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# CAN POLITICAL DEMOCRACY SURVIVE THE LOSS OF ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY?

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## CAN POLITICAL DEMOCRACY SURVIVE THE LOSS OF ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY?

By Jim Jordal

If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?

Psalm 11:3, WEB

Throughout most of American history the twisting path toward expanded political democracy has been accompanied by a no less important, but often more difficult, struggle for economic democracy, or we might say, justice. But today the political freedoms purchased by war, ideological combat, and great personal sacrifice are in danger of being washed away by a tide of misguided and unjust economic decisions inimitable to continued political democracy.

Let me make it clear: If we wish political democracy to continue we must rein-in the trend toward massive income and wealth inequity, corporate control of the election process, the excessive power of Wall Street, and the continuing rape of both people and nature by predatory corporations and financial manipulators.

This is because the natural tendency of business institutions is toward increasing profits through the efficiencies associated with gaining greater market share or monopoly if possible. The money gained from these successes will naturally be used to protect, and change if necessary, the legal status that helped them become successful. Since enlightened government perceives its major role to be balancing the economy and the welfare of all people, it undertakes a regulatory role regarding business. This regulatory role, however mild, can easily be seen by business as an impediment to the accumulation of capital. Therefore it must be opposed through application of money where it will do the most good. So we have the mantra of deregulation at all costs.

At the present time the United States is rapidly losing economic democracy, which could be defined as the right of individual citizens to participate freely as either producers or consumers in the economic growth of the country and to share equitably (not necessarily equally) in the fruits of their participation. The past generation has revealed a great and growing gap between the wealth and incomes of the top few percent of Americans and the remainder of our citizens. It has also resulted in a vast concentration of economic power in large financial institutions having power to crash the economy almost at will. With the aid of the Supreme Court in the 2010 Citizens United case, it is now possible for this massive wealth to be passed to Super Political Action Committees (Super PACs) that can use it to support any candidates they choose for any amount of money. So it all works together to destroy both economic and political freedom.

The Republic of South Africa presents a troubling example of just how effectively an unjust economic system can destroy all but the illusion of political democracy. For years a powerful system of apartheid run by the ruling white National Party created a system of racial segregation using political and economic discrimination to oppress and control non-white peoples. When Nelson Mandela came out of prison in 1990 it looked as if freedom would finally arrive for the impoverished masses. But in the negotiations over how political democracy would be expressed and implemented, leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) lost sight of the importance of economic democracy in the future welfare of the nation. In their eagerness to achieve political democracy they surrendered their economic goals, giving F.W. deKlerk's National party control over banking and foreign trade rules. So now the people could vote and run for office, but the domination system controlled the economy and still ran the country. The unfortunate result is that poverty still reigns supreme even in the midst of a considerable degree of political democracy and the presence of great wealth in the gold and diamond fields.

It's as Baron Nathan Rothschild (1777-1836) of the British branch of the famous Rothschild banking empire once said, "I care not what puppet is placed on the throne of England to rule the Empire. The man that controls Britain's money controls the British Empire. And I control the money supply." And that's exactly what happened in Britain, in South Africa, and in many Western countries, including the United States.

Today in America political democracy is severely threatened. We vote, but only for the candidates chosen and paid for by the power structure. We seek office, but with no chance against the millions of corporate dollars flowing to candidates favorable to corporate issues. We speak relatively freely, only to have our views drowned out by corporate money. So we maintain the illusion of having political democracy when in reality much of it has been eroded over the past 30 years.

So it becomes increasingly clear that economic power can and does eclipse political power. Political democracy cannot survive the crushing blows delivered against it by unlimited corporate power, a corrupted suborned government, subverted national institutions, and a somnolent public lulled into stupor by mindless entertainment, incessant propaganda, and mountains of consumer goods.

That's why we need movements like the Occupy Wall Street protesters who seem to be the only ones awake to the true situation.