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The vote in Iraq on the constitution

The Joys of Democracy

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Yet again, Iraqis are asked to brave death to vote, this time for a
constitution shaped by their occupiers, which they have not read
and which can be changed at will by politicians.

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As anarchists argued before the US-UK invasion of Iraq, any claims that this was a war of liberation were false. Rather, it was an imperialist war, waged under the flimsiest of rationales, in which the victors would shape Iraq as they desire. Due to mass protest by Iraqis themselves, the occupiers have been forced to present a fig leaf of democracy.

The first such concession was the election last January. While the bravery of Iraqis in voting cannot be denied, the election itself was a farce. With even the names of candidates not revealed to the electorate, it is hard to say what, exactly, the voters were voting for. With the US imposed super-majorities required to elect a government, it was guaranteed that occupier friendly politicians would be selected — as they were.

Needless to say, the hype that the elections would mark a turning point was as false as that accompanying the numerous previous turning points. This has not deterred the proclamation of the next

turning point, namely the approaching referendum on the new Iraqi constitution. That this will be as false as previous ones seems obvious. The constitution has been shaped systematically by the US occupiers, who have specified what is acceptable and what it not. The badgering by US diplomats of Iraqi politicians continued up to the last, ostensibly to ensure changes that would overcome Sunni opposition to the document.

As it is, many Iraqis do not have a copy of the proposed constitution and so they are being asked to vote for a document most have not seen. Perhaps just as well, given that the US thinks it can keep on writing provisions just a few days ahead of the vote making any documents currently published potentially out of date. That, however, is not all. The Shiite and Kurdish parties have agreed that the newly elected parliament after December 15 will reopen negotiations with the Sunni Arabs on the constitution. This means that Iraqis are now being asked to vote on a constitution that may be subsequently changed. So not only are the people being asked to vote for something most of them they have not read, those who have read it do not know if it will be implemented!

This does not mean that many in Iraq will not vote for the constitution. They want to take control of their own country and many see a constitution as the means to do this. However, voting for something they have not read which can be changed at will by politicians is hardly a step towards that goal. It will, however, make good PR for the occupiers and that is why it is being pressed upon them.

One thing is sure, the constitution (accepted or not) will not end the insurgency, particularly as the occupier's hand is so noticeable on the constitution itself. What can be done to correct the situation in Iraq? Nothing, unless the US does what it will never do and end its occupation. Nor will the constitution ensure self-determination for Iraqis (with or without the US) as it will, at best, delimit the powers of the politicians and bureaucrats who will, in reality, determine their fate. Sadly, this is what they will get — un-

less they create self-managed alternatives to the joke which passes for democracy under capitalism.