

# **Lincoln versus Jackson: Rights and Democracy**

## **Lincoln's Emphasis on Rights**

### **Unalienable Rights**

**Individual rights, Group rights, Anti-discrimination guarantees for minorities, universal statement, Declaration of Independence**

*Declaration on Independence: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident: that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these rights Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it ...."*

## **Jackson's Emphasis on Democracy**

### **Democracy**

**Majority rule by voters, Republican government, specific rules for citizens of the United States often called nativism, Constitution**

*Constitution, Article I, Section 4: "The Times, Places, and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof, but the Congress may at time by Law make or alter such Regulations ...."*

*Constitution, Article IV, Section 4: "The United States shall guarantee to every State in the Union a Republican Form of Government ...."*

## **Practical Problems with Each Concept**

### **Rights**

**Rights Clash:** *What about conflict between my rights and your rights?*

**Level Playing Field:** *Is government required to intervene in the market to guarantee individuals equal access to opportunity?*

**Nation-state Branding:** *Universality of rights agenda hampers foreign policy.*

**Interpretation:** *What about the heterogeneity of preferences? People differ in their definition of what constitutes a right. Religions may define rights for members of the faith differently from each other. So-called God given rights have different meaning for different people.*

### **Democracy**

**Voting:** *Who is allowed to vote? Are poor people disadvantaged in voting because they cannot afford to forgo wages while they are voting? Are voting laws applied in a discriminatory fashion?*

**Information:** *Are voters informed? Is there a way to guarantee them access to unbiased information? Is government required to assist in this process?*

**Big Tent Parties:** *Does the system promoting two opposing parties restrict voicing of heterodox opinions that might gain traction if allowed to flourish? Does it promote “negative” voting where people vote to prevent the other party from gaining political traction rather than as a positive statement of political principles?*

**One Person One Vote? Popular Voting Versus Electoral College Voting:** *Is this a violation of “one person = one vote”? What about unrestricted contributions to Political Action Campaigns allowing the rich to exercise undue influence over elections?*

**Arrow’s Impossibility Theorem:** *“...when voters have three or more alternatives, no ranked voting can convert the ranking into a community-wide ranking while also meeting a specified set of criteria: unrestricted domain, non-dictatorship, Pareto efficiency and independence of irrelevant alternatives.”*

**Example:** How did the party (the NDP) manage to be the government in British Columbia in 2017 despite being the party the majority of voters disliked?

Three parties: New Democratic Party (unions, government workers, pro-taxation of the “rich”, welfare recipients); Liberal (pro-business, attempt to restrict generous payments to welfare recipients); Greens (environmentalists)

How people ranked the parties

Pro-NDP:                NDP > Greens > Liberals

Pro-Liberals            Liberals > Greens > NDP

Pro-Greens             Greens > Liberals > NDP and/or Greens > NDP > Liberals

The Liberals fell one seat short of a majority despite having the highest percentage of the seats in the legislature; the Greens won 3 seats denying the Liberals a majority; they proceeded to form a coalition with the NDP. The NDP – disliked by a majority – was able to form the government. It immediately raised the minimum wage, infuriating many of the Green voters who disliked the NDP more than the Liberals.