

Preface

*"A democracy ceases to be a democracy
when the will of the people is no longer the foundation of its decisions."*

~ Thomas Paine

I have always believed that democracy is more than a form of governance – it is a promise – a promise that the power to govern ourselves should always reside in our hands – not in those of some wealthy elites. Every voice should count, and together, we are able to build a better world for ourselves and future generations.

Yet, especially after events I've seen firsthand, like the 1993 Clayoquot Sound *War in the Woods*, I realized that promise had been broken. The institutions meant to serve us have been co-opted by the elites, turning democracy into a stage managed façade — an oligarchy in disguise. Elections are no longer the expression of the people's will but rather a stage-managed charade where politicians serve as puppets for the powerful, self-serving minority who pretend they have our best interests at heart.

Why I Wrote This Book

My journey toward writing this book began long before I ever put pen to paper. As an activist, I have spent three decades fighting for political reform, monetary reform and organizing movements that demanded real systemic change.

But I wasn't always this way. Like many people, I once believed that voting every few years was enough to fulfill my democratic duty. I trusted that elected officials would represent the people who chose them. That illusion shattered one summer morning in 1993.

I witnessed the provincial government of British Columbia break its promise to protect the ancient rainforests on Vancouver Island. Instead, they allowed a multinational corporation to clear-cut some of the most beautiful old-growth forests

on the West Coast. I stood with others in Clayoquot Sound in 1993 and participated in one of the most significant acts of civil disobedience in Canadian history.

That moment changed me from a passive voter to a grassroots organizer. This transformation was a testament to the power of individual action coupled with political non-violent disobedience and the potential for change within our democratic system. I became a passionate advocate for Direct Democracy, not because I had planned to but because I felt compelled to defend our fragile democracy, which was under siege. (See Chapter 1 for details.)

Later that year, I became a relentless advocate for accountability. I founded a small group of activists called the *FAIR Foundation* (For Action In Referenda) which published the *FAIR Newsletter*. Our mandate was to ensure the politicians in Victoria passed the promised *Recall and Initiative Act* legislation. Without our persistence, that legislation might never have seen the light of day. Eventually, our efforts paid off. British Columbia became, in 1995, the first — and, to date, only — province in Canada where voters were granted the tools of Direct Democracy (commonly referred to as IRR: Initiatives, recall (petitions) and referendums (a.k.a. referenda). (Described in the Introduction.)

Through these and other experiences, I have seen both the power of citizen-driven movements and the immense difficulty of achieving lasting change within a system designed to resist it. Again and again, I've asked myself:

What would it take for democracy to be reclaimed by us – so that everyone, everywhere could vote on all the critical issues that affect us?

This book is my answer to that question — a journey toward exploring of how we can reclaim democracy with the implementation of Direct Democracy. This I discovered through my personal experiences, historical insights, and the use of some very practical tools for citizen empowerment.

What This Book Offers

Reclaim Democracy is a personal narrative from a unique, first-hand perspective. In it, I recount key moments in my life leading to the realization that Direct Democracy is our best path forward.

It is also a research-based exploration that draws on historical examples, such as Switzerland's long-standing use of Direct Democracy to satisfy the needs of three different cultures (the French, Germans and Italians under one flag) and the use of the recall petition to replace a corrupt politician in Nanaimo, B.C. These and other such cases highlight the potential of directly empowering citizens. The book examines practical strategies to implement a system where we — not politicians — hold the reigns of power.

More than a critique, *Reclaim Democracy* is a roadmap for change — a call to action for anyone who has felt powerless or betrayed by the political system. It argues that Direct Democracy is not an unreachable ideal but a practical and achievable solution to restore true self-governance.

Some will say change is impossible and that representative democracy is too entrenched to be reformed. But history teaches us otherwise. Every major shift in human civilization — from the abolition of absolute monarchy to the fight for civil rights to the empowerment of women — began when ordinary people refused to accept the status quo.

Today, we stand at another pivotal moment. The question is no longer whether democracy is failing but whether we will allow its decline to continue. Will we continue to elect politicians who misrepresent us, or will we take matters into our own hands and demand the right to vote directly on the laws that govern us?

Representative Democracy vs Direct Democracy

This book argues that representative democracy has run its course. From monarchy to oligarchy to representative democracy, we've progressed — but we have not yet reached our ultimate destination. That destination is Direct Democracy: government *for the people, by the people*, as promised by the founding fathers.

The idea that power should rest in the hands of the people is neither radical nor new — it is as ancient as the first gatherings of free citizens who chose to govern themselves rather than be ruled by tyrants. Yet, despite the hard-won struggles of the past, democracy has become an illusion in recent times.

Is this really what a genuine democracy looks like — when:

- The ballot box becomes a ritual, rather than a means for social change?
- Elected representatives serve the interests of elites?
- Elections are won by dollars, not voters?
- Laws are shaped by the lobbyists, not the citizens?
- Public opinion is manipulated by social media misinformation?
- The voices of the citizens are drowned out by the sound of money?
- There's no more fact-checking to distinguish the truth from the lies?

Our current form of democracy — representative democracy — is a far cry from a true democracy. It's a deception, a *demockery*.

As such, it is a betrayal of democracy's core principle: rule by the people. Representative democracy has evolved into a form of rule by the elite.

Some will say, as Winston Churchill once did:

*Democracy is the worst form of government
except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.*

However, only one modern nation has truly attempted Direct Democracy: Switzerland. (See Chapter 9 for details.)

To accept that representative democracy is the best we can do is a dangerous myth — one that has led to disillusionment, voter apathy, and a widening gap between us, the citizens, and the policies that govern our lives.

A Call to Action

The time has come to shatter this illusion. We don't need nor want to be ruled by those who continually mis-represent us.

Reclaim Democracy is not merely a critique of representative democracy — it is a way out — a path forward for those who will no longer tolerate political corruption and elite control. It is a guide for implementing a real democracy — one that returns power to the people, such as that which is practiced in Switzerland.

This book does not beg politicians for reform or seek permission from those who hoard power. It does not blame individual politicians. They are but symptoms of a more significant problem. It identifies the root cause — Representative Democracy — a totally dysfunctional system. It enables corruption, breeds inequality, and strips power from the people it claims to serve. Representative Democracy must be exposed — and deposed.

The future of democracy — of liberty itself — is at stake. It is crumbling before our eyes. This is not the first time tyranny has reared its ugly head, nor will it be the last. But history shows that when people rise up with purpose, democracy is reborn.

Lady Liberty's torch is flickering, but it has not gone out — and the flames she carries must now be multiplied and passed on to all the people through the power of Direct Democracy. She calls on every generation to defend her and expand her reach. She is calling to us now.

Just as Albert Einstein captured the vastness of the universe in the simple equation $E = mc^2$, I believe the path to world peace can also be captured in a similarly concise formula:

$$\textbf{Peace} = \textbf{WD}^2 \textbf{ — Worldwide Direct Democracy.}$$

The more Direct Democracy expands, the more just and peaceful our world becomes. It is not just a symbol but a principle: power in the hands of the people creates more peace on the ground.

The question is not whether change is needed — that much is clear. The question is whether we will stand by as democracy dies a slow death or we rise up to reclaim our God-given right to govern ourselves. As Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis (1856-1941) once said:

*We can have democracy in this country,
or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few,
but we can't have both.*

Reclaiming What We've Been Promised

The world does not have to remain as it is. We can reclaim what rightfully belongs to us — a real democracy. We must reclaim what was stolen and create a future where the will of the people is not ignored but embraced.

Representative democracy has run its course. It turns representatives into masters — and some masters into monsters. To save our future — a future of hope, freedom, and self-determination — we must evolve beyond this broken system. It's time to reclaim our power and build a democracy that genuinely belongs to us.

If you, like me, believe a better world is possible, I invite you to read on. Together, we can bring the vision of true democracy to life. The time is now. The path is clear. Hope is here.

Let's harness people power to demand Direct Democracy — genuine self-governance that belongs to us, not to others.

You may find this book is deeply personal — but it's not just my story. It reflects a larger truth: Millions around the world are waking up to the realization that something fundamental has gone wrong. We are not alone in our disillusionment.

In the pages ahead, we will examine this grand illusion — we currently live in a so-called democracy crafted by wealthy elites — a system that has strayed so far from true democratic principles that many of us feel deeply frustrated and powerless.

It's time to look behind the curtain and uncover how the “powers that be” have been deceiving us.

Let's begin.

Every great idea goes through three stages: First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident. — Arthur Schopenhauer

[Preface Use the Schopenhauer quote to intellectually frame the idea that direct democracy is radical but will one day be obvious.]

Note to Reader: Throughout this book, you may encounter these abbreviations:

DD = Direct Democracy **RD** = Representative Democracy

PREFACE — Sources & References

(To go as Endnotes at the back of the book)

Thomas Paine

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— Source of your opening quote and inspiration for democratic principles rooted in popular sovereignty.

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FAIR Foundation and Direct Democracy in Canada

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Winston Churchill Quote

Churchill, Winston. *Speech to the House of Commons*, November 11, 1947.

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Abraham Lincoln Quote

Lincoln, Abraham. *"Speech at a Republican Banquet in Baltimore,"* April 18, 1864.

— The quote about the people being "rightful masters" of Congress and Courts.

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— Addresses algorithmic echo chambers and misinformation relevant to your modern critique of democracy.

General Theory and Advocacy for Direct Democracy

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— It offers a broad framework for implementing participatory democratic reforms.
