fabian tract 419

towards participation in local services

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Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, London SW1H 9BN.
February 1973 ISBN 7163 0419 8

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 First 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 a prior one. 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 exclusively 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 Jewel 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 Skeffington 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 politcal 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 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 Derricourt 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 Derricourt, 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 on the one hand recognising 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 so that they cease to be 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 "everybody" fudges 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 intermeshing of arrangements 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 perceptively analysed by Peter Marris. 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. These have been analysed more fully by Barry Hindess (*The decline of working class politics*, 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 of Labour councillors in many local authorities, particularly in London. Although systematic evidence on a national level is lacking, it does appear that the Labour Party is now much less of 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. Immigration 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*, OUP, 1967) points out that a person's position in the housing market, for instance whether he is a furnished tenant or living on a good local authority estate, has significant implications for his political interests; and that housing class in this sense often cuts across class defined in occupational terms. Disputes over the eligibility of furnished tenants for rehousing during slum clearance illustrates 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 in general elections has declined steadily since 1950, but has been sharpest in inner city areas. Thus between the general elections of 1959 and 1970 average turn out in the 12 safest Labour seats in the former London County Council area 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 close coincidence between under privilege and membership of the working class, and the Labour Party could legitimately claim to be the political instrument of the under privileged. 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 under privileged seek political expression outside the formal system, through incursions into participatory politics. But these are fragmentary and therefore 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 adopted that suit only the 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

abstraction, or to influence the ways in which issues are defined.

The politically isolated will be the losers unless first, there are people who deliberately take on the role of catalysts, advocates and community developers on their behalf, and second, fresh political alliances can be forged which unite the politically isolated with the Labour Movement and give it a new impetus.

But the contributors to this pamphlet are not primarily concerned with the arguments for and against participation. Discussion of participation has now continued long enough to make it more important to ask how rather than why. It is time to get to grips with the problems and possibilities of implementation. This pamphlet is a step in that direction. It does not offer final answers: no-one would pretend anyway that participation is a panacea for the ailments of a democratic society. Rather it shows how participation might be advanced. Thence, later on, we shall be able to ask more searching questions of actual experience concerning who benefits, in what ways and under what circumstances.

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 budgetery 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, once the privilege of those who could afford it, come to be seen as universal rights and 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 puts 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 obtrusive 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 surely 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 disclaim responsibility, leaving problems in a limbo between jurisdictions. So the Seebohm report repeatedly emphasises that its reform implies a commitment of larger resources. I think the same argument must apply wherever the present provisions are poorly organised, ignore the underlying causes of needs, and are under pressure to make immediate economies. Thus the budgetary pressures which provoke the search for a more efficient use of resources end by placing even heavier demands on the budget. The institutional resistances to reform, too, are 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 mean worse 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 frustrations which seriously damage the quality of education.

Rationalisation, however, also tends to make government seem even more remote from popular control. 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 attempts at 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 counties, counties with 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 others he knows nothing of *and* he is told that if he objects to this, he should have said so 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 taxpayer, whose reluctance to pay for it all posed 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 not cope with the strains this evolution puts 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 the 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 resources. 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 even has to pay his share of things he abhors.

To some extent, the same evolution is taking place even in non-government provisions. 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.

weakness of administrative traditions

The administrative structure which representative democracy has developed seems equally inadequate. So long as democracy is principally conceived to assert the sovereignty of parliament, the regulation of its bureacracy through specialised, hierarchical departments, responsible to the political leadership ensures the subordination of administrators without constant supervision. The limits of official discretion are carefully hedged by elaborate rules and restricted jurisdictions. The system works well for routine functions. But once the administration becomes an instrument of planning, the segregation of departments, the circumscribed regulation-bound vision of the bureaucrat, his dependence on the manipulation of privileged information to secure his ends, and his preoccupation with the defence of jurisdictional boundaries become severe handicaps. The structure inhibits the exchange of information and any wide-ranging analysis of social needs, distorting all issues into questions of departmental inter-relationships. Nor, is a bureaucracy automatically required to inquire into the success of the policies it implements, which is a political question. It need only show that it has carried out instructions. It is generally a poor monitor of its own functions, defensive and protective of its political masters, nervous of any research whose questions and conclusions it cannot control. Yet government relies very heavily on its civil service to plan, inform and innovate; and there is a characteristic, often stultifying tension between the civil service and the government's external advisers (whose vision may be wider but innocent of administrative politics).

Thus the traditions of representative democracy are ill-adapted both politically and administratively to the demands of a society where government is principle provider and planner.

the evolution of government

All this leads up to my central concern: the evolution of a pattern of government that can better reconcile intelligent collective action with a sense of 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 trends 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 uses 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-

munity action and the militant refusal of protesting groups to abide by public decisions all seem to reflect these issues. We are at once seeking continually to enlarge the scope of integrated management, in desperate need of international systems of regulation, and at the same time, to break systems of government down into sets of relationships which will be humanly responsive and comprehensible.

Not that most of us, most of our lives, want to participate in government. Rather, we want a social environment which as it most immediately impinges on us largely seems to regulate itself where the relationships are predictable, and the adjustments we must make within a familiar range; where we have a sense of confidence and autonomy, internalising the constraints it imposes on us, and where the threats to that environment can be contained by defences which need only occasionally be mobilised. If the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, we mostly leave it to a few watch keepers, responding sluggishly to their alarms. Everyone wants an active part in the government of his family, most want a part in the government of their work; elsewhere we commonly delegate the defence of our interests, ready, more or less willingly, to mobilise our political resources when those interests truly seem threatened. This presupposes a loose integration of society, organic rather than hierarchical, where the survival of the whole allows for a large measure of self-regulation in its parts. Nothing else seems humanly possible, except perhaps by an overwhelming sacrifice of liberty. No closely integrated system of government could begin to muster the complexity of relationships on so vast a scale, assimilate and respond to information in time and act intelligently; it could only blunder on with a crude and brutal insensitivity. Yet our models of government are still characteristically of this kind. They have survived so long only because we left the greater part of life to take care of itself, in a manner that now threatens to overwhelm us.

The crucial issue then is not simply participation in government, but the way in which participation can influence the relationship between the formal or informal systems of regulation through which we conduct our lives. For if these systems must be partly autonomous, if they are to be manageable, they are also interdependent, and the survival of the whole depends upon the nature of the transactions across their boundaries.

All such transactions are mediated by people whose part it is to act across the boundaries. It is not necessarily possible for them to promote both the coherence of the larger system and of the subordinate system; their actions then are either destructive or abortive, and they destroy themselves too. At best it is never easy.

But if I am right, these mediators will play the most crucial role in the government of society—the community leaders, community organisers, arbitrators, planners, royal commissioners, policy advocates, experts, trade union leaders—everyone whose concern is not with the maintenance of a system of relationships, so much as its interdependence with other systems. We seem to understand such roles poorly, and to have studied them little. There is the politically passive citizen, who finds he must turn outward from his private life to involve himself, for a while, in a public issue that touches his immediate interest; the community or interest group leader, who must negotiate with the larger system on behalf of his following; the community organiser, as paid official, whose loyalty is divided between his paymasters and those he is appointed to help and encourage; the civil servant who represents his department before lobbies, protest groups, community interests, and represents their views to his colleagues; the expert who tries to turn his expertise to practical account in a politicised setting: the royal commissioner; the arbitrator, the planner confronting the variety of public interests; and the politician too when he negotiates between party policy and the interests of his constituents. If I am right, the quality of government depends on the skill and sensitivity with which these mediating roles are played, and on the possibility that they can be played, without abortive and self-destructive conflict.

3. Health services: the case for a counter bureaucracy

Rudolf Klein

Once it used to be accepted that history represented the inevitable, inexorable and irresistable march of progress, from primitive savagery to enlightened civilisation. Now this approach is no longer fashionable. But historians of medicine, with more reason than most, still tend to see developments in terms of an evolution from the witch doctor to the scientist. Generally it is difficult to quarrel with this interpretation. But in terms of the relationship between the doctor and the patient, between the service and the consumer, this evolutionary view clearly is 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 customer.

Before Lloyd George's introduction of national health insurance, the system of providing medical care outside hospital—an incomplete, partial system admittedly—was a network of workingmen's clubs, medical and friendly societies and institutes which often hired their own doctors. This machinery of lay control was resented by the medical profession. However, in 1911—when various clubs and societies had to register under the National Insurance Act—this co-operative welfare system was still an example of what might now be 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 630 societies with a membership of between 50 and 1,000—the Airdale Oddfellows, the Ravenstone Druids, the Pride of the Hill, the Mayfield Temperance, the Phoenix Iron Works and all the rest.

To read this roll call is not just to indulge in nostalgia. It is to remind oneself that participation—the middle-class luxury of the second half of the twentieth 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 development. 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 organisations run—in theory at any rate—by 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. Pflanz, "German health insurance," *International journal of health services*, vol 1, no 4, 1971). In Saskachewan, 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 consumer has very little 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: 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 agitations 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 low: 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 in trade unions, passive membership is only exceptionally translated into active participation. More striking still 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. Currently, 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 this minority turn up at the Association's annual meeting.

In this passivity non-participants are behaving more rationally than the all out advocates of participation. For moving on to the second proposition in favour of participation—the moral imperative approach—the arguments in its favour seem even more dubious than that for the first. In the first place, the individual participator in any except small groups has very little chance of affecting decisions. Then again, to participate effectively means acquiring information: but acquiring information is a time consuming and expensive business where the effort involved very seldom brings any equivalent returns (which is why most citizens invest so little in acquainting themselves about the details of politics: an ignorance which tends to shock moral participators but is far more rational than attempts to acquire knowledge that could be put to no practical use). Lastly, most decision making machinery works only because of the large element of non-participation: for instance, the House of Commons depends upon the willingness of a large number of MPs to be lobby fodder, leaving active participation in speech making to a rather small minority.

So far this discussion has deliberately side stepped the question of what participation actually means. Most definitions are unsatisfactory. For example, the Skeffington Committee's "the act of sharing in the formulation of policies and proposals" is a tautology. What does "sharing" mean? At one end of the spectrum it can mean the right of being informed or consulted. This is an important concept in itself, particularly in a closed political system like the British. But it still represents the weak concept of participation—which at the other end of the spectrum surely means involvement in the decision making itself, conceivably even (on the model of the Polish diet) the right to veto.

Perhaps this difficulty of defining the *means* of participation is inevitable, given the confusion about the *aims* of participation. If one rejects the view that participation is a natural human need and/or a sort of moral Swedish drill, then perhaps the most useful working concept is to think of participation as a means for securing benefits or advantages. These can be psychic benefits (a sense of doing good, the satisfaction drawn from manipulating other people). Or they can be material benefits (control of resources, access to power which will bring resources). Either way this approach allows one to look at the problems of participation in the National Health Service—or any other area of activity—in a non-mystical way. Rather than assuming that the case for participation does not need arguing, it starts from the proposition that participation has first to be shown to be in the interests of the potential participator—a seemingly crashing platitude which yet is so often ignored.

The conventional case for participation in the NHS can be easily sketched out. Here is a £2,000 million a year organisation, whose raw material is human beings: 5,000,000 people a year go into hospital as in-patients and 32,000,000 visit them as out-patients, with another 200 million contacts between the general practitioner and his clients. Yet Parliamentary control is largely mythical, and a series of reports into hospital scandals has now shown that the lay representatives on management committees are often ineffective representatives of the consumer interest. Further, the emphasis in present proposals for changing the administrative machinery of the NHS is on improving management, not on reinforcing consumer influence or power.

But consumer influence or power over what? Here it is important to stress what is a crucial distinction between the allocation of resources and their use at the point of delivery. The consumer of health services (and of any other publicly provided services, for that matter) has a double interest. The first is to get the maximum possible in the way of resources for himself, his family and his community—more hospitals, more GPs, more nurses and so on. Although 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 in the way of medical manpower and other services. The consumer's other interest is to have a say in how resources are organised and administered—the way in which services are run.

If in fact we were prepared to contemplate more local consumer influence or power over the allocation of resources, then 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 is it possible to conceive giving more control over the allocation of resources to the local consumer? In education, despite the existence of elected bodies, this has not happened; on the contrary, the central Government prevents Local Education Authorities from improving the quality of their services beyond a certain point. In health, almost exclusively Treasury financed, it is even more difficult to see the Department of Health allowing any local discretion in this respect; the present drift of policy is in 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 also—or at the very least, to accept—inequality, perhaps even to increase it. It is to accept, for example, a community paying to keep a local hospital open (much as it can already pay, out of rates, to keep a local bus line operating). If this 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 many of which are no bigger than a parish council—then a high degree of public involvement would be linked with a degree of inequality in the level of provision: by and large, one would expect middle class communities to take out a sort of collective BUPA policy to improve their local health service facilities. In short, it is possible to conceive of a policy deliberately designed to bring about greater participation and a greater flow of funds for public services by deliberately exploiting what has been called the "law of consumer differentiation" (Anthony Downs and R. Joseph Monsen. "Public goods and private status," *The public interest*, no 23, Spring 1971).

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 self-interest, usually economic, to defend their own interests (this motorway will disturb the peace of my garden and lower the value of my house). Equally participation in planning protests is usually a classic example of consumer differentiation: the protesters usually want someone else to have the motorway and its accompanying disamenities. In the NHS, 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 know than the patient? 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 though to 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 experimentally interviewed patients on discharge to find out their views about their stay. However, the prospect of regular surveys of patient attitudes, carried out as a matter of routine in all hospitals, seems remote: it is still exceptional to find hospitals which analyse patient complaints in a systematic way or treat them positively as basic management information about customer wishes, instead of regarding them as a nuisance. There is no problem about prescribing ways in which patient participation could be extended. For example, why not have a patient doctor committee attached to every new health centre? Why not invite patient comments and discussion about such matters as the organisation of appointment systems or waiting lists. However, it would again be over optimistic to ignore the potential obstacles. To begin with (to repeat and elaborate an earlier point) it is misleading to talk about *the* consumer of health services—in the sort of way that it is possible to talk of the consumer of other, more standardised services. There are different consumers whose interests may well be different: for example, the elderly and mothers of small children might have very different ideas about the organisation of waiting rooms.

Then, again, different consumers vary in their capacity to participate effectively: clearly the mentally handicapped or acutely ill patient is not well placed to make his or her views felt (which is not to say that it should be automatically assumed, as so often now, that they have none to which it is worth paying attention). Again the parent who invests time participating in a school committee knows that this will have a definite pay-off, in that the children will be there for a specific number of years; but it is difficult to be certain about the return on effort in the health service—any would-be participant who does a cost-benefit exercise could well decide that it is not worthwhile arguing about a casualty department (say) which he may never use. 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. To the extent that the NHS is an example of producer-participation, and the junior doctors and nurses are now trying to extend the principle of workers' control to cover themselves as well as the consultants, so it is difficult to introduce consumer-participation. For even organisational issues can affect the professional autonomy of the staff. Arguments about appointment systems are often arguments about whether the time of doctors or patients is more valuable: arguments about visitors or waking hours are often arguments about whether the convenience of the staff or of the patients should be the decisive consideration. There is a direct conflict of interest here, particularly since the existence of the NHS guarantees the professional staff 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 profession is responsible for a monopoly health service and has a virtual monopoly of technical expertise and information, it is difficult to be hopeful about the ability of the consumer to become an 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 health 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 routine, it is then 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 manpower and expertise required to analyse their performance from the point of view of the user. As the experience of the nationalised industries has shown, there is little point in setting up consultative committees and all the other paraphernalia of participation if they then lack the independent 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 means of measuring the performance of the services in their area against some benchmarks (however crude) of what was desirable from the point of view of the consumer and the best practices elsewhere.

At present it is the absence of publicly accessible information about the performance of the health services at a local level, where it matters most to the consumer, that is remarkable. Even the most elementary facts about comparative lengths of waiting lists, staffing and so on are lacking (leaving aside the explosive subject of information about the clinical performance of doctors to obtain which not only a counter-bureaucracy but an anti-profession would be needed). 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, let alone would be participators, are singularly badly equipped to evaluate the services provided on an independent, comparative basis and have to rely on the information provided by the professionals who run the hospitals. Nor is this 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 health 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 buyer to the exclusion of the consumer of public services. Yet arguably the latter is in an even more vulnerable position. Some of the elements of a counter-bureaucracy already exist. There is the school inspectorate. There is the Hospital Advisory Service. There is the Parliamentary Commissioner, soon to be reinforced by the Health Commissioner. An inspectorate for local government has been proposed. But one of the main characteristics of most of these institutions is their lack of direct responsibility to those actually using the services: thus the Hospital Advisory Service submits its detailed findings to the health authorities, not to the consumers of health services: its annual report gives general conclusions not the details relevant to local users.

The role of a counter bureaucracy should not be to interfere administratively or judicially, with the operations of the health service. It should be, though, to alert the public to specific weaknesses and to provide the information required by the consumer if he is to assess the quality of his local service. This at least would provoke informed debate and feed local pressure groups with evidence for ammunition—perhaps the best form of participation which we can hope for.

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the only hitherto successful examples of spontaneous, participatory protest movements occur when a local hospital or casualty out-patient department is threatened with closure: again a specific local interest is being defended—the right of a particular community to have a "better" service is being asserted, even at the cost of perpetuating what may be an unequal and inefficient allocation of resources as measured by the quality of the medical service provided and the wasteful use of scarce manpower.

Hence what seems to be the first law of participation. participation will increase in direct proportion to the resources at stake, and to the ability of the participators to affect the distribution of those resources. If we want a bureaucratically rational distribution of resources, if we want to put the emphasis on egalitarianism, then it is both futile and hypocritical to talk about participation except in the weakest sense as a programme of public consultation and education.

Equally, to encourage participation (however defined) in decisions about the allocation of resources might well increase the existing bias towards those parts of the NHS which service the needs of the majority of the population as distinct from minorities. By definition it is the consumers of acute hospital services as distinct from the mentally handicapped, the chronically ill or the aged, who are best able to assert themselves. To introduce participation, in place of the present (reasonably benevolent) political bureaucratic paternalism, which could therefore lead to an even greater imbalance in the distribution of resources.

So much for participation in decisions about the allocation of resources. But what about decisions about how those resources should be used? Here again it is important to distinguish. In the health service, decisions about the use of resources fall into two main categories though they may be taken by the same people:

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 occasional 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 know how 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. There 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 the most effective tool of his trade. Equally, one of the main effects of the introduction of the NHS in Britain so far 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 a misleading over-simplification. 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 through consumer choice model begin to make sense. What is more, a market system may often work against the consumer 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 with medical 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 costs of any attempt at participating in medical decisions are growing the whole time. In other words, a patient has to acquire 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 from that of a consumer of most 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 when he has to use those 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 his 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 investment in 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 fastest growing areas of medical care are those which may persuade doctors actively to seek the co-operation 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 an exercise in consumer/producer co-operation.

The consumer is, however, much better placed when it comes to the organisation or administration of medical care. For here, in a sense, the patient automatically

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...opening up the planning process

Peter Levin

Every proposal for significantly changing the physical environment in Britain has to pass through a prescribed procedure of some kind. These offer varying degrees of scope for public involvement. In the case of projects sponsored by central or local government or statutory undertakers, the procedure usually provides 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' proposals 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 too little scope for public involvement: this chapter sets out to show why this scope is as restricted as it is and to suggest how it might be extended, in particular by the modification of procedures and by the action of citizen groups.

the nature of the planning process

Stautory procedures are only part of the planning process. One needs to look further to discover how, in practice, actions that change the physical environment get 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 our acceptance was virtually inevitable, since the figure 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 the 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'd 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 would also 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 one 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, then. 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 in making less 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 subsequently 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 untypical 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 the passage of time 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 a penalty for himself personally or for the group to which he belongs.) 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—since no change will thereafter be possible. The existence of commitment, it should 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-

ing 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 gentlemen'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 very effective at producing commitment; they might almost have been designed to do so. Seen from the point of view of the public, the people on the receiving end, many planning procedures are simply 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 specialised staff. To take a formal decision that substitutes a different project would then be to throw time and effort down the drain and to incur the penalities of responsibility for this waste and the alienation of people on whose support and goodwill one depends. Administrative investment is one of the elements of the process that Lord Bridges described in *The Listener* (25 June 1964): "The experience of anyone who has worked in Whitehall is that there is an early stage in any project when things are fluid; when, if you are in touch with those concerned and get hold of the facts it is fairly easy to influence decisions. But after a scheme has been worked on for weeks and months, and has hardened into a particular shape, and come up for formal decisions, then it is often very difficult to do anything except either approve it or throw it overboard." Lord Bridges might have added that there is invariably a penalty—the loss of the administrative investment—attached to throwing the scheme overboard. In other words, there is a commitment towards accepting the scheme rather than rejecting it, as well as a commitment towards accepting that scheme rather than any other.

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 contentiousness becomes apparent. Approval together with positive support may be given in return for support for another person's project: in effect a bargain is struck, with both sides incurring a commitment. Sometimes 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 obviously 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 is formed to work on a scheme to be submitted for planning permission. The scheme submitted will embody some of the planning officers' 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 find 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 suported protest to prevent the giving of planning permission at this stage —as did 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 various administrative procedures, most of which are designed to deal with only a single proposal. Most public inquiries, for example, are inquiries into a single proposal only or into 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—to bring an alternative proposal to the same stage, 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 plainly 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 Sunburry Cross to Popham should be diverted at its London end: "To abandon the published route and adopt the more southerly route in Surrey would mean republication 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 effects. Roy Gregory, in his recent book *The price of amenity* (Macmillan 1971), describes how the Central Electricity Generating Board's application to build a power station 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 participated hardly at all in reaching 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 storm will not break until 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 Minister of 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 more 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 a "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—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 yearly allocation of finance may have to be spent or it will be forfeited (and next year's allocation possibly reduced). A non-recurring deadline is created when, for example, notice is given that an Exchequer subsidy is to be withdrawn, It was the approaching end of the hotel building subsidy in March 1971 that led to Bristol Corporation giving outline planning permission for an 8-storey hotel in the Avon gorge only 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 will be able to create administrative deadlines by arranging that the work of his department—the more the better—will be held up if a decision is not given by 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 follow one another without intermission. 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 a Compulsory Purchase 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 was done, it seems, in order to forestall a 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 has got under way he or a new politician coming 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 does sometimes happen 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 well 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 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 his discretion, has only to "have particular regard to the need for promoting the better distribution of employment in Great Britain," but the way in which some ODPs have recently been handed out (notably 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 publicity for ODP applications, so if giving the permit is part of a bargain the local planning authority will thereby incur a strong commitment towards giving planning permission even though formal application for it has not yet been made. If the local authority should refuse planning permission, the developer can appeal to none other than 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 plan showing 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, or a group of attractive cottages, a local authority 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 different and 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, cobblestones, 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 furnished tenants were supplanted 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 has at its disposal various ways of binding itself to carry out or permit 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, to revoke it generally carries 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 million of pounds. Accordingly, just as a route for a motorway can be safeguarded by refusing planning permission for development in its path, possible alternative routes 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

forsees itself being compelled to provide a camping site for gypsies and has identified 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 located near a "high class" residential area where several councillors happen to live. By arranging for planning permission for housing to be sought for that site, and seeing that it is given, councillors can raise the cost of acquiring it and therby tilt the scales in favour of using the other. Even where the bind comes in the guise of an informal undertaking it may be no less strong, since no public authority wishes to gain a reputation for failing to honour such undertakings, especially if it has many dealings with other authorities or developers and is dependent in any way upon them.

10. *Direct action.* The principle here is to bring about changes in the physical environment or in behaviour patterns before embarking on the formal decision making process for a planning scheme. Then when the time comes for the formal decision, the costs and benefits of the range of possible schemes have been altered in such a way as to favour strongly the scheme originally prepared. This is the strategy to which the actions of the Ministry of Transport in recent years over the Archway to Mill Hill stretch of the A1 conform. Eleven years ago the Ministry formulated a general plan (never subjected to a public inquiry) to widen the whole of this stretch. In places where there was no organised opposition it went ahead with widening and with improving junctions and alignments, which naturally attracted more traffic to the route as a whole. By the time that a public inquiry was held, three years ago, in connection with the proposed widening of the A1 where it ran through Hampstead Garden Suburb, these actions had succeeded in increasing significantly the penalty attached to not going ahead with the Ministry's scheme—a penalty measured not merely in terms of traffic congestion and delay but also in terms of the waste of road capacity already provided elsewhere and not fully utilised. Another form of direct action is the engineering of planning blight. Pending a decision as to whether an area of Victorian housing is to be redeveloped, say, or to have a motorway run through it, a local council can cease to give mortgages or improvement grants on houses in the area. After some years of uncertainty, the area will have run down so far that when the time comes for a formal decision demolition is the only possible thing that can be done. Where the local authority owns the housing it can short-circuit this process by simply moving the tenants elsewhere and destroying all the fixtures and fittings, nominally to discourage squatters. This was the procedure adopted by the Greater London Council earlier this year in the case of Trentishoe Mansions, overlooking Cambridge Circus in Charing Cross Road, after deciding to sell the site to a property company which wished to build a nineteen storey office block there.

All these strategies have one thing in common. Their effect is to generate commitment to a proposed course of action—to create a penalty for switching to an alternative—and to do so before the public come to appreciate the existence of the proposal. Benefits for the consumer would be deferred or lost, and the government would be held responsible: further study would be needed; issues already settled would have to be reopened: valued officials would be offended and alienated if work they had done were wasted: credibility and "face" would be lost if the Council were to back down: the trust of other officials or developers would be forfeited: long cherished dreams would have to be abandoned.

A number of those commitments do of course vanish when control of government changes hands from one party to another, since a new government does not inherit all the obligations of the old. The same is true when a ministerial post or committee chairmanship changes hands. But with costs and benefits for the consumer it is a different matter. These can be created, destroyed or otherwise irreversibly changed by direct action or simple delaying tactics. It is important to bear in mind, when told that issues should be considered on their merits, that merits are by no means intrinsic and unchangeable attributes of a proposed course of action.

It would of course be quite wrong to suggest that local and central governments are staffed by sinister men, intent on putting one over on the citizen, and such a suggestion should not be read into what has been said earlier. The participation inhibiting strategies that have been described admittedly lend themselves to abuse, but often they are as much a trap for politicians and administrators as for anyone else. It would seem to be in the best interests of all concerned, therefore, if administrative procedures could be modified in such a way as to suppress these strategies, or at least minimise their harmful effects.

improvements to administrative procedures

In the case of public authority projects it should be perfectly possible to devise procedures that restrict the amount of administrative investment that may be made in a single project prior to any formal decision, for instance by splitting the formal decision into an interim decision (such as on a short list or outline but not ruling out additions to the short list or modifications to the outline as further investigations are made) as well as a final decision, with as wide participation in the interim decision as in the final one. There is a case too for ensuring that the process of getting initial approvals for a project is less secretive than at present. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that the single proposal procedure for publishing proposals and holding inquiries on them is quite inimical to genuine public participation: an inquiry into the merits of alternatives is far superior from that point of view. When studies are commissioned their terms of reference ought to be widely publicised, together with some illustrations of what the findings could be and what they could lead to, which would certainly be a far greater stimulus to participation at a formative stage than the mere announcement that a study has been commissioned. When a number of projects are combined in a long term programme, a stock pile of approved, implementation ready ones should always be maintained, so that if a new project is held up in the decision making process the resources that it would have utilised can be diverted to one in the stock pile, thereby diminishing the penalty caused by the delay. There should be an onus on a promoting authority to show that the project it is putting forward is not merely a section of a greater project and to justify treating it on its own, since tackling projects piecemeal is a procedure that lends itself to obscured and segregated decisions. Finally, there should at the very least be some form of check to prevent an authority from incurring without some over riding justification a contractual commitment that will skew the distribution of costs and benefits associated with an impending project, or from taking direct action to a similar effect.

In the case of development control a further set of recommendations can be made. There is a need for a stringently enforced code of practice governing the interaction between local authority members and officials on the one hand and developers and contractors on the other, with the aim of preventing "multiple clearance" of proposals prior to the formal decision on planning applications. A public, compulsory register should be kept of the financial interests of members and officials in property and in companies with property and development interests; and a record kept of all pre-decision negotiations with developers, especially where there are joint official/developer working parties. The deadline problem as it affects the treatment of planning applications would be eased considerably if the subsidy, for example, were tapered off over a period of 6 or 9 months: the promoter could hardly say convincingly that his interest would cease the moment the subsidy was reduced by 5 per cent. There should be no place in development control procedures for the unpublicised decision making that occurs when planning applications are inadequately advertised and when the Secretary of State for the Environment takes decisions on Office Development Permits. In the former case what is needed is a full check list of categories of people who might be affected

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 ODP should be treated together, with the Secretary of State making a practice of calling in the planning application for his 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 plan making process as a single proposal procedure, while the public examination to which structure plans will be subjected is liable to exhibit the characteristics of a "limited study," 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 beating the air. In short, it is clear that the new development plan system will offer a number of opportunities for the generation of hidden commitment.

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—to prevent the generation of hidden commitment, or to counter such commitment when it is discovered. Some of these counter-strategies are outlined below. While their main function is to prevent public participation from being stifled, such strategies are necessarily closely allied to strategies for participating effectively, and the points that are made are applicable in that context too.

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 surveyors, minor road works that may be the precursor of something bigger, opinion and data gathering household surveys, traffic counts (if a "cordon survey" 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 pre-judged and that formal decisions not yet taken will be no more than the rubber stamping of faits accomplis. Hence to publicise discoveries of the strength of a public authority's commitment to a plan or specific project may yield some disowning (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 by 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 or 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 unmobilised set of opponents might, if asked separately, each opt for a different alternative, mobilisation allows each to take into account the probability of his preferred alternative mustering sufficient support to succeed. It is the ability to place the decision making body under an obligation that enables the opposing group to extend their commitment to that body, for whom it will be a counter commitment to their existing proposal. (A commitment represents a "cashed" obligation, so to speak.) For maximum effectiveness a mobilised group must be a representative one. It may be representative by virtue of its membership comprising a very high proportion of a particular homogeneous segment of the population (like the parents of children at a particular 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 embracing some cross section of the population of the authority's area (like a panel consisting of a randomly selected one per cent sample 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 some naturally. The Skeffington Committee, in its report *People and Planning* (HMSO, 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 people's 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 moreover see proposed physical change in the context of other social 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 services department and found themselves severely at odds with the planning department. Some method of financing them would need to be found whereby independence of the local planning authority was assured.

4. *Cultivation 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 part in negotiation generally. 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 important umpiring functions 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 the second category 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. Genuine potential neutrals should be given a vested interest in neutrality, by holding out to them the opportunity of earning respect by keeping an open mind and giving a fair hearing to the group, respect which would be forfeited if they prematurely 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 restraining the growth of a public authority's commitment towards implementing or permitting a particular project, it must be able to bring expert analysis and authoritative criticism to bear on the facts (including the choice of facts), assumptions and logic underlying the specification of the proposal. It is helpful too if alternatives can be suggested that are less open to such criticism. The object is to lessen the psychological attachment to the project of those who have promoted or espoused it (psychological attachment being of course one element of their total commitment). If manifest errors or ommissions 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 here. From the moment that the planners of the project first publicly resist an attack, the more forcefully and persistently the attack is mounted the more strongly—not less—will they become committed on that point. The more they defend it, the more " face " they stand to lose by giving way. A challenging group may chalk up a moral victory each time the local planning officer, say, has no more substantial an answer than " my professional judgment " when pressed to explain his reasoning, and the planner may wish more and more fervently that he had never thought of the scheme in the first place, but he is no nearer to backing down. Moreover the more " face " that the planning officer stands to lose, the more strongly his political masters will feel obliged to support him in public. Privately, however, the latter are likely to feel themselves pushed into a more neutral position, with an interest in finding a compromise solution. Lacking a pretext for putting one forward (such as an unforeseen change of circumstances), it will fall to the citizen group to provide one. An invaluable strategy for this purpose is the demonstration of strength of feeling. The effective deployment of analysis and criticism requires a degree of expertise which is unlikely to be found in many areas, for example those where semi-skilled and unskilled workers tend to predominate. It is areas such as these—especially in the inner parts of cities, where the standard of environmental quality (particularly of housing) tends to match the standard of incomes—that attract the attention of developers and local authorities as being ripe for redevelopment of one kind or another. Consequently it is the inhabitants of these areas who are most in need of help in order that they and their interests may be effectively represented in the planning process. This need is particularly apparent when the question arises of where to locate urban motorways, since it is often a matter of choice between deprived areas and areas inhabited by members of the professional classes, who are able to mount a well organised and well financed campaign in defence of their property. F. J. C. Amos, President of the Royal Town Planning Institute 1971-72, has expressed the view that " it would do much to make the planning process more democratic and more sensitive to its effects if a free planning advice service could be made available to those in need " (*Journal of the Royal Town Planning Institute*, November 1971). This suggestion clearly has everything to commend it. The only real problem is to decide what conditions a community or group ought to satisfy in order to be eligible for aid of this kind. In the case of development plans, the inhabitants of an area that is proposed to be (or has already been) designated as an action area might automatically qualify; in the case of " one-off " projects such as motorways the amount of aid might depend on how high a threatened area scored on an index designed to reflect its socio-economic structure. The aid itself could be dispensed through a regional consultancy and advocacy service. To those who would object that this would be to create another bureaucratic structure the reply is given by Stafford Beer: the best way to control a system of fifteen men in red jerseys is by means of fifteen men in white jerseys (*Decision and control*, Wiley, 1966).

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 are working. However objective and detached a planning team may set out to be, there is almost always a sense in which it follows the line of least resistance in formulating proposals (like by taking account of local authority boundaries, or by 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 from an early stage that a particular line will meet very strong resistance, they may well become particularly alert for others that will not. Accordingly 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 too when 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, a pretext on which 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 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 reinstate it is more trouble (or 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 delaying tactics to counter a commitment that has arisen through one course of action being perceived as capable of speedier implementation than another. This involves determined exploitation of the full range of legal safeguards of property rights, of safeguards against maladministration and unauthorised expenditure, of technicalities and loopholes in the law, and of the opportunities for 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 liable 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 expose themselves by making 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 can aid 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 controlling the administrative apparatus—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 in which 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 appropriate machinery for setting up advisory groups, and therefore it was decided to convene public meetings for this purpose. The nursery centre public meeting was attended by about sixty people, and was handled well by the Director of Education. As the meeting was a diverse group drawn from different parts of Hillfields, it was not realistic to have elections and therefore the Director invited people to volunteer to serve on the advisory group. Some dozen people volunteered, including two Asian men. Most parts of Hillfields were represented, but with half of the volunteers from the flats.

An attempt to have a public meeting about the play centre was abortive. The meeting had been publicised by leaflet throughout the flat complex, but only three officers of the tenants' association committee turned up. It was then agreed that the Director of Education should raise the question of an advisory group at the next public meeting arranged by the tenants' association. This was primarily about rents, and few of the 40 people present were interested in the play centre. Four people volunteered to go on an advisory group, and one later withdrew and a second failed to attend a meeting. At the first meetings of the advisory groups, representatives were nominated for the management committee. In the case of the advisory group for the play centre, it was a case of the two people who attended!

The management committee was appointed through the normal LEA channels, and consisted of two Conservative councillors, one Labour councillor, myself representing voluntary agencies and the four nominated residents. At the first meeting, the Conservative councillor, who represented a local ward, was appointed chairman on the nomination of the second Conservative councillor.

An assistant director of education saw himself as the person who should work with the advisory groups. The first two meetings of the play centre advisory group were largely abortive because they consisted only of two residents and the Assistant Director. The community associ-

ation'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 operation or to challenge policy. However, they made recommendations on charges and hours to the managers and also nominated their own representatives to this body—a young Indian father and a local mother.

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

We have now had six meetings of the management committee, but it might be 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 posts 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 managers 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 three inexperienced residents present and eight other people who were familiar with this 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 hierarchical order. Residents obviously found it difficult to formulate questions but were not encouraged to do so by a general, "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 professional advisers. Only nine came from the managers, and four of these were put by me in an attempt to bring something out relevant to the residents. No resident put a question. It was apparent that in the pre-interview sessions with the candidates, the officers of the LEA 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 but the Labour councillor was prepared to defer to my view. During the discussion, the chairman had a side conversation with me in which he suggested that we made a nomination of deputy head at the same time and offered 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 also had *five* professional advisers present. The pattern was much 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 and at least one resident 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 feel as though you can after 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 consumers. 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 machinery existed for electing more 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 warmly 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. We had also decided that the advisory group should meet at its own behest and not when convened by the education office; that it should have its own chairman and secretary; and prepare its own agenda. The leader convened the first meeting, drawing on our 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 found this hard to tolerate. The play leader attended meetings, but he never tried to dominate them. In fact, some of the group used to appeal to him for 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 things have been chaotic, there have been internal problems, but the group has survived and has insisted on being 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 educationalist. The community workers concern would have been with process—how the members of the group participated, the degree of inter-action, 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 gained the backing of his committee. His own role was helpful and he was skilful 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. On occasions three 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 officers.

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-infomed, 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.

One cannot but be tremendously impressed by the difference in the performance of residents in their own cultural setting and in one which is alien to them, between their contribution in an advisory group controlled by them and in a management committee where they are in a minority. In the former they can be articulate, confident and constructive; in the latter, hesitant, uncomfortable and negative.

In *More power to the people* (Fabian Society 1963) John Edmonds sums up the limitations of joint supervisory councils from the workers' point of view: " Whatever safeguards are written into the constitution, the manager's near monopoly of administrative expertise will inevitably give him substantial power. To enforce its will against the administrator's determined advice a representative council has to clamber over the bureaucratic obstacles placed in its path, brush aside the forecast of dire results, and refuse to believe the premature judgments of failure. This requires an enthusiasm, a persistent alertness and a co-ordinated effort which most part time assemblies of changing composition normally and understandably lack." These remarks are almost as relevant to the question of residents' participation in management structures.

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 mere " 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 structures 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 in which 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.

6. tenants and housing management

Nick Derricourt

For 3½ 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 5½ 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 somewhere 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 flatted 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 complaining that tenants tend to ignore property, don't report disrepairs 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. But there is some evidence 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 housing officials would like them to 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 one London Borough's housing department has staff who regret the end of door to door rent collecting, because it was a means of keeping close contact with tenants and gaining knowledge about repairs problems at first hand. Another council put an end to its door to door system after several attacks on its collectors. Rather than make its door to door system more secure, the council opened rent offices, 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 overtures by tenants associations were turned down. It was this last act which led the ALHE's Executive Committee to write a letter to the council concerned, which contained the following sentence: "The organisation cannot support any management policy changes (by that authority) affecting tenants without prior consultation with the Association."

Housing management problems which originate in cost and departmental structure 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. Nor would it be easy to affect the amount of money available to a housing department for maintenance. 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, Cmnd 3604) not only ascertained tenants' views but gave them careful consideration. The PIB found that tenants' complaints justified a suggestion that machinery should be set up for dealing with complaints—but this proposal appears 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 Cullingworth appeared to endorse the GLC 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 nominees and the Rent Scrutiny Committees of the Housing Finance Act threaten to take away from the tenant what political influence he has at local level and his consumer influence on the market, 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, at least two tenants should be coopted on to every housing management committee. Dudley Savill, the present Organising Secretary of the ALHE, has described the need like this: "The aims of tenant participation must be in the first place to lessen the degree of alienation, secondly, to change 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 to management by consensus; and fourthly 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: "It is essential 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 powers 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 estates and the management of local authority housing? 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 shelved the plan on the grounds that it would cost thousands of pounds to implement; the tenants association replied that it had 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 rather than 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 to planners and architects of a high density housing estate on the appearance of a scheme at Granby Street, Bethnal Green. After the meeting, the architects were openly impressed by the amount of information that the women 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-

ants' 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 disappointed to find 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 wider electorate, or where an established departmental procedure or an ideology was being called into question by tenants, it is very unlikely that success would be achieved.

One of the reasons why tenants have 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 ALHE are now beginning to look further ahead, and to think in terms of the local authority leasing each estate to a management committee of tenants. According to this suggestion, the management committee would be responsible (and accountable to the local authority) 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 serious tensions which participants will have to learn to handle. How will it affect the role of the tenants association? It is quite possible that the management committee would become a clique of estate worthies, whose attitudes are impugned as often as those of the housing department previously. 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 taking on a lot, 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 ALHE'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 rank and file tenants? Nothing is more obvious than that people only participate if they stand to gain something by it, whether it is better provision, better repairs service, cheaper rent, or greater satisfaction in having the place the way you 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.

national decision making

The passage of the Housing Finance Act taught the tenants association movement 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 issues which have to be 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 place different emphases on consultation and executive responsibility, so that experience of them should give clues to the difficult questions. What real benefits does each side get from each scheme? 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 councils 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 formerly 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 ALHE.

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 chairmen, 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 each 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 bet up for an individual estate. The estate concerned has 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 alteration 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 porterage.

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 chairman, permanent officials including the housing manager and members of each tenants' association affiliated to the ALHE. This includes 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 providing 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

present framework of quarterly meetings with council representatives. But the group wants to develop the relationship in the spirit of the aims set out in the ALHE's tenants charter; the tenants would like to have representation on the housing committee and any sub-committees with full voting rights. This would be in line with paragraph 30 of the Ministry of Housing Local Government Circular 37/68. Furthermore, provision already exists in Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1933 for a local authority to co-opt tenants' representatives on to their housing committee, provided that at least two-thirds of the members of the committee are members of the authority.

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 are 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 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. I don't need to describe 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, where 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 therefore 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 symbollically 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 staffs: 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, roneod 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 what 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 it 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 occasions 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 questions, acting as quiz master, scorer and timekeeper, providing refreshments and taking the old people on a tour of the school. At the end of the afternoon's 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 Seebohm Committee meant by "enabling 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" (Seebohm 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 affected by their planning proposals: the roads we travel to work on are built and maintained by the local authority: our children are educated in local schools, and cared for by local clinics; the local cleansing department is responsible for sweeping the roads and our rubbish is taken away by local dustmen; our water may flow through local authority pipes, and we may travel on municipal transport; in the larger cities, our theatres and concerts will be dependent upon local subventions; if we need practical assistance, or guidance through an emotional problem, then the personal social services are available; and finally we may rest in locally controlled burial grounds or disappear into local crematoria. Such a list is not exhaustive, but it indicates the special significance of the arguments in favour of a greater measure of public participation.

The revival of interest in participatory, as opposed to representative, democracy has not been confined to local politics. Anthony Wedgwood Benn has reconnoitered the implications for our parliamentary institutions in a previous Fabian pamphlet (*The new politics, a socialist reconnaisance*, Fabian tract 402); industrial disputes, in some cases, take the form of work ins rather than strikes, while workers' participation in management, and even workers' control, are again being discussed by advanced trade unionists; young people everywhere, whether at school, college, or work, refuse to accept traditional hierarchical arrangements. They expect to be consulted before decisions are taken which affect them. The argument from authority carries little weight in our developing society; and rank takes few tricks.

Such developments will not seem strange to those who are familiar with the writings of Rousseau or G. D. H. Cole, to name but two advocates of participatory democracy, but conventional wisdom had begun to overlay their theories with the dust of anachronism. The practice of Herbert Morrison, no less than the theory of Schumpeter or the empiricism of Dahl, defined democracy as "the rule of the politician." In this view of representation, the public are restricted to voting periodically to elect a government; once 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, but 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 had a remarkable influence: accounted for, no doubt, by the predilection of elites to believe their ascendency to be both beneficial and inevitable.

During the 1960s the views of the elitists began to be challenged. The disciplined decades of the 1930s and 1940s, when organisation seemed necessary to defeat the twin enemies of political fascism and economic stagnation, gave way first to the "end of ideology" apathy of the 1950s, when material affluence was hailed as the solution to all social problems, and then to the revival of interest in anarchism and citizen participation. The resurrection of the fashions and music of the 1920s is now being 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 activities 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 most of them find 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 branches. Tenants form associations to demand consultation about rents and other matters affecting their estates. Residents start action groups to protest at local development plans and proceed 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, the 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 organisers of mass involvement in popular democracy. This is a harsh judgment and 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 knowledgable 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. About two-thirds did not believe that they had sufficient knowledge to make full use of council services, and over one-third did not even believe that they knew enough to use their vote to the best advantage ("The local government election." *Management of local government*, vol 3, pp 9-14 and 39, HMSO, 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 far below this figure are not uncommon.

The councillors interviewed for the Committee agreed with the self-assessment of the general public. 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 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 230). The level of communication between the councillors and their electorate clearly leaves much to be desired.

Who is to blame for a situation of such mutual misunderstanding, where the councillor is depicted in popular caricatures as an interfering, incompetent, bumble? Many councillors blame the public; yet many members of that 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, and of council meetings incomprehensible to anyone without the background of the committee discussions. The upsurge of interest in local participation has taken place against this backcloth of mutual confusion and distrust. Many of the self-help organisations, and of course the action groups, have developed consciously 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 the new developments. They welcome the interest shown in their activities, but they find difficulty in integrating the demands for participation into their established concept of representative demo-

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 invited, if they are lucky, to comment on fairly firm 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 confutation 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 where easy relationships exist between councillors and those members of the public who wish to participate, but there are probably more authorities where the atmosphere on both sides is one of thinly disguised contempt. 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 difficulties of forging 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 should be no sectional associations in 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 representative 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 tabling of the decision making process. Such a time tabling was proposed for planning decisions by the Skeffington Committee (*People and planning*, HMSO, 1969). Decisions, planning or otherwise, are not made overnight, and the delays associated with consultation are more often caused by inviting public discussion at too late a stage rather than by the process of participation itself. Such a process will cost money: more documents will be prepared and circulated; meetings must be organised; exhibitions will be designed; more staff will undoubtedly be needed; but such expenditure is itself a matter for public decision. If the end of participation is desired then we can vote the means. Nor are all the cost arguments so obviously against participation. Many wrong (in the sense of unwanted by the public) 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 combine a technical competence with the temperament and skills necessary to involve the general public in genuine discussions. Student planners are already showing a great interest in this aspect of their work and demands may be heard from the planning schools for more politics and sociology to be included in the syllabus. An 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 as 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 obviously 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 instrumental 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 those who participate and fail become more alienated than if they had remained apathetic? The obverse of this argument is a fear that the skills of established local politicians will enable them to manipulate a consensus where none is justified. The sting of political conflict over policy choices may be drawn. Potential leaders of radical politics may settle for the shadow of participation rather than contest the reality of political power. Non-political groups, it may be felt, are no substitute for party organisation in the political process. Such objections are basically elitist and defeatist. They deny the potentiality of the general public to achieve the greater political maturity which it is the declared aim of socialists to encourage. To achieve maturity one must pass through adolescence with all the uncertainties and extravagances which this brings. Local politicians must not act the heavy parent; nor should they mistake their own style of politics for the only one possible. At some local levels formal party organisation may be an inappropriate 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 in narrow 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 whose occupations encourage them to develop managerial ability 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 Skeffington Committee and the Seebohm Committee, who advocated a greater measure of popular participation in the personal social services, recognised the possibility of accepting the views of the articulate minority for those of a participating majority. They both suggested ways, including the employment of community development officers, in which the views of those participating could be made more representative. The title of community development worker 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 officers, "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 proselytising 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 are often much smaller. Within these areas people are interested in local affairs, or can be encouraged to be so by a community worker, but it is a social rather than a political interest. This is why the public activities which arise can often be unfamiliar to local politicians: the activities are often confined to one or two objectives within the neighbourhood, and lack a wider political perspective. The faction here is one of area rather than of social class, but it again allows councillors to emphasise their 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 elicit 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, for example, polls have 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 have been 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 confined to relatively simple issues which affect 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 or of those who vigorously oppose, will not be sufficient. The first need within the Labour movement is to reiterate the pluralistic nature of the social democratic view of democracy. Methods must be found to integrate representative and participatory approaches into a satisfactory framework. At all times, emphasis should be placed on the transitory character of democratic arrangements. There is no "right" answer which will survive for generations. We should regard ourselves, therefore, as "labouring indefatigably to discover the undiscoverable," (R. Michels, *Political parties*, p 368, Collier books, 1962), encouraging among councillors the flexibility of mind shown by Alderman Harold Lambert of Sheffield when he wrote: "Participation's ultimate form is at the moment obscure . . . Our experience in the city has shown a different approach by different groups, but out of these experiences will grow a greater liaison between the local authority and citizens and a new role for the elected representative. The surgeries 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 broader-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 remain 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 even where the power to make the final decision continues to rest with the councillors. Secondly, 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 decisions may involve an increased recognition of the role of pressure groups in local affairs. The major producer groups have long been accepted as an influence in our larger towns and cities: the trade unions through their links with the Labour party, and local industry and commerce through their connections with Conservative councillors; many other local organisations assume a political role when the need arises. Despite this activity, the process of pressure group involvement is relatively undeveloped in local government. Much of the influence of the groups is exercised through members who are also councillors, and other approaches are usually of a routine nature. The elitist character of all pressure group activity is accentuated, therefore, in their relationship with local authorities. A two fold approach is needed to overcome this problem. First, there should be an increase in the formal opportunities for consultation through joint committees, working parties, and so on. Secondly, there should be a definite attempt on the part of local authorities to encourage new groups, so as to provide more institutional links with the general public. As Rousseau reminded us: "if there are sectional associations, it is wise to multiply their number . . ." Local councillors could also take more seriously the wide powers of co-option which are available to them.

Within the reformed local government structure, local authorities will be precluded from delegating their functions to other authorities, but this will not prevent them from decentralising certain powers to administrative bodies within their areas. Examples of the initiatives which councillors should be taking may be given from the recommendations of the Seebohm Committee: area social work committees could be created, with people from the neighbourhood appointed both to these and to management bodies of residential institutions. With a little ingenuity possibilities for participation can be extended in local authority services.

The system of school managers and governors recently established in Sheffield provides an excellent example. The system is intended "to promote the widest participation in the running of schools by parents, teachers, trade unionists, people from all walks of life within the locality" (Peter Houston, *Sheffield forward*, July 1969). The managers and governors include nominees of the political parties, the head teacher of each school *ex officio*, elected representatives of the assistant teachers, non-teaching staff, and parents, and people drawn from other local organisations. Each managing or governing body is allowed to make two co-options and in some comprehensive schools this power has been used to invite senior pupils to join the governors. Few of the boards include more than one or two councillors out of a membership of between twelve and sixteen.

Local authorities in towns and cities should also be supporting the development of neighbourhood councils. The idea of a council without statutory functions is foreign to many councillors, who ridicule the creation of "mere talking shops," but they should be encouraged to think again. Neighbourhood councils based upon an extension of the parish council concept into urban areas could provide a vital participatory infrastructure within the larger representative units of a reformed local government. This will create a demand for the provision of relevant adult education courses. Indeed such courses can be one method through

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 Skeffington-style 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 rent increase protest, or defence against the planners 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 the consequences of changes in boundaries or functions. In these circumstances the councillors and officers will be endeavouring to maintain services amidst administrative upheaval: it will not be easy. Against this background the further changes of attitude discussed in this chapter may seem too much to add to an already heavy burden. In the present government's view "it would be best to allow the new district councils to become firmly established" before proceeding to a general review of the parish pattern, and they have indicated a preference for non-statutory consultative bodies rather than a fully developed pattern of neighbourhood councils in the larger urban areas (*The future of parishes and neighbourhoods*, May 1971, DOE).

The caution is understandable, but should be contested. The pressure on local authorities to adopt a more open attitude towards local administration, and to allow a greater measure of citizen participation, will not be satisfied with promises that something may happen in five years' time. The present atmosphere of reform provides an opportunity to integrate the movement towards participation with the new local government structure, but the opportunity may be missed through lack of imagination or through undue delay. There would then be a danger of the action groups and other participatory organisations developing into a parallel and potentially antagonistic system within the urban areas; they, too, would claim to represent the electorate. Every effort should be made to prevent such a division developing between formal institutions and grass-roots enthusiasts. The ensuing frustration would produce either destructive conflict or renewed apathy.

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Cover design by Dick Leadbetter. Printed by Civic Press Limited (TU), Civic Street, Glasgow G4 9RH.

ISBN 7163 0419 8