1. Introduction

Stephen Hatch

Traditionally, socialist parties have aimed to concentrate power, for only by creating a strong state could they attack the entrenched positions of the more privileged classes. Today, paradoxically, many on the left advocate the decentralisation of power through greater participation. Yet this argument between the two strains of socialist thinking is not new: it has a long pedigree, dating at least from the split between Marx and Bakunin that broke up the International a hundred years ago. Why today does the pendulum seem to be swinging towards the decentralisers? Is it only another Utopian aberration, or are there aspects of modern society which make a different and stronger case for participation?

That is one fundamental question. But there is another. Under the banner of participation march a motley crowd, with a variety of objectives and programmes. In order to answer any more general questions these different and sometimes conflicting aspirations need to be disentangled.

To some extent for almost everybody, and especially for some, participation is an end in itself—one of those universally desired and desirable concepts like democracy which do not need to be justified in terms of other objectives. But this is a naive position. For some people the vision of small, self-governing communities is what is attractive about the notion of participation. This may represent a yearning for a non-industrial society, as with William Morris in the last century and parts of the commune movement today. Alternatively there is a more hard-headed belief in direct participation as a means of self-realisation, as something that brings psychological benefits to the participants, and thereby alters the quality of life and society. The arguments for the participation of old people in the running of day centres described by Peter Jewell in this pamphlet seem to be essentially of this kind, as are those advocated elsewhere by Carole Pateman (Participation and democratic theory, CUP, 1970).

Another kind of argument for participation is concerned with knowledge and communication. Planners and decision makers cannot know what people want without first canvassing the views of those who will be affected by their decisions and debating exhaustively alternative possibilities. In this sense participation is a way of getting better decisions out of the machine by basing them on fuller information. The Skelgill Report and Peter Levin’s contribution seem to be based to a large extent on this position.

The third argument for participation is concerned explicitly with power, rather than information and knowledge, though of course knowledge can be seen as a form of power. For some this means mobilising new political forces in an attack on existing political institutions. Less radically, it means supplementing and giving recognition to conventional pressure group activities. Rudolf Klein’s proposals for institutionalising consumer interests in the health service are an example of the sort of thinking involved here.

If there are different aspirations behind the label of participation, so also there are differences in the desired forms of participation. An important distinction is that between direct participation in decision making and exerting influence on decision makers. The latter is essentially a pressure group activity which is a long practised and well understood part of the democratic process. Some would say that this is not what is meant by participation, and would confine the term to direct involvement in decision making. But in practice the distinction is often ignored. Thus only the most radical of those who advocate participation in planning actually suggest that the people directly affected by planning decisions should themselves take planning decisions or be represented among the decision makers. More commonly, what is advocated is giving greater opportunities for the people affected to express and press their views and listening to these views more attentively. Participation schemes therefore take a number of forms, among them:

1. Setting up neighbourhood councils; that is, representative bodies covering
small areas, but with wide terms of reference.

2. Adding consumers to decision-making bodies (see contributions by Nick Derri- court and Harry Salmon).

3. Devolving responsibilities to groups or committees of consumers (Peter Jewell).

4. Encouraging the articulation of particular interests by steps, like recognising certain groups for consultation purposes (Nick Derriencourt, Harry Salmon, Rudolf Klein and Peter Levin).

5. Improving the flow of information through meetings, surveys and so on (Rudolf Klein and Peter Levin). Activities of this kind cannot properly be described as participation, though they may be conditions for it to occur effectively.

The fact that proposals for participation in housing and education occur, both in categories two and four, points to a real dilemma, between the on one hand recognition of tenants' representatives for the purposes of consultation and on the other adding tenants' representatives to committees that make decisions or devolving certain management functions to tenants' representatives. The essence of the dilemma is this. If the “participants” take on management responsibilities or functions, will their perspectives not be altered to the extent to effective representatives of the tenants? Where there are sharp conflicts of interest the dual role will become difficult, if not impossible.

The same problem has been central to debates about industrial democracy. For some this has meant workers' control, that is direct participatory democracy: for others recognising the essentially opposition role of trade unions, but strengthening this through improved processes of joint consultation.

Debates about workers' control raise another issue for contemporary arguments on participation—that is, who is to participate. To answer “everyone” fudge a potentially critical conflict. This pamphlet is concerned with the participation of the consumers or beneficiaries of services, but some advocates of participation are more concerned with the participation of those who provide services, that is, workers' control. The kind of conflict that can arise on this score is well illustrated by the famous dispute between the teachers and black parents at Ocean Hill/Brownsville in New York. No comparable conflict has yet occurred in this country, but it would be wrong to ignore the potential difference of interest between the providers and the consumers of services. At present this difference may be masked, as with social work, when it is the radical social workers who are prominent in claiming a larger say both for themselves and also for their clients. However, the opposition within the teachers' unions to having parents in the classroom is an example of the sensitivity of professionals to encroachments on their domain. The growing professionalisation of local services is unlikely to lessen this sensitivity. Hence the progress of participation will not depend simply on the intermingling of management for participation with the machinery required to make decisions through the formal representative processes. It will also require different attitudes on the part of providers of services, not only regarding what they feel to be their own domain but also, as shown by Harry Salmon's contribution, in the way they relate to “participants.”

The role of professionals raises the issue, touched on in the opening paragraph, of the underlying reasons for the growing demands for participation. These fall into two categories. One is the continuing extension of social provision and of planning, affecting both services provided from public funds and “private” activities, which goes hand in hand with growing bureaucratisation and professionalisation. The way this can distance and alienate the ordinary citizen, even the intended beneficiaries of local services, is powerfully analysed by Peter Morris. The important question is whether arrangements for participation will necessarily improve the situation. Some attempted exercises in participation increase rather than decrease frustration, for instance the public meeting which aims to sound out local feeling but leaves local residents more confused and uncertain. It will be important to ensure that the cause of participation does not founder on the experience of ill-conceived and half-hearted gestures in that direction. In this respect, the contributors to this pamphlet go some way in sorting out the wheat from the chaff.

The second category of reasons for the growing pressure for participation concerns, putting it very broadly, changes in the relationship between the political system and the social structure. There have been more fully by Barry Hindess (The decline of the working-class politician, Paladin, 1971). Put in brief, there has in recent years been a significant change in the social composition of the active membership of the Labour Party, reflected in the increasingly middle-class social background of MPs and Labour councillors in many local authorities, particularly in London. Although systemic evidence of working-class political activism is lacking, it does appear that the Labour Party is now much less a class party, more of a loose populist coalition led by progressives drawn from professional occupations.

The other side of the coin is a decline in the homogeneity and cohesiveness of the working class. This has created ethnic divisions among the working class, evident particularly in inner-city areas. In addition many of the controversial issues of urban politics are ones that divide rather than unite the working class. John Rex in his analysis of housing classes (Race, community and conflict, 1967) points out that a person's position in the housing market, for instance whether he is a furnished tenant or living on a local authority estate, has significant implications for his political interests and that housing class is in this sense a class defined in occupational terms. Disputes over the eligibility of furnished tenants for rehousing during slum clearance illustrate the kind of conflict that may occur within the working class. These are not easily contained within the Labour Party, and the consequence is to be seen in the growth of groups that are isolated from the political process. Such groups are most numerous in the inner city. The percentage voting Labour in 1967 fell from 67 per cent to 52 per cent, whereas nationally the fall was from 79 per cent to 72 per cent. In the past there was a difference between middle-class privilege and membership of the working class, and the Labour Party could legitimately claim to be the political instrument of the working class. But it was not a passive instrument - it helped to forge and mould the political aspirations of the working class. Today this is less true. The Labour Party aims pragmatically to capture the middle ground in an era of issue rather than class politics. Consequently, the underprivileged seek political expression outside the formal system, through incursions into participatory politics. But these are generally weak. Following a community activist on what may be only an ego trip is not an effective substitute for mobilising a mass party.

Conclusion

To conclude, the development of participation is a necessary response to the growth in scale of the services provided by government and the presence of increasing groups of the population isolated from the political system. But these two forces do not necessarily point in the same direction. It is the middle classes who have the skill to manipulate bureaucratic systems; indeed much of the pressure for participation is the middle classes responding to the extension of planning. They alone will benefit from the growth of participation if styles of participation are tailored suit the interests of middle class activist. Public meetings, exhibitions of plans, opportunities to make representations and present alternative proposals are of little use to people who lack the skills and the resources to present their views at the requisite level of formal
2. new forms of government

Peter Marris

There are trends in highly industrialised societies which, as it seems to me, tend to undermine the viability of our traditions of government. Unless we can establish new forms of government, democratic institutions risk becoming increasingly ineffectual, beset by continual budgetary crises, cynically manipulative, but weakly responsive to pressure and regarded with contempt. We shall have neither confidence in government, nor confidence in our liberty. The argument should fit any highly industrialised democracy, but I want to apply it to Britain particularly.

the dilemma of costs

As industrialised societies grow richer, the proportion of needs met directly or indirectly by government tends to increase. Education and health care for instance. Since the privilege of those who could afford it, once to be seen not as universal rights but only government intervention can secure a more or less equitable distribution of them. Social justice apart, too gross a disparity would threaten social cohesion. So the most important desires which growing prosperity can satisfy tend to be provided as a public or quasi-public service. At the same time, the industrial wealth itself, plus new demands upon public amenities: to control pollution, dispose of waste, preserve parkland, provide roads, water, and generally to protect the people of a crowded island, with more and more money in their pockets, from making life intolerable for each other. Economic development creates a more complexly interdependent society, and hence a growing need for comprehensive regulation. My first assumption, then, is that government will become an increasingly intrusive agent of what we most want and so, also, of what some will not want at all.

Secondly, the relative costs of government provision will increase, because the most crucial of them are services such as health care and education, where the productivity of labour is hard to improve. But the people who work in them will still expect their pay to keep in line with wages in manufacturing where higher productivity meets the cost. And the goods which government provides, such as cheap housing, tend to be just those where labour is comparatively unproductive, which I suppose, is why private industry is reluctant to take part. So, government is faced with growing demands at growing costs, and has continually to search for more revenue.

It then risks a taxpayer's revolt. Politically, it cannot easily either raise more taxes or cut back the services which people still demand. In this dilemma it tends to make small cuts in provision which hurt some without substantially reducing its costs; and to revert to regressive taxation, such as user charges which do not so immediately unite everyone in opposition. At worst, no budget can be passed at all; the conflicting pressures are deadlocked. The crisis arises because people do not feel that they control the use government makes of their money, and so mistrust the costs without lessening their demand for service.

the paradox of efficiency

The dilemma provokes a search for greater efficiency. If more could be done with the same money, the costs would be politically more manageable. Some suggest introducing the mechanisms of the market into government provisions, stimulating efficiency through competition. I think the opportunities to do this are likely to be few. The important choices are often indivisible and so binding on everyone: he may be free to choose whether to use it, but not whether to pay for it and accept its effect on his life. Even where choice is conceivable, in education or health care, more freedom seems to make for less equitable distribution. Government then has to redress the inequity by selective assistance, and this turns out to be either very inadequate or very expensive. In both private and public provision, the pressure towards rationalisation must lead to a search for wider control intrinsically incompatible with the conception of a free market. So I believe that above all government will seek to rationalise its services—through planning.
coordination, research. If we had better information, understood the consequences of intervention, organised services more coherently, resources would be less wastefully used. This would not resolve the political problem however because paradoxically it increases the cost, and it removes services even further from democratic control.

The Seebohm Committee’s report on personal social services illustrates the relationship between efficiency and cost. It argues for an integrated service, replacing the confusion of overlapping, poorly co-ordinated agencies with a single comprehensive service to which people can bring their needs. Yet just because it is more efficient it will reveal a host of unmet needs, because its structure is more comprehensive in scope, it cannot so easily blame responsibility, leaving problems in a limbo between jurisdictions. So the Seebohm report repeatedly emphasises that it is still a token commitment of larger resources. I think the same argument must apply wherever the present provisions are poorly organised, ignore the underlying causes of need, and are uncertain of the immediate economic consequences. Thus the budgetary pressures which provoke the search for a more efficient use of resources end by placing even lower demands on the budget. The institutional resistances to reform are thereby much harder to overcome without expansion; with a static or declining budget, changes are more immediately threatening than when innovation is incremental.

Conversely, cuts in provision are likely to make worse the value for money. The loss of efficiency is disproportionately greater than the saving in cost. Fewer books, more crowded classrooms for instance, do not save very much money, but create frustration which seriously damages the quality of education.

Rationalisation, however, also tends to make government seem even more remote from the people. It depends on knowledge and techniques of analysis which few people have mastered. It lends more authority to the expert, who justifies his proposals by logic rather than popular feeling. It also makes for centralisation, where the interests of any individual voter are merged with so many others, in so many issues, that he can no longer use his vote to express any particular demand. Efficiency means intelligent coordination, it leads towards an doing at a planning of wider and wider scope because everything is dependent on everything else, both geographically and functionally. Hence physical planning merges with social and economic planning, towns merge with county council areas, regions, and the crucial decisions become further and further abstracted. These decisions bind the future too. A man finds that his back garden is to be cut off to make a main road, for reasons he cannot follow, worked out by people he never elected, in the interest of which he knows nothing of and he is told that if he objects to this, he should have said it several years ago.

weakness of representative democracy

So the expansion of government services, and their rising cost, leads to a search for efficiency which generates further expansion, and a further alienation of the citizen, whose reluctance to pay for it all is thus the problem in the first place. In themselves, more and better services, regulated with a concern for social justice and the common good, and intelligently planned may broadly represent what people want. However, the traditional principles of representative democracy can cope with this, since this expands on them. They were designed for an age when government defended the realm, maintained law and order, protected people from gross exploitation, but was not itself a major provider of every day needs, nor continually intervened in the shaping of people’s surroundings. Universal suffrage legitimised government, as the expression of sovereignty of the people, and provided a sanction against the abuse of power. It was conceived as a means of determining leadership, not as a means by which people would control the allocation of services. But once government becomes a major provider, it stands in much the same relationship to each individual citizen as any private business, except that he cannot take his custom elsewhere. He can only protest his interest. For the most part, he must buy at the government’s price, whether he personally wants the provision or not. He is even to pay his share of things he abhors.

To some extent, the same evolution is taking place even in non-government provision. In the interests of efficiency, companies merge into larger and larger units, forcing a greater aggregation of consumer demand; and the customer finds himself remote from the supplier. His personal needs carry less weight, and his complaints fall on the deaf ears of a computer. Hence people are beginning to turn against great corporations as they turn against government, out of the same resentment at their own impotence.

the evolution of government

All this leads up to my central concern: the evolution of a pattern of government that can better reconcile individual capacities for personal autonomy. But the “fashionable preoccupation with participation” (as British politicians are inclined to disparage it) is not simply a matter of ideological fashion. It reflects fundamental changes in society which cannot help but raise these issues. They will become increasingly critical as the part government plays in everyday life grows in scope and cost, and the paradoxes of rationalisation play themselves out.

How then, might the conflicts between planning and democracy, effectiveness and cost, collective and personal choice be managed better? It seems to me that three inter-related kinds of change, especially would be needed: to break administration down into a looser network or more open decision-making bodies; to institutionalise the arbitration of conflicting interests far more comprehensively than ever before, at every level; and to establish new rights of intervention in the processes of government.

The current concern with decentralisation and participation, planning and the use of legal advocacy to defend a common interest: with the evaluation of social policies, and the theory of systems and their regulation: experiments in com-
5. Health services: the case for a counter-bureaucracy

Rudolf Klein

Once it used to be accepted that history represented the inevitable, inexorable and irresistible pace of progress, from primitive savagery to enlightened civilization. Now this approach is no longer fashionable. But historians of medicine, with more reason than most, still tend to see development as a series of events from the witch doctor to the scientist. Generally, it is difficult to quarrel with this interpretation. But in terms of the relation between the doctor and the patient and the relation between the service and the consumer, this evolutionary view is clearly not tenable. In this respect the history of the medical services, in Britain, at least, is one of regression, with the medical profession successfully asserting its autonomy and capturing control of the system, at the expense of the client or consumer.

Before Lloyd George's introduction of national health insurance, the system of providing medical care outside hospital—an incomplete, partial system admitted in numerous clubs of workingmen's clubs, medical and friendly societies and institutes which hired their own doctors. This machinery of lay control was represented by the medical profession. However, in 1911—when numerous clubs and societies had to register under the National Insurance Act—this co-operative welfare system was still an example of what has now become called self-help through participation in co-operative enterprises. There were 2,600 approved societies with 14,400 branches. By 1922, when the Royal Commission on National Health Insurance was investigating the situation, the number of societies and branches had dropped by half. Even so, and despite the dominance of bureaucratic giants like the Prudential, there were still 63 cooperatives with memberships between 50 and 1,000—the Airdale Oddfellows, the Ravenstone Druids, the Pride of the Hill, the Mayfield Temperance, the Phoenix Iron Works and the rest.

To read this roll call is not just to indulge in nostalgia—but to remind oneself that participation—the middle-class luxury of the mid-century—was a working class necessity of the nineteenth century. It is also to stress that there is no natural, inevitable progression from bureaucracy to participation; that the evidence, for what it is worth, suggests the opposite, and that the system that was undermined by the 1911 Act and later replaced by the National Health Service did not work very well despite or because of (depending on one's point of view) the large element of participation.

Moreover, contemporary evidence from very different health systems in other countries tends to undermine any belief in the automatic efficacy of participation. In West Germany, today's sick funds (the equivalents of yesterday's approved societies in Britain) are self-governed, autonomous organizations run in theory by any rate—the representatives of the insured. However, "participation in voting is very low; candidates are generally proposed by labour unions. Most of the representatives identify themselves with their sick funds rather than with the consumers of services." (M. Pfann, "German health insurance," International Journal of Health Services, vol. 1, no. 4, 1971.) In Saskatchewan, Canada, more than 50 community sponsored group practices were born as a result of the doctors' strike in the early 1960s. Only three remain today, and the consumers have no voice in their operation. In New Zealand, health councils are directly elected, but interest in voting is low.

Indeed the case for more participation usually rests on two sets of largely unargued, and very dubious, assumptions or propositions. The first is that participation somehow is a natural human need, drive or instinct: that in that homo sapiens is also homo participans. The other, supporting or alternative, assumption is that participation is a moral imperative, that to value democratic institutions is also to feel a sense of obligation to take part in their running: that people ought to participate even if they do not feel like it spontaneously. Before examining the health services in detail it is worth looking at these propositions critically.

To begin with the evidence about people's desire to participate seems, at best, to be...
ambiguous. On the whole, despite the periodic agitation by students and other activists—most people simply ignore existing opportunities to participate. Apart from trade unions, where often there is no choice, membership of clubs and organisations tends to be high. For example, in civic or community groups it ranges from 2 per cent for residents' clubs to 4 per cent for parents' associations—though participation tends to be higher among white-collar workers. Even trade unions, passive membership is only exceptionally translated into active participation. But the striking thing is the experience of the Consumers' Association. The prototype, one might think, of an organisation with a membership dedicated to the idea of involvement and participation. Recently, the Consumers' Association has 250,000 subscribers entitled to become voting members: yet of these fewer than 2,500— or one per cent—have chosen to become such members and only some 200 of them turn up at the Association's annual meeting.

In this passivity non-participants are behaving more rationally than the all-out advocates of participation. A more direct extension of the second proposition is true in the case of the Consumers' Association. The simple equation of "more resources equal a better service" does not hold, other things being equal, he will benefit from increasing his share of what is going on in the way of medical manpower and other services. The consumer's interest is to have a say in how resources are organised and administered—the way in which services are run.

In fact we were prepared to contemplate more than one form of participation, if power over the allocation of resources was a factor. It would be logical to assume a high degree of participation—and to design our system of health care accordingly. The American experience of community action suggests that participation is high when it involves access to extra resources of health or education or money for the blacks and other poor sections of the population, but that the whole experiment tends to turn sour when in fact those in power are not prepared to concede control.

But in the British context it is possible to conceive giving more control over the allocation of resources to the local community, even if there is not enough evidence to suggest that this has not happened. On the contrary, the central government prevents Local Education Authorities from improving the quality of their services under a certain point. In health, in particular, it has been seen to be a source of criticism, and it is even more difficult to see the Department of Health allowing any local discretion in this respect; the present drift of policy is precisely the opposite direction. All the emphasis is on ironing out the historical inequalities in the provision of medical services.

Here then is the dilemma. The logic of encouraging participation in decisions about the allocation of resources is to encourage—I say at the very least, to accept—inequality, perhaps even to increase it. It is to accept, for example, a community policy to keep a local hospital open (much as it can already do) if it cannot raise enough rates, to keep a local bus line operating. If this were to become the accepted pattern, if it were to become the accepted pattern, if in fact participation were linked to local self-interest— as it is in Finland, where the hospital service is run by local authorities which are not even, at one time or another, even, to be a source of criticism, it might be even more difficult to see the Department of Health allowing any local discretion in this respect; the present drift of policy is precisely the opposite direction. All the emphasis is on ironing out the historical inequalities in the provision of medical services.

A great deal of existing evidence can be mustered in support of this view. Take the field of town planning, where participation through local groups has been perhaps most effective in recent years. It has been effective for two reasons. The participators have had a direct interest, usually economic, to defend their own interests; in this motorway will disturb the peace of my garden and lower the value of my house. Also, participation in town planning is the result of a more general example of consumer differentiation; the protestors usually want someone else to have the motorway and its accompanying disamenities. In the USA, similarly, perhaps
acquires the information needed for participation by the very fact of being a patient. If waiting times are excessive, if meals are bad, if staff are rude or uncommunicative, if appointments cannot be made for weeks to come, if visiting hours are inconvenient, who is better placed to question the hospital? The consumer may lack the knowledge about whether he is getting the right treatment but he certainly knows whether or not the treatment is being delivered in the right way or not. He can judge from the evidence: about the present high rate of consumer satisfaction with the NHS, patient expectations are pitched on the low side and the most common attitude is that it would be ungrateful to complain.

So if there is scope for patient participation anywhere in the NHS, it is clearly in this area. Indeed, in a very tentative and haphazard way, there have already been some moves in this direction. One hospital has set up a patient's affairs department, another has experimented with patient-controlled wards, and the like. However, the prospect of regular surveys of patient attitudes carried out as a matter of routine is still exceptional. If one is to analyse patient complaints in a systematic way or treat them positively as basic management information about customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction, then the latter is still exceptional to find hospitals whose management analysts can be made happy about their work.

Lastly, there is the recurring and endemic problem which is peculiar to the health service, although it may spread to other public services as these become more profession-dominated. The extent to which the NHS is an example of the patient's participation, and the junior doctors and nurses are now trying to extend the principle of patient control or self-management, as well as the professionals, is difficult to introduce consumer-participation. For even organisational issues can affect the professional autonomy of the staff. Arguments about the appointment system are often arguments about whether the time of doctors or patients is more valuable: arguments about waiting lists, or about the benefits of the service to the patient, or about the convenience of the staff or of the doctors, or the benefit of the patient to the service. The private sector, which can by its nature be a captive clientele, and there is no need to try to attract customers by making the service more attractive and consumer orientated. Given that a monopoly is responsible for a monopoly health service and has a virtual monopoly of technical information, it is difficult to be hopeful about the ability of the consumer to become effective participant in the running of the NHS—however desirable this might be in theory.

Given the inevitable weakness of the consumer in a service like the NHS, given the problems of obtaining and using the information required for effective participation, it may be that a rather different approach is required. This is to accept that consumer participation is bound to be sporadic and unsystematic, a reaction to specific events and developments rather than an on-going process, a matter not so much of committee work but of protests and pressures when something happens which allows a healthy lobby to be mobilised. For once it is realised that participation is neither a moral duty nor a natural instinct or drive, that it is exceptional rather than the norm, then the question of whether it is possible to devise machinery for deliberately strengthening the consumer's position in the NHS.

For what the NHS, and perhaps any monopoly service needs, is a counter-bureaucracy. The need appears to be for an organisation which exists to service the consumer of public monopolies like the NHS, which has the resources of monopoly to back it. There is a need to analyse their performance from the point of view of the service. As the experience of the various industries shows, there is little point in setting up consultative committees and all the paraphernalia of participation if their real aim is to gain input from dependent resources required to conduct a dialogue on equal terms. Similarly, it is difficult to be optimistic about the role of the proposed community health councils if these were to lack the authority and the independence required to conduct an effective participation system.

At present, it is the absence of public access to information about the performance of the health service at a local level, where it matters most to the consumer, that is remarkable. Even the most elementary schools need information about the quality of teachers and textbooks. The NHS is a monopoly health service and has a virtual monopoly of technical information. It is difficult to be hopeful about the ability of the consumer to become effective participant in the running of the NHS—however desirable this might be in theory.

The role of a counter-bureaucracy should not be to interfere administratively or judicially, with the operations of the health service. Its detailed findings to the health service authorities, not to local government, local government and police forces, but to provide information required by the consumer and by local government. This is the right way to go, but one thing is clear: doctors themselves are not the right people to provide it. Some regional hospital boards do not even issue an annual report; many of the Executive Councils, responsible for general practice, issue nothing at all. On the whole even the members of hospital management committees are singularly badly equipped to evaluate the services provided on an independent, comparative basis and have no basis for demand the service provided by the professionals who run the service. It is surprising given the medical profession's own restrictions on doctors providing information about their activities to potential clients.

Hence the case for deliberately setting out to create a counter-bureaucracy. Indeed what might be called a consumer information or protection service seems to be much more urgent in the near monopoly area of public services like the NHS than in that of the competitive market; it is a pity that this whole issue has been so neglected by the consumer movement in this country which in effect has concentrated on the consumer as a buyer to the exclusion of the consumer as a user and it is in an even more vulnerable position.

Some of the elements of a counter-bureaucracy already exist. There is the school inspection service, the Audit of the Health Advisory Service. There is the Public Accounts Committee, soon to be reinforced by the Health Commissioner. An inspectorate for local government has been proposed.

But one of the most obvious and most important of these institutions is the lack of direct responsibility to those actually using the facilities of the hospital Advisory Service. This Inspectorate for local government service may rely on the information provided by the health authorities, not to the health service, but to the consumer of health services: its annual report gives general conclusions not the details relevant to local users.
1. Technical or professional decisions about treatment.

2. Administrative decisions about the organisation or delivery of care.

The first category is largely that of decisions made by members of the medical profession (though other health professionals, nurses, for instance, may have an equal, or greater, say). It is in this respect that the health service is, if not unique, very much a special case—interesting and important precisely because it raises in a highly developed form a problem which is only beginning to make itself felt in education and other social services.

Put very simply, the problem is that posed by a universal service where a profession manages to establish both a monopoly of technical knowledge and control of entry. As a result, the health service is perhaps the only example in Britain of effective workers’ control; consultant syndicalism in action. To discuss consumer participation in the NHS is therefore to discuss, in effect, the relationship between the patient and his doctor: to ask whether a profession can be made answerable for its performance.

At present patients only “participate” in the sense that churchgoers “participate” in the Mass. This may be a mystic communion, but there can be no doubt as to who is in charge of the service. Although much of modern medicine is no more mysterious (though perhaps more complex) than car engineering, the profession’s approach still bears the imprint of its pre-scientific past. When, indeed, a doctor’s manner and authority was probably his only tool of his trade. Equally, one of the main effects of the introduction of the NHS in Britain has been to weaken the bargaining position of the consumer.

To equate the strength of the consumer’s bargaining position with a fee paying system of medical care is, of course, to make the misleadingly oversimplified assumption that the consumer has the necessary economic resources for successful bargaining. Even assuming that it were possible to give consumers the necessary economic resources for successful bargaining—by a system of health vouchers, for example—the patient’s position is still much weaker than that of a shopper or voter. Neither the acutely ill nor the geriatric patient (to take the two extremes) is in a position to bargain; only in the middle—the area of what might be called optional, convenience or cosmetic medicine—does the participation of consumers through consumer choice begin to make sense. What is more, a market system may often work against the consumer’s interest.

However, to acknowledge the weaknesses of this model should not mean ignoring the flaws in the NHS model. Admittedly, the British system does not give the doctor any incentive to exploit the patient, for instance by carrying out unnecessary operations and procedures. But neither does it give him any incentive to pay any heed to the wishes of the patient. The NHS has enlarged the doctor’s area of choice (since he is no longer restrained by his patient’s lack of means) but not that of the consumer. Arguably indeed the consumer’s choice is shrinking the whole time as the organisation of the health service becomes technically, if not necessarily socially, more “rational.” For rationalisation means closing down hospitals, enlarging group practices, concentrating resources at supermarkets eliminating the small shopkeeper and so reducing the area of choice.

Moreover, the consumer’s role is also being diminished, irrespective of the nature of the medical care system, by the growing technical complexity of much of medicine today. What may be called the information or the data processing role of participating in medical decisions is growing the whole time. In other words, a patient has acquired a considerable amount of expertise in order to be able to argue with his doctor which means devoting more time than most people can afford to the acquisition of what will be only sporadically useful knowledge.

In short, it is rational for the average patient to remain ignorant. For as a consumer of medical services he is in a different position to that of a consumer of other services in a number of respects. For example, he is only going to use medical services from time to time. So he has little incentive to acquire information in advance of use—since this may (if he is fortunate) be information wasted. But with his access to these services, he will often be in no position to acquire the information needed to establish an effective dialogue with his doctor; a man in an acute care unit, to take an extreme example, is not well placed to read the literature about heart disease.

Hence the position of power occupied by the medical profession. Not only does the consumer of medical care lack the knowledge required to participate effectively in decisions about treatment—quite apart from any emotional deference. But the sensible consumer of medicine is not going to waste too much time acquiring that knowledge. For even if he had the required knowledge to discuss techniques of treatment with his doctor, it is uncertain whether he could affect the medical decision. And what might be called the second law of participation is that in any information is proportionate to the chances of changing any decision: the greater the odds on changing the decision, the more rational it is to invest in information, and vice versa.

The possibly depressing conclusion seems to be that prospects of more patient participation in treatment decisions are dim. On the other side of the balance sheet, though, the fact that knowing too much about medical care are those which may persuade doctors actively to seek the cooperation of their patients in treating or preventing disease: coronary disease and cancer are the outstanding examples where the medical profession will have to try to educate and involve the consumer in an attempt to modify habits. Paradoxically, therefore, the medical profession may have to take the initiative in this direction, though this carries the implication that the task may be defined paternalistically as educating the patient, rather than as an exercise in consumer/producer co-operation.
Every proposal for significantly changing the physical environment in Britain has to pass through a prescribed procedure of some kind. These vary in scope and involve varying degrees of public involvement. In the case of projects sponsored by central or local government or statutory undertakers, the procedure usually involves providing an opportunity for the public to register objections, generally followed by a public inquiry, and a formal decision from the appropriate government minister. Ordinary development proposals have to be submitted to the local planning authority for planning permission. Refusal, or the attachment of conditions to going ahead, may lead to an appeal to the Secretary of State for the Environment, and the appeal will be the subject of an inquiry prior to decision. Certain planning applications are called-in by the Secretary of State for his own decision, the application itself—rather than an appeal—being the subject of the inquiry which is generally held. Then there are the statutory development plans, which indicate the local planning authorities’ intentions for the way that land should be used. Development plans have invariably been subjected to a public inquiry before receiving ministerial approval. The development plan system is currently in the throes of major change, but the public scrutiny of proposals will continue to play a major part. All of the current procedures have been criticised as offering little scope for public involvement: this chapter sets out to show why this is as restricted as it is and to suggest how it might be extended, in particular by the modification of procurement and by the action of citizen groups.

Peter Levin

The nature of the planning process

Statutory procedures are only part of the planning process. One needs to look further to discover how, in practice, actions that change the physical environment are determined—how a particular development comes into being, and why it takes that form and not another. One well known approach to the problem is to look for decisions. For example, one might ask the Town Clerk of the Municipal Borough of Exbury what the decisions were that resulted in the building of a certain housing estate consisting of six tower blocks for his Council. The conversation with him might run along the following lines:

“When did the Council decide to go ahead with the scheme?”

“The final decision, I suppose, was when the Council accepted the contractors’ tender in 1965 after hearing that the Ministry of Housing had no objection to our doing so. But after hearing from the Ministry, I was told it was virtually inevitable, since the figure for what would cost was what the Council expected when tenders were invited. We already had planning permission from the County Council, of course.”

“Was going out to tender the result of a formal decision?”

“Yes indeed. That was the decision to proceed on the basis of the scheme recommended by the Housing Committee. The scheme itself had been drawn up by a firm of consultant architects, who had been commissioned by our Chief Architect.”

“Was that decision to proceed a completely crucial decision?”

“Well, it was important. Actually there was some suggestion of scrapping three of the towers and having long, low blocks instead, but the Council more or less had to accept the scheme as it stood, because if they had wanted major modifications the design work alone would have set the scheme back 6 or 9 months. And discussions would have had to be reopened with the Ministry’s regional architect, who had already given his informal approval. We also would have had to go back to the County Council for fresh planning permission. Moreover, the contractors, who were coming towards the end of the Council’s previous building project, had been given to understand in fairly clear terms that they would be able to carry on with this project, without a break, using the same industrialised building methods. So in practice the Council didn’t have much choice so far as the design was concerned, given that they wanted a housing scheme in the first place. They’d have looked pretty silly if they’d suddenly decided to abandon the whole thing.”

“The crucial decision must have been taken earlier than that. Was it the Housing Committee’s acceptance of the final scheme?”

“That was important too. But the Housing Committee would have been faced with the same deterrents to modification or abandonment at that point as the full Council were shortly after. And it was they who had already agreed at the draft layout stage on a six tower block scheme. On the basis of their agreement planning permission had been obtained from the County Council, an informal go ahead received from the Ministry’s regional architect, and a great deal of work put into producing the detailed design.”

“So the Housing Committee’s decision to accept the draft layout was a crucial one?”

“Well, fairly crucial. But their options were limited. The consultant architects submitted five draft schemes, of which only one did not feature tower blocks and that one was demonstrably inferior on several counts, for example by making provision for children’s play and car parking. They emphasised very strongly that in their professional judgment tower blocks offered the best architectural solution to the problem.”

“It sounds as though the choice of architects was a crucial decision too.”

“Certainly commissioning them set the seal on the Council’s desire to have the housing scheme, and the choice certainly had an important influence on the design. But, as our Chief Architect pointed out, the size and shape of the site definitely made it more difficult—though not impossible—to devise a non-tower block scheme. In fact, it might have been possible to buy some adjoining land, but the opportunity wasn’t taken.”

“A crucial non-decision, perhaps?”

“It was another important influence on the design, yes. Like the fact that at the time it wasn’t our practice to involve the Housing Manager in briefing the consultant architects on such schemes. He already knew very well of the problems of families with young children in tower blocks, and had discovered how difficult it was to find tenants for the tower blocks the Council had already built. He would have warned the Housing Committee off tower blocks for sure.”

Although this story is fictitious, it represents a compressed ‘collage’ of experiences that are by no means atypical of real life. It shows how the administrative context of the design process can influence the product of that process. And it illustrates the well known fact that once a proposal takes shape administrative procedures and that they can endow it with a ‘momentum’ that makes it very difficult to alter.

For the purpose of charting the progress of a planning process, the concept of ‘momentum’,although graphic, is not entirely satisfactory. It will be more useful to employ another concept, that of ‘commitment’. An individual has a commitment towards taking a particular action if he perceives a penalty to be attached to not taking that action. It may be this contemplation of a commitment, or that of an intention, that influences the whole process in a particular way. Commitment towards a course of action is a relative quantity, and its strength will be measured by the penalty perceived to be associated with substituting another action or no action at all, before it is implemented. Once it is fully implemented, commitment to it is complete—100 per cent—so that it will thereafter be impossible to substitute another action or no action at all. If it is or it is implemented, the existence of commitment, should it be noted, does not actually determine that the action takes place. It will sometimes be considered worth paying the penalty.

In the above example, councillors discovered when they came to take the final, formal decision that they already had a very strong commitment towards accept-
The scheme as it stood, with six tower blocks. Had they rejected it they would have borne responsibility for delaying the rehousing of families in need and for the waste of money involved; they would have risked forfeiting the confidence of others by breaking a gentleman’s agreement; and they would have suffered loss of “face” through failing to defend plausibly a decision for which they had been responsible, let alone the unpleasantness of having to destroy their psychological attachment to an action on which they had resolved.

Given the commitment generating nature of the planning process, the problem of how to achieve participation in planning acquires a new dimension. The fundamental equation is this: the scope for influencing a prospective action decreases as the decision making body’s commitment to going ahead strengthens. Unfortunately for participation, many current planning procedures are simply ineffective at producing commitment: they might almost have been designed to do so. Seen from the point of view of the public, they are often on the receiving end of many planning procedures, as simple strategies for generating commitment, more or less secretly—strategies in other words, for reducing the scope for public participation.

**strategies for generating commitment**

Some commitment generating strategies will already be apparent from the tower-block story. Here is a classified list.

1. **Administrative investment.** This strategy involves investing scarce administrative resources in a project before a formal decision has been taken, resources such as the time and effort of not to be alienated senior and specialist staff. The effect of such administrative clearance procedures is to increase the number of people who have staked their judgment on the project and who therefore have something to lose by subsequently acknowledging defects in it. A potentially dangerous form of multiple clearance can arise in a development control situation, if some arrangement such as a joint working party consisting of developers and their architects and local authority planners. The more formal ways of working on a scheme to be submitted for planning permission. The scheme submitted will embody some of the planning officer’s recommendations and conform in significant respects to their professional judgment. The members of the planning committee will inevitably be under some obligation to heed their officers’ views, and therefore will fend themselves committed in some degree to allowing the scheme to go through. The scheme will not have been publicised until formally submitted to the council (possibly not even then) so this commitment will have been generated in virtual secrecy. It is likely to require a very powerful and widely supported protest to prevent the giving of planning permission at this stage—indeed in fact occur in the case of the Piccadilly proposals produced in May 1972, proposals that were the fruits of close collaboration between Westminster City Council’s planners and three firms of developers.

2. **Multiple clearance.** This strategy, which is the second element of the process described by Lord Bridges, involves getting approval for a project from as many influential officials and politicians as possible before it is made public and its limitations become apparent. Approval together with public support may be given in return for support for another’s project; in effect a bargain is struck, with both sides incurring a commitment. Such administrative procedures will actually require a proposal to be cleared with other officials before it has been properly investigated or exposed to public view: for example, a new town proposal will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval and to the Treasury for an allocation of funds before being subjected to detailed study and public scrutiny. The effect of such multiple clearance procedures is to increase the number of people who have staked their judgment on the project and who therefore have something to lose by subsequently acknowledging defects in it. A potentially dangerous form of multiple clearance can arise in a development control situation, if some arrangement such as a joint working party consisting of developers and their architects and local authority planners. The more formal ways of working on a scheme to be submitted for planning permission. The scheme submitted will embody some of the planning officer’s recommendations and conform in significant respects to their professional judgment. The members of the planning committee will inevitably be under some obligation to heed their officers’ views, and therefore will fend themselves committed in some degree to allowing the scheme to go through. The scheme will not have been publicised until formally submitted to the council (possibly not even then) so this commitment will have been generated in virtual secrecy. It is likely to require a very powerful and widely supported protest to prevent the giving of planning permission at this stage—indeed in fact occur in the case of the Piccadilly proposals produced in May 1972, proposals that were the fruits of close collaboration between Westminster City Council’s planners and three firms of developers.

3. The single proposal procedure. Development proposals have to be put through a formal approval procedure, in most of which are designed to deal with only a single proposal. Most public inquiries, for example, are inquiries into a single proposal, with no objections to a single proposal only. If a proposal is rejected after the inquiry, it will take several months—if not a year, or even two—before an alternative proposal to the same site is considered. A substantial part of this period being taken up with repeating the statutory procedures. The proposal funnelled into such a procedure may be shown at the inquiry stage to be mainly inferior to others, but it will possess a head start by virtue of the fact that it can be implemented sooner. As the Minister of Transport (Barbara Castle) put it when rejecting the recommendation of her Inspector, Sir John Evans, after a public inquiry, that the M3 motorway from Sunbury Cross to Posham should be diverted at its London end: To abandon the public inquiry and adopt the more southerly route in Surrey would mean repudiation of the scheme and this would delay construction of the motorway by at least a year, with a consequential loss of its benefits to the community.” It does indeed happen on occasion that despite the attendant penalty a proposal is abandoned following an adverse report from a public inquiry. One can safely say that if an alternative is then put through the procedural obstacle course the likelihood of its being rejected will be exceedingly small, not only because of the delay effects but because of what is at stake psychologically and politically. This may have interesting sequel in Sir George Gabriel in his recent book The price of amenity (Macmillan 1971), describes how the Central Electricity Generating Board’s application put to the inquiry led to a public inquiry at Holme Pierrepont was turned down after a public inquiry, while their second application, to build at Ratcliffe-on-Soar instead, was accepted. Gregory suggests—and his argument is very difficult to resist—that had the order of the applications been reversed, so might have been the outcome. In other words the one proposal at a time procedure was such as to generate an overwhelming commitment to the proposal that happened to be put forward the second time round. One may note that the inhabitants of Ratcliffe-on-Soar parished in the area, had they been commissioned with the decision on Holme Pierrepont, which was to generate so great a commitment towards the Ratcliffe-on-Soar site.

4. The limited study. The technique here is to commission a study with terms of reference that guarantee a favourable result. There will be a good chance that the study will confirm the report on the study is actually published. Although objectors and inspectors who hold public inquiries may argue that further study is needed, such pleadings are easily rebuffed. To quote from the Secretary of State for Housing’s decision letter on the Central Lancashire New Town: “It would require further detailed and extensive study to establish how satisfactory and economical a form of development could be devised for the town as a whole... The Minister is not persuaded that the points advanced by the Inspector indicate the prospect of a satisfactory and economical form... The Minister is not persuaded that further examination of the possibility... is justified.” A limited study is often presented in the guise of “feasibility study,” a term which suggests...
that it is commitment free, implying as it does that no decision has yet been taken and that the only outcome of the study will be information. In practice virtually anything is feasible and it is feasible to build a new town practically anywhere in Britain, although the costs and benefits would vary—and once a desired course has been shown to be feasible it will be quite easy to discover reasons for not investigating others. So the outcome of the study is not merely information but commitment too.

5. The deadline. The point about a deadline is that a penalty is paid if the deadline is not met. A common, recurring deadline for government bodies which operate on annual budgets is the end of the financial year, by which point a year's allocation of finance may have to be spent or it will be forfeited (and next year's allocation possibly reduced). This may constitute a penalty when, for example, notice is given that an Exchequer subsidy is to be withdrawn. It was the approaching end of the building subsidy in March 1971 that led to the Croydon Housing Area Development Order being put forward for 8-storey blocks in the Avon gorge 22 days after the application was submitted. The nearer to a deadline that a body takes (or causes another body to take) a decision, the greater the probability that a penalty will be paid if the decision is re-opened. A skilled senior civil servant or local government officer takes on a multi-administrative deadlines by arranging that the work of his department—the more the better—will be held up if a decision is not given within a certain point in time. In recent years this art has been dignified by the title of "critical path programming." Originally—and ostensibly still—aimed at increasing efficiency by minimising the overall time taken on a multi-activity project, the technique involves identifying the particular sub-sequence or "path" of activities on which the overall time critically depends and then ensuring that these activities are completed before another can commence. The effect is to interlock the total programme of activities in such a way as to maximise the disruption caused by a delay. The use of such techniques clearly puts a great deal of power into the hands of the officials and technical experts who prepare and execute them. In an article in Community Action (July-August 1972), Bob Hudson, a Sunderland City Councillor, has described how his Council submitted an Order to the Department of the Environment five weeks ahead of the time indicated on the critical path programme that had been drawn up. This has done, it seems, in order to forestall the movement by councillors opposed to the Order—who assumed that they had five more weeks to work in—to have the matter reconsidered. The five-year rolling programme is another management device that could concentrate power in the hands of officials, both in central and in local government. Nothing that results will enable the politician who participates in drawing it up to get any credit by the time that he is up for re-election. So his attention may well be diverted to more immediately pressing matters. But once the programme is set up under which the only or new politicians can come into office is liable to find that it has gathered so much commitment that he can do very little to modify it, let alone halt it.

6. The unpublicised decision. The most elementary way of generating a commitment secretly is simply to take a formal decision without publicising the fact. This sometimes happens with applications for planning permission that are approved by the local planning authority and not called in by the Secretary of State, and so are not the subject of a public inquiry. Many authorities, although by no means all, do make a point of notifying individuals and groups whom they consider are likely to be affected if a planning application goes through, but even in these cases notification is likely to be patchy. Thus when a landlord puts in an application to redevelop his property, adjoining owners may not be notified while tenants actually living in the house are not. The Stevenson Committee found that it was "quite possible for an important project to be approved by the local authority without any of those likely to be affected being aware of it" (Fifty million volunteers, HMSO, 1972). A new variation on the unpublicised decision has come into prominence recently in connection with schemes for building large office blocks in London. These are development schemes for which the developer has to get an Office Development Permit from the Secretary of State for the Environment before he can apply for planning permission to the local planning authority. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 the Secretary of State, in exercising this power, has only to "have particular regard to whether it is necessary for promoting the better distribution of employment in Great Britain," but the way in which some ODPs have recently been handed out (usually in connection with the Piccadilly scheme) demonstrates clearly that local planning considerations were taken into account and that the permits were part of a bargain between the developers, the Secretary of State, and the local planning authority (the "multiple clearance" strategy at work). There is no provision for public participation in ODP decisions, or even for notification of ODP applications, so if giving the planning permission is not a bargain, then the local planning authority will thereby incur a strong commitment towards giving planning permission even though formal application for permission has not yet been made. If the local authority should refuse planning permission, the developer can appeal to another body, the Secretary of State for the Environment. And if he has taken planning considerations into account when reaching—In virtual secrecy—his decision to give an ODP he will be strongly committed towards allowing the developer's appeal.

7. The obscured decision. This is a strategy for obscuring a very specific decision behind another decision—possibly at a general or "policy" level—from which it will necessarily follow and hence is the subject of a strong but hidden commitment. For example, rather than put forward a public inquiry for a new housing estate on the edge of a town connected to the existing road network by a link road that can only be placed where it will obliterate a children's playground, or a small wood, a group of attractive cottages, or other important features, one might put forward simply the policy of re-zoning the "white" land for housing. Such a policy could well arouse no opposition, and be ratified without difficulty. Only when the inevitable implications became apparent would there be an outcry, but at that stage, numerous penalties of one kind or another may have to be paid if the policy decision is to be reversed.

8. The segregated decision. Strictly speaking, this is a variation on the obscured decision, the obscurity arising out of the fact that the decision is on the face of it concerned with a separate area of community life or local authority activity. Thus, a decision to clear "undesirable elements" out of a neighbourhood—low income overcrowded furnished tenants, let us say—could be manifested as a decision to create an environmental area, complete with tree planting, cobbled streets, flowers in tubs and the exclusion of through traffic. This would be a "planning decision," not a "housing decision," ostensibly for the benefit of all those living within the area. Only when through the workings of the housing market, the development is planned by well to do owner occupiers would the nature of the original decision become apparent. By which time it would manifestly be too late to do much about reversing the changes.

9. The contractual bind. A local planning authority, when at its disposal various ways of binding itself to the development of a part of its area, may be so committed by the granting of a plan that it is committed to the development of a particular site. The granting of planning permission is one such way. The bind arises through the fact that once permission is granted, it revokes a penalty in that compensation is payable by the authority for the loss or damage that results. When the permission is for an office block in central London, the cost of revoking it can run into millions of pounds. Accordingly, just as a route for a motorway can be safeguarded by refusing planning permission for development in its path, possible additional development can be made more costly by making a point of giving planning permission for development in their paths. This strategy lends itself to use in other situations too. Consider the case of a local council which...
forses itself being compelled to provide a
for a site for gypsies and has iden-
tified two pieces of open land in its area
that are suitable for the purpose. One of
them might be particularly well suited
but happens to be locally earmarked as a "high
class" residential area around which
the council wishes to retain the estate.

By arranging for planning permission for housing to be sought
for that site, and seeing that it is
granted, the council can acquire
the land and thereby tilt the scales
in favour of using the land. Even
where the local authority has no
interest in the area, these acts could raise the
counterfeit of a planning
project being undertaken. This
practice, if it exists, would open the
way to an opportunity to influence
the process by directly interfering
with the development of the area.

10. Direct action. The principle is here
to bring about changes in the physical
environment in a more targeted manner,
and to recognize the potential for
initiatives in this area. In order to bring
about changes, it is necessary to identify
the points of influence and to work
with those who have the power to make
changes. In this case, the local authority
should be approached and an agreement
reached on how the planning process
will be handled. This could involve
negotiations with the owners of the
land or the parcel itself, or with the
developers who may be interested in
pursuing the project. The aim should be
to ensure that the interests of all
parties are taken into account and
that the project is developed in a
way that is beneficial to all.

All these strategies have one thing
in common. Their effect is to create a
strategic framework for the planning
process, and to ensure that the
interests of all parties are taken into
account. The aim is to ensure that the
decisions made are in the best interests
of all, and that the planning process
is conducted in a transparent and
fair manner.
by a proposal, and prescribed measures for ensuring that the information reaches them. In the latter case the application for planning permission and for the OPP should be treated together, with the Secretary of State making a practice of calling in the planning application for his or her own decision and holding a public inquiry in all but the most patently innocuous cases.

A full critique of the new development plan system would take up far more space than is available here. But it must be said that the new system would seem to offer opportunities for deploying many of the commitment generating strategies listed above. The division of development plans into "structure plan" (a written statement, illustrated by diagrams and not by maps) and "local plan" (more detailed and based on a map) will undoubtedly lend itself to the taking of "obscured decisions," while the corresponding division of planning powers between the new counties and districts could lead—depending on what staff sharing arrangements are adopted—to a great deal of "multiple clearance." There is nothing to prevent authorities at both levels from treating the planning-making process as a single propositional procedure, while the public examination to which structure plans will be subjected is liable to exhibit the characteristics of a "limited body" since participation in it will be only at the invitation of the Secretary of State or of the person or persons conducting the examination. The same is true of the local plan inquiry, the purpose of which is to consider objections to the plan, not the plan itself. If the precedent of the new town designation inquiries is followed, no defence of the plan will be made, and objectors will find themselves being in the air. In short, it is clear that the new development plan system will offer a number of opportunities for the generation of hidden commitments.

**Counter strategies for citizen groups**

Fortunately (from the point of view of encouraging participation) there are several things that citizen groups can do to open up the planning process—

1. **Intelligence gathering.** One of the prices of effective participation is constant watchfulness. As much information as possible should be gathered about what a local authority and private developers are up to, with the object of establishing what schemes they are committed to, and how strongly they are committed. The register of planning applications should be monitored, reports of the planning and housing committees scrutinised, an eye kept open for advertisements for staff (which often give useful clues as to what an authority has in mind). A look out should be kept for surveys and roads that may be the precursor of something bigger—opinion and data gathering household surveys, traffic counts (if a "cordon" is being carried out it may mean that there are plans for action within the cordon).

2. **Publicity.** Whatever criticisms one may make of central and local government in Britain, one must concede that it is highly sensitive to charges that issues have been prejudged and that formal decisions not yet taken will be no more than the rubber stamping of facts accepted. Hence to publicise discoveries of the strength of a public authority's commitment to a plan or specific project may yield some discrediting (or destruction) of that commitment in the shape of formal undertakings—and some measures to ensure that alternatives are not lost sight of. The press and broadcasting are the obvious media for such publicity: the message can be highlighted at protest meetings, demonstrations, or devices such as the unofficial structure plan examination to look at the issues left out by the official one. The other important purpose of publicity is to alert the public. This presents no problem if the plans are for a specific project, but if the proposals take the form of a draft structure plan its generality and technicality and the lack of a map are likely to make it incomprehensible to the layman. If the public are to appreciate the true significance of the plan it will only be through a group of people working out the likely feasible implications—in terms of actual physical and social changes in specific locations—and publicising their conclusions. To make a study of this kind requires expertise, and the question of how to secure this is discussed below.

3. **Mobilisation.** The necessity for mobilisation arises out of the need to create a body capable of exerting some political muscle, of putting the decision-making body under an obligation to heed its views. Mobilisation involves getting the opponents of a project to join in supporting (sharing in a commitment to) an alternative scheme. Whereas an uncommitted set of opponents might, if asked separately, each opt for a different alternative, mobilisation allows them (though it is not necessary to account for the probability of his preferred alternative) a more solid support. It is the ability to place the decision making body under an obligation that enables the opposition to strengthen their commitment to that body, for whom it will be a counter commitment to their existing proposal. A commitment represents a "caused" obligation, so to speak. For maximum effectiveness a mobilised group must be a representative one. It may be by virtue of its membership comprising a very high proportion of a particular social segment of the population (like the parents of children at a primary school), or by virtue of being elected by the residents of a particular "community" (like a parish or neighbourhood council), or by virtue of having taken over some section of the population's area (like a panel consisting of a randomly selected one in ten of the population of the area over the age of 12). A problem arises, of course, in promoting the mobilisation of those segments of the population to whom such an activity does not satisfy naturally. The Skelliging Committee, in its report *People and Planning* (1969), suggested the appointment of community development officers "to secure the involvement of those people who do not join organisations. Their job would be to stimulate discussion, to inform people in their neighbourhood, and to give them views to the authority." The definition of community development that this statement implies is a very narrow one, but the tasks suggested could well fall within a wider community work brief. And this suggests that these tasks would be best carried out by community workers, people who would otherwise have proposed physical change in the context of local authority policies and of the (changing) social structure of the area. Their position would, however, be very difficult if they were accountable both to the local authority and to the people with whom they worked, and would be impossible if they were financed by the social service department and found themselves severely at odds with the planning department. The power to look at the finances of the community would need to be found whereby independence of the local planning authority was assured.

4. **Culturization of neutrals.** The existence of neutrals is always important to a citizen group that finds itself in conflict with a government authority. Neutrals may play the role of umpire, making sure that the authority plays fair and abides by the rules of the game, or the role of conciliator, suggesting compromises and taking the heat off. In the former category are to be found the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, who deals with complaints against central government, and the forthcoming Local Commissioners for Administration; who will deal with complaints of maladministration by local authorities. The Council on Tribunals is another body with an important umpiring function in that it has the power to look into complaints about the conduct of statutory inquiries and similar procedures (including structure plan examinations). Members of that body of neutrals, those able to perform a conciliatory role, may include local councillors and MPs and others who, although not party political activists, are nevertheless not without influence. The cardinal rule for a
citizen group is to avoid driving potential neutrals of this kind into the opposing camp and thereby consolidating the "enemy." It should not be taken for granted (although it commonly is) that those who are not with the group are against it. Generally, potential neutrals should be given a warm welcome, and every effort should be made to hold out to them the opportunity of earning respect by keeping an open mind and giving a fair hearing to the group, regardless of one's own position. Thereby the group could be fortified if temporarily incurred a commitment towards supporting the authority's proposal. Should a stalemate be reached at some point, neutrals will be well placed to break it (and will often have a positive incentive to do so) by suggesting compromises or safeguards or by adding new ingredients to the mix of possible measures and thereby opening up the mix to further negotiation.

5. Analysis and criticism. If a citizen group is to succeed in undermining the authority's commitment towards implementing a particular project, it must be able to bring expert analysis and authoritative criticism to bear on the facts (including the choice of arguments and logic underlying the specification of the proposal. It is helpful if alternatives can be suggested that are less open to such criticism. The object is to lessen the psychological attractiveness of the project to the local authorities are being much more difficult to be made aware of course one element of their total commitment. If manifest errors of omission can be incontrovertibly demonstrated, then the promoters will be forced to back down. It is much more common, however, for disputes over facts, assumptions or logic to boil down to questions of judgment. The opening phase of the debate is crucial. F. J. C. Amos, President of the Royal Town Planning Institute, 1971, has expressed the view that "it would be much more difficult to make the planning process more democratic and more sensitive to its effects if free planning advice service could be made available to the public during the early stages of the proposals."

6. Demonstration of strength of feeling. This strategy serves two purposes. The first is simply to influence the climate of opinion in which the politicians and planners act. The second objective is more specific and detached a planning team may set out to do. There is almost always a sense in which it follows the line of least resistance in formulating proposals (like taking account of local idiosyncrasies, boundaries, or giving greater weight in a cost benefit analysis to the costs and benefits falling to the more influential sectors of society). If the planners are made aware of the need from an early stage that a particular line will meet very strong resistance, they may well become particularly alert for others that will not. According to the citizen group's views may make their mark before much commitment is generated, thereby avoiding the problem of how to bring about a climb down later. But this strategy does have an application even when from the moment a proposal has reached the stage of being well defined and carrying a considerable weight of commitment. This, the second purpose, is to provide, at an appropriate point in time, an obstacle to the promoters of the scheme—or a decision making body—may diminish their commitment, perhaps by undertaking to reconsider alternatives which had earlier been rejected, or by introducing the possibility of a compromise scheme. Under the "rules of the game" there is less loss of face in a climb down if it is made in response to strength of feeling than if it acknowledges defeat in argument. Accordingly a demonstration of strength of feeling will provide an opportunity for the politicians to reconsider a proposal without necessarily implying that the planners have failed to do their job properly.

7. Direct action. A citizen group obviously has far less scope for direct action than a local authority or central department. But there are two kinds of things that it can do. The first is to follow the example of the squatters, and change the situation in such a way that for the authority (say) to restate it is more trouble (more expensive) than it is worth. Squatters are of course helped in this by the legal difficulty of removing them, a protection that is not available if the direct action takes a more destructive form. The other available course of action is to use delays tactics to counter a commitment that has arisen through one course of action being perceived as capable of hindered implementation than another. This is achieved by exploiting the solicitation of the full range of legal safeguards of property rights, of safeguards against maladministration and unauthorised expenditure, of technological boondoggles, or of obstruction that are sometimes available to Members of Parliament.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown how commitment generated in the course of the planning process denies the public an influence on changes in the physical environment. It is of course unrealistic to expect that the hidden generation of commitment in the earlier stages of the process can be entirely avoided. Planners will always have personal preferences for particular approaches to problems: a completely open mind is likely to be a completely empty one. It is a fact of political and official life that sensitive negotiations cannot be conducted in the glare of publicity, and a fact of human nature that few people are willing to express their opposition to a public initiative until they have assured themselves of at least some support. It must
be said, too, that commitment seems to play an essential part in stimulating citizens into action: if it is absent so is the sense of urgency that rouses people to participate. The existence of a small degree of commitment when a project is first revealed should accordingly be taken neither as evidence of conspiracy nor as inherently inimical to participation. It is the secret build up of a strong commitment that militates against genuine participation, and administrative structures and procedures for all this secret build-up, or indeed in some cases necessitate it. Greater openness in the planning process requires the reform of structures and procedures. It requires that public authorities refrain from exploiting the opportunities that they will inevitably have for frustrating participation. And it requires action by citizen groups.

This chapter has been devoted to participation in physical planning, in the process by which actions to change the physical environment become determined. But planning comes in other forms too. Education, medical care and personal social service systems, for example, do get planned, although one sometimes wonders whether the decision makers are conscious that they are going through a planning process, and many of the points that have been made here apply with equal validity to these other planning processes.

In conclusion, it is worth reminding oneself of the reasons why public participation in planning is needed. The lesson of Stansted, of Piccadilly, of Covent Garden, of practically any motorway or new town proposal, is that the smaller the group that participates in the planning process the more likely it is that the outcome will be constricted by pre-conceptions, will be directed to only a narrow range of problems, and will satisfy only a tiny minority of interests. Administrative procedures and strategies can make it difficult, sometimes impossible, to halt the process when the outcome becomes apparent, because of the commitment they have generated. Public participation is not and cannot be a panacea; it does not provide a way of satisfying everybody, nor does it provide a substitute for decision making. It takes time and it costs money. But it brings undoubted benefits. It means that no body has power to bring about changes solely by virtue of the ability to manipulate deadlines, to limit the terms of reference for studies, to prejudice future decisions. It means that preconceptions and perceptions of problems are examined and challenged, that the distribution of costs and benefits is closely scrutinised, that conflicts and areas of disagreement are made explicit, that possibilities of trade offs and compromises are fully explored. In many cases, admittedly, no trade off or compromise will be possible, and the decision making body will have to decide that one group or the other has to give way. But it will at least be clear to everyone why—and clear too if one particular interest group consistently comes out on top or if one is consistently over ridden. The outcome hopefully will be a little more of that old fashioned virtue, natural justice.

5. participation in educational institutions

Harry Salmon

When the Government's community development project began in Coventry in January 1970, the local authority had already obtained sanction to spend urban aid money on the provision of a play centre and nursery centre in the inner-city redevelopment area where the project was to be based. I had been doing community work in the area for four months, and it was apparent that such facilities were required.

Almost before work had started on the buildings, the project director had raised with the director of education the need for working out ways in which residents could share in the management of these two establishments. Community groups were only just beginning to emerge, and discussion about management took place among professionals without any pressure from residents for participation.

the model

The Director of Education agreed that a model should be worked out involving local people and for this he gained the consent of his committee. It had been assumed that there would be separate management committees for the two places. (Although they were only 300 yards apart, the play centre was located on ground at the centre of a large flat complex and the nursery centre was set outside its perimeter. The former was intended for the children in the flats, but the nursery centre was for the whole of Hillfields.) However, it was decided that there should be one management committee for the two institutions. As the management committee was to consist of only eight people (three councillors, one representative of voluntary agencies and four residents), this meant local participation on a small scale. Largely to broaden the base of local involvement, the Director of Education proposed that advisory groups of local residents should be set up for the two places. Each group would nominate two people to serve on the management committee. This produced a tidy looking administrative structure.

Within the community we had no appro-
tion's community worker/play adviser attended two of the early nursery centre advisory groups, but sensed that her presence was resented by the Assistant Director of Education. Her impression of these meetings was that through the Assistant Director acting as chairman, secretary and giver of information, there was little scope for the group to develop its own style of negotiation or set its own policy. However, they made recommendations on charges and hours to the manager and also nominated their representative to the body—an young Indian father and local mother.

The advisory group was never given an opportunity to develop without a representative of the LRA being present. Now the group has emerged into something resembling a PTA.

We have now had six meetings of the management committee, but probably the best to concentrate mainly upon one of these. I will take the second meeting when the main item was the interviewing of candidates for the post of head teacher at the nursery centre and leader for the play centre.

**A management committee meeting**

Apart from one resident, there was a full complement of members for the second meeting. In addition to seven managers, there were four senior professionals present—the Director of Education, an assistant director, someone responsible for nursery schools, and a director from another department. This meant that there were four inexperienced residents present with only eight other people who were familiar with the kind of situation.

Before interviewing began, the chairman made it clear that he would begin by giving the professionals an opportunity to put questions, and he did this in a fair and open manner. Residents obviously found it difficult to formulate questions, and the chairman did not encourage them to try. “Does anyone else want to ask anything?”

There were four candidates for the post of head teacher at the nursery centre. In all, 35 substantial questions were put by the eleven people present. 26 of these came from the professionals. Only nine came from the managers, and four of these were put by me in an attempt to bring something in about the residents. No resident put a question. It was apparent that in the pre-interview sessions with the candidates, the officers of the LRA had made little of the role of the advisory group.

In the interviewing and subsequent assessment of the candidates, the Director of Education was helpful and fair in his relationship to the committee as a whole. It proved to be a difficult decision. The professional advisers obviously favoured a particular candidate but her professionalism, and strong middle class values caused me to have reservations. The three residents all opted for a different candidate, and the councillors were not clear in their choice. One councilor was prepared to defer to my view. During the discussion, the chairman had a side conversation with me in which he suggested that we make a nomination of deputy head at the same time and offer this post to the person I tended to favour. After more discussion, the committee agreed to do this.

Recently we had to appoint another deputy head due to the first one resigning. We had a full management committee, but we had five professional advisers present. The chairman was the same as on the previous occasion with me as the only manager to ask a question of all the candidates. The four residents put one question. We had three candidates. Two were easily eliminated. On balance, the professionals were prepared to advise the appointment of the third person, and the committee went along with this. I did not vote on the matter, as I had reservations, but did not feel as though she could voice them. When I mentioned to two of the residents that they had not asked any questions, they said, “Well, you don’t force people though you can often they (the professionals) have finished.”

On the occasions when the management committee has dealt with issues other than appointments, the contributions of residents have tended to be few and pitched in a low key. This in spite of the fact that the two representatives from the play centre have been deeply involved in its emotional history since it was opened, and have quite strong feelings on certain matters.

**Play centre advisory group**

This group cannot be ignored in any attempt to describe and evaluate the model. It has functioned in a very different way from the nursery centre advisory group which has been absorbed into the system, and is no longer in a position to represent the views of the managers. There was no initial enthusiasm for serving on the play centre advisory group. The Assistant Director of Education called two meetings which were attended by two residents. No machine existed to get people on to the group, and the tenants' association for the flats complex had earlier turned down a suggestion that they should be involved with it. They were critical about the location of the centre, and wanted to be free to act in regard to it as they thought. In January 1971 we used a student on a community work placement to stimulate interest in the play centre which was now being built. Six people agreed to join the advisory group, and their names were sent to the Director of Education in February. He replied very quickly and said that his assistant would invite them to the next meeting. Actually, it was at least three months before a meeting was held, and by that time one or two of the people had lost interest. None of them is on the advisory group now.

A 25 year old school teacher was appointed as play leader and he started work in June. He had clear ideas about play and quickly established good relationships with children and local people. He lacked a capacity to handle administration and to cope with the pressure under which he found himself, but he was eager to co-operate with local groups and was sensitive to the aims of the community development project. After three months, he decided to resign.

During his time at the centre, the advisory group became a significant unit. He took it seriously, and did not feel threatened by it. He sought the help of those of us engaged in community development, and it was agreed that I should give community work support to the group. The leader had also decided that the advisory group should meet at its own behest and not when convened by the education office; that the chairman should be the chairman and secretary; and prepare its own agenda. The leader convened the first meeting, drawing on his list and his own contacts. He guided the meeting at which officers were appointed or—more likely—volunteered. It was agreed that people from the education office would be invited as and when required, but they should not be present as a right. The play organiser for the city was invited to find this his hard to tolerate. The leader attended meetings, but he never tried to dominate them. In fact, some of the group used to appeal to him as creator of more authority and guidance.

Since then there have been about twenty meetings of the group. Membership has kept changing with anything from five to fourteen people attending meetings. Sometimes decisions have not been followed through, often there have been chaotic, other times there have been internal problems, but the group has had a life of its own. It has been taken seriously. They have had to face one crisis after another.

Landscaping round the centre, admission charges, the problem of coping with teenagers, what to do about "problem" children, inviting a pre-school play group to use the centre and a consequent battle with the education office and the present leader about rent and storage space, the right to approach the education office direct—are just some of the issues with which they have had to deal. They have had meetings with the Director of Education and the chairman of the managers. On other occasions, they have agreed to have educational officials present to discuss matters on which they have been in conflict. At least, they have established that it is their group.
and though one assistant director of education is quick to emphasise that they are only an "advisory" group, they are determined to be more than that.

evaluation

In attempting a critical assessment of this model, we can begin with such general observations as apply to any attempts to involve local people in management control.

1. Residents feel uncomfortable because they have no experience in this field and find the procedures, language and ethos of formal groups strange.

2. In this situation, residents can be "controlled" because they lack the confidence, expertise and information to challenge statements made either by professionals or people familiar with formal structures (like councillors).

3. "Grass roots" leaders are internally oriented and their authority is within the local community. Often they have neither the inclination nor the orientation to enable them to operate alongside people from outside the community.

the community development project role

1. Though the idea about local participation in the control of institutions had come from the community development project nothing had been done to prepare local people for this kind of experience.

2. The functions of the advisory groups had not been worked out with the education people, and there is still no consensus about how they should operate. The danger in the word "advisory" should have been seen and it should have been realised that this could become an expression of tokenism.

3. It was not clarified clearly with the Director of Education before the model was set up who would work with the advisory groups and how they would relate to the education office. The expectation was that a community worker would operate with each advisory group rather than an education official. However, this did not appear to be acceptable to the officers of the LEA.

4. The role of a community worker could have been crucial in the early days of the advisory groups, and would have been quite different from that of an educationist. The community workers concern would have been with process—how the members of the group participated, the degree of interaction, growing ability to cope with the situation and to run their own group—whereas the Assistant Director of Education's concern was with goal achievement—professional competence, efficiency, getting everything tied up in a minimum of meetings and without raising too many difficult questions. The community worker would also have been seen by the group in quite a different way from the representative of the education department.

5. To ensure the maximum contribution from the community (and that is why the advisory groups were mooted in the first place) the situation required that a community worker should have operated with the residents, and that someone from the education department should have been available as a consultant.

6. Two years ago we lacked the experience to anticipate what pattern of behaviour would be likely to emerge in a management committee constituted as previously outlined.

7. The significance of the community work role can be seen by contrasting the history and fate of the two advisory groups.

the official's role

1. It was the Director of Education who first agreed to an experiment in resident participation and he was in the backing of his committee. His own role was helpful and he was skillful in handling his face to face relationships with local people. However, one repeatedly gained the impression that the officers with more direct responsibility for the centres were chary about the experiment, and resented some of the activities of the play centre advisory group.

2. Some of the problems which have occurred have been attributed either to the involvement of residents or to the presence of myself. Certainly it has been an uncomfortable experience for some education officials.

3. It has been apparent that even reasonably sympathetic officials have conceptions of participation which rarely move beyond tokenism. There has been a willingness to consult the advisory groups, but not to give them power to make decisions on any substantive matters like who should use premises, provision of storage space for pre-school play groups, criteria for admission of children to the nursery centre.

4. There has been a remarkable inability on the part of the education office to deal with the problems arising from a small £18,000 play centre with the minimum of effort. Out of this three of the officers of the department have been involved in dealing with the centre, and there seems to have been no clear delegation of responsibility.

5. In eight months the play centre has had two leaders and a temporary part time leader. Experiences with three different leaders have demonstrated that the nature and extent of residents' participation depends as much upon the outlook of the professional in immediate contact with residents as upon the policy of senior officials.

6. In the management committee the role of professional advisers has been crucial. The character of the meeting is changed by the introduction of articulate, well-informed, middle class professionals. Most residents are overawed, and there is also a temptation for some to defer to the views of those who are identified with power and status. A sensitive chairman could do something to redress the balance but the situation is still one which can be exploited by the professional.

alternative models

I would not wish to see this model replicated in disadvantaged areas. The management committee structure might be satisfactory in those suburban areas where people are available with the appropriate skills and experience. Even in these situations, only one consultant/adviser should normally be present from the education department, and more "advisory" groups should be avoided.

In working class areas, in localities where there are large numbers of people unfamiliar with middle class styles of operating, we must continue to search for alternative forms of participation. Here are a few possibilities.

1. Increase number of councillors on
Management Committees for educational institutions and tighten their relationship and answerability to the local community.

2. Develop the Neighbourhood Council concept, and draw managers from the people who have been elected on to such bodies.

3. Appoint to managing bodies local residents who are externally oriented. In every area there are those who relate more easily and willingly to structure and people outside the community. Often they are mobile people (students or young professionals), or aspiring people. The danger is that they may not reflect fully the mood of the community, but they are more likely to be able to exploit the management committee situation.

4. Set up “consumer” groups which could be supported by a community worker and call upon resource people as necessary. The function of such groups would be to influence the policy of management bodies through informed criticism, pressure and conflict.

5. Division of management responsibilities between two groups—a community group and a professional group. Success would depend upon a careful delineation of responsibilities, and would depend upon a willingness on the part of the Education Committee to put more power in the hands of local people. Such a structure would take into account that there are matters (like professional qualifications, terms of employment, technical issues) over which residents cannot have jurisdiction, but there are other matters (like use of buildings, hours of opening of a play centre or nursery, involvement of parents) which could be locally controlled. This model might be particularly suitable where community schools are being developed as in Coventry.

In working out forms of participation, we are faced with the problem that they are likely to degenerate into expressions of tokenism unless we can from the beginning build in areas where consumers have power and control. The people who normally control services usually mean something very different by participation from what we do. It means a drastic adjustment on their part, if consumers are going to have a real say in the provision and deployment of services.

b. tenants and housing management

Nick Derricourt

For 35 years until August 1971, as Secretary of the Association of London Housing Estates (ALHE) I was employed by local authority tenants, and although I am no expert in housing management, finance or maintenance, I had a chance to see the issues from the tenants' point of view and also had to get to grips with some of the problems myself.

What local authority tenants "as a body want" is unclear, mainly because of the diversity of the localities involved. Some tenants favour direct control of housing estates, some a cooperative solution, and most just want a better service from their landlords. I say "just a better service" but I can hear some of my erstwhile employers cracking up at that, because many tenants associations have been hammering away at that for years with little sense of success. I propose therefore to accept the assumptions made by the ALHE that tenants do have a point of view, and provided they have adequate resources to do so, can express this point of view. It is also assumed that this point of view will be modified as their experience of their predicament grows, and that their perception of effective solutions will grow along with this experience.

what's wrong?

It's important to recognise the generalisations one makes when one talks about 51 million tenants. Over a million local authority householders or a fifth of the total of council tenants, are in receipt of a Supplementary Pension, which means, in effect, that their rent increases are paid by the Exchequer. Of the remainder, the great majority are fairly tightly bunched around the average wage, and yet more - a very small minority of comparatively well off tenants does exist, although the size tends to grow in the heat of the debate.

Council tenants are said to pay a "subsidised" rent, and are expected to thank their lucky stars for it. If you live on a "nice" estate, like Churchill Gardens on the Thames Embankment, you might feel lucky, but if you live on one of the grim inter-war family estates in the decaying parts of London you could probably be forgiven for not feeling lucky. But both nice and nasty have something in common. The provision of public housing is made in a way which cannot avoid some pressure upon the tenants to conformity. The aim is to provide a public service equitably; the result is to make tenants irresponsible, in the sense that usually they are given no scope for involving themselves responsibly in the decisions affecting their immediate environment. Although their housing, unlike other sorts, is directly controlled by democratically elected members of the council, they have no say in the most salient aspects of their home environment — no say in the choice of colour schemes, in the time and frequency of repairs and maintenance, in the design, provision and management of amenities. They have little or no means of consultation with management when it comes to changes in services, such as caretaking and cleaning schemes, or rent collectors being replaced by rent collection offices.

It is quite common to hear housing department officers saying that tenants tend to ignore property, don’t report disrepair unless they are affected personally by them, and turn a blind eye to vandalism.

So in spite of the variety of individual circumstances which they represent, local authority tenants have at least one thing in common. The way that their housing is provided pushes them into the role of recipient without responsibility. They are on the receiving end of standardised and accountable procedures which are designed to take advantage of economy of scale, and which are often insensitive to individual cases. The problem of justifying the cost of provision re-inforces both the procedures and the roles of tenant and landlord. Before going any further, I would like to say that I believe most housing department staff to be very competent, conscientious, and harrassed people. The evidence is that housing services are susceptible to bureaucratic pressures which irritate both housing officials and tenants. For instance,
problems of feedback are often due to structural divisions in the council's administration, as, for example, where the Borough Engineer's Department is responsible for dealing with job tickets made out by the Housing Department.

It could be countered that a hidebound relationship between tenant and landlord does no harm to anyone provided that the standard of provision and management is high. But it is important to remember that standards are not always as high as they should be, and often this happens because elected members have difficulty in justifying increased costs to non-tenant ratepayers. So standards of management practice, the criteria of which are anyway by no means universally agreed, vary a good deal between localities. Hence there have been instances when housing officers have found it difficult to justify in housing management terms, measures which cost conscious housing committees are "forced" to adopt to avoid increasing the rate contribution to the housing revenue account. At least in the Borough's Housing Department has staff who regret the end of door to door rent collection, because it was a means of keeping close contact with tenants and gaining knowledge about problems, at first hand. Another council took an end to its door to door system after several attacks on its collectors. Rather than make its door to door systems in some other form, no consultation took place on the grounds that tenants could take or send their rent. Some of the offices are a fair walk away from the estates they serve, and they are only open during the working day, which makes the system difficult for the elderly and households all at work in the day-time. Incidentally, throughout the changeover from one system to the other, no consultation was initiated by the council, and several key tenants associations were turned down. It was this last aspect which led the ALHE Executive Committee to consider the question of tenant representation, and which contained the following sentence: "The organisation cannot support any management policy changes that (by that authority) affecting tenants without prior consultation with the Association."

Housing management problems which originate in cost and structural department are clearly not going to be resolved just by involving tenants in decision making procedures. None should expect that preventative maintenance, as opposed to maintenance in response to complaint, would begin the following month. Nonetheless, the amount of revenue available to a housing department for maintenance is still very limited. But many of these difficult problems are made worse by the gulf fixed between tenants and local authority landlords. This situation benefits nobody.

a little progress

The idea of participation in management is not new. A Political and Economic Planning tract in 1948 advocated that councils assign management functions to local committees on which tenants should be directly represented. The Milner Holland Committee, and the Prices and Incomes Board (Report no 62, Cmdn 3630) '74, advocated tenants' views but gave them careful consideration. The ALHE found that tenants' complaints justified a suggestion that machinery should be set up for dealing with complaints—but this proved too easy to have been forgotten. However, the sub-committee of the estimates committee, in undertaking its massive examination of housing subsidies in 1969 (the first examination since 1946), did not consider it worthwhile to call for any evidence from tenants. More recently, Professor Cullingford appeared to endorse the o.e.c. and borough policy of omitting to consult tenants when considering a proposal to transfer 46,000 tenants from one landlord to another.

At a time when the absolute power of central government dominates and the Rent Scrutiny Committee of the Housing Finance Act threaten to take away from the tenant the political influence he has at local level and his consumer influence on the Housing Executive, Dick Leonard (mp for Romford) has been trying, so far unsuccessfully, to introduce a private member's bill, the Council Housing (Tenants' Representation) Bill, into Parliament. The latter Bill requires all local authorities to introduce an element of tenant participation into their housing management. There are two main provisions first, that housing advisory committees be established, at least half of whose members should be council tenants, and secondly, that at least two members be appointed to the housing management committee. Dudley Swill, the present Organising Secretary of the ALHE, has described the need like this: "The aim of tenant participation must be to set up the first place tenants are able to alter the conditions of their housing, secondly, to identify the view that poor people are fed into council housing at the entrance, and after a period of processing are expected to exit as whole and prosperous families capable of making their way in a competitive society which it is the major function of management to see done; thirdly, to change the psychology of management by complaint by management by consensus; and finally to establish proper channels of communication by allowing tenants increased opportunities to exercise some degree of control over their circumstances."

In a proposed "Council Tenants' Charter" drawn up by the ALHE, the Association's own policy on tenant representation appears to be that machinery should be set up to enable council tenants to be involved in the decision making stages of local authority housing policies, by representation on housing committees. Council tenants are frequently and justifiably aggrieved at the standards of repair and maintenance which are in practice applied by the local authorities. Provision should therefore be made for tenants' representatives to take a responsible part in the management of their own estates, be consulted about the provision of amenities and have executive power over financial expenditure (my italics). But have tenants shown any signs that, given encouragement, they might have enough to contribute, or enough interest in their own management of local authority housing estates? The answer is a firm "Yes." In fact, the evidence is more remarkable because many of the initiatives have come from tenants' associations. One South London estate devised a parking plan which would ease the parking space problem on the estate. The council concerned agreed to look at the plan, which was duly submitted, after several months' careful homework by the tenants. The housing committee only shelved the plan on the grounds that it would cost thousands and pounds of pounds to implement; the tenants协会 replied that they thought of this, and pointed out that the expenditure could be recouped by the end of three years through the charges made on the increased number of car parking spaces. Although the matter has taken years, a few months to argue out, it seems that the council is now prepared to implement the plan.

Another example can be seen in an exercise carried out between the ALHE and the Department of the Environment. One of the staff asked the Department's Research Unit whether they would allow a number of tenants who were housewives to comment on the planning of a new high-density housing estate on the appearance of a scheme at Granby Street, Bethnal Green. After the meeting, the architect was most impressed by the amount of information that had been able to give them. The housewives for their part only expressed regret that they could not be involved in the planning of the interiors as well.

consultation or control?

Until quite recently tenants in the ALHE's membership tended to regard better consultation as the aim. This issue has been discussed intensively within the ALHE, as it has among many tenants groups elsewhere, and there is growing evidence to suggest that while recent experiences have toned down expectations of consultation, a large number of tenants associations are becoming eager to move from a consultative model to an executive one. The events of the last few years, and particularly the debate leading up to the passage of the Housing Finance Act, have served as a stimulus to both the consultative and the executive schools of thought. It seems likely that both attitudes and leadership have changed relatively quickly, which means that negative evidence about ten-
The tenants' desire to participate gathered as recently as 1970 is probably already out of date. (Marjorie Mayo, "Some fundamental problems of community work in housing estates in Britain," *Community Development Journal*, January 1972.)

Several local authorities have in the last few years begun to experiment with consultation, justifying the step with one or more of the following hopes:

1. That they would be able to get useful information from the consumers of their service, and so provide a more efficient service.
2. That tenants would be able to let off steam.
3. That they would be able to break down the "us and them" relationship.
4. That they would reduce the number of small complaints by channelling a representative sample of complaints through a central point.

The tenants' groups concerned would, I suspect, report varying success, but most of them were aware that they could not make much impression on the bigger issues which affected them. Indeed, when a council felt that a change was too costly, or against the interests of the tenants, it was unwilling to accept the tenants' involvement or control. And in the absence of an established procedure or an ideology being called into question by tenants, it was very unlikely that success would be achieved.

One of the reasons why tenancy has been encouraged to go beyond consultation has been the comparatively radical format of the Camden Borough Council's scheme (see below) in which four district committees have executive functions as well as advisory, some members of the ALIE, are now beginning to look further ahead, and to think in terms of the need for all management functions, except allocation of tenancies, which would remain in the hands of the local authority.

This raises several problems. A move from a consultative model to an executive one is bound to create more serious tensions which participants will have to learn to handle. How will the executive committee represent the tenants' association? It is quite possible that the management committee would become a clique of estate worthies, whose attitudes are challenged by the tenants' representatives. There is a possible solution. First of all, it is easy to see that the tenants who want to play a significant executive part in managing or controlling their estates are taken on a long-term basis. And I would not expect many to succeed without some support and technical help. This help must be available on their terms, and they must control the resources they use. In this context, the ALIE's experience is helpful, not least for the fact that the way that it is funded (mainly through central and local government grants) clearly represents a classic community work dilemma. Secondly, will tenants' involvement or control lead inevitably to greater interest on the part of the tenants who interested in their own affairs? Nothing is more obvious than the possibility that tenants will stand to gain something from it, whether it is better provision, better repairs service, cheaper rent, or greater satisfaction in having the place the way they like it. People will involve themselves as long as these benefits seem to proceed from the effort that they apply, and as long as these benefits mean something to them. Ultimately, a longer term question will have to be solved, because the benefits will have to stand comparison with the benefits received for a similar perceived input of effort by people in other sectors of housing. In other words, tenants will ask either that they receive a share in the appreciation of the flat they live in, or that other sectors are reformed.

### Strategic Alternatives

The passage of the Housing Finance Act 1982 has made the council more conscious that the association movement is a lesson which it had learnt often enough already. There was no concerted national strategy for opposition, although many of the local groups and federations lobbied hard. And now that a greater measure of control of local authority housing policy has passed to Whitehall, there is an even stronger case for an effective national body to represent tenants. After all, it is now national policy that will govern the context in which local administrative and management decisions are made.

A most difficult obstacle is that of resources. The schemes which have been dealt with at this level are often very complex, and only an organisation that can afford to use advocates even on a temporary basis can seriously enter the lists.

### Conclusions

The schemes described below differ in emphasis on consultation and executive responsibility, so that experience of them should give clues to the difficult questions. What real benefits does each scheme set out to achieve? Will it be possible to suggest a universal model for differing localities? Or has tenants' representation merely served to diffuse the conflict, and to enable the council concerned to preserve the status quo?

There is usually a marked disparity between leadership styles of poor working class people, and the ideal democratic behaviour which they are expected to adopt on local authority committees. This can lead to ineffective participation of locally influential people who are actually representative: it can also lead to "co-opting," whereby a formally representative local person adopts the style of the committee, and becomes unable to represent the people he is supposed to be representing.

How will tenants' associations interpret the discovery that only local issues are susceptible to local solutions? Will it merely serve to localise their interest, or will they also attempt to deal on a wider basis with problems which can only be solved by dealing with regional or national issues?

### Five Existing Schemes

The following examples of schemes for involving tenants in decision making or consultation are taken from a paper prepared by the ALIE.

**Camden**

For at least five years the council has had a tenants' consultative committee which started as a forum to discuss rent increases. This group soon raised its sights and the evident improvement in communication channels was seen in the fact that the chairmanship of the committee alternated between tenants and councillors at successive meetings. This has now developed into four district management committees which possess both advisory and executive functions.

#### Executive

1. Maintenance of open spaces, estate amenities and play provision within the budget notified by the director of housing, being a proportionate amount of the council's approved estimates.
2. Repairs to properties within the cost range of £1,000 to £3,000, including questions of priority.
3. Encouragement of social and community activities.
4. Control of use of amenities on estates.
5. Inspection of estates and properties within the management district.
6. Regular contact and meetings with individual tenants' associations.
7. Such other matters as may be referred to the district committee by the housing committee.
8. Interpretation on district basis of council's policy on housing management.

#### Advisory

Any matter on which tenants feel their
views would be of assistance to the council, especially: caretaking; observance of tenancy rules; problems from redevelopment and rehabilitation as referred by the housing committee including plans for new estates and improvement areas; matters in excess of the budget or outside council’s normal programme in respect of executive functions 1 and 2.

Composition of committee

6 Councillors (one who must be a member of the housing committee and one who is a member of the works and service committee).

3 Tenants’ representatives.

Non-voting: the chairman or a representative from the tenants’ associations within the area; the principal assistant housing manager; the district housing officer.

The meetings are held every two months and are serviced by the town clerk’s department.

Wandsworth

The general intention of the scheme is to provide liaison between tenants, council and housing department. A three-tiered structure has been set up which consists of:

1. Four district housing panels to discuss local repairs, maintenance and so on, consisting of two representatives from each tenants’ association in the district and six councillors, one of whom is appointed chairman by the council.

2. Borough housing panel to consider wider issues concerning borough housing policy. This comprises one representative of each tenants association, housing manager and officials from the housing department, the four district housing panel chairman, the chairman and vice-chairman of the housing committee, plus minority party housing committee members to make equal representation. The chairman is the chairman of the housing committee.

Meetings of both district panels and the borough panel are three-monthly.

3. The borough panel has the right to elect two tenant members to be observers on the housing committee; they also attend the management sub-committee and development sub-committee.

The only tenants’ association representatives who are included in the above scheme are those who represent one third of the households on their estates, and they must be elected annually. A “reasonable amount of time” will be allowed for the representatives to increase their membership to allow the one third representation.

Lambeth

This scheme was set up by the housing management sub-committee in consultation with the Lambeth borough estates group. There are five joint area housing committees, consisting of councillors from both the majority and the minority parties and two tenants’ representatives from the association (majority affiliated to the ALHE). These committees

1. Discuss matters relating to tenancy, estates’ maintenance and improvements in the environment to the mutual benefit of the council and its tenants.

2. Advise the council on the proposed programme of works of improvements to be included in the annual estimates for each estate.

Greenwich

This is a unique scheme as the machinery is being set up for an individual estate. The estate concerned had had a reputation of being a “multi-problem” one. The council approached the estate’s improvement group and invited them to a meeting and to submit their proposals for a scheme. The improvement group declared as a first principle that in order to be anything more than a “talking shop,” the joint management council must have the powers to act upon its decisions. They wanted training procedures written into the machinery, and saw their terms of reference as covering estate and community planning as well as administration. This was broken down as follows:

Estate planning

1. Design, provision and management of amenities like play areas, laundry facilities and so on.

2. Consideration of possible alterations of application of particular flats.

3. Seek means of reducing the very high density of population.

4. Selection of tenants inwards and outwards.

Community planning

1. Encourage and assist the integration of tenants into the estate and the local community.

2. Attempt to improve the estate’s image with a view to raising the morale and local pride of the tenants.

3. Define policies that will help to stabilise the community, reducing the resident turnover on the estate.

4. Seek improved means of dealing with social problems that will have a lasting effect.

5. Establish a good working relationship between tenants, tenants’ groups, the joint management committee and the local council.

Administration

1. Decide on the responsibility of both tenants and local council, and then seek ways to ensure that these are honoured.

2. General day to day management.

3. Seek improved arrangements for car parking, refuse disposal, caretaking and portering.

4. Seek ways in which emergency repairs and general maintenance problems can be dealt with promptly and efficiently.

Their suggestion for membership of the joint management committee was:

6 councillors (including chairman of the housing management committee and 2 councillors from the ward in which the estate was situated).

6 tenants’ representatives (3 voting and 3 non-voting).

This scheme is very much a pioneering one, and obviously cannot be used for every estate. However, it will be a very valuable learning situation. Once it has been evaluated it may well provide useful guidance for the future.

Southwark

The Southwark scheme has been operating for a period of three years. It consists of a meeting held every three months between the council’s housing committee elected representatives including the chairmen, permanent officials including the housing manager and members of each tenants’ association affiliated to the ALHE.

This includes the Greater London Council estates and is the only scheme where tenants from such estates are encouraged to participate. This does not happen in the other models and the Greater London Council has no such machinery.

There is a prepared agenda and associations may submit items for the agenda provided they give two weeks’ notice. These items mainly concern issues relating to repairs, maintenance and amenities connected with individual estates. Policy matters can be raised mainly on a consultative basis but within a limited influence. Tenants are given no say in the allocation of resources as is the case with the Camden and Greenwich schemes which include executive powers.

The Southwark group of the ALHE agrees that the present relationship provides a sound basis, and would like to retain the
7. Self management in day centres

Peter Jewell

This chapter is about my experiences with the day centres in the Welfare Department—as it was then—of one of the inner London boroughs. As Deputy Principal Social Worker between 1965 and 1971 I had delegated to me a special responsibility to develop the work being done in this field with groups of clients. In the main they were elderly people, but include the physically handicapped, many of whom are also in the higher age range and for whom transport is available. Certainly I chose not to distinguish between these two categories of members for it seems to me appropriate that groups of people should not be segregated from each other in what is primarily a social setting. This does not account, however, for the small number of younger physically handicapped members, for whom, ideally, in my opinion and their own, special provision would be preferable.

The day centres offer a setting for groups. The purpose of attendance is, broadly, social rehabilitation. This in itself speaks poorly of society's attitude towards the elderly. In my experience, the disastrous effect that retirement poorly prepared for can have on many individuals, who may have led very full and active lives in the field of employment and who, suddenly find themselves with a greatly reduced outlet for physical, mental and social energies. Various attempts are being made today to prepare people for this change, but in the area in which I have been working, there is a large proportion of elderly people living alone, so far these attempts have had little impact. Especially in the cases of elderly people who are housebound or even semi-housebound, they can very quickly lose contact with others and become extremely isolated and lonely.

Society stigmatises the elderly by cutting off their activity and involvement in the everyday life of the community, and thereby their feeling that they are contributing to communal life. Elderly people are thrown back on their own devices just at a time when their initiative, social contacts, knowledge of resources and ability to move through normal social channels is more limited. It seems quite extraordinary that society views old people very much in this light, tacitly assuming that they have no contribution to make, that they are "helpless" and requiring help, and only rarely noting that they may be able to offer or provide help. The emphasis in the phrase "old people" is more often on the first word than the second, and in any case little distinction is popularly made between people in their sixties and people in their nineties. The elderly are put in the position of having to take or to receive but rarely to give help, and this one way relationship is damaging to the personality.

Traditionally this attitude has permeated welfare provision for the elderly, especially in the clubs run for elderly people. The tendency in the past has been for clubs to be "run for" elderly people. It seems to me more appropriate for clubs or day centres to be run "by" their members rather than run for them. It should be no surprise that there are members perfectly capable of taking a hand in the management of day centres, for many members have led extremely active lives and indeed some may have had managerial or committee experience. What we have arrived at is a situation where the tables need to be turned, and instead of the staff social workers or whoever—providing for the members of day centres, a joint relationship is attempted between staff and members. There is an obvious parallel here with the casework situation.

The designation of staff employed in this work was formerly that of "centre organiser," and symbolically in my department we chose to change the designation to that of "centre social worker." At the time the change was more symbolic than real, as the staff in fact remained the same, but it was an indication of a change of role. The possibilities of the change in policy were discussed with staff concerned for some time before they were put into effect. Staff participation in this context is certainly as important as and a necessary forerunner of client participation. It was agreed that the experiment would require the setting up of committees of members in order that discussions and decisions
about the development of day centres could take place with representatives of the membership as a whole. The idea may not sound very startling, but such committees are not widespread in my experience, even today.

Through a committee of members it was hoped that their ideas, suggestions and criticisms of the existing daily routine of the day centre could be examined, and be altered according to their wishes. And in fact this is what happened. Very quickly it became apparent that centre committees did have ideas, did hope for changes in some areas, and according to their capabilities and to the quality of the relationship between the committees and staff, were able to work towards achieving their objectives. In addition, through the committees the membership as a whole were kept informed and were also able to participate in the new activities that emerged.

Initially, caretaker committees were set up in most of the day centres, made up of members hand-picked by the centre staff, and an informal constitution was then pieced together. At the start of the Council year, new committees were democratically elected, a process that has been repeated annually when the retiring committee has the opportunity of presenting an annual report to a general meeting of the members of the day centre. It was agreed that the chairmanship should change annually, providing an opportunity for various members to hold this position. The centre social worker generally acted as secretary. The raising of centre funds which are used to subsidise various activities such as outings, was seen as a function of several committees. The sort of group activities which take place in day centres are as follows: singing concert groups, cookery, discussion groups, drama, film making, gardening, handicrafts, indoor sports and games, industrial outwork, music and movement, old time dancing, percussion band, social groups, bingo and whist drives.

The members of the ten day centres in the borough jointly publish a magazine known as the Centre News. Inter-centre competitions take place, enabling members to visit each other and vie for a shield awarded to the centre that comes "top of the league." Gratifyingly, the magazine is written, edited, roneoed and stapled entirely by members themselves (though it is not always typed by them as yet), and the inter-centre shield was designed and brought into being as the result of an inter-centre competition.

Another very simple example of the change implicit in this policy are the outings and Christmas parties traditionally enjoyed by members. Formerly, arrangements for these had been made by staff, with the best will in the world, on behalf of members; now they have the opportunity to discuss and to decide themselves where they will go for their outing and how they will eat at their Christmas Party. Almost before we knew it, we were discovering untapped knowledge and skills among members that had not emerged earlier because there was never an opportunity for this to happen. More recently and more significantly we have been able to involve members in, for example, discussions on types of vehicles most suited to their needs and in discussions with architects and others on the equipping and design of new day centres.

The picture is not entirely rosy however. Some dangers in the committee structure were foreseen, like the following:

1. Misrepresentation. The members of the committee might fail to understand that they represent the centre members, and act as spokesmen for them as well as bringing their own ideas.

2. Committee elite. The members of the committee might feel that they are in some way privileged members of the day centre.

3. Personality difficulties. Relations between members in the centre might not always be cordial, and could be aggravated by election of committee members.

4. Staff Manipulation. Centre staff may be tempted to impose their own ideas, rather than listening sympathetically to ideas contributed by members and giving explanations when their suggestions are not taken up.

On occasion these things have happened and caused friction, requiring skilful handling from the staff concerned. But then it would always be "tidier," less bothersome and superficially more satisfying to organise and take credit for the day centre oneself, allowing members little or no say in the general proceedings. This method answers the needs of the member of staff rather than the needs of the members. And at a higher level, the centre committees have not always been seen as a progressive development. Senior officers and councillors in my experience have sometimes felt threatened by the "power" given to groups of clients or consumers and, either prefer the quiet life or fear that the recipients of social services will bite the hand that feeds them! Which brings me full circle back to the theme of stigmatisation—"clients should know their place." At best this attitude is "charity" or at worst "social control," but not in my view "social group work" which is what day centres are all about.

Finally, there is scope for wider community participation. For example, as part of a social studies exercise, pupils at a local school arranged the inter-centre quiz one year, making out the question acting as quiz master, scorer and time-keeper, providing refreshments and taking the old people on a tour of the school. At the end of the afternoons' proceedings, a centre member gave a vote of thanks and challenged the pupils to a return match for which the old people would in turn prepare the quiz and refreshments, and so on. This took place, and links with the school are continuing. The pupils performed old time songs for the old people, and the day centre members responded by putting on some pop numbers in return.

To my way of thinking this represents a two-way and more healthy relationship between the elderly and the rest of society, and in a very small way exemplifies what the Seeborn Committee meant by "en-

abing the greatest possible number of individuals to act reciprocally, giving and receiving service for the well being of the whole community."
8. popular participation in local democracy

William Hampton

"There is certainly a difficult link to be forged between the concepts of popular participation and traditional representative democracy" (Seaborn Report, para 494).

The services provided by local authorities closely affect everyday life. The houses we live in may be provided by the council or rented by their planning proposals, the roads we drive on are built and maintained by the council. Our children are educated in local schools, and our health is cared for by local clinics. The local government department is responsible for policing our streets and for the safety of our streets. The government takes office then direct intervention by the general public in policy making becomes at best inefficient and at worst undemocratic. Schumpeter believed his analysis of democracy to be an accurate reflection of reality in the modern industrial state. He went further to argue that it was also the way in which democracy ought to work (Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, George Allen and Unwin, 1943). His views have a remarkable influence: accounted for, no doubt, by a predilection of elites to believe their assiduousness is both beneficial and inevitable.

During the 1960s, the views of the elitist began to be challenged. The perceived decline of the 1930s and 1940s, when organisations seemed necessary to defeat the twin enemies of political fascism and economic stagnation, gave way to the "end of ideology" apathy of the 1960s, when material affluence was hailed as the solution to all social problems. Thus the revival of interest in anarchism and the current organisations such as the Factory, the Factory, and the Factory in the 1920s, and the Factory Movement, and the Factory Movement, and the Factory Movement, and the Factory Movement, and the Factory Movement, have not only been an outstanding success as organisations, they have also been an outstanding success as organisations. The Factory Movement, and the Factory Movement, and the Factory Movement, and the Factory Movement, and the Factory Movement, have been accompanied by a re-reading of those socialist authors who wrote with optimism before Stalin and Hitler dominated political consciousness.

The interest in participation as a political method has been accompanied by activism affecting locally provided services. This is not surprising. 'Theorists of participatory democracy have always stressed the importance of local government as a means of enabling people to enter the political process at a level which one of them finds meaningful. We all participate most readily in those matters which affect us directly. As we have seen, the services provided by local authorities affect each and every one of us throughout our daily lives. When we look for examples of the new approach towards participatory democracy we are drawn irresistibly, therefore, towards the activities of local groups. Parents organise pre-school playgroups, or seek to influence policy through local advancement of state education blocks. Tenants form associations to demand better conditions and to have control over rents and other matters affecting their estates. Residents start action groups to protest at local development plans and to continue to produce alternative plans of their own for their neighbourhood. Those who have a special need for personal social services organise for self-help or to put pressure upon government agencies. There are local groups for the disabled, for unsupported mothers, for the parents of handicapped children, and many others. In this chapter we are principally concerned with the impact of these developments upon the existing institutions of local democracy, and with the attitudes which the Labour Party should be encouraging both nationally and locally. In one sense, of course, movement towards independent activity implies a criticism of existing institutions and of politicians who have been slow to accept the participatory possibilities of local government. Local authorities, with some honourable exceptions and whatever their reputation as service providers, have not been an outstanding success as organisations of a local population. This is a harsh judgment which we must review the evidence upon which it is based.

The Committee on the Management of Local Government conducted surveys into the attitudes of both councillors and general public. They found that the general public were not knowledgeable about the activities of their local authorities nor about the services they provide. The public were aware of their ignorance and in some cases concerned about it. They also believed that they had insufficient knowledge to make full use of council services, and over one-third did not even believe that they knew enough to use their vote at the best advantage ("The local government election.

Management of local government, vol 3, pp 9-14 and 39, (1967). This lack of confidence and information is reflected in the low turnout at most local elections. The proportion voting averages forty per cent, but polls fall below this figure are not uncommon.

The councillors interviewed for the Committee agreed with the self-assessment of the councillors. Two-thirds of the councillors thought that the public knew insufficient to make good use of existing council services, and over half believed that the public did not know enough about government to vote in an informed way at local elections. On a more general level nearly all the councillors thought that the level of knowledge shown by the public was insufficient to enable them to obtain a balanced picture of council affairs ("The local government councillor," Management of local government, vol 2, p 250). The level of communication between the council and the electorate clearly leaves much to be desired.

Who is to blame for a situation of such mutual misunderstanding, where the councillor is depicted as a despotic figure, and the electorate as an interfering, incompetent, bumbling body? Many councillors blame the public: just many members of the public express a wish to know more about their local councils (op cit p 38). The councillors believe that the necessary information is available (op cit p 234), but the public complain of secrecy, of committees which meet in private, of meetings incomprehensible to anyone without the knowledge of the committee discussions. The upsurge of interest in local participation has taken place against this background of mutual confusion and distrust. Many of the self-help organisations, and of course the action groups, have developed outside the existing local government framework. In some cases they refuse to allow ward councillors to participate in their proceedings. Local councillors, for their part, are ambivalent about these new developments. They welcome the interest shown in their activities, but they find difficulty in integrating the demands for participation into their existing concept of representative democr-
cracy. They are concerned to protect the primacy of the elected representative, and in so doing they project an image of paternalism or arrogance. There is seldom a genuine interchange of views in the development of policy; the more usual pattern is for the public to be informed, if they are lucky, to comment on fairly ironclad council proposals. Some councillors seem to hope that if they smile, and wait, the whole thing will simply go away.

Generalisations about local government are always difficult to substantiate. The variety throughout the country provides easy confusion of dogmatic assertion. So we may find examples which contradict the previous paragraph. Local councillors reading these lines will wish to draw attention to the different circumstances obtaining in their area. In my experience each council is always "special"; councillors are always convinced of their readiness to implement, or indeed their anticipation of, whatever reforms are being discussed. Of course there are local authorities which are easier to get at than others, and councillors and those members of the public who wish to participate, but there are probably more authorities where the atmosphere on the ground is such that discussion is curtailed by the mere presence of councillors. The public have a right to be heard. The bulk of local authority areas fall between these two extremes; what is needed is for the councillors and public in these areas to examine self-critically the mutual developing links between popular participation and traditional representative democracy.

The objections to an extension of public participation in the provision of local services are of two main types. First, there are the instrumental objections, those which suggest that participation would not achieve the ends intended. Secondly, there are the objections based upon a fear of faction. The view which led Rousseau to declare: "...if the general will is to be clearly expressed, it is imperative that there shall be no interference with the secret of the state." The most common objections are based upon the practical difficulties of implementing popular participation. Discussion takes time; delay causes expense; the professional skills of local government officers are dissipated as they constantly attend meetings on details while the broad principles are forgotten. In such circumstances, it is argued, public participation produces inferior and more expensive policies than traditional administrative methods, and this surely cannot be the intention of those who wish to participate. Such practical objections can be overcome by practical action if the political will is present. The opportunities for participation can be allowed for in a time table of the decision-making process. Such a process will cost money: more documents will be prepared, and circulated; more meetings must be organised; exhibitions will be designed; more staff will undoubtedly be needed. But such is it itself a matter of public decision. If the end of participation is desired then we can vote the means. Nor are all the cost arguments so obvious as against participation. Many wrong (in the sense of uneconomic or counterproductive) decisions may be prevented by wider consultation. A consequent saving of public funds may be effected; it is easier to amend a proposal in response to suggestions before the work is started than to make alterations later in response to public pressure.

The extra officers employed will need to be trained. The technical skills of the field of public administration are necessary to involve the general public in genuine discussion. Student planners are already showing a great interest in this aspect of their work and demands may be heard from the planning boards for more politics and sociology to be included in the syllabus. The associated argument is the need for confidentiality. This argument is at its strongest in planning matters where premature disclosure of an authority's intentions may affect property values, but it may also be heard elsewhere. Personal details affecting individuals should be treated with respect, but sometimes this admirable intention produces curious results. It has been argued, for example, that students should not have an extended right of appeal against academic exclusion. This would involve public disclosure of personal matters. Many junior university staff object strongly to being involved in discussions affecting individual promotions on the grounds that personal embarrassment might be caused to the candidates concerned. When such arguments prevail the consequence is to strengthen the elitist character of our institutions. A more open society will of necessity involve a loss of privacy for some people. We may seek to prevent private economic exploitation of public decisions, and to protect individuals from embarrassment, but ultimately we must weigh such loss of privacy in the balance against the gains we expect from wider public participation. We may discover ourselves less sensitive than we thought in the process.

Other objections to participation are more openly political. Those who participate cannot be certain of achieving all their objectives. The political process involves inevitable compromises. Will the interests of the participants be protected and fail become more alienated from the demands of political power? If they have remained apathetic? The obverse of this argument is a fear that the skills of established councillors will enable them to manipulate the elector, or to defeat those on whom none is justified. The sting of political conflict over policy choices may be drawn. Potential leaders of radical politics may settle for the status quo, or participate rather than contest the reality of the political system. The argument that participation is more alienated is not desarmed. Non-political groups, it may be felt, are not substitute for party organisation in the political process. Such objections are logically elitist and defeatist. They deny the potentiality of the general public to achieve the greater political maturity which is the declared aim of socialism to encourage. To achieve maturity one must participate in the experience of freedom. Since the uncertainties and extravagances which this brings. Local politicians must act the heavy parent; or should they mislead their own style of politics? At the only one possible. At some local levels formal party organisation may be an in appropriate method of participation at the present time. This does not mean that the overall effect of action groups, for example, or of more widely based school management boards, is any the less radical. Even party terms, Labour is likely to gain from such activities despite the lack of harmony which may be expected from time to time between the local groups and the party organisation.

The Rousseauean fear of faction expresses itself in two ways in relation to local participation. First, there is the fear that only the middle class will seek to influence local policy by these methods. Those who occupy important and communication skills have an obvious initial advantage when entering the political process, though the organisational experience gained through trade union membership should not be forgotten.

Both the Skewgill Committee and the Sebbah Committee, who advocated a greater measure of popular participation in the local social service, recognised the possibility of accepting the views of the articulate minority for those of a parochial majority. They both suggested ways, including the involvement of community development officers, in which the views of those participating could be made more representative. The title of community development officers covers a wide variety both of occupations and skills. Some of these workers are seeking traditional social work ends through an involvement with a local community, others are youth workers, probation officers, or adult education workers, "unattached" to any particular office or institution; and a few are concerned with encouraging participation in the planning process. Whatever their specialism, however, they are all stimulating people to think and act for themselves.

Here again is a difficult situation for many councillors to accept. A successful community development officer may ameliorate certain social problems, but he may also provide a spark which fires opposition to certain council policies. Indeed the two
effects are part of the same process. The professional integrity of the officer should prevent him profiting for any particular political point of view, but the corollary of this is a willingness on the part of the councillors to accept the activities which may result from his efforts. Once people are encouraged to participate it is difficult to control the lines upon which they will develop; nor would manipulation, as opposed to guidance, be desirable. Councillors need considerable self-control to accept some of the situations which occur, and may blame the community development officer for an unwarranted intrusion into politics.

Community development work is based upon an understanding of the closely circumscribed neighbourhood within which most people conduct their daily life. In the larger towns and cities such neighbourhoods are unlikely to be larger than a ward, and often much smaller. Within these areas people are interested in local affairs, or can be encouraged to be so interested, but it is the social rather than a political interest. This is why the public activities which arise can often be unfamiliar to local politicians: the activities of participating in activities for one's own benefit, rather than within the boundaries of the wider community, and lack a wider political perspective. The action here is of one area rather than of social class, but it is a different form of participation requiring responsibility to a wider constituency.

There are many occasions when the sum of the individual interests of those who participate may not correspond to the interests of the population as a whole. In such circumstances it is often tempting to ask for a plebiscite to elect the views of the silent majority; the temptation should usually be resisted. Local government provides the few examples of referenda being used in the British political process: the experience is not encouraging. Recently, the poll has been held in some peripheral areas to determine the boundaries of the new local authorities. The future planning needs of the areas are unlikely to be foremost in the minds of those voting, and their decisions may affect far wider interests than their own. Another example of the use of a referendum in local government may be taken from the town poll often held when a private bill is being promoted. The electors are asked to vote on a measure which may have over a hundred diverse clauses. Understandably, the turnout on such occasions is low, and heavily weighted towards those who object to some part of the bill. Plebiscites are essentially conservative and emotional in the face of complex issues. Their use should be limited to simple, clear issues affecting only the inhabitants of a clearly defined community, and even then the difficulties of framing an objective question to place on the ballot paper should be remembered.

The movement towards a greater measure of participation in the provision of local services is raising fundamental questions, therefore, about the nature of our democracy. The simple answers, either of those who demand participation of those who vigorously oppose, will not be sufficient. Instead, the movement is to reiterate the pluralistic nature of the democratic system of government.

Methods must be found to integrate the experience of participation into a satisfactory framework. At all times, emphasis should be placed on ensuring that the democratic arrangements are not just formal but also meaningful. There is no right answer when it comes to the generation. We should regard ourselves, therefore, as 'laboriously indefatigably to discover the undiscoverable,' (R. Michels, Political party, 1920). Encouraging among councillors, the flexibility of mind shown by Alderman Farold Lambert of Sheffield, when he wrote: "Participation's ultimate form is the moment of decision. Our experience in the city has shown a different approach by different groups, but out of these experiences we have found a way of involving the local authority and citizens in a new role for the elected representative. The government of the councillor for dealing with personal problems must continue but the contact with the electors, as envisaged by the old ward meetings, is diminishing and to replace this, one can see emerging a more broadly based meeting of electors in wards, with the elected representative as liaison officer.'

Contact with the electors is not the only function of an elected representative. He is publicly accountable for the policies of the local authority and will be responsible for decisions affecting the broad allocation of resources. In considering participation, we should consider, therefore, two parallel developments. First, improved consultation leading to participation in the decision making process where even the power to make the final decision continues to rest with the councillors. Second, the delegation of power to communities, either functionally or territorially based, where the decisions to be taken affect exclusively those within the community.

Improved consultation over the more general participation in the provision of local services is raising fundamental questions, therefore, about the nature of our democracy. The simple answers, either of those who demand participation or of those who vigorously oppose, will not be sufficient. Instead, the movement is to reiterate the pluralistic nature of democracy. The methods must be found to integrate the experience of participation into a satisfactory framework. At all times, emphasis should be placed on ensuring that the democratic arrangements are not just formal but also meaningful. There is no right answer when it comes to the generation. We should regard ourselves, therefore, as 'laboriously indefatigably to discover the undiscoverable,' (R. Michels, Political party, 1920). Encouraging among councillors, the flexibility of mind shown by Alderman Farold Lambert of Sheffield, when he wrote: "Participation's ultimate form is the moment of decision. Our experience in the city has shown a different approach by different groups, but out of these experiences we have found a way of involving the local authority and citizens in a new role for the elected representative. The government of the councillor for dealing with personal problems must continue but the contact with the electors, as envisaged by the old ward meetings, is diminishing and to replace this, one can see emerging a more broadly based meeting of electors in wards, with the elected representative as liaison officer.'

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Within the reformed local government structure, local authorities will be scrutinised and challenged by other authorities, but this will not prevent them from decentralising certain powers to administrative bodies within their areas. Examples of the initiative with which the local authorities should be taking may be given from the recommendations of the Shee

The system of school managers and governors recently established in Sheffield provides an excellent example. The system is intended to promote the wider participation in the running of schools by parents, teachers, trade unionists, people from all walks of life within the locality. (Peter Hounsell: N.E. 1969). The managers and governors include members of the political parties, the head teacher of each school, the local education authority, the local authority and the local authority. The idea was conceived with the aim of increasing the involvement of parents, teachers, and pupils in the running of schools. Since then, schools have been encouraged to involve senior pupils in the management process. Several schools have been invited to join the governors. Few of the boards include more than one or two pupils out of a membership of between twelve and sixteen.

Local authorities in towns and cities should also be supporting the development of new local authorities. The idea of a council without statutory functions is foreign to many councillors, who ridicule the creation of "merely talking shops", but they should be encouraged to think again. Neighbourhood councils are based upon an extension of the parish council concept into urban areas. The idea was conceived with the aim of increasing the involvement of parents, teachers, and pupils in the running of schools. Since then, schools have been encouraged to involve senior pupils in the management process. Several schools have been invited to join the governors. Few of the boards include more than one or two pupils out of a membership of between twelve and sixteen.

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which local authorities can encourage participation from beyond the already confident circle of present activists. There is a need to provide adult education in local government and planning matters. Such education, of course, should not be influenced by a particular party political viewpoint, but the idea of educational courses for citizenship is very much part of the Fabian tradition, and should be strongly supported in the present context.

Examples could be given from many parts of the country, but again to quote Sheffield, The Local Education Authority, the Workers' Educational Association, and the Department of Extramural Studies, University of Sheffield, either individually or in cooperation, have provided many courses to service those who wish to participate in the administration of local services. When the local authority Planning Department recently announced an action plan for one area of the city, the adult education service engaged a Polytechnic lecturer to give talks in the locality on the planning process. They wished to stimulate a 'hands on' style of participation. The LEA and the Extramural Department have organised conferences and lecture courses for school managers and governors. Other courses, ranging from five to twenty-four meetings, have been arranged on housing policy, welfare rights, and various aspects of planning.

The attendance at these courses has been encouraging: most of them attract several dozen registrations. But even when attendances are low they should not be compared with the large audiences at public meetings held in crisis situations: the permanent increase protest, or defence against the plannings rally. We are concerned here with educational courses for those who carry on the regular work of consultation and pressure group activity after the excitement dies away. The response, here as elsewhere, suggests a readiness to become involved which is far wider than the relatively narrow circle of those accepting the responsibility of elected office. The next few years are going to be a time of great change in local government. Some great authorities, and most small ones, will disappear: all will be struggling with...