

Lyndon LaRouche: What Is Democracy?

In an interview granted to a reporter for a Brazilian newspaper in late September 1991, Lyndon LaRouche was asked for his views on democracy.

This word “democracy” is used in a way which is often counterproductive.

Remember, the next-to-final stage of destruction of the civilization of Athens was caused by a party which was called the Democratic Party of Athens, the party which condemned Socrates to death on false charges.

In the history of mankind, democracies such as that of Meletys of the Democratic Party of Athens, or of Robespierre of Paris, and similar phenomena, have been a disaster. We use the word democracy wrongly, perhaps, sometimes; but democratic is not good. The idea that the simple will or the simple opinion of a majority ought to rule a nation, is the most dangerous and evil idea ever conceived.

We ought to mean something else. What is at issue is the insurance of the true natural rights of every individual person. . . . The United States was not created as a democracy, it was created as a *democratic republic*. . . . This is the important thing to recognize in this case here. Even Thomas Jefferson recognized that you had to have a high quality of education, to have a citizen who is qualified to vote. . . . As Franklin said, coming out of the Constitutional Convention, we have given you a republic, it is now up to you to keep it. You cannot keep

a republic, if you allow the kind of democracy that Robespierre represented, or Meletys of the Democratic Party of Athens represented. If you allow that kind of democracy, you can't have a republic. It will be destroyed. Your majority vote will destroy it. The demagogues, and the rhetoricians, and the Sophists will come in and get the majority, perhaps by way of television programs. You'll have a mass outpouring of voting. As you see, we get worse and worse elected officials these days, in many countries—precisely because of this emphasis upon democracy, which is not democracy. Sometimes it's called demagoguery, not democracy.

What is needed? The rights of the individual have to be protected. What are the rights of the individual? They're the natural rights, human rights, of natural law. The individual has the right to be known as in the living image of God. The individual has the right to be sovereign. The individual nuclear family has absolute sovereign rights as a nuclear family: its right to exist; its right to function; its right to protection. The individual has natural rights to be treated as a human being in all ways. The individual has the right to an education—and to a *compulsory* education of a suitable quality. The individual has the right to the opportunities to participate in the technology, and so forth. To opportunities which suit his particular disposition and abilities, his capabilities. The individual has a right to have a voice in shaping society. And a voice as a vote—yes, that's important.

If we mean that, that means republic. But what gives the individual that right? Majority opinion? No. Majorities are not to be trusted, as history shows. You can't trust the majority of American citizens these days. Look at what they've put in public office. The most terrible creatures. We haven't had a sane President since probably Kennedy—if you consider the fact that the Nixon and Ford administrations were really Kissinger administrations.

What is meant is a republic.

What do we mean by republic? You require two things in my opinion, which I think is also the opinion of the ancient Dante Alighieri, for a stable, sound nation. You require a literate form of spoken and written language. Because without a

literate form of language, people cannot participate intelligently in the formulation and selection of national policy.

Two. You require a submission of the nation's will to the rule of law, the rule of law being not positivist law, not legislative law as such, but rather, natural law, law based on the principles of a constitutional republic.

So we should use the term—not democracy, which is a word which is used so loosely that we shouldn't use it today. We should use the word *democratic republic*, a republic which is based on commitment to maintaining and developing a literate form of language, which means literate in spoken and written language; literate in geometry (mathematical language); literate in music. If those qualities of literacy are maintained and developed in the population, then you have a mentally, morally healthy population, in terms of communication. If you have a nation which is committed to certain constitutional principles—not positive laws but constitutional principles—and the people combine the process of the democratic vote with submission of the will of the people to the law at the same time, as Solon of Athens prescribed 2,500 years ago, then you have the only form of society which we know of, that works.

For this same reason, we must have truly sovereign republics, and we must oppose all those who counterpose democracy the way Bush does, to sovereignty. Without sovereignty of nations on the basis of language, there can be no freedom. There can be no effective form of democratic functioning whatsoever.

So, the first thing is sovereign nation-state; and within the sovereign nation-state republic, democracy. Democracy in the form of the democratic republic. Better to have a king than a mob, if there is no law. But it is better to have a democracy than a king, always, and when it is the democracy of a democratic republic.