REFERENDUMS: NEW PRACTICE AND OLD THEORY

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Thirteen years ago, David Butler and I published a book of essays on the practice and theory of referendums[2] (Butler and Ranney, 1978). While we and our associates focused mainly on the experience of Australia, France, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the American states, especially California, we also added appendixes listing all the nationwide referendums we could find that had been held up to 1978. In 1987, John Austen joined us in updating the list through 1986 (Austen, Butler, and Ranney, 1987). And in the appendixes to this paper I have added all the national referendums I could find that were held from the beginning of 1987 to the end of 1990.

The appendixes show that the acceleration in the number of nationwide referendums, first evident in the 1970s and continuing in the early 1980s, has increased its pace in the past three years. During that period, twenty-one nations have held at least one

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[1] I am grateful to Mr. John Austen for once again helping me to update the list of national referendums. I am also grateful to Professor Sergio Fabbrini of the University of Trento and the University of California, Berkeley, for instructing me in the conduct and results of Italian referendums.

[2] As in the 1978 book, I am using the term "referendums" to denote all elections in which voters directly approve or reject a public policy measure printed on the ballot. The most common forms are: government-controlled referendums; constitutionally-required referendums; referendums by popular petitions; and popular initiatives. (Butler and Ranney, 1978, 23-24; Magleby, 1984, 1-2; and Walker, 1987, 10).

referendum, and a worldwide total of seventy-four measures have been voted on. Switzerland, with a total of nineteen measures in seven elections, continued to be the unchallenged leader in referendums, but the Italian Republic was a strong second, with nine measures in three elections.[3]

However, perhaps the most striking development since 1978 has been the the holding of (relatively free) referendums by a number of former authoritarian nations as part of their efforts to establish democratic regimes. They have been held by former dictatorships of both the Right (Chile and the Philippines) and the Left (Hungary and Poland). And the climax came on March 17, 1991, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics held a national referendum on the question of whether the nation should continue to exist "as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics." The Soviet referendum did not satisfy all the standards by which Westerners usually judge the democratic quality of such elections, but it was certainly much freer and more meaningful than the Yes-only referendums normally held in authoritarian regimes.[4] Yet, perhaps the most striking aspect of the referendum was Mikhail Gorbachev's powerful statement that such elections are the best way

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[3] The pace has also accelerated in the American states: in the elections of 1988 and 1990, a total of over 400 measures were on the ballots, the largest number in history.

[4] Some the of the U.S.S.R.'s fifteen republics boycotted the referendum entirely, while others reworded the question and/or added other questions. The central government's officials reported that 80 percent of the eligible voters cast ballots, and 76 percent of those who did voted Yes on the question quoted in the text. There are many accounts of the referendum in the Western press; I am relying mainly on that in The Economist, March 23, 1991, 53-54.

to make a nation's most basic decisions. He first expressed this view in September, 1990, when he told the Supreme Soviet that it would not be legitimate for a law permitting the private ownership of land to be enacted solely by a small body of politicians like them. "[It is] the sovereign right of the people to decide," he declared; therefore, "it can only be decided by referendum."[5] Gorbachev continues to insist that holding a referendum among the people concerned is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition to legitimize any possible future change in the relationship of any of its rebellious republics to the Soviet Union. That is perestroika indeed!

The increase in the use of referendums since 1978 has been accompanied by a similar increase in the number of scholarly studies of the referendum device, as evidenced by a number of new books and articles and by conferences such as this. In our 1978 book, David Butler and I noted that most of the works on referendums had been published in the early years of this century (e.g., Cree, 1892; Deploige, 1898; Dicey, 1910; Sharp, 1911; Munro, 1912; DeWitt, 1915; Bonjour, 1920), with only a handful of works on referendums from then until the 1970s (e.g., Strachey, 1924; Key and Crouch, 1939; Wambaugh, 1933). After 1970, the increased use of referendums stimulated a whole new body of literature. It was launched by several studies of the 1975 British referendum on remaining in the EEC (e.g., Goodhart, 1971; Alderson, 1975; Butler and Kitzinger, 1976; King, 1977). Since our book appeared in 1978,

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[5] Quoted in Facts on File, Septebmer 21, 1990, 703.

the number of scholarly studies of referendums has more than doubled, including works focusing on referendums in the American states (e.g., Schmidt, 1983; Magleby, 1984; McGuigan, 1985; Hahn and Kameniecki, 1987; Cronin, 1989), comparative analyses of the role of referendums and other forms of direct popular participation as ways of realizing democracy (e.g., Ranney, 1981; Barber, 1984; Walker, 1987), and speculation about the possibilities of new forms of electronic communications for establishing town-meeting democracy on a national scale (e.g., Hollander, 1985; Neuman, 1986; Arterton, 1987; McLean, 1989).

Thus, in the period from 1978 to the present a good deal of both practice and theory has been added to the material for evaluating the nature, impact, and value of the referendum device in modern nations. This paper considers what new light, if any, this material sheds upon the familiar arguments both for and against referendums.

THE CASE FOR REFERENDUMS RECONSIDERED

What Institutions Best Realize the Principles of Democracy?

While political theorists and practitioners have long used the term "democracy" in many different ways, most of them appear to agree that it denotes at least the principles of popular sovereignty, political equality, popular consultation, and majority rule.[6] But, at least since the seventeenth century, democrats have divided into two main schools of thought about the institutions

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[6] For a more complete statement of this view, see Ranney and Kendall, 1956, chs. 1-3.

required to realize those principles in actual polities. One is the "participationist" or "direct-democracy" school, led by such classical theorists as Rousseau and the English levellers, and such modern theorists as Barber, Osbun, and Pateman (Pateman, 1970; Barber, 1984; Osbun, 1985). They have argued that the only truly democratic way to make decisions on matters of public policy is by the full, direct, and unmediated participation of all the citizens. The citizens, they declare, should set the agenda, discuss the issues, and determine the policies. Any indirect form of participation, such as decisions by elected representatives, cannot be truly democratic, for two reasons. First, if the citizens' ideas and preferences are expressed only by squeezing them through the minds and mouths of representatives, they are bound to emerge distorted. Hence, the only way to achieve the ideal that political decisions be made in full accordance with the wishes of the people is to ensure that those wishes are expressed directly, not mediated or interpreted. Second, democracy, like any form of government, is not an end in itself, but only a means to a higher end. The higher end that democracy should serve is the full development of each and every citizen's full potential, and the citizens' civic potentials can be realized only by their direct and full participation in public affairs, not by delegating their civic powers and obligations to representatives. Thus, the model institutions for the full realization of democracy are the face-to-face meetings of the New England towns and the Swiss landsgemeinden.

Opposed to the advocates of direct democracy has been the

"representationist" or "accountable elites" school, pioneered by such theorists as John Stuart Mill and Henry Jones Ford (Mill, 1873; Ford, 1924) and continued by such modern theorists as Schumpeter, Schattschneider, and Sartori (Schumpeter, 1950; Schattschneider, 1960; Sartori, 1962 and 1987). They have argued that the direct democracy ideal is meaningful only for a community small enough that all its citizens can meet face-to-face. Even more important, it is possible only in a community in which all the citizens can spend full time on making political decisions, perhaps, as in the ancient Greek city-states, by using the full-time labor of slaves to liberate the citizens for full-time participation in politics. In the modern nation-state, they say, not only is it impossible for all the citizens to meet face to face in one place, but, since slavery is abolished, it is impossible for all but a handful to spend all their time on politics. Accordingly, to insist that full participation by every citizen in every public decision is a necessary condition for democracy is simply to make democracy irrelevant for the governing of modern nations. Such a posture, the representationists say, is both unnecessary and foolish. The essence of democracy is locating the ultimate power to rule in all the citizens rather than in one citizen or a small oligarchy of citizens. That ideal can be realized by having the citizens, at frequent intervals, elect representatives who will then "re-present" their constituents in the law-making assembly and, at the end of their terms, be held to account by the voters for how well or badly they have used their

temporarily delegated powers. Thus, representative government not only realizes the essential principles of democracy; it does so in a way that makes those ideals reachable goals rather than irrelevant dreams.

Referendums as Useful Supplements to Representative Democracy

Some of the most extreme advocates of both the participationist and representationist schools appear to take the position that a modern polity has only two institutional choices: full and direct participation, or undiluted representation. The democrat, they seem to be saying, must choose between these two alternatives, for there is no satisfactory way in which elements of one can be grafted onto the other. On the other hand, we sometimes forget that most advocates of the referendum device see it as a third alternative. They agree with the representationists that representative government is the basic institutional form that democracy must take in any densely-populated community, such as a modern nation-state. Indeed, I have never encountered an advocate of referendums who proposes that representative assemblies be abolished and that all laws be made only by initiatives and referendums.

However, the partisans of referendums believe that representative government can partake of some of the virtues of direct democracy by making it possible under certain conditions for the citizens themselves to confirm, reject, or make laws directly, The main benefits they expect from supplementing representative institutions with the referendum device are the following.

1. Maximizing Legitimacy. Most democratic theorists believe that democratic regimes, far more than authoritarian regimes, rely upon the consent of their citizens rather than the coercive power of their governments to ensure compliance with their laws. Consequently, they put an especially high value on making political decisions in ways that will seem the most legitimate to the largest number of citizens. Advocates of referendums believe that one of their greatest virtues is the fact that most ordinary people believe that the most legitimate decisions are those made directly by themselves rather than by elected representatives or party leaders or other elites. As Geoffrey Walker puts it:

> In a democracy, the only possible source of legitimacy is the will of the sovereign people. As the most direct way of ascertaining the will of the people, initiative and referendum have great advantages in this respect. The citizen is more likely to feel entitled to flout a law promoted by an elite, or procured by blackmail or corruption, than one that is seen to reflect the free and informed consent of the majority of citizens. (Walker, 1987, 50; see also Butler and Ranney, 1978, 24-26)

Recent experience and research give some support for this position, although it cannot be said to be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. One bit of new evidence supporting it is the fact that in the period since 1978 as well as in the earlier period, a number of authoritarian regimes have held referendums to endorse decisions made by the ruling dictators or oligarchies,

presumably because they believe that the 99+ percent majorities on 99 percent turnouts in those elections give their regimes and policies a patina of popular participation and support that makes it easier to for them to rule. In the period from 1987 to 1990, such referendums were held in Algeria, the Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Maldives, Morocco, Niger, and the Seychelles.

The trick, however, is evidently to make sure of the outcome before the election is held, for if the election is fair the rulers may not like the outcome. Former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet Ugarte is a recent case in point. Chile's constitution of 1980 (written by Pinochet's military junta and approved by a popular referendum) provided that toward the end of his eight-year term as president, the junta would name a single candidate, whom the voters would approve or disapprove in a referendum. If they disapproved a competitive multi-candidate election would be held. In 1988, the junta named Pinochet to serve for another eight years, but the opposition forces were allowed to campaign, albeit somewhat circumspectly, against him. In the referendum of 5 October 1988, 92 percent of the electorate voted, and 55 percent of them voted No. Even more remarkably, Pinochet apparently felt that he could not defy such an authoritative expression of the popular will, for he announced that he would abide by the result. In 1989, Patricio Aylwin Azocar was elected president in a fully democratic multi-candidate election, and took office without incident. Thus did an authoritarian regime allow itself to be overthrown by a referendum!

Another, though equally indirect, piece of evidence supporting the claim that referendums maximize legitimacy is provided by several studies of the attitudes of American voters toward initiatives and referendums (summarized in Magleby, 1984, 7-10). Surprisingly, majorities of the respondents in these studies did not idealize the superior wisdom and honesty of ordinary people over elected representatives; indeed, they said that laws enacted by legislatures tend to be better than those produced by popular initiatives. Even so, majorities ranging from 77 to 85 percent said that referendums are a good thing, that people should have the right to vote directly on issues, and that voting on issues is more effrective for people to get the policies they want than voting for candidates. Accordingly, ordinary citizens should have the right to put measures on the ballot when they wish, and should not be restricted to voting only on those measures that elected officials put before them. Then too, a number of nationwide polls taken from 1977 to 1987 showed majorities of 57-58 percent in favor of establishing some form of the referendum at the national level (Cronin, 1989, 4-5, 174-79).[7]

It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that recent experience and research tends to confirm the proposition that the strongest single argument in favor of using referendums as a supplement to representative democracy is the fact that most people regard them

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[7] Although forty-nine of the fifty American states use referendums in some form, and about twenty of them use the device frequently, the United States and the Netherlands continue to be the only democratic nations that have never held a nationwide referendum.

as the most authoritative, because the least mediated, of all the expressions of the popular will. Therefore, in a system based upon the principles of popular sovereignty, political equality, popular consultation, and majority rule, direct popular decisions made by referendums have a legitimacy that indirect decisions by elected representatives cannot match. This does not mean that all decisions should be made by direct vote of the people. It does not even mean that decisions made by referendums are wiser or more prudent than those made by representatives. It means only that when a representative democracy wishes a particular decision to be made with the maximum possible degree of legitimacy, it would do well to make that decision by referendum.

2. Maximizing Participation. Many political commentators believe that popular participation in politics is a central concern, some would say the central concern, for democratic polities. As we have seem, they declare or assume that one of the prime goals of democracy is to maximize the civic potentials of its citizens, and they believe that direct participation in the making of public decisions is the best way to develop everyone's potential. They conclude that perhaps the most important single indicator of a democratic nation's civic health is the degree to which its citizens participate in politics: high participation is a sign of political good health, while low participation is a symptom of political malaise. Moreover, voting is the indispensable minimum form of participation; therefore, while the more people discuss politics, work in campaigns, contribute money,

attend rallies, and write letters to their representatives the better, voting turnout is the most important single indicator of a political system's health (For a minor dissent, see Ranney, 1983).

Most partisans of referendums contend that people are more likely to vote when they can vote directly on policy issues than when they are restricted to choosing candidates for public office. Cronin, for example, cites studies showing that voting turnout is generally higher in the American states that have popular initiatives on the ballot than in the states without popular initiatives, although he does not claim that the presence of initiatives causes the higher turnouts (Cronin, 1989, 226-28).

One way to test this proposition is to compare the turnouts in referendum elections with those in candidate elections. Some relevant data are presented in Table 1, which compares the mean turnouts in referendum elections with those in parliamentary elections in twelve nations in the period from 1945 to 1986.

(Table 1 about here)

The data in Table 1 show that in every one of the twelve nations, the mean turnout in referendum elections is lower than the turnout in parliamentary general elections; the smallest difference is -0.1 points in Belgium (which has compulsory voting for both types of elections), and the largest difference is -30.1 points in Austria. The table shows, moreover, that the mean turnout rates in referendum elections have fallen in the recent period in all of the countries listed for the period, quite sharply in three of the four.

Table 1 also highlights what might be called the "Swiss paradox": Switzerland makes far greater use of the referendum device than any other nation in the world; and yet not only is the mean voting turnout in Swiss parliamentary elections (64.5 percent) over ten points lower than that of any other nation (Ireland is next lowest with 74.7 percent), but the turnout in Swiss referendum elections is only 46.3 percent, nearly twenty points lower than turnout in Swiss parliamentary elections. Furthermore, in 1987-90 the turnout in Swiss referendums declined even further, from 46.3 percent to 44.8 percent.[8]

These findings are matched by similar findings about the "dropoff" phenomenon in American state elections: both Magleby and Cronin find that turnout in referendum elections drops off from turnout in candidate elections held at the same time by a mean of 15 percentage points. Turnout is somewhat higher on popular initiatives than on legislative referendumss, but, with the exception of a few especially controversial and highly publicized measures, such as California's popular initiatives to cut property taxes (Proposition 13, 1978) and repeal open-housing laws (Proposition 14, 1964), the turnout on direct-legislation measures is consistently lower than that in candidate elections (Magleby,

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[8] One might think that the low and declining turnout in both types of Swiss elections would worry the partisans of referendums, but Geoffrey Walker, at least, is not concerned. He notes the decline, and comments, "It would appear that [the Swiss] want the right to decide and vote, but if the matter is not one on which they have strong views, they are content to delegate its exercise to their fellow-citizens, knowing from experience that they are safe to do so." (Walker, 1987, 81).

1984, 83-87; Cronin, 1989, 66-70).

In short, there is little support in recent experience and research for the proposition that referendums increase voting turnout, and there is no reason to suppose that it encourages other forms of participation either.

THE CASE AGAINST REFERENDUMS RECONSIDERED

In 1978, David Butler and I listed three main arguments against superimposing referendums on representative democracy: (1) ordinary citizens have neither the analytical skills nor the information to make wise decisions; (2) decisions by elected officials allow for greater flexibility, weighing the intensity of preferences, and accommodation of minority views and interests than decisions by referendums; and (3) both by allowing elected officials to be by-passed and by encouraging them to evade divisive issues by passing them on to the voters, referendums weaken the prestige and authority of representatives and representative government (Butler and Ranney, 1978, 34-37). What light does recent experience and analysis shed on those arguments?

Decisions by Ignorant, Uncomprehending Voters.

Since 1978, several studies have been published on the information and comprehension of voters in direct-legislation elections in the American states. Magleby begins his review of those studies by noting that it is not uncommon for ballot measures to be worded in such a way that a Yes vote is, in effect, a vote against a particular line of policy: for example, Proposition 14, the 1964 "fair housing" referendum in California, was on a measure

that proposed to repeal the legislative act that prohibited racial discrimination in the purchase and rental of houses and apartments; hence, voters who favored the law had to vote No on the measure, while those who opposed it had to vote Yes.[9] Magleby cites several studies showing that from 10 to 20 percent of the voters in referendums where this is the case cast "mistaken" votes--that is, votes they think support the policy they prefer but in fact have the opposite effect. A particularly egregious example was California's referendum on rent control (Proposition 10, 1980), in which 23 percent of the voters wanted to protect rent control but mistakenly voted Yes on a proposition to repeal it, while 54 percent of the voters who opposed rent control mistakenly voted No. Magleby reports, however, that on measures on which most the voters had strong preferences, almost all of them accurately perceived the policy consequences of Yes and No votes, and voted accordingly (Magleby, 1984, 141-44).

The questions of how much information referendum voters have and how sophisticated are their cognitive maps for deciding what that information means for their voting decisions are more complex. Perhaps the fairest way to answer them is to compare referendum voters, not with some abstract standard of high political information and understanding, but with the levels of knowledge and

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[9] This is, in effect, how all Italian referendums are structured: every measure is a proposal to repeal an act of Parliament, so voters who favor the policy established by the act must vote No, and voters who oppose the policy must vote Yes. Presumably, Italian voters are familiar with this structuring and rarely cast "mistaken" votes.

comprehension displayed by voters in candidate elections. We have already noted that the electorates in referendum elections average about 15 percent smaller than those in candidate elections. Recent studies of the two electorates show that, compared with voters in candidate elections, voters in referendum elections are older; they have more formal education; they are of higher socioeconomic status; and they are more involved and active in politics. Since studies of voting behavior in candidate elections show that these traits are the main correlates of higher political knowledge and sophistication, it seems likely that referendum voters, however ignorant and unsophisticated they may be in some absolute sense, are nevertheless better informed and more sophisticated than candidate voters (cf. Magleby, 1984, 127-30; Cronin, 1989, 70-77).

On the other hand, referendum voters have a cognitive handicap that candidate voters do not have: in candidate elections, the candidates' party labels printed on the ballot provide powerful clues to the voters about which alternatives are the most desirable--clues, moreover, that persist from one election to the next and thus grow more useful over time. Referendum electorates have no such clues, and so they are likely to find it more difficult to translate the information they receive into Yes or No votes on the measures before them. In short, recent experience and research appear to confirm that most referendum voters fall well short of the highest standards of information and understanding--but that in both respects they are probably superior to voters in candidate elections.

Inflexible Choices, Immoderate Decisions, Majority Tyranny

. In assessing the argument that the decision-making process in referendums is significantly less flexible than that in representative bodies, we should begin by remembering that most of the referendums in the world are on measures put before the voters by legislatures, constitutional conventions or commissions, or other representative bodies. The wording of the measures put before the voters for final decisions is thus worked out by exactly the same representative processes of receiving, weighing, and accommodating the demands of different interests and ideologies that produce other kinds of representative acts. Consequently, the charges of inflexibility and majority tyranny sometimes brought against decisions by referendums are in fact relevant only to decisions made on popular initiatives, in which the petitioners, not elected officials, decide the wording of the measures. Only Switzerland, Italy, and twenty-six American states allow measures to be put on the ballot by popular initiatives without any prior action by elected representatives (Cronin, 1989, 2-3).

Accordingly, if we review the popular initiatives on the ballot in Switzerland and in the American states since 1987, we find relatively few that proposed significant restrictions on minority rights and only limited success for the few that did. In Switzerland, as Appendix C shows, only a few of the popular initiatives sought truly radical changes, notably the proposal to abolish the army (1989) and the proposal to require popular approval of all military expenditures (1987). Moreover, both lost,

with, respectively, 36 and 40 percent of the votes. Many would also feel that the Swiss initiative to limit the number of foreigners allowed to live in Switzerland (1988) was an attack on minority rights, but it too lost, with only 33 percent of the votes.

The American state elections of 1988 and 1990 featured several popular initiatives that many civil libertarians felt would be significant abridgments of minority rights, and they had some success but far from total victory. The most successful were measures proposing to change the balance in criminal trials away from the persons accused and toward the victims and the prosecutors. For example, six states voted in favor of initiatives to increase the power of judges to deny bail to persons accused of crime when, in their judgment, allowing the defendants to go free before trial would constitute a danger to public safety. Also, in four states initiatives declaring English to be the states' official language were successful, thereby limiting the use of Spanish as a co-equal language in public schools and in the printing of ballots and official voter-information booklets. On the other hand, initiatives to restrict the use of public funds to pay for abortions for poor women won only in Arkansas and lost in Colorado and Michigan. Moreover, the voters in Maine approved a measure to fund the rewriting of the state constitution in gender-neutral language.

Accordingly, while in some instances voters in the American states used popular initiatives to restrict some minority rights in

ways that the legislatures had eschewed, it is hard to point to any flagrant act of majority tyranny against minority rights. If elected representatives are more protective of minority rights than popular majorities voting in referendum elections, the difference is, at most, marginal.

Referendums as Underminers of Representative Democracy

Many opponents of referendums have argued that the referendum device, though intended to be a useful supplement to the institutions of representative democracy, in fact undermines them in two major ways. First, it allows ordinary citizens to reject decisions made by elected representatives and/or enables ordinary citizens to enact laws without participation by and even over the objections of elected officials; and that subverts the authority and prestige of legislatures, cabinets, and executive heads of government. Second, referendums provide a politically acceptable way in which elected representatives can evade difficult decisions by "passing the buck" to the people; and that makes it easy for representatives to shirk their responsibilities.

Recent experience and research have not made it any easier to evaluate these two significant but hard-to-test propositions. Some facts, however, are worth noting. One is that many democratic nations have not held any national referendums since 1978, and some (e.g., Australia and France) have used them less frequently. Switzerland has continued to hold far more nationwide referendums than any other nation. Only Italy, with five measures voted on prior to 1978 and fifteen measures since then, has significantly

increased its use of referendums.

Furthermore, in the few polities that have both government-controlled referendums and popular initiatives, measures referred to the voters by governments have had a considerably higher success rate than those placed on the ballot by popular petitions. In Switzerland prior to 1978, three-quarters of all measures put on the ballot by the parliament won the approval of the voters, while only 10 percent of the popular initiative measures won. From 1978 to 1990, the approval rate for parliament-referred referendums dropped a bit to 69 percent, while the approval rate for popular initiatives remained steady at a low 10 percent.

The American states with both legislative-referred referendums and popular initiatives show similar patterns: the approval rate for referendums is 60 percent, while the approval rate for initiatives is 14 percent (Butler and Ranney, 1978, Table 4-6, 81; Ranney, 1989). In most democratic systems, then, the only measures that the voters can vote at on all are those placed on the ballot by elected representatives; and in the few polities that also allow the voters to place measures on the ballot without the approval of the representatives, measures without the sponsorship or endorsement of elected representatives rarely--but sometimes--win. Is even the possibility of such an event enough to undermine representative democracy?

CONCLUSION

As David Magleby wisely concludes, people who believe in undiluted representative democracy place the highest value on the

virtues of stability, compromise, moderation, and access for all segments of the community, and seek institutional arrangements that insulate fundamental principles from momentary passions or fluctuations in opinion. People who believe in coming as close as possible to direct democracy place the highest value on the virtues of participation, competition, conflict, responsiveness, and majority rule, and seek institutional arrangements that maximize rapid and full responses to what popular majorities want (Magleby, 1984, 180-81),

It may be that many democrats, like me, want it both ways. They want stability that allows change when it is needed; majority rule that preserves minority rights and ensures peaceful minority acquiescence in public decisions; and laws that, by giving every group something but never everything of what it wants, keep all groups convinced that they have stake in keeping the the system going. Such people are likely to continue to reject extreme versions of both "representationism" and "participationism," and to regard the referendum device as an occasionally-useful supplement to, but never total replacement for, the institutions of representative democracy.

Table 1

Mean Turnout in Candidate and Referendum Elections, 1945-1986

Nation	Candidate Elections, 1945-1986	Referendum Elections, 1945-1980	Difference	Referendum Elections, 1987-1990
Australia*	95.4	89.3	-6.1	42.5
Austria	94.2	64.1	-30.1	---
Belgium*	92.5	92.4	-0.1	---
Denmark	85.8	68.4	-17.4	---
France	79.3	76.5	-2.8	37.0
Ireland	74.7	52.3	-22.4	---
Italy	92.6	81.7	-10.9	56.9
New Zealand	90.4	63.3	-27.1	---
Norway	80.8	77.6	-3.2	---
Sweden	84.9	66.6	-18.3	---
Switzerland	64.5	46.3	-18.2	44.8
United Kingdom	76.9	64.5	-12.4	---

*Compulsory voting laws.

Sources: Ivor Crewe, Table 10.3 in David Butler, Howard R. Penniman and Austin Ranney, eds., Democracy at the Polls (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1981), 234-36; David Butler and Austin Ranney, Referendums (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1978), Appendix A; John Austin, David Butler, and Austin Ranney, "Referendums, 1978-1986," Electoral Studies, 6:139-49; and appendices A and C of this paper.

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Appendix A. National Referendums, 1987-1990

Nation and date	Subject	Percent Voting Yes	Turnout
ALGERIA			
11/3/88	Approve constitutional reforms	92.7	82.8
2/23/89	End one-party state	73.7	79.0
AUSTRALIA			
9/3/88	4-year limit on House terms	33.3	42.5
"	Require one-vote, one-value for districting state parliaments	34.1	42.5
"	More power to local governments	33.1	42.5
"	Extend right to trial by jury	33.3	42.5
BENIN			
12/2/90	Approve new constitution	77.0	----
BOTSWANA			
9/26/87	Independent elections supervisor	Yes	----
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC			
12/21/86	Approve new one-party state constitution	90.0	----
CHAD			
12/10/89	Continue Pres. Habre's term for 7 years	99.4	92.0
"	Approve new constitution	99.4	92.0
CHILE			
10/5/88	Approve another 8-year term for President Pinochet	45.2	92.0
7/30/89	Package of 54 constitutional amendments	85.7	----
COLOMBIA			
5/27/90	Constitutional assembly to prepare reforms	90.0	----

COMOROS 11/4/89	Enable Pres. Abdallah to serve third term	92.5	----
ECUADOR 6/1/86	Allow independent candidates to run for office	25.2	76.0
EGYPT 2/2/87	Approve Mubarak proposal to hold general election	88.9	76.5
10/5/87	Apporove Mubarak as president	97.1	88.0
ETHIOPIA 2/1/87	Approve new constitution	98.7	97.0
FRANCE 11/6/88	Approve preparations for self-determination for New Caledonia	80.0	37.0
HAITI 3/29/87	Approve new constitution	99.0	----
HUNGARY 11/26/89	Postpone presidential election	51.0	58.2
"	Ban Communist party organizations in workplace	95.3	"
"	Require Communist party to disclose assets	95.4	"
"	Disband Communist party militia	94.9	"
7/29/90	Direct election of president	86.0*	13.8
IRAN 7/28/89	Approve 45 constitutional changes	97.6	68.0
IRELAND 5/26/87	Approve EC changes	69.9	----
ITALY 11/8-9/87	Repeal law on nuclear power plant siting	80.6	65.2
"	Repeal law on subsidies for nuclear power plants	79.7	65.1

"	Repeal financial links to foreign nuclear projects	71.8	65.2
"	Magistrate's liability for civil errors	80.0	65.2
"	Permit government ministers to be tried by courts	85.1	65.2
6/18/89	United European government	88.0	----
6/3-4/90	Repeal hunting law	93.0*	43.3
"	Repeal law on forbidding entry of hunters	93.0*	43.3
"	Restrict agricultural pesticides	93.0*	43.5
LIECHTENSTEIN			
1/23-24/88	Increase number of parliamentary seats	51.7	69.0
"	Authorize funds for art gallery	Yes	----
MALDIVES			
9/23/88	Re-elect Pres. Maumoon	96.4	----
MOROCCO			
12/1/89	Extend parliament's term by 2 years	99.98	95.8
NIGER			
6/14/87	Approve national charter	99.6	----
9/24/89	Approve new constitution	99.3	95.0
PHILIPPINES			
2/2/87	Approve draft constitution	76.4	87.0
11/19/89	Approve autonomy for southern provinces	40.0	40.0
POLAND			
11/29/87	Approve Communist party's proposals for economic reform	66.0	67.3
"	Approve Communist party's proposals for political reform	69.0	67.3
SAO TOME & PRINCIPE			

8/22/90	Approve new constitution	Yes	79.4
SEYCHELLES			
6/9/89	Give Pres. Rene a third term	96.2	91.0
SOUTH KOREA			
10/27/87	Approve constitutional amendment	93.0	----
SURINAM			
9/10/87	Approve new constitution	93.0	70.0
TURKEY			
9/6/87	Allow former politicians to participate in politics	50.1	----
9/25/88	Hold local elections earlier	35.0	----
URUGUAY			
4/16/89	Confirm amnesty law	56.7	84.0
11/26/89	Index pensions	Yes	----

*Measure failed because supported by less than 60% of eligible voters.

Appendix B. Referendums in subordinate territories

(affecting boundaries or status)

BELAU			
2/6/90	Approve Compact of Free Association with U.S.	59.8	----
7/30/87	Approve Compact of Free Association with U.S.	67.9	----
10/4/87	Repeal nuclear-free clause in constitution	73.3	----
2/6/90	Approve Compact of Free Association with U.S.	60.8	69.0
NEW CALEDONIA			
9/13/87	Remain part of France	98.3	----
SERBIA			
7/2/90	Approve new constitution	96.8	86.0
SLOVENIA			
12/23/90	Approve independence from Yugoslavia	94.6	93.5

Appendix C. Swiss Referendums, 1987-1990

Date	Subject and Type	Percent voting Yes	Turnout
4/5/87	Revise asylum law(R)	67.3	42.8
"	Require popular approval of military expenditures(I)	40.5	"
"	Revise referendum laws(R)	63.3	"
"	Revise health and maternity insurance laws(R)	28.7	"
6/12/88	Increase national control over transportation(R)	45.8	47.0
"	Lower retirement age(I)	31.5	"
12/4/88	Establish 40-hour work week(I)	34.4	----
"	Limit number of foreigners allowed to live in Switzerland(I)	32.7	----
"	Allow decomercialization of agricultural land(I)	31.2	----
6/4/89	Protect peasant farms from animal factories(I)	49.0	35.2
11/26/89	Amend constitution to say "Switzerland has no army"(I)	35.6	68.6
"	Raise highway speed limits(I)	38.0	"
4/1/90	Halt road projects(I)	38.0	40.5
"	Reorganize judiciary(I)	47.4	"
"	Wine industry regulations(R)	46.7	"
9/23/90	10-year moratorium on building nuclear power plants(I)	54.0	40.0
"	Close existing nuclear power plants(I)	47.1	39.0

"	Give federal government more control over energy policy(R)	71.0	39.0
"	Approve revisions in transport laws(R)	52.8	39.5