" by myself or others who know the definition of the word – perhaps a bit of an overreach in attempting a turn of phrase here. Mr Perry may have meant the noun 'ruminator'. No "sneer" is evident against democracy in my article, just a cautionary assessment based on history. However, Mr Perry should be credited with at least sensing the correct direction of my sentiments toward unions and the OWS demonstrators.]

In any case, his political affiliation is not at all disguised. He makes no attempt at truth or reason, but misuses language to spin contempt for one of the founding ideals of the nation. I suppose he is speaking to those who don't, won't, or can't distinguish between democracy and the Democratic Party. Perhaps it was a slow news day. Perhaps the publisher is attempting to find the opposing view he must know exists.

[GJR – as a known conservetarian commentator in these parts, I am proud of my ideology and have never attempted to disguise it – *Union* readers have known this for some years now. No examples of untruths, unreason, nor misuses of language are cited by Mr Perry. The rest of the paragraph is incomprehensible even to the most charitable of readers.]

Furthermore, the cud-chewer demeans "democratic" movements of the world, claiming that the inevitability for all these is autocracy.

[GJR – lapsing again into *ad hominem*s, Mr Perry seems to ascribe 'demeaning' to any views that are contrary to his, but correctly extracts my 'claim' that all pure democracies have inevitably degenerated into one of the several forms of autocracy as their aftermath.]

I wouldn't argue with his assertion, if he was referring to our own pluralistic, winner-take-all

version of democracy including the judicial prevarications regarding the personhood of corporations (and if he substituted “oligarchy,” which is factually more appropriate in the U.S., for “autocracy”).

[GJR – another incomprehensible paragraph. From it we can only gather that Mr Perry neither knows that oligarchy is a form of autocracy, nor that calling the US an “oligarchy” is totally inappropriate. Nevertheless, in today’s polarized atmosphere more and more progressives are given to describing our country as already having a form of autocratic government.]

On the other hand, democracy has many more available forms than those we must endure in the U.S. Many democracies around the world are undergoing a transition among ruling philosophies. The advantages of proportional representation and consensus voting might mediate the injustices of government if libertarian and anarchic curmudgeons can be prevented from bringing it all down before the “will of the people” is considered. I, for one, will not concede that “a more perfect union” is off the table.

[GJR – here we finally get a glimpse of Mr Perry’s dissatisfaction with our form of governance. Except for misusing “mediate” where he meant ‘mitigate’, he does appeal to the collectivists’ renaissance of the “will of the people” that, when properly followed, will give us a yet “more perfect union”. Such a new union must be in line with the “fundamental transformation” of the country that our current leader has promised us.]

I found usage of the phrase “the guiles of democracy” to be particularly insidious. The implication that the system itself is to blame for the deceptive subversion by some of its partisans is the type of rhetoric one might expect from a propagandist with no allegiance to reason. It was not “the guiles of democracy” that took us to war in Iraq; it was the lies of politicians. When those lies became obvious, the argument suddenly morphed into championing the exportation of democracy to the Middle East. To ascribe this type of fraud to democracy itself is ignorance at best.

[GJR – have no idea where this little sojourn to left field came from. Again a little more time spent with the dictionary would have prevented the self-referential and erroneous use of “insidious”. My column on democracy, starting with its title ‘The Devil in Democracy’, was throughout anything but an insidious commentary on that form of governance. Big words, infrequently used, can sometimes get us in trouble. No “type of fraud” was ever ascribed to democracy in my piece.]

It doesn't take advanced education to realize that we don't have a democracy. All we need do is consult the Supreme Court decision regarding “Citizens United” to realize that we have a republic that moneyed interests are proud to own. And those who point to China, Vietnam and Europe as examples of democratic failure have a bright future in editing Texas text books.

[GJR – Perhaps the first cogent paragraph by Mr Perry. The commendation to editors of Texas textbooks is most apropos since Texas ranks 11th in its K-12 system, and California ranks 30th. Perhaps an effort should be made to attract some of those editors to help us out.]

If “democracy's sweet spot” is small, it is because it follows the magnitude of the honor of the elected. Regardless of what those who wish to depress voter turnout tell you, democracy is the closest thing to consensus a government can get. Without the “consent of the governed” we are not living in the constitutional environment envisioned in that founding document. (By the way, consent has never required total agreement.)

[GJR – Actually, the size of democracy’s sweet spot depends on and derives entirely from human nature. “magnitude”(sic) withstanding, the honor of the electeds is determined by the educational level and interest in public affairs of the electorate.]

The sweet spot of democracy is the large area of potential compromise among those whose concern is the well-being of the nation. Once the interests of a political party are held supreme, democracy becomes the place where obstructionists go to die.

[GJR – Translation please.]

Democracy alone is not the answer to anything. It is a tool that people must use in order to keep. If you believe that democracy “always ravages its minorities,” just try “civilization” without it. I can only hope that concern for minorities indicates that the author realizes his views are there to stay.

[GJR – An appropriately confusing finish to match its beginning. Civilization has not only been tried, but overwhelmingly practiced, without democracy for the span of recorded history. And I sincerely hope that both my “concern for minorities” and my “views are there(sic) to stay.”]

Fred Perry lives in Penn Valley.