

Colloque
LE PARLEMENTARISME AU XXI^E SIÈCLE

Discussion Paper

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THE PARLIAMENT OF TOMORROW,
what for?

**The challenges and hopes
of parliamentary government**

“The current era is literally the age of politics.”

Julien Benda

Gilles Lesage
Journalist
Québec City, January 2002

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**Thoughts and questions (in search of answers) for a (virtual?)
democracy in the XXI century**

***“The challenge of the next century?
Making the ungovernable governable.
Perhaps the squaring of the circle.
But there is nonetheless resistance.
Seattle in the street: a beginning, a symbol.
We are bound to the impossible.”***

Pierre Vadeboncoeur¹

Are parliamentarians reduced to the role of set extras on a novel world scene in the throes of violent gestation, at this dawn of a new millennium full of thunderstorms and rainbows competing frantically with one another?

Complex and numerous signs suggest that barring some radical process of modernization, the representation, supervision and control exercised by our legislators in the liberal democracies will become seriously attenuated under the combined forces of the direct action of contradictory lobbies, the merciless and blind rules of the market and the anarchic law of the street.

From Montréal to Seattle, Vancouver to Washington and London to Berlin, the powers and prerogatives of the people’s representatives have shrunk like shagreen. And they are not the ones to whom those deeply concerned or abandoned are turning for solutions to counter the perverted effects of globalization. Partial answers come, for the stronger among us, from the lobbies, but for the weaker, from massive and noisy demonstrations.

Throughout the world, so-called democratic governments are resorting to summits and desperate consensus-seeking as a means of solving complex problems when dealing with health, education and youth issues, rather than first giving parliamentarians a chance to address those matters. The people’s elected representatives are now relegated to acting as foils and rubber-stamps. They are reduced to agreeing to final approval of policies, policy approaches and even budgetary and fiscal decisions, all made in isolation by officers and powerful canvassers having no mandate other than that of their administrators or corporations.

Governments are the first to set the example, and not always the best, often characterized by the usual neglect, browbeating and subtle mistrust directed at the Members of Parliament. It comes as no surprise, then, that citizens and groups have turned to devising and getting away with ever-more sophisticated methods—except the parliamentary process—as a means of achieving their purposes. One for all, all for one, and to hell with the public good!

As if the fever running rampant from one continent to the next could be stopped simply by breaking the thermometer.

Closer to home, farmers use their pigs as barricades on public highways; truckers use their conveyances to block roadways to put pressure on overly voracious forestry operators.

Elsewhere, young activists believe they can solve the problems facing them by interrupting the discussions held by the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.

The hordes descend upon Québec City to disrupt the Summit of the Americas, and then do the same at other important globalization events. All in the name of essential demands and primary anarchism.

Oh Democracy, what crimes are committed in your name!

Especially when people decide to fight in order to impose their solutions rather than debating and proposing compromises acceptable to the greatest possible number of citizens.

Bring out the pie tossers!

The new proponents of globalization, seduced by the paradigms affording them outrageous wealth, refuse to see the poverty and misery brought on by their ideas, now more than ever before.

Instead of the people's representatives reflecting upon and discussing the issues to arrive at fair and lasting solutions, it is left to investors, bankers and the knights of industry to impose remedies they themselves have concocted. In between summits, the hardened forces of the marketplace complete the usurping of Parliament's sovereignty. In the name of a New World Order based on economics, knowledge and information. For the benefit of whom, if not the North, which continues to gorge itself while the South struggles with seemingly insolvable problems?

But grounds for hope nonetheless do exist. For example, in October 2000, women from 150 countries marched, in unison, with the hope of building a world without poverty and violence, in a society founded on fairness and social justice.

“This movement of international solidarity is necessary because we still live in a world ruled by inequality,” explains Françoise David, President of the Québec Women’s Federation. “There are thousands, even millions of us who no longer tolerate the widening gap between the nations of the North and those of the South, and between men and women, the rich and the poor.”

“We live in a world of enormous technological and scientific advances yet one in which billions of people are still living in abject poverty. Our world has no lack of resources, but suffers from a serious problem of wealth distribution. And for the most part it is the women who are paying the price of misguided development.”

That is what faces the people’s representatives, both former and current, who believe more in the virtues of pacific confrontation than in the false artifices of burlesque terrorism and the cream pie! Yet the new masters of triumphant capital and arrogant knowledge risk causing our parliamentarians to be forever relegated to the simple role of bench managers. All because of inaction and short-sightedness. For lack of *aggiornamento*.

From Westminster to the American Congress, the Diet to the Douma, the Commons to the National Assembly, France to Senegal and to Québec, the dizzying millennium dance enjoins parliamentarians to reshape the world on a more solid basis: that of pluralistic democracy which is tremendously demanding, focused on a patient quest for the common good.

More than ever before, the “refoundation of the world”, to borrow the title of an essay by Jean-Claude Guillebaud, stands out as a clear imperative, a sort of long-overdue return to human essentials.

To move towards this ancient ideal—one that implies popular sovereignty and parliamentary supremacy—we must endeavour to force the issue by raising fundamental questions. From the sources of the persistent discontent to the promising resurrection of the citizen, the following questions to reflect upon are an attempt to let in a little light. And to contribute to restore to politicians—to public affairs, the affairs of the city—the pre-eminent place that they should, once again and from now on, rightfully hold.

1) What are the roots of this malaise afflicting our democracy?

“Most legislators have been narrow-minded men, placed at the head of others by mere chance, and who have consulted hardly more than their prejudices and fancies.”

“It seems that they have misunderstood the grandeur and very dignity of their work: they have amused themselves creating childish institutions which are a reflection of small minds, but have discredited themselves in the eyes of people of common sense.”

Montesquieu

If the need is such that we must or have the means to moderate, control or counter both “particracy” and “ad hococracy”, should we not begin at the base of the system, the election process, and therefore, the mode of representation or delegation?

Does not the root of the malaise in our democracy stem for the most part from the fact that the citizens feel powerless, sceptical, disillusioned with a system that so outrageously favours the so-called traditional parties, usually two of them, and that operates a changeover of power between them in the liberal societies, a situation that obviously makes a mockery at election time of the supreme principle of equality that is supposed to apply to suffrage and votes?

The proportional election option has come in for serious criticism. However, could not the very expression “proportional representation” be interpreted as including numerous variants and possibilities each one fairer and more finely tuned than the present rigid and constraining system? Between the flagrant instability that a pure proportional system engenders and the false security that often accompanies a first-past-the-post system, would it not be possible to find several realistic compromise solutions that could easily be adapted to societies as they evolve?

But while democracy has its lot of laborious procedures and top-heavy structures, it is also a fragile flower that demands much attention and nourishment through creative tension.

The “business” of the concealed or secret funds which emerge here and there and which tarnish many a reputation, even that of the most respected leaders, is an illustration of yet another flaw in liberal democracies: the manner in which political

parties and their leaders are financed. This is a genuine “black hole”, roundly criticized by even the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, Mr Jean-Pierre Kingsley.

In places where partisan funds are controlled, however difficult or imperfect the control may be, unsavoury situations greatly diminish. If citizens only are allowed to contribute to the political parties of their choosing, either directly or through state subsidies, the eventual result is the emergence of transparency and fairness. Political parties certainly do nothing to inspire greater confidence from increasing distrustful citizens when they water down the rules of financing by citizens, widely disregarded in most countries, or take up with the sharks of the financial or industrial world.

In this respect, the example Québec has set for more than twenty years should be a source of inspiration, rather than one of criticism and demands for less stringency on the pretext that the democratic ideal cannot be attained.²



2) Is Parliament's decline irreversible?

***“The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling
a rock to the top of a mountain,
whence the stone would fall back of its own weight.
They had thought with some reason that there is no more
dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labour.”***

Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

Futile and hopeless labour. Like that of a Parliament too weak to reform itself, declared former Québec Minister Denis Vaugeois some twenty years ago. But if, as it is often touted, Parliament can do anything, why is it constantly striving to reform itself without the least success?³

Even more biting, another former Member from Québec, Yves Michaud, wrote in 1969: *“Parliamentary reform is a never-ending yet unrisky subject. Never-ending because the Members never tire of talking about it. Unrisky because their interventions present very little threat to the eternal order of things. Her Majesty watches over the flock!”*

From the Magna Carta to the parliamentary system handed down to us from Great Britain, the western world has for centuries pretended to champion liberty and equality, human respect, independence and separation of the three principal branches of power: the legislative, the executive and the judicial.

But have the institutional guarantees of those three age-old pillars been as sound and watertight as we would like to believe and repeat?

Has the grand theory so dear to the heart of the “honest man” of the eighteenth century kept its democratic promises of liberty, equality and fraternity?

Do citizens (still?) have the Members of Parliament they think they have, or deserve, in a system of representation supposedly of the people, by the people and for the people?

In theory, the legislative branch, originating out of a popular vote, is pre-eminent and sovereign. The executive branch (or government) derives its power along with its autonomy from the legislative branch. The same applies in the case of the judicial branch, separate from the first and second, each being independent within its sphere and, as the theory goes, not interfering with the two others.



The fact is, however, that over the years and decades, the executive and judicial branches have grown enormously in stature and strength, mostly to the detriment of the legislative branch. The latter continues to examine, enact and amend laws and regulations, but the initiative and supervision do not, at least to any great extent, come under its authority.

The end result has been an erosion of popular representation. So much so that in both the opposition and governing parties, the elected representatives of the people more often than not are simply foils, going through the motions of rubberstamping government bills and giving in to the partisan line of the government or the opposition.

Is this decline of traditional parliamentary government which is a source of much outcry from those most closely affected, our current and former parliamentarians, reversible or irreversible? Is it not essential to “Democratize our Parliament”, to repeat the appropriately worded title of a reform project put forward by former Québec Member Claude-E. Forget in October 1977?⁴

Legislative “power” has been superseded by executive power. But the executive has in turn yielded to technology and to administrators and managers who hold the knowledge. “Generalists” have gradually been replaced by “specialists” who behind the scenes pull all the strings as they put out working documents and papers in every colour of the rainbow.

Slowly, insidiously it might be said, the judicial branch has taken on duties that Parliament no longer can or wishes to assume. It too has taken to stopping leaks that have sprouted here and there, imagining and proposing new avenues when faced with solutions that obviously no longer work. It is now the courts’ turn to see their very foundations shaken.

But are all these new powers not really the powers of the Bill Gates, the merchants of all types, the magnates of international finance and every dyed-in-the-wool mondialist?

An old saying has it that one cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. But when those eggs are citizens, populations, countries, even continents? What to do in the turmoil?

3) Can the parties and proponents of one cause only, their own, be kept at bay?

***“To accomplish great things,
one need not be a genius;
one must not be above men;
but be with them.”***

Montesquieu⁵

“Particracy”—the ascendancy of political parties and their henchmen over the people’s elected representatives—has smothered the initiative, supervision and control that are supposed to be the prerogative of parliamentarians. But is not this heavy-handedness in turn subjected to the power wielded by the promoters, investors, fund backers and money lenders having a supreme right to oversee governmental action?

Could it be that “adhocracy”—a term coined some time ago by Alvin Tofler in reference to selective ad hoc action taken by individuals or groups in relation to a cause and for a limited time, without concerning themselves with any other matter and without worrying about consequences and the common good—has, by default, adorned itself with the tattered garments of an anaemic democracy?

The signs of this fundamental mutation are everywhere but we are only beginning to evaluate the runaway and overwhelming extent of it. Those who were once “men of power” are now yielding to lobbies of every description and to “power brokers” who use their influence as they please: some to protect a small hunting and fishing paradise; others to secure the survival of long-outdated or corporate privileges; and then again some to broaden their little empires or their control over whole sectors of the economy and finance.

Where, then, is the common good in this era of rampant neo-liberal globalism on the one hand and increasingly imperative individual rights on the other?

How can we explain that despite party discipline being so unpopular, it remains so prevalent in our political system?

Professor Stéphane Dion (who later became a federal cabinet minister) has formulated a three-faceted response to that question: ministerial responsibility requires the government to exact strict party discipline which “reproduces” voters’ concerns;



the citizens are only moderately interested in politics and “the parties enable them to save phenomenal sums in terms of information costs”.⁶

Is one to be satisfied or happy with those “savings”? Many observers hold the opinion that it is not only possible but essential that Parliament be reformed. One element of reform could, for example, stop the Government from imposing ministerial solidarity on the caucus. Ministerial solidarity, by definition, can only apply to ministers of the government.⁷

It is often said that in liberal democracies, the prime minister or premier is a monarch or king elected for a four or five-year term. But given the importance and extent of the prerogatives of the head of the government, should he or she not be elected by popular vote as is the case in the presidential system?⁸

Furthermore, should we not consider the implementation of measures to restore the will of the people?⁹

4) Should ministerial responsibility be limited?

***“Is it not strange, though true,
to say that virtue itself has need of limits.”***

Montesquieu

“The Seductive Power of Technique and Strategy” (according to the title of a working document of the Public Service Commission of Canada (PSC)) has bestowed enormous prerogatives on stewardship in the public service.¹⁰

Over the years, managers and mandarins have accumulated a plethora of duties that in principle, or by tradition, the system of parliamentary democracy assigns to the Members, the representatives of the people.

If the public servant is to the politician what the engineer is to the architect (in the terms of Louis Bernard, former Secretary General of the Government of Québec), then are we not forced to admit that the engineers generously overstep their roles to take on the roles and powers of architects, with our duly elected representatives transformed into odd-job men and women, into social workers and into so many ombudsmen?

If this is the case, should we not modify, or rather recognize the far-reaching evolution of, the centuries-old concept of ministerial responsibility, to clarify and adapt it to contemporary reality? At the very least there could be redistribution between the “architects” (policy-makers and implementers) and the “engineers” (enforcers).

In other words, how do we make parliamentarians and managers accountable for their actions, the former to the citizens, the latter to the representatives of the citizens?

It is perhaps time to redefine and clarify the role of the “watchdogs” appointed by Parliament and who report to Parliament on a periodic basis. Each of these watchdogs is a *persona designata*, persons who are appointed directly by Parliament, at least in Québec: the Chief Electoral Officer, the Auditor General, the Public Protector, the president of *the Commission des droits et libertés de la personne* and the president of the *Commission d'accès à l'information*. It is particularly important to ensure that these persons exercise their duties to the fullest, and that the resources necessary are made available to them.

But to what extent is it necessary to control the controller and to make certain that the “police” of the bureaucratic and technocratic apparatus are themselves controlled? If the mandarines of the parliamentarians are gagged, who will report to the elected representatives and thus, by extension, to the people?

We may also wonder whether what is referred to as “government by judges” is fact or fiction. If such “government” actually exists, is it a real threat to democracy? Or is it the ineluctable consequence of judicial decisions made in the place and stead of parliamentarians, incapable of making difficult decisions, who leave things up to impartial courts that enjoy independence from any other branch? In this latter case, is the judicial branch being given a suppletive role it should not have?

Are we faced here with a patent case of the ancient rule according to which necessity makes law?

Given that it is impossible to go back to a former order of things, now that the human rights charters have developed into standards bestowing hitherto unthought of prerogatives on the courts, especially the higher courts, would it not be wise to implement measures to render the appointments to the high courts more transparent and public in nature? Without the judges being elected in the manner of ordinary sheriffs, candidates for judgeships could, for example, come before a special parliamentary committee to expound on their conceptions and on the views they hold.

The role of ordinary or parliamentary committees is precisely to allow citizens and groups, intermediary bodies and the lobbies to make their views known to the parliamentarians, especially in legislatures that do not have a second Chamber or a Senate. But because those procedural instruments no longer have the efficiency they once had or that we would like them to have, it is felt in some circles that the traditional two-chamber system should be retained or brought back. Yet on the other hand, however, perhaps we should endeavour to improve our most recent instruments rather than look back nostalgically to the solutions of times gone by.

5) Can Parliament be reinvented?

“To prevent this abuse (abuse of power), it is necessary, from the very nature of things, power should be a check to power.”

Montesquieu

Parliamentary democracy is dead, but what exactly do we replace it with? The law of the jungle or of the pack, the lobby groups, the contractors, the unions, the bankers? And the abandoned, the little people, the uneducated, the paupers and the scabious, through whom evil comes?

Is parliamentary sovereignty, in these times of globalization and the Internet, not simply a pious memory for out-of-step politicians? If power by the people once did have a golden age, are we now living in an age of darkness? And at the beginning of this new millennium, what form is it taking: that of idols with feet of clay?

Rather than the reinvigorating of the Parliament we are so content to be proud of, maybe it is just invigorating that is needed, now that the humble servants of the people—Members and Ministers—have long since become powerless and, in many respects, reactionaries in the strict sense of the term.

Socrates, to the rescue!

We are reminded by the philosopher Jacques Dufresne that “Our regimes are characterized by the separation of the legislative and executive powers. Perhaps it would be more fitting to subdivide legislative powers into two distinct powers: the power to establish priorities and that of transforming those fundamental choices into laws forming a coherent whole. Just like Socrates who, whenever required, forced the person with whom he was speaking to be coherent, our Members should set a goal of bringing the citizens they represent to establishing their own priorities.”¹¹

One thing is certain, if Parliament is to survive, it must be reinvented. Why? “Because Parliament in a collective sense simply does not exist (except in fleeting moments of major national disaster or rejoicing). Rather, what exists is the Government and the Opposition, bound up in an on-going election campaign in the House of Commons and in the committee rooms.”¹²

6) In the age of the Internet, towards a resurrection of the citizen?

***“What is the name we give to that moment
when the day breaks, as it does today,
and there is only havoc and destruction,
and yet we continue to breath the air, and when all is lost,
the city engulfed in flames,
innocent people at each other’s throats,
but the guilty are dying, in a corner of the day that is about to break?
There is a beautiful name for this moment, that name is dawn.”***

Jean Giraudoux, *Electra* (1937)¹³

In these times of the Internet, of world-wide exchanges, of the global village, can we reasonably expect the emergence of a new international democracy that is centred on citizens, concerned for the supreme dignity of all citizens—beginning with the abandoned, the weak and destitute, the homeless, refugees and children—and respectful of human rights and freedoms? Is urgency the precursor of a new dawn, to borrow the title of a work by Ignacio Ramonet, the resurrection of the citizen who becomes at long last the master of his destiny?

“Paradoxically, at the end of the twentieth century there exists both an increase in the capacity of societies, locally, nationally and globally to generate and disseminate information, and at the same time increasing disenchantment on the part of citizens towards many of the institutions and procedures of democracy.”¹⁴

The above quotation, taken from the introduction to a series of articles in the British journal *Parliamentary Affairs*, highlights a fundamental fact: new information technologies (NIT), for better or for worse, are increasingly impinging upon the parliamentary process.

As a political institution, Parliament will need to seek greater transparency from government departments if it is to prevent further marginalization by the executive. The government uses the Internet considerably to disseminate a greater quantity of information to the public, a situation which allows the backbenchers to be personally more proactive in their scrutiny of government action, and in addition, enables the opposition parties to remain less excluded from government activities than was formerly the case.

The cybernetic revolution presents major challenges but it also constitutes an extraordinary opportunity for a Parliament that wants and claims to be “connected” to the aspirations and expectations of its constituents, and to the ways and means most capable of meeting fundamental needs as well as the individual needs of citizens and the broader needs of society.

We now are capable of an efficient Parliament, one that knows how to properly use the modern means of communication available to it which are conducive to furthering openness, accountability and democratic participation, thanks to new technologies making parliamentary information accessible to all. “From democratization of information to informatization of democracy,” to echo a fitting title of an address given by Pierre Duchesne, the former Secretary General of the National Assembly of Québec.¹⁵

Better still, the citizens in a cyberdemocracy are able to seek out information rather than having to wait to receive it. Thus they are now able, more than ever before, to challenge the authority of experts, professionals and politicians. But we are still in the beginnings of electronic democracy, as is clear from the issue of *Parliamentary Affairs* devoted to the subject, an issue that offers ample material for reflection, particularly the concluding article.¹⁶

***“The new interdependence imposed by electronics
recreates the world in the image of a global village.”***

Marshall McLuhan

What will Parliament be like in 25 years?

A committee of American legislatures (National Conference of State Legislatures) has made a small attempt at answering that very big question.¹⁷

Economic and technological changes will generate interesting possibilities for the citizens of the year 2025. Electronic commerce, Internet communications and world economic interests, for example, now confront the viability of traditional political boundaries and the government authorities working within those limits. The global village enables citizens to see and virtually to occupy the world from any angle. No longer having a well-defined local perspective, individuals are beginning to lose their ability to have sound political judgment based on stable “parochial” or “provincial” interests.



What are the implications of such sweeping change for the legislative institution? The working group of American legislatures believes at least three critical concerns will have a profound effect on the answer to that question:

- the direction taken by society in terms of the use of direct democracy;
- the degree of confidence society has in the legislature or Parliament as a problem-solving institution; and
- the position taken by society as regards the demand for services provided by the government.

“As the link between the citizens of States and the community of States and, by definition, dedicated to dialogue, debate and the pursuit of harmony, parliamentarians are the very agents of democratization on the international level.”

Boutros Boutros-Ghali

After numerous detours, lightning-quick advances and devastating failures, are we witnessing a return of direct democracy or democracy à la carte, as you prefer?

A Parliament—what for?

The challenge of globalization opens new horizons to the people’s representatives, and immense hope.¹⁸

Provided we act. We accomplish nothing by pining over the glory of times past. We must build on new foundations. To conclude in quoting Montesquieu: “Thoughts must be linked to some form of action.”¹⁹

Questions raised in the Discussion Paper

Presentation and introduction

Do you agree with the French writer Julien Benda (1867-1956) that *the current era is literally the age of politics*?

A Parliament: for whom? For what purpose? To do what?

Parliament has had a brilliant past, but does it have a promising future?

Do you agree with Québec union lawyer and essayist Pierre Vadeboncoeur for whom the challenge of the new millennium is *to make the ungovernable governable*?

Are parliamentarians doomed to being set extras on a novel world scene in the throes of violent gestation, at this dawn of a new millennium full of thunderstorms and rainbows competing frantically with one another?

Is parliamentary sovereignty being usurped in the name of a new world order for the sole benefit of the rich countries of the North while the South struggles with seemingly insolvable problems?

1) What are the roots of the malaise afflicting our democracy?

Is our election process, that of representation and delegation, often at the root of the malaise in our democracy?

Can that essential principle of voting equality—one citizen, one vote—be respected if government stability and efficiency is to be safeguarded?

Without necessarily resorting to strict proportionality, are there not numerous variants and possibilities each one fairer and more finely tuned than the present rigid and constraining system?

What should be done to ensure that the financing of political parties and their officers is truly democratic?

As regards political party financing, instead of denouncing or watering down the system implemented 25 years ago in Québec on the pretext that the ideal can never be achieved, should it not serve as a model and be a source of inspiration?

2) Is Parliament's decline irreversible?

If, as it is often touted, Parliament can do anything, why is it constantly striving to reform itself without the least success?

Have the institutional guarantees of the three age-old pillars of a liberal democracy (legislative, executive, judicial) been as sound and watertight as we would like to believe and repeat?

Has the grand theory so amenable to the "honest man" of the eighteenth century kept its democratic promises of liberty, equality and fraternity?

Do citizens (still?) have the Members of Parliament they think they have, or deserve, in a system of representation supposedly of the people, by the people and for the people?

Are the new powers of knowledge and information not really first and foremost the powers of the Bill Gates of this world, the merchants of all types and the dyed-in-the-wool mondialists?

3) Can the parties and proponents of one cause only, their own, be kept at bay?

Has the stranglehold of the parties, so overbearing in Parliament, smothered the initiative, supervision and control that are supposed to be the prerogative of parliamentarians?

Why is it that the notorious party line, with its attendant whips and iron discipline, is so unpopular yet so peremptory in our political system?

Does selective, ad hoc action taken by individuals or groups focused on themselves with no concern for the public interest impart, by default, a certain flashiness to an anaemic democracy?

What exactly do we mean by the common good in this era of rampant neo-liberal globalism on the one hand, and increasingly imperative individual rights on the other?

What are the measures that could restore the people's confidence? For example, should the prime minister or premier be elected by popular vote as is the case in the presidential system?

4) Should ministerial responsibility be limited?

What does ministerial responsibility entail in 2002?

Has ministerial responsibility for many years now not been greatly pared down, to become as much the prerogative of public servants and managers as that of the ministers?

What should be done to turn fiction into reality in reference to implementing genuine accountability for the stewards and technicians?

If the agents of our parliamentarians are muzzled, who will accurately inform our elected representatives and, by trickledown, our citizens?

Does “government by judges” really exist?

Does the third traditional branch, the judiciary, now have a suppletive role that it should not have?

Is it advisable to restore a two-chamber system or instead to rely more and with greater advantage on the more recent instruments: parliamentary committees, study committees and rainbow-coloured working papers?

5) Can Parliament be reinvented?

Parliamentary democracy is dead, but what exactly do we replace it with? The law of the jungle or of the pack, the lobby groups, the promoters, the unions, the bankers?

And will the abandoned, the little people, the uneducated, the paupers and the scabious, through whom evil comes, continue to be and remain forever forgotten?

Rather than the reinvigorating of the Parliament we are so content to be proud of, would it not be simply invigorating that is needed, now that the humble servants of the people—Members and Ministers—have long since become powerless and, in many respects, reactionaries in the strict sense of the term?

6) In the age of the Internet, towards a resurrection of the citizen?

Will the information revolution diminish or increase the disenchantment citizens are feeling towards democratic institutions and the democratic process itself?

The beginnings of electronic democracy—an extraordinary occasion for *aggiornamento*?

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