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**Life, Flight and Liberty Part XII**  
An essay by Henry Nicolle

*Franchise: Right, Privilege, or Gift? (Self-governance 101)*

What is a vote? If it is a Right, it is no Right if not exercised. Is it a Privilege? If so, then you are not the authority that you imagine yourself to be. If it is a Gift, then I suppose that you can thank the giver and pray for another one at the next election. A vote is an expression of your authority and status as one of the Sovereignty of the People. We are the Source, Authority and Power of American government, the free people of a self-governing society.

Don't toss it away or hold it in contempt. If you believe that it has no power, then it is you who have failed through ignorance or neglect to sustain its value.

Around Carbon County and our little towns, another casting of ballots has been completed. A few new faces have stepped up to the tasks of managing our infrastructure. Forty-nine elective offices in Carbon County were on the ballot with seventeen candidates unopposed. Several positions were free of incumbents. I did not take the time to cross-reference the new and old names. In only two of the contested county offices were there clear voter mandates. In my opinion, this is a sorry report on the condition of our community's governance.

County Sheriff and County Assessor results indicate substantial voter interest in those office holders. Those offices notably attracted the highest number of ballots cast, each approaching the full turnout of over 5,000 ballots. Each had a popular margin of about double the votes cast for their competitor.

In Rawlins, the voters expressed clear preferences/mandates for the two open City Council offices.

In every other vote count, excepting unopposed candidates, voter preference was ambiguous or non-existent. We appear to be uninterested in governing ourselves, indicating we are passive and more willing than not, to simply empower a mostly independent ruling class.

From the record:

Carbon county has just over 15,000 people, of which about 12,000 are adults of voting age.

Of the 12,000, only 6,900 are registered to vote.

Of the 6,500 registered to vote, 5,250 people voted.

In gross terms, only 35% of the constituents expressed an opinion for prospective holders of elective offices. In most cases, the new office holders received only 30% to 60% of the ballots cast. Again, generally speaking, our government policies and decisions are made by office holders selected by a small plurality of 15 to 20% of the population. Is that "democracy" in action?

"Democracy" is a term we use with negligent indifference. Democracy is a process reviled with experience and adored mostly by people ignorant of history and enamored by its promises. Most

people generally presume democracy is a process of choices made by majority vote.

In reality, the majority at the ballot box is not a majority, but only a plurality of votes, often derived from only a minority of constituents. It is commonly a means for exploitation and domination by a few over the many.

I can hear some complaining, "Well then, what is our acceptable alternative?" Well, you could be a candidate for any office. Your presence in the challenge offers a very visible soapbox from which to express your concerns and solutions to the ears and considerations of your neighbors, and importantly, to your incumbents and challengers. Speak out your support for your neighbor who is unafraid to stand as a community voice! Get the important issues and potential remedies in the open and prominently in the public forum. Initiate a conversation. Do not fear!

Never forget that your present and future are in the hands of the government that you create and guide. If you complain that you do not get involved in politics; that politics are corrupt or corrupting; that you can't fight city hall; that you don't have time or patience to argue a losing argument; that your religion tells you to obey and respect your rulers; that you fear retaliation if you stand for your opinions; remember that in America, in Carbon County, that you are the core of government and all politics is local. When you act with self-respect, you are respecting your role in self-governance.

Voicing your opinion, encouraging capable candidates, voting, and, if necessary, exercising your authority to bring discipline to the bureaucracy, are not "politics". These are your shared responsibility for self-government on par with your responsibility for housing and feeding yourself and your family. The health of your Liberty and Community are as much in your care as your familial concern and love. Take a few minutes from time to time to care for our community, your family lives here.

I write to share my knowledge and opinions. If my re-telling of facts is faulty or the reasoning of my opinions fails, I trust that you will write or call to compare notes, to probably correct my errors. (Thank you Sherril, for always testing my punctuation and spelling!)

I encourage, invite and welcome your conversations. If we talk, we can restore true Liberty, command our governments, and prosper in our own security instead of living as a comfortable herd, managed to benefit our herders. I sincerely hope that we agree in principle and can join our efforts to bring a better future.

In Carbon County, we have three active newspapers in Rawlins and Saratoga, plus a monthly press published in Snake River. Collectively, they are a vital resource for community opinion, development, and cohesion. If you want to see something that you find interesting in a newspaper, subscribe and write! All of these papers beg in every issue, "**Please Write!**" A "Silent Majority" is no majority at all.

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