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Politics is Broken

Gail Sheehy once said, "If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we are not really living. Growth demands a temporary surrender of security."

Could it be that, here in Australia, we refuse to "surrender our security" and choose "individual responsibility"?

By continuing to ask (plead) and expect too much from Government we have plunged our democracy into a bottomless abyss.

Way back, in 1970, the renowned development economist / political scientist, Albert O. Hirschman, published an interesting book that "veils" the current situation.

His book, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (Harvard University Press), makes a basic distinction between alternative ways to reacting to deterioration in business firms and, in general, to dissatisfaction with organizations and countries.

His 'exit' is for the member to quit the organization, or the customer to switch to a competing product, or a citizen to simply leave and the other 'voice' is for such individuals to remain loyal and exert influence for change 'from within'.

The efficiency of the competitive mechanism, with its total reliance on exit, is questioned for certain important situations. 'Exit' often undercuts 'voice' while being unable to counteract decline, 'loyalty' is seen in the function of retarding 'exit' and permitting 'voice' to play its proper role.

His interplay of the three concepts illuminates a wide range of economic, social and political phenomena and the author states in the preface; "Having found my own unifying way of looking at issues as diverse as competition and the two-party system I decided to let myself go a little."

This is an interesting exercise in understanding 'exit' along with the lesser understood realms of 'voice' and 'loyalty'.

Hirschman's explanation of the forces that make people stay in a place, voice their concerns in order to change things, or just get up and leave is highly illuminating for today's young Australians.

In reading this book it brought to mind the wise words from the great Thomas Jefferson —

"When the people fear their government, there is tyranny; when the government fears the people, there is liberty."

Ron