

Democracy - Allegedly.....

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We get the opportunity once every five years, to vote ourselves a representative into government. Your vote this time, it is being argued, is perhaps the most important in many years as the new government faces challenging circumstances – a revenue budget under severe strain, a rapidly ageing population with ever increasing expectations of health and social security benefits, a private sector facing the high probability of years of modest growth at best, and the likelihood of big tax increases to fund our public sector spending plans.....

Unfortunately, the prospect is perhaps more that of electing the devils-in-waiting to replace the devils-in-office – who all too likely will be corrupted by the power of office and the patronage of a Chief Minister not elected by the people, pursuing policies of which we will remain unaware until they are implemented. Which perhaps is the greatest shame of all – that we can be proud of our culture and history as the oldest parliament, but in effect are no better than a third world tribal society in which there is no true democracy..... we vote for someone in total ignorance of just what policies our next government will action.

And the reality behind that is that the most powerful person in government isn't elected by anyone – the Chief Secretary, and head of our Civil service, the “eminence grise” and the Manx “Cardinal Richelieu”, is the real power behind the throne, the man who manages all those grey suits and faceless individuals who allow the elected MHKs the opportunity to pronounce on the policies and legislation they develop for them.

Democracy is a funny old thing, you think you've finally understood its importance and feel how lucky to live in one, and then you realise it's all a mirage – that the devils we elect will somehow grow halos, and that we can trust them to do “the right things” on our behalf. We can but hope..... that the new government has the drive and the real integrity to change our system into a more democratic model, and to escape the “block vote” and undemocratic process that we have suffered of late – which under Mr Brown was widely acknowledged as the “worst government of recent history”. Something we cannot afford in these most challenging of times.....