Are we seeing the slow death of Democracy?

by *Richard Bartlam*

Rule by the people

From the ***Encyclopaedia Britannia*** **Democracy**, literally, rule by the people. The term is derived from the Greek *dēmokratia*, which was coined from *dēmos* (“people”) and *kratos* (“rule”)

The world seems to me to be changing, slowly and surely, to a one that is less Democratic and more Authoritarian. In the last twenty years China has once again receded to the complete one person one party state, with ***Party App Xi Jinping*** on phones now tracking, teaching, spying on its people. Gone are the days of the “Little Red Book” when you can have an app for that! We see democracy in Hong Kong slowly being squeezed to death by the State and it operates an ***estimated 1,200 concentration camps in Xinjiang***. Also gone are the days when China was content to be the world’s cheap manufacture, it now also has an aggressive foreign policy.

Likewise Russian, since Putin became acting President on 31st December 1999 when Boris Yeltsin unexpectedly “resigned” he become the de facto “head” of Russia. He first served two 4 year terms, but was barred from a third by the then constitution. So he handed over the “power” but was immediately made “Prime Minister of Russia” Since regaining the “Precedency” for two more terms he has ***eliminated all candidates*** in the opposing parties and suggest ***major constitutional amendments*** that will keep him in power past 2024. During his term Russia has moved in an ***autocratic direction***

Both of the above are countries where one man has used that

party to become omnipotent. However what I find equally disturbing is what is happening right now in Texas USA where one party is now trying to secure the next election by ***changing the voting rules***. Thus eliminating a large proportion of the the population from voting with the Republicans introducing ***389 bills** with **restrictive provisions** in **48 states***. Is American, the "land of the free", the next country to be the land of the single party?

Only ***around half the worlds population*** live in a "democracy" but some like India should now now be downgraded as an "***Electoral autocracy***" Other countries like Saudi Arabia although having implemented some modest reforms for women still allow no political parties or national elections. An ***International Aline was "hijacked" by state security*** to arrest an opposition blogger but despite much protest, little real actions has been take by the EU. Likewise, little has happened to Myanmar since the the government was overthrown and disappeared.

Governments of the world should re-read the poem by Pastor Martin Niemoller. A poem I have always found emotional to read. The words may need to change, but the sentiment of the poem remains true today. And if our governments truly believe in democracy, maybe it's time to speak out?

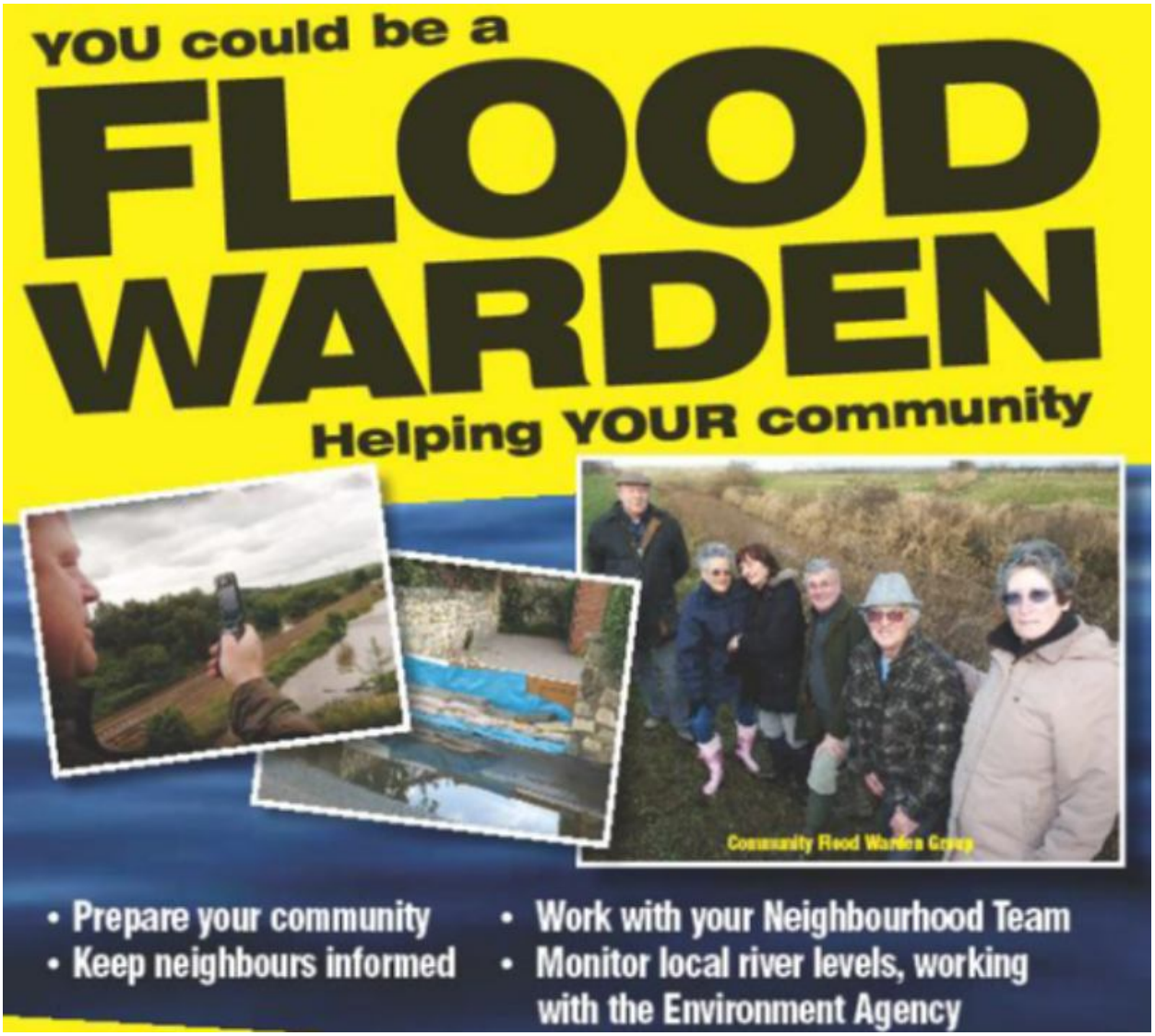
First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew

Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me

If you are interested in the above, perhaps you might like to read "***Democracy under Siege***" by Freedom House.

Parish Council Flood Warden

Parish Council seeks Flood Warden



Flooding – a growing problem

Flooding seems to have become a more regular occurrence in Stinchcombe over the last few of years. Problem areas include Berkeley Road, an area on Echo Lane and Church Lane/Wick Lane near the war memorial. The Parish Council would like to appoint a volunteer Flood Warden to help develop a more co-ordinated approach to tackling this issue.

Responsibilities

In brief, the Flood Warden's responsibilities will be to:

- provide a point of contact on flooding matters
- carry out timely inspections of problem areas
- talk to landowners informally about any issues and keep the Parish Council informed
- let Parish Council know if there is a need to contact other bodies e.g. Gloucestershire Highways

Your paramount responsibility will be to keep yourself safe and we will discuss with you how that can be achieved.

The Flood Warden will not be personally responsible for clearing ditches or unblocking gratings, gullies or pipes.

To find out more

If you may be interested, please contact ***Councillor Kath Hudson*** for a more detailed job description. She can also suggest relevant guidance and resources you may wish to look at.

Parish Council Charities Representative

Parish Council requires Charities Representative

Dursley United Charities operate in the Dursley, Cam, Stinchcombe and Uley area to help local people in need. The Charities own land and properties in the area, the rents from which are used to provide financial help for those who need it.

Russ Holloway has represented Stinchcombe Parish Council on the Charities' board for many years but has finally decided to retire.

The post is not onerous, involving little more than attendance at one board meeting per year and providing a brief financial report to the Parish Council at the Annual Parish Assembly. If you would be interested intaking on this role, or would like more information about it, please ***contact the Clerk***

Stinchcombe Social

A Source of Community Spirit

Don't you just love Stinchcombe Social. Just to know that after posting an innocuous "*does anyone have any recommendations for a cake maker.?*" this morning there have

been no less than ***EIGHT*** suggestions.

For those who might not know, The WhatsApp group “Stinchcombe Social” as you see, has now been around now since March 2020.

It is **ONLY for residents of the village** and some people are more active than others. Some people never post messages but just like to turn off the notifications for the group in the WhatsApp settings and read the messages.

During the past year, we have had lost pets, local planning issues, lots of of jokes, local recommended tradespeople, local notices, local groups started, local events and fundraising and lots and lots of local talk. **All just for Stinchcombe Residents**.

It also has been for the last year a great source of Local Community Spirit!

So if you are not on “Stinchcombe Social” and you live in Stinchcombe, you DO miss out on a lot of gossip!

Memorial Stone

Bengad Stud

As many of you know, sadly ***Laura Hutchins*** of Bengad Stud died just before Christmas 2020 – the end of an era.

Lots of us love to walk the footpaths through the fields of Stinchcombe and for many years this included enjoying the wonderful ***Bengad ponies***. A stone has been placed to the right of the gateway from Lower Church Field to Upper Church Field so that we don’t forget them.

I hope it brings a smile to your face and many happy memories.

Julie Thomas

A Stairway to Heaven?

Is this the Stairway to Heaven?

I had a lot of trouble writing this post as when I was researching the phrase “Stairway to Heaven”, using the Google God all I got was 3 pages of a song by Led Zeppelin which was banned!! (Do your own research on that).

Where I lived as a child there was a footpath called “Jacob’s Ladder” but a search on that ended with a path in the Derbyshire Peak District.

Trying a new search “Who built the Stairway to heaven?” came up with a footpath in Hawaii built during WW2 which is now closed and illegal to use.

I do feel that these tremendous treads, this stately stairwell, deserves a name deserving of the hard work by John Pinch in providing them for the community. Maybe **“Pinches Progress”** ?

What do you think they should be named? Comments below.

The March to Gloucester

Saturday 22nd May 2021 March to Gloucester

The good news is that we completed the Sponsored Walk last Saturday from Slimbridge to Gloucester both on land and on the canal!

A big thank you to all who took part and to everyone who supported us in this initiative. The support of our local community here in Stinchcombe is really special, so thank you all.



For those of us who took part, it was a wonderful day, great fun and successful on all fronts as we are thrilled to have raised over £1,000 for St Cyr's church and the Stroud Food Bank. As the funds are still being collected the final figure has yet to be confirmed, so there is still time to donate online through the link if you have missed out so far! ***Here is the link*** Meanwhile we are thrilled at the likely outcome.

There were ten of us walking the tow path and two in their

canoe peacefully paddling their way to Gloucester and they were the first to arrive! Not that it was a race, but rather a lovely day in the open air out when even the recent uncertain weather was kind to us and we escaped the heavy rain experienced elsewhere.

On route we managed to walk and talk in a very sociable manner, so catching up on news and views, as well as enjoying the beautiful scenery and enchanting birdlife especially several families of swans with their goslings.

Once again, many, many thanks to all involved.

Pippa.