

## **Social and Civil Democracy.**

Political democracy was achieved over 80 years ago with the introduction of universal suffrage that provided all citizens over a certain age with specific political rights and responsibilities.

This was followed in the mid 1930's to mid 1960's with social or welfare rights and responsibilities and extended to all or most citizens.

Next was the "Freedom of Choice Revolution" in conjunction with a program of privatization. It intended to introduce competition and provide citizens with a free choice between public and private service providers.

The public sector would, thereby become more efficient and citizens would have more influence over the services they demanded.

Accordingly, the public sector would be drastically reduced in size and most of the public services would be exposed to private competition via contracting out, service checks and the introduction of other market mechanisms.

It was argued that 'exit', rather than "voice", would provide citizens with the real choice of influence, but first and foremost as customers, rather than citizens.

Universal welfare states attribute many more responsibilities to the public sector and fewer to the market, than do residual welfare states. Some countries (such as the Nordic countries) are well known for their highly developed welfare programs while others are associated much more closely with commercial and/or voluntary provision of basic social services such as the United States.

The "Freedom of Choice Revolution" (in Sweden) severely underestimated the transaction costs of exit, both to individual consumers, to the organizations or firms providing such services and to the society as a whole.

The "Freedom of Choice Revolution" also ignores potential democratic benefits of voice, in particular of collective voice, in the provision of social services.

Furthermore, it drastically reduces the scope for citizen's rights and responsibilities, by transforming them into consumers.

This in turn contributes to the already growing "democracy deficit" (in Sweden). This deficit is most acutely felt at local government level, where the number of municipalities was reduced from nearly 2,500 in 1950 to just over one tenth, or 280 municipalities in the 1970's.

### **Civil Society.**

Premier Geoff Gallop (WA) said; *"The Western Australian Government strongly promotes increased community involvement in decision making. Involving the public is a 'must do' activity in Western Australia, as it is across the world...public participation works.*

### **Civil Society, the Law, and the State.**

Research has not yet resolved the role of the Law, and the State in relation to civil society. Historical and ethnological case studies examining citizens rights in the 20th century and legal pluralism in post colonial India aim to determine the relationship between government and civil society in its transformations and mixed forms.

### **Civil Society and the Economy: Trust as Social Capital.**

It is widely believed that trust is an indispensable resource both for differentiated economic activities in the modern market society and for civil society.....”bridging social capital” into a “bonding social capital”...from a linking resource for action to one based more strongly on exclusivity.

Source; [www.wz-berlin.de](http://www.wz-berlin.de) (Prof's Dr Jurgen Kocka and Dr Deiter Gosewinkel)

### **Talk of a Civil Society.**

In his inauguration speech US President George W Bush stated that:

*“A civil society demands from each of us good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness”.*

Kofi Annan said: *“The United Nations once dealt only with Governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving Governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society. In today's world, we depend on each other”.*

Source; BBC.Co.UK

*“Inequality in terms of income leads to greater differences in terms of literacy. Not only are we socioeconomically disadvantaged people in general less literate, but overall levels of literacy tend to be lower in countries where there is greater gap between well-off and poor. When this happens we become a less informed community overall and the quality of community life, public debate and the capacity of our economy are diminished – we all lose.*

*On average poorer people suffer poorer health”.*

Source; Prof Graham Vimpani, Head of Paediatrics & Child Care, Univ of Newcastle

Developing a culture of consultation within an organization will go a long way towards the development of successful public participation strategies. Involving the public needs to be a ‘taken-for-granted’ assumption of the way things are done in an organization – Peters and Waterman (1982) have developed a useful framework (the 7S framework) highlighting seven elements within an organization where culture of consultation can be enhanced. These are:

1. Shared Values: Shared values pull an organisation together in striving for common goals. The development of a set of shared values may require challenging-procedures and behaviours that have been accepted as the status quo for years,
2. Strategy: Developing a course of action that both anticipates and responds to changes external to the organisation. In respect of developing a culture of consultation in your organisation it means identifying "where you are now" and “where you want to be”.
3. Structure: A culture of consultation can be promoted if your own organization practices consultation internally and encourages input from all levels of the organisation.
4. Skills: These refer to your organisation's key attributes or capabilities - the practical skills of your staff accompanied by an attitude or mind-set committed to consulting the public on important community issues.

5. Staff: The challenge for organisations is how to make use of and to develop a team of motivated, committed and skilled practitioners,

6. Systems: The formal and informal procedures and routine processes guiding your organisation and making the best use of individual talents and skills,

7. Style: Actions are more decisive than words. People may listen to what managers say, but they believe what managers do. Senior staff must show their own enthusiasm towards the practice of consultation – with both their own staff and the public.

The benefits of public involvement include;

- Long term financial savings to the organizing agency.
- Increased user satisfaction in services.
- Increased likelihood of policy/program acceptance.
- Reduced conflict.
- Improved relationships with citizens.
- Improved public image.
- Stronger communities.
- Reinforced legitimacy in decision-making process.
- Actual or potential problems revealed
- Increased citizenship capacity.

Source; Citizens & Civics Unit, WA Gov.

*“Research shows that over the six years between 1995 and 2001 average disposable incomes increased by \$50 per person (or 11.9%) but the richest 20% of Australians increased their income by \$111 per week (or 14%) while the poorest 20% of Australians increased their incomes by \$13 per week (or 7.8%)”.*

Source Prof. Peter Saunders, Social Policy Research Centre, Univ. of NSW

Citizens have several roles vis-a-vis the state and/or municipal authorities today, most of which are passive, including their roles as tax payers, service users and/or clients. Their political activity and influence is limited to participating in general elections and perhaps also to becoming a member of a political party. The growing democracy deficit and the professionalization of fee provision of social services in Sweden have, thus, resulted in an unintended and undesirable situation where many citizens are pacified and become objects of social programs, rather than active subjects in meeting their own service needs. Stakeholder democracy promoted by the Labour Government in Britain is seen as a way of giving all groups in society, i.e., all citizens, clear rights and responsibilities, and thus a clear stake in society, in the way it is run and in the way it functions.

The concept of civil democracy suggests an alternative to the "Freedom of Choice Revolution" in terms of giving ordinary citizens greater rights and responsibilities to influence the services that are both financed and provided by the public sector, however, here via voice rather than exit.

Civil democracy provides the grounds for a fourth democratic revolution, or for a democratization of civil institutions and personal social services.

The term civil democracy refers to citizen empowerment through cooperative self-management of personal social services, where the citizens become members in social enterprises, where they participate directly in the production of the local services they demand, as users and producers of such services, and where they therefore become co-producers of these services.

One of the main underpinnings of "civil democracy" is a realization that democracy is interactive in its nature; i.e., the relationship between the rulers and the ruled comes into focus.

A democracy that encourages its citizens to vote every 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th year, but expects little or nothing else of them will lead to an atrophy of the democratic spirit of its citizens. Moreover, a democracy that attempts to meet most or all of the needs of its citizens without also expecting them to actively participate in the provision of some social services, at least occasionally, turns its citizens into passive consumers of such services rather than active co-producers of the services they themselves demand.

In Sweden many citizens have become the passive objects of a well-intended and well-organized universal welfare state, but one decided upon by politicians and run by professional bureaucrats. However, democracy rests on a moral base, which grows when exercised, but dwindles when left fallow for too long. Unless Putnam's (1993) concept of social capital clearly includes the phenomena of civil democracy and participation in local decision-making, it also faces the risk of becoming a passive resource.

If the provision of personal social services and other local services remains exclusively the domain of professional civil servants, and if it does not directly involve and concern the citizens in their daily-life, then political democracy will also atrophy.

Voting and paying taxes are not enough to maintain solidarity between groups and keep democracy alive.

In order for social capital to be turned into a resource available to many citizens in the economic, political and social spheres it must be exercised more often than at general elections or annual general meetings.

Civil democracy and the idea of enabling citizens to become co-producers of the personal social services they demand are part of a strategy for increasing the stake of the average citizen in the existence and effectiveness of the welfare state and public sector. Such a strategy attempts to turn passive citizens who merely pay their taxes, receive social services from the public sector and who vote regularly into active stakeholders in the society where they live. It proposes both to enable and empower them by providing them with opportunities to play an active role as co-producers of some of the most important personal social services they demand. It provides them with an individual stake in collective solutions to basic social needs and the collective provision of basic social services.

It provides them with obligations, responsibilities, but also rights and influence in the democratic decision-making structures set up to govern these services. Such services could include day care, primary and secondary education, long-term health care, handicap care, housing and elderly care.

In the 21st Century the rights and responsibilities of citizens will, hopefully, not be limited to those spelled out by universal suffrage and political democracy. Greater citizen involvement in the provision of basic social services promises to extend and develop the concept of citizenship in a new direction. It can make citizenship meaningful once again and provide means for getting citizens back into the management of important matters for their personal lives, their future and the future of their loved ones.

Civil democracy can provide all citizens with a stake in society and the running of personal social services and perhaps eventually even a local countervailing power to globalization of the market.

Source; Democracy and Making Citizenship Meaningful by Professor Victor Pestoff

*“The evidence shows that societies with high levels of income inequality suffer high levels of violence. Periods of history when income inequality goes up are periods when violent crime rises”.*

Source; ARC Fellow Prof. John Braithwaite, Aust. Nat. Univ, a leading researcher on crime

### **Democracy;**

REAL democracy and the democratisation of people can only be achieved if people generally are informed: about where power, and wealth for example, really are.

There is no mileage in highlighting social problems, unless they are then remedied: and that can be achieved only if people are willing, and able to influence their own lives.

And pensioners, because of their numbers alone are a group of people in Australia who are potentially powerful.

The time has come when we must realise, and use that power.

Source; APSL (Brian O'Halloran)

### **Empowerment.**

Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizations and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.

Empowered people have freedom of choice and action. This in turn enables them to better influence the course of their lives and the decisions which affect them.

Source; [www.worldbank.org/empowerment](http://www.worldbank.org/empowerment)

### **Empowerment has a number of aspects;**

- Being prepared to question aspects you are unsure or uncertain about.
- Feeling competent and positive.
- Have a high level of control over yourself.
- Feeling proud of things you are good at.
- Accepting your weaker points without guilt or despondency.
- Feeling confident of your ability to learn and grow through your ‘mistakes’.

### **Social Involvement;**

- Developing and maintaining a network of supportive people.
- Developing skills to assist and influence other people and organizations.
- Improved relationships with citizens.
- Improved public image.
- Reinforced legitimacy in the decision making process.
- Actual and potential problems revealed.

### **Key Objectives;**

- (1) Membership is personal and should suit the requirements of the individual.
- (2) Satisfy the expectations of membership by promoting avenues to increase the membership.
- (3) To ensure initiatives are soundly based and realizable.
- (4) Identify what you hope to achieve.
- (5) Identify success factors.
- (6) Create evaluation criteria.
- (7) Identify stakeholders or citizens.

### **Reflective Practice;**

Reflection throughout the process requires that you review where you've been and decide whether you are still heading in the right direction.

Reflecting on your plan will help identify all key elements in a project and allow you to make adjustments as you go.

Source: WA Gov. Kidshelpline, and Editor

### **Definition;**

*'A civil society is a public space between the state, the market and the ordinary household, in which people can debate and tackle action'.*

Source: BBC.co.uk

.....by this definition, civil society includes charities, neighbourhood self-help schemes, international bodies such as the Red Cross, the UN, and other religious-based pressure-groups etc.

Sources;

- (1) Prof Victor Pestoff (Democracy and Making Citizenship Meaningful)
- (2) A.P.S.L Queensland (The Comet)
- (3) Consulting Citizens, Cit. & Civics Unit, Dept of Premier & Cabinet, WA
- (4) Worldbank.org

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