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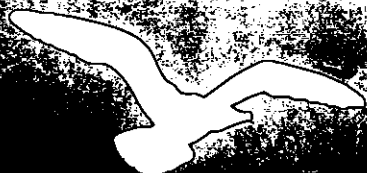
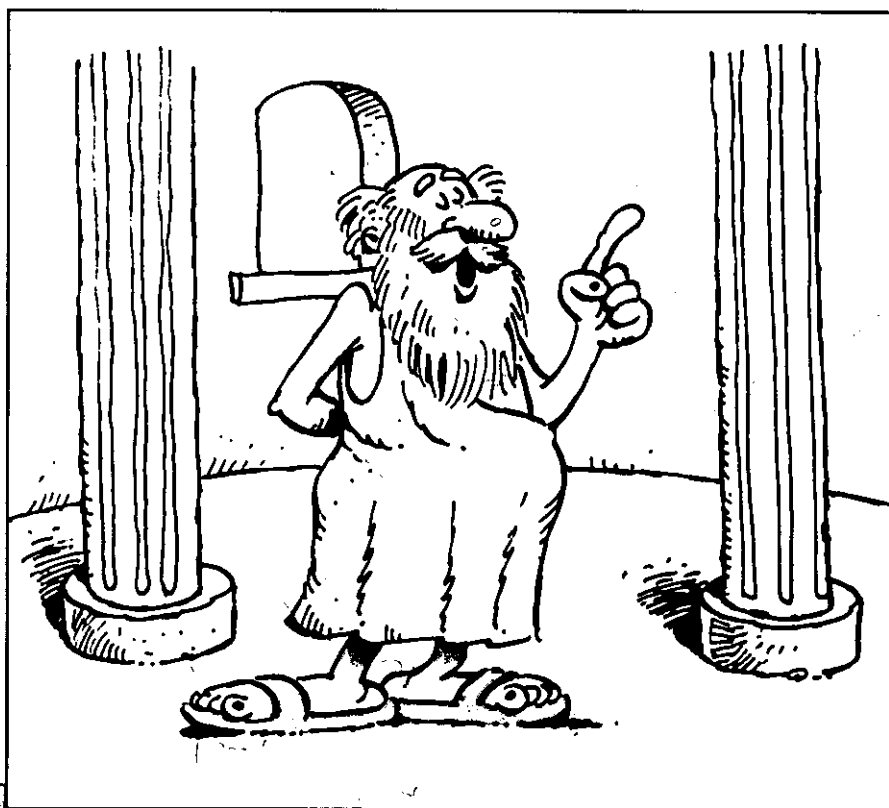
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The principles of

DEMOCRACY



MARC SWANEPOEL



THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY

Marc Swanepoel

Drawings by Mark Wiggett
Edited by Lynn Freeman

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Drawings by Mark Wiggett

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Don Caldwell. His stimulating criticism and dynamic arguments were always welcome. As a true freedom fighter in the realm of ideas, he will remain in our thoughts and in our hearts.

Part I

THE MEANING OF
DEMOCRACY

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROSPERITY

All people would like to live in a society where no one is poor, and where every citizen is free and prosperous. Unfortunately, very few societies have achieved these ideals.

Experience shows that wealth creation and distribution on a large scale are possible only if individuals have the right to own property, and if the price system is allowed to work. In fact, all societies that have prospered in the past, or are prosperous at present, have protected the private ownership and use of property. This allows individuals to trade, to create wealth, to form voluntary associations, to build communities, to help the poor, and to freely express themselves.

Freedom and prosperity are only possible if our political system protects the principles on which they are built.

How can we protect these principles?

Well, it is basically the job of the State or government. As the servant of the people, it should protect those very important rights that make it possible for people to get on with their lives in a peaceful manner.

And this is where the trouble starts.

It is very easy to say that the government should protect people's rights, but what does this mean? Should such a government





consist of a group of clever people? Should it be a dictatorship? Or must the citizens elect the leaders, that is, should it be a democracy?

If it is democratic, what kind of democracy should it be? A constitutional democracy, an unlimited democracy, a multi-party democracy, a one-party State, or what?

Should it be a federation? If so, what kind of federation? America, Germany, Switzerland, and India are all federations, but they differ tremendously. What, in fact, is a federation? It soon becomes clear that there are many different political systems in the world. Which one works best?

In this section we will look at some of them. We will see how they work, and whether they can protect those very important rights that are required for peace and prosperity.

NON-DEMOCRATIC FORMS OF GOVERNMENT



Let's first look at non-democratic forms of government. These are systems where the rulers are not chosen by the citizens. Examples are the kingdoms of old, military governments of recent times, one-party dictatorships, and a few colonies.

Can such societies be prosperous?

There is no doubt that some non-democratic societies have been prosperous - at least for a time. But, and this is very important, such periods of prosperity have normally gone hand in hand with the protection of individual property rights. That is, in prosperous countries people usually had the right to own their own land, tools, money, and other possessions, and to use these as they themselves saw fit.

Hong Kong, for example, while being ruled by Britain for a century, had no democratic elections and its laws were not determined by its citizens. Yet, due to the protection of property rights and free trade, it became a very prosperous society.

Does it mean that democracy is not a requirement for prosperity?



Strictly speaking one could have a successful society without a democratic government. All that is required is that the government protect people's right to own and control their own property. However,

experience shows that prosperity never lasts very long under non-democratic governments. These societies inevitably get leaders who interfere with property rights and individual freedom.

DEMOCRACY AND PROSPERITY

What about democratic governments? Are they always prosperous?

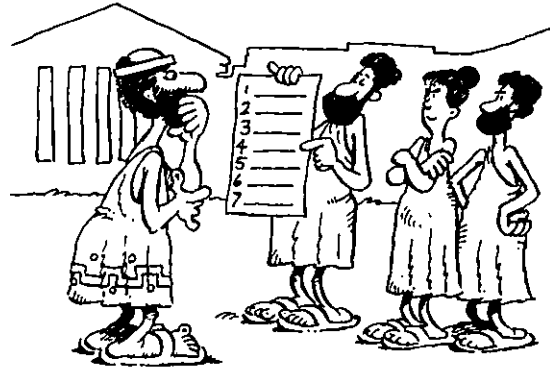
No, unfortunately not. Their prosperity depends very much on the **type** of democracy. For example, both India and Switzerland are seen as democracies, but their governments are completely different. Switzerland is very rich while India is generally poor.

So, let's look at the concept of democracy more closely.

The word itself simply means "rule by the people." It is a system where citizens can change their rulers in a peaceful manner. Unfortunately, there are many misconceptions about it. Some people believe that democracy should be unlimited. They believe that any decision taken in a democratic way is always fair. In such an unlimited democracy, they say, these decisions reflect the will of the people. And is this not what democracy is all about?

DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

The Greeks of old, who introduced democracy to the world, definitely did not have such unlimited power in mind. They saw democracy as an instrument that could be used to elect new leaders or to get rid of unwanted ones in a peaceful way. But that did not mean that such elected leaders could do whatever they wanted, even if they had the support of the majority. The elected leaders, so the Greeks believed, could only do what the law allowed them to do.



Of course, during those times, the word *law* had a very different meaning from the way we use it today. The Greeks believed that laws were rules of behaviour that were not made by anyone. They *developed* or *evolved* over long periods.

As in the case of language, traditions, or the price system, such laws resulted from human action but not from human design. They came about through the daily activities of millions of people who never had the intention of designing a legal system.

This kind of law existed long before governments were even invented. In fact, since the very dawn of mankind, human beings have developed their own traditional rules to live by, without the help of governments. These customary laws have guided people's actions, and have helped them to survive and prosper.

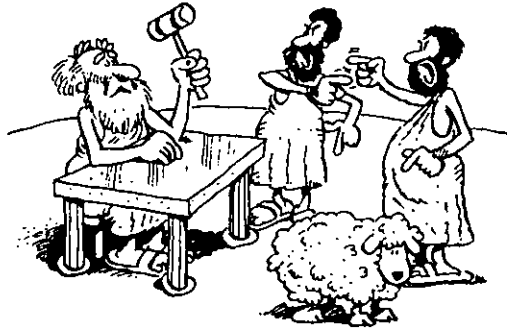


Many people believe that the only reason why societies and governments developed at all, was because people did learn to follow certain general rules of behaviour; rules like honouring agreements, or respecting another person's property.

The Greeks themselves correctly saw that laws existed before governments, and not the other way round.

How did these customary laws develop? Well, suppose two people had a disagreement. They would take their case to a judge, who was sometimes called a 'law-giver' or 'law-speaker.' He would have knowledge of the traditional rules of the people, and would try to discover which rule applied to their specific case. If the case was completely new and the judge could not find such a law, he would use the everyday principles of fairness and justice to make his decision.

This decision would then be used in similar cases in the future. Soon people would begin to view it as another general law of their society. It was, in fact, the task of judges to *discover* such general laws from the people's own rules and customs, and to adapt them to new situations.



In this way, the law did not change every time the government changed, as is so often the case today. It changed only very gradually, over centuries. It became known as the **common law**, showing that it came from the common people. Laws against stealing, murder, assault, and so on, are all part of this common law.

What does this have to do with democracy?

Initially, democracy was seen as a system where elected leaders ruled a country according to the *common law* of the time. The leaders were elected in a democratic way, but they could do only those things that the law allowed them. This was what people meant when they used the expression: the **rule of law**. The rule of law simply meant that everyone, including the government or leaders, had to obey the same rules.

Many of these rules had to do with the protection and transfer of private **property rights**. And this is the main reason why the few societies that were governed by common law, were more successful than their neighbours. Their system of property rights led to the creation of wealth and

to general prosperity.

These societies were far from perfect. Most still practised slavery; they did not allow women to vote; and many people were poor. Even so, they were far better than the brutal dictatorships of the time. During the last few hundred years, however, the word 'democracy' has taken on many different meanings.



DIFFERENT TYPES OF DEMOCRACY

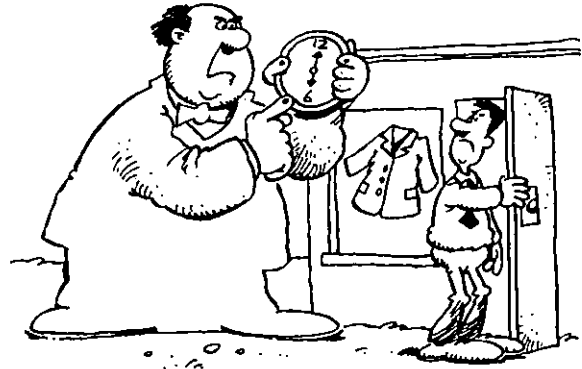
Today, very few people understand what 'common law' or 'the rule of law' mean, or what they have to do with true democracy. Nowadays, most people view democracy as a system where an elected government can make any law it pleases.

This is very different from what the Greeks had in mind when they spoke about democracy. In the past, laws came from the customs and traditions of the people, and could undergo changes only gradually. In modern times, the law

is seen as something made by governments as and when it suits them.

In the past, the common law was a set of rules that prevented people from using force or fraud, and that protected property rights. Such rules had to apply to everyone equally. They were not supposed to discriminate between rich and poor or between leaders and ordinary people.

Nowadays, government-made laws can selectively place burdens on some people and give benefits to others. They can destroy property rights and personal freedom. And they make the phrase *rule of law* meaningless.



Under these conditions, modern democracies can take many shapes, some quite successful, but others very destructive.

So, let's look at some of them.

We'll start with **direct democracy**. Here people can vote directly on the laws themselves. It was popular in earlier societies, where very few cities had more than 10,000 people. Women and slaves did not have the vote, and it was easy for the voting males to meet somewhere, discuss a problem, and vote on it directly.

Today, the closest we come to direct democracy, is during a referendum, when citizens are asked to vote 'yes' or 'no' on a

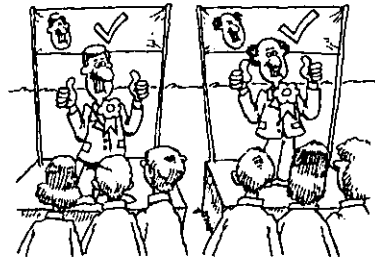
specific issue. Later on, we will discuss the importance of a referendum.



REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

In modern societies where there are millions of citizens, direct democracy is more difficult. It is not so easy to get everyone in a large country together to vote every time a problem arises. Instead, a country is normally divided into voting regions or electoral districts. People then form political parties that choose or nominate certain individuals to represent them as candidates for particular regions.

Citizens vote for the candidate of their choice. The elected candidates, or representatives, become the government of the country. This is called a **representative government**. The system is called a **representative democracy**.



If a new law is to be passed, all the representatives discuss it, and then they vote on it. If more representatives vote for the law than against it, the new law will be adopted.

In a representative democracy, people do not vote on issues directly, but their chosen representatives do. It is seen as a more practical way for the millions of citizens in modern societies to express their wishes. The political group that has a majority, that is, more than half the representatives in government, usually gets its way.

Many people view this as a very fair way of deciding how a country should be ruled. After all, shouldn't the majority determine the outcome of decisions?

Unfortunately, things do not always work as we intend.

Let's take an example. Imagine a country where each region is represented in government by a democratically elected candidate. What can be fairer than that?

Suppose this country consists of 900 voters, and there are 3 districts or regions. Each region has, say, 300 voters. Let's assume further that there are two political parties, called the red and the green party.

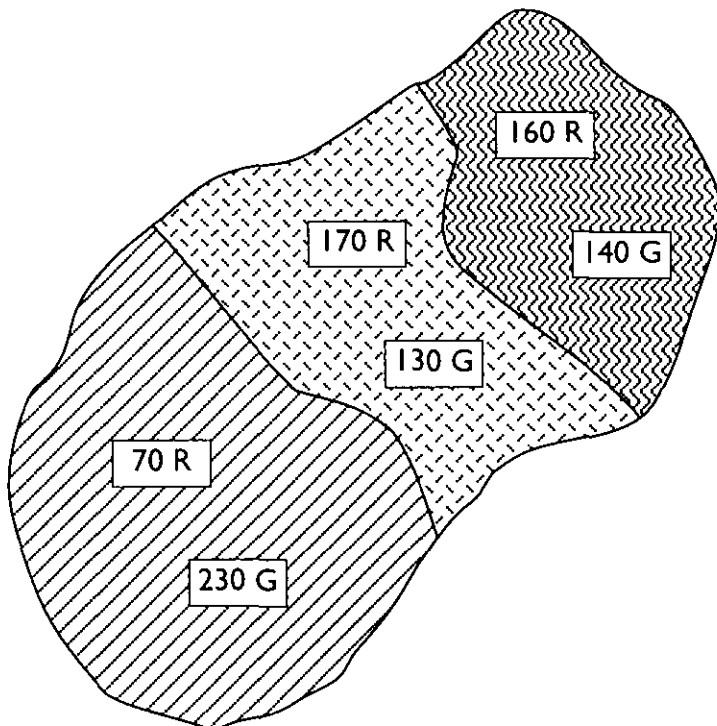
During the election, the voting is as follows: In the first region, 160 people vote for the reds, and 140 for the greens. The candidate of the red party wins. He or she receives the most votes and will thus represent the 300 people of the region in government.

In the second region, 170 people vote for the reds, and 130 for the greens. Here, once again, the red candidate wins, and will represent the citizens.

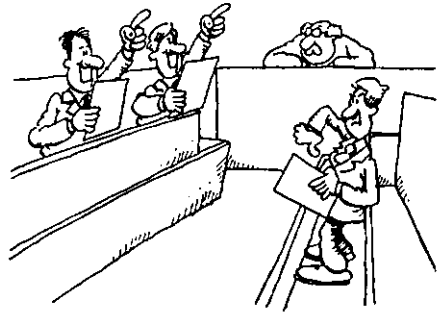
In the third region, things are different. The greens have a runaway victory, and they collect 230 votes against 70 for the reds. The green candidate will represent that region.

This government will now consist of two red candidates and only one green. When they vote, the issues favoured by the reds will be passed, while those favoured by the greens will be turned down. Remember, the reds have the majority in government.

But, if one counts the total number of votes, then it becomes clear that out of the 900 citizens, 400 people voted for the reds against 500 for the greens. That is, more citizens voted for the greens than for the reds.



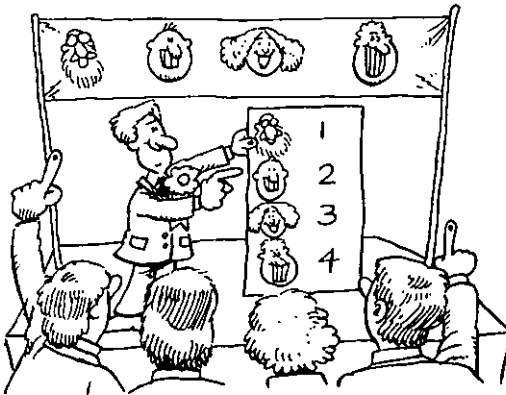
Yet, the reds have more representatives in government, and will effectively rule the country. And what is so democratic about that?



In fact, many ruling governments have discovered that this system can be a clever way to side-step democracy. All one has to do is to subdivide those regions where one has a lot of support into more voting districts. This will give the ruling party more representatives in government.

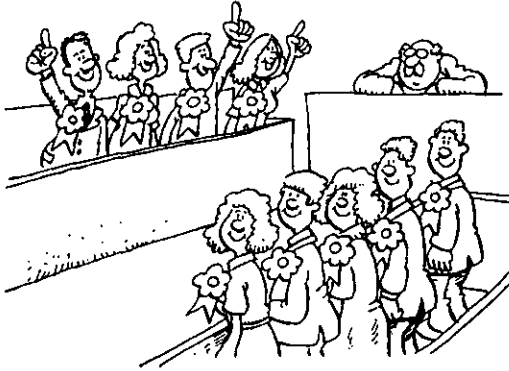
PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Some countries have tried to overcome this shortcoming of a representative democracy through a system called proportional representation. Under proportional representation, each political party draws up a list of its preferred candidates before an election.



After the election, such parties will be represented in proportion to the support they received. People now vote for a specific party and not for a specific candidate. Such candidates will be taken from a list of names supplied by each of the parties.

In our earlier example, where 400 people voted for the reds and 500 for the greens, and if there is one representative for each 100 voters, 4 representatives will be taken from the reds' list, and 5 from the greens'. The greens will now have the majority in government, and not the reds as before.

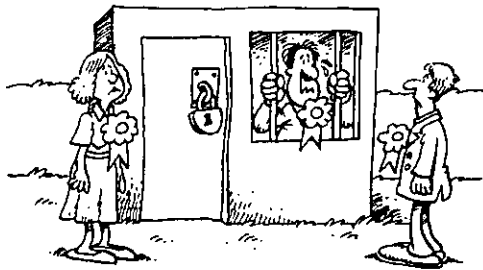


the reds' list, and 5 from the greens'. The greens will now have the majority in government, and not the reds as before.

This is still a representative democracy, but each party is now represented proportionally to the support it has. The main advantage of proportional representation is that it allows for smaller parties to be represented in government. That is, if people vote for a small party, then, under a system of proportional representation, such a minority will still be represented in government, even if the other parties got most of the votes.

MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY

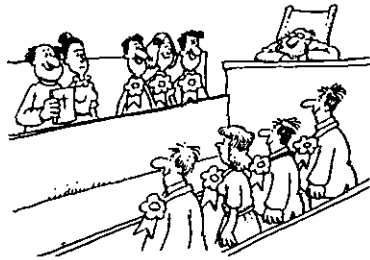
Of course, it is clear that one cannot have such a system in a one-party state, that is, where the government places a ban on all political parties except its own. Proportional representation only works in a **multi-party** democracy, where there is more than one political party competing for the votes of the citizens.



In such a multi-party democracy, we may even find that several parties are represented in government, with no single one having a majority.

Take our earlier example of the country with 900 voters. Say there are now three political parties, the reds, the greens, and the religious party. What happens if, during an election, 300 people vote for the reds, 400 for the greens, and 200 for the religious party?

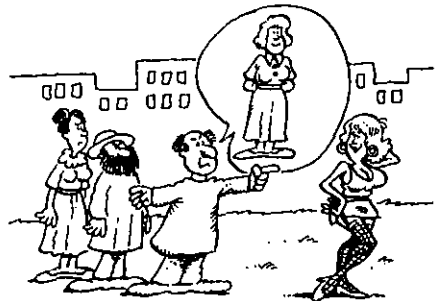
In a multi-party democracy, based on proportional representation, the reds will have 3 representatives, the greens 4, and the religious party 2. In this government of 9, no party has more than half the representatives. But, any two of them combined will have more than half. They will have a majority.



Such a combination of political parties to form a majority is called a *coalition*.

POLITICAL BACKSCRATCHING

Even with proportional representation, representative democracies can still be used for undemocratic ends. For example, if the religious party wants a law passed that will make it illegal to wear certain types of clothing, they may have a



problem. With only 2 candidates out of 9, they will be outvoted every time. It is likely that the majority of the citizens would also be against such a law.

Suppose further that the green party has the support of many farmers. They may want a law that will prevent competition from farmers overseas who would sell their grain more cheaply. But, with only 4 representatives out of 9, they will also be outvoted by the others. The majority of the citizens, on the other hand, would like the benefit of cheaper imported grain.



But, let's see what can happen under this type of representative democracy.

What, for example, will prevent the religious group from going to the greens and suggesting that if they voted with the religious party to make certain types of clothing illegal,



then the religious party would help the greens to prevent the import of cheap grain? You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. By cooperating with each other, both parties can now get bad laws passed which they could not have done on their own.

This process may have the appearance of democracy, but it is not very democratic at all. A majority of citizens opposes

both laws. If they could have decided themselves, through direct democracy, they would never have voted for these laws.

The problem is that in any modern society, and even within the same political party, there are many different interest groups.

Farmers would like to have subsidies, protection of their markets, and minimum prices for their products.



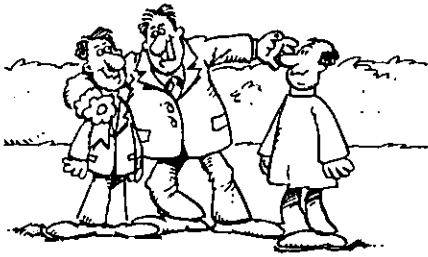
Manufacturers would like to have import controls and subsidised exports. Trade unions would like to have minimum-wage laws, labour laws, and closed-shop arrangements. Doctors, lawyers,

dentists, accountants, hairdressers, estate agents, and others would like to have the protection of licensing laws. Each of the groups would like to use the political process for special protection, permits, licences, and favours.

THE REFERENDUM

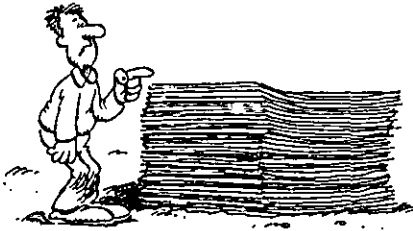
How do we prevent this abuse of democracy by special interest groups? Unfortunately, this is very difficult. Interest groups are normally well organised. They may use the best lawyers and advocates to state their case, or try to make their causes sound as if the public would benefit from them.





One may even find a group of professional people, called lobbyists, whose job it is to influence politicians, and to arrange deals between them.

In most democracies of today, thousands of laws are passed that do not benefit the public. In fact, many of the laws lead to higher prices, higher unemployment, higher housing costs, fewer available goods, and a lowering of living standards. But each law benefits some interest group in some way. And what is democratic about that?



As you can clearly see, a representative democracy is no guarantee that we will not have many unnecessary and unjust laws that benefit only small minorities at the expense of the general public.

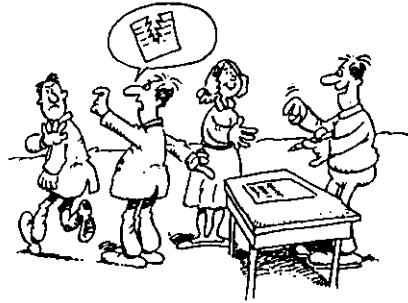
And this can be true under a one-party democracy, a multi-party democracy, and under a system of proportional representation.

Is there anything that ordinary people can do to protect themselves against this corruption of the democratic process?



Well, what will happen if the citizens themselves have a direct way of removing bad laws? We'll take our 900-citizen society as an example once again. Let's say this society has a political system based on a representative

democracy but with this additional requirement: if a certain percentage, say 10%, of the citizens sign a petition saying they don't like a particular law, then the government has to hold a **referendum**.

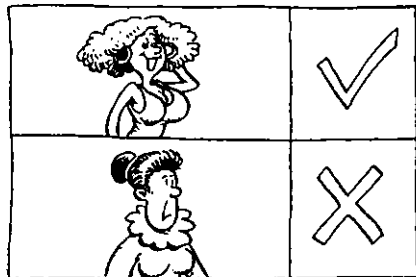


Remember that a referendum is a special election where citizens have to vote either 'yes' or 'no' on a specific issue.

In our imaginary society, you will remember, the religious party wanted a law that would prevent people from wearing certain types of clothing. But, because they only had 2 representatives out of 9, they had to co-operate with the green party that, in turn, wanted a law to protect farmers from foreign competition.

In this way, two bad laws, that benefitted only a minority of citizens, were passed.

Fortunately, with our referendum option, the rest of the citizens can protect themselves. All they have to do, is to get the signatures of 90 people who think the laws are bad. Remember, we said that they needed 10% of the



citizens, that is 90 out of 900, to show disapproval, to force a referendum. Once they can show that at least 90 people are against the laws, the government must hold a referendum where all the voters have to vote 'yes' or 'no' on the two laws. If, in the referendum, more people vote *against* the

laws than for them, they will be scrapped.

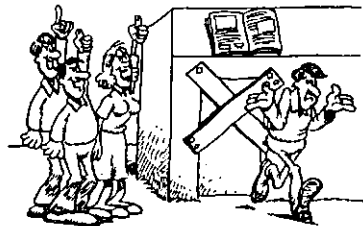
This is called a referendum for scrapping bad laws. It gives the general public the opportunity to remove laws by voting directly against them. It allows the majority to cancel unwanted laws. It is a protection for citizens against small but well-organised minority groups who want to promote their interests at the expense of everyone else's. And it makes politicians more careful not to introduce bad laws.



CAN DEMOCRACY BE UNLIMITED

However, there are still some other problems to solve. For example, what happens if the majority of citizens favours a law that discriminates unfairly against a smaller group?

Can they decide democratically to cut off the left ear of those few individuals who go around spitting on the pavements? Or can they decide democratically to close down those newspapers that criticise the majority? Or democrati-





cally silence small religious groups preaching a faith that differs from the beliefs of the majority?

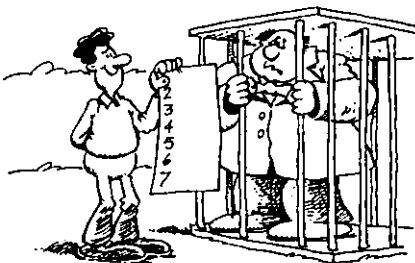
Of course not.

If these things can happen, then such an unlimited democracy could easily lead to the total destruction of the democratic process itself. The majority could then vote to take away everyone else's right to vote!!

CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACIES AND A BILL OF RIGHTS

The truth is that real democracy depends on certain fundamental freedoms. These freedoms include, among others, the right of an individual not to be locked up without a fair trial, the right to vote, the freedom to criticise the government, that is, freedom of speech, and the freedom to choose one's own religion. These freedoms, or *rights*, make democracy possible, and, they need special protection.

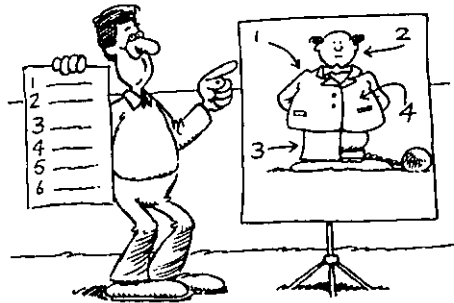
This is done through a document known as a **bill of rights**. It is a list of certain important rights that all citizens are entitled to. A bill of rights places a limit on the power of the



government. It is an acknowledgement that if one wants democracy to be meaningful, then there are certain human activities that governments should leave alone even if the majority wants to interfere.

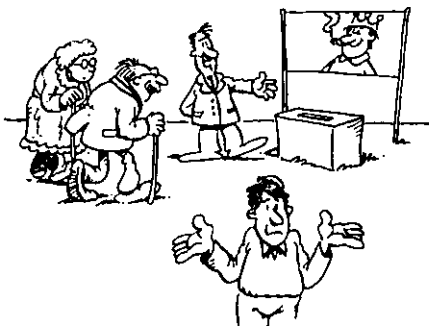
Whereas the referendum protects the majority against special interest groups, a bill of rights protects individuals and smaller groups against the power of government and of the majority.

There is another important document that many people see as essential for a proper democracy - a **constitution**. A constitution contains information about the structure or make-up of a specific government. It is like a recipe that spells out how the government is supposed to function.



A democratic government that functions in terms of a written constitution is called a **constitutional democracy**.

Of course, one can clearly see that if two countries are both constitutional democracies then it still does not mean they have the same political system. Remember, the political system of a constitutional democracy depends entirely on what the constitution actually *says*.



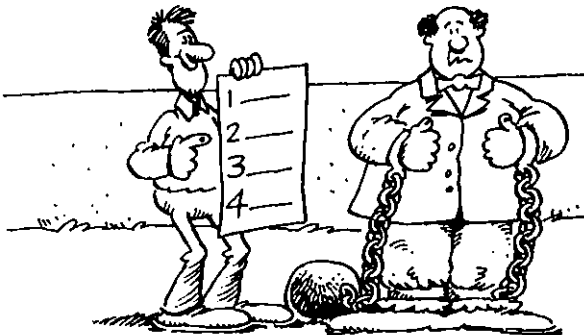
For example, if one country has a constitution that says only citizens over the age of 70 may vote, that the president is elected for life and can make any law he wants to, and that people who are caught stealing must have one of their hands chopped

off, then such a society can certainly be called a constitutional democracy. All the citizens who live long enough, will eventually vote, and the country does have a constitution.

However, none of us would like to live in that society. The fact that a country is a constitutional democracy, is no guarantee that its citizens will be either free or prosperous. Such a constitutional democracy can still be an unlimited democracy and be abused by politicians and special interest groups.

As you can see, a constitution is a very important document. It should contain clear instructions about how the government should function, and what it may and may not do. In fact, it should be like a *job description* for the government. Only then does it have any value.

Just as in the case of a bill of rights, the true function of a proper constitution, is to *limit* the power of a government. It is an effort to force those who rule over us, to do so *justly*, and in terms of certain fixed and known rules spelled out clearly in the constitution.



BI-CAMERAL PROTECTION

Many people will agree that constitutions and bills of rights could be very handy tools to protect all people. But, they say, they are tools made from paper! And what will happen if a government comes to power, and then simply tears up those pieces of paper? What will protect the people then? After all, history has shown that these things do happen.



So, how does one prevent that?

During the last few hundred years, various societies have struggled with this problem. Only some have succeeded in solving it. History shows that all the successful societies have had one thing in common: They all limited or controlled the power of their government. That is, they have all been **limited democracies**.

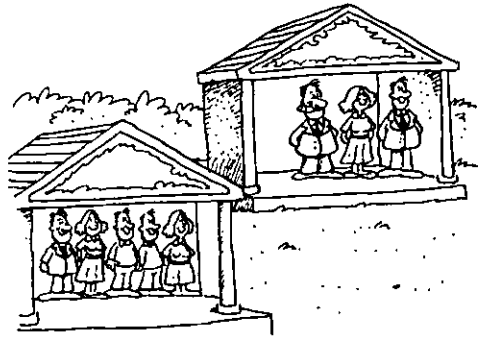
How does one control the power of a government?

Well, many people have realised that constitutional protection is not always enough. Constitutions can be changed or scrapped. Therefore, some additional protection is required for a true and lasting democratic society. That is, there must be other controls or checks and balances in government.

One such extra control is a system of two groups of repre-

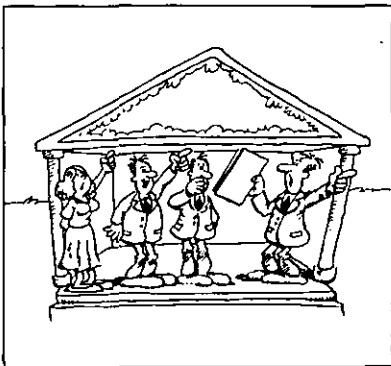
representatives in government. This is called a **bi-cameral** or a **two-house system**.

The first group is chosen democratically on the basis of one-person-one-vote. This branch of government, is normally called the lower house or house of representatives. It represents the citizens of the country.



The second group, normally called the upper house, may consist of individuals representing specific regions, minorities, or interest groups. This upper house does not represent people in their capacity as individuals, but as members of a specific interest group. Any new law will only be passed if both the lower house and the upper house are in agreement about it.

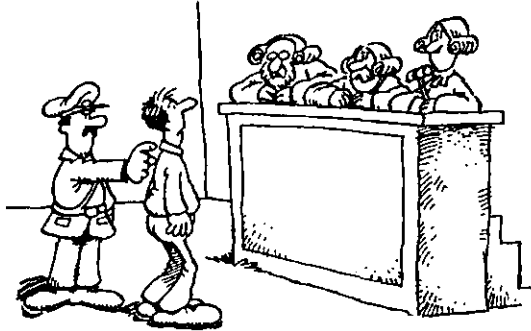
The main purpose of a bi-cameral system of government, is to make sure that all laws are debated at length by every interest group in that society before it is passed or thrown out. And in some societies the second house is able to *veto* or prevent a law from being passed. A veto can thus be another way of *limiting* the power of a government.



Examples of bi-cameral systems are the U.S.A with its house of representatives and it's senate, and Britain with its House of Commons and House of Lords.

PROTECTION THROUGH AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY

As another additional safeguard against the abuse of government power, many bi-cameral democracies have decided that the people who *make* the law, should not also be the ones who *interpret* it. That is, the makers of the law should not decide how it should be applied to different cases.



Judges should have the job of interpreting the law. And they should be completely independent of the government that makes the law. In other words, politicians and other members of government should not be the ones who choose judges.

In fact, many people believe that either the citizens themselves should elect judges in the same way that they elect their representatives in government, or that they should be elected by lawyers and advocates who know the specific ability and independence of their own colleagues.

With such an **independent judiciary**, politicians cannot easily influence the interpretation of the law. They cannot get judges to 'bend the law' to favour their supporters.

Of course, it still means that magistrates and judges have to make their findings according to the law. For example, if



it says that anybody caught spitting on the sidewalk should be hanged, then the judge cannot make a decision that is contrary to the law.

Even with an independent judiciary, one can have many unfair laws. Remember, in modern societies, the laws are made by governments, and not by the people as in the case of common law. Today, judges only interpret the law written by politicians.

A bi-cameral system is still open to abuse by powerful interest groups. As we have seen, they can still arrange deals and coalitions between representatives of different parties. And, in spite of an independent judiciary, the citizens may still end up with laws that they themselves would never have voted for.

Any powerful majority can control both houses and pass all kinds of laws that may harm minorities. The referendum that we discussed before will be of no use in such a situation.

PROTECTION THROUGH THE DEVOLUTION OF POWER

In fact, some people believe that it is simply impossible for any central government *not* to make bad laws. Representatives of political parties, they say, can always be



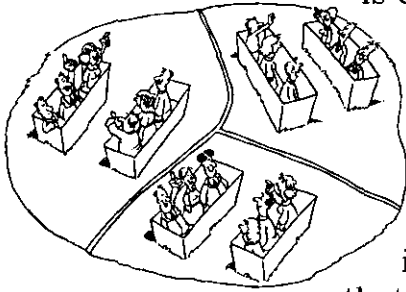
manipulated or bribed to pass laws that benefit minorities and special interest groups. Or, if the country is ruled by a powerful majority, politicians would just ignore the interests of minorities.

And the only way to overcome this problem, the critics say, is to **decentralise** the power of government. They believe that **devolution of power** through a regional or federal system, is the only solution.

What does this mean?

Well, it simply means that a country consists of certain regions, as in a representative democracy, but that each region can make its own decisions about local issues. Instead of all representatives getting together at central government level to make laws for the whole country, the representatives for a specific region make the laws for the people in that region. Such a system





is called a **federation** or a federal system of regional governments.

The regions can be called federal states or provinces or cantons. The name is not important. But it *is* important that each region should have its own regional government, elected by the local people, and with the power to decide on local issues.

Another very important requirement is that people are free to move to any area they wish if they are not happy with the policies of their regional government.

There are many federal or regional systems of government in the world, but they differ greatly from each other. In many federations, the central government still has all the power. In these societies, the regions are nothing



but geographical areas that make it easy for people to decide which football or soccer team they support. And that is definitely not the real objective of a federation. Federal societies are only successful if regions have the right to make their own decisions about local issues.

Why should that make them successful?

Well, most societies consist of a mixture of very different people. There are differences of language, ethnicity, culture,

religion, and many, many more.

No politician, however well-meaning, can represent the interests of such a diversity of human beings. A central



government that tries to please all the different people will inevitably become a government of conflict.



Each group will see it as a source of either benefits or oppression. They will constantly try to control the government or to overthrow it.

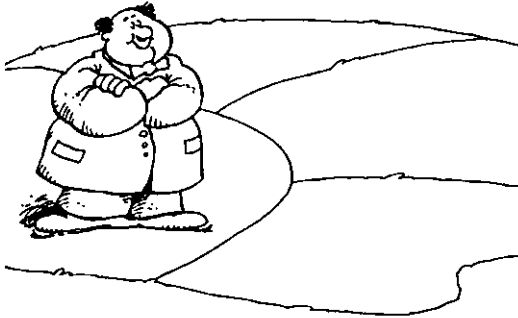
The main advantage of a federation or regional system, is that it allows decision making to be decentralised. This, in turn, allows people with different interests to live in the same unified country, but under laws that they agree with. It makes diversity possible.

Remember, in a federation people can move freely from one region to another. This is very important. It is this freedom of movement that results in healthy competition between the different local governments. If citizens feel that taxes are too high in one region, or that the building regulations are too strict, they can **vote with their feet**. They can move to another area where the rules and regulations are more acceptable.

Of course, one can clearly see that this kind of competition will only be effective if the regions have the right to make their own laws. Only then can some regions have rules that differ from those of other areas.

In some societies, like Switzerland for example, the federal regions are further subdivided into smaller areas where citizens, through their community governments, have a very big say in issues that concern their neighbourhood, town, or city.

As we said before, federal democracies can differ greatly from each other. The type of federation is determined by the degree of decision-making power each region has.



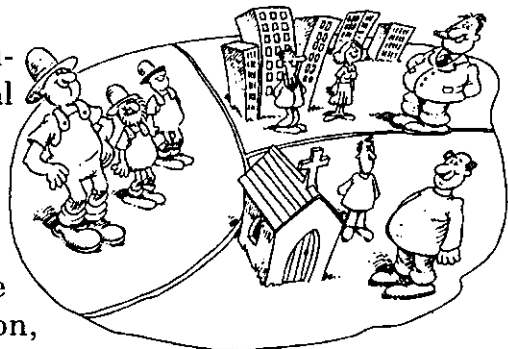
If the central government still makes all the decisions, then a federation is really just a geographic carve-up of a country. In such a federation the government delegates power to the regions to implement

its decisions. The regions, however, have no real power of their own. In the past, the U.S.S.R federation was of this type.

Federal societies where regional and local governments have the power to make their own decisions, are called **devolved federations**. Switzerland is an example of this. Only devolved federations, that is, federations where regional and local governments make their own decisions, can bring peace and unity to multi-cultural societies.

If government power is devolved to community level, it becomes much easier for community organisations to solve the problems of poverty, housing, and crime. At the same time, community involvement brings psychological benefits to individual community members. They feel they have a stake in that society.

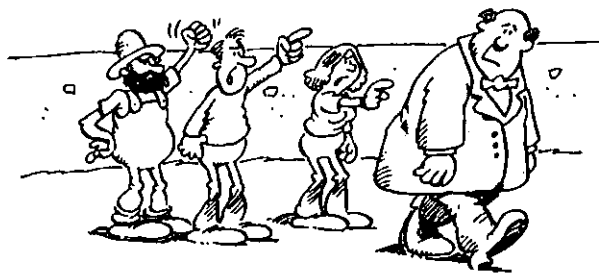
It is only through devolution of power, that natural human diversity can be accommodated voluntarily and peacefully.



In such a society, people are citizens of one nation, but, at the same time, they have the opportunity to live their daily lives as members of a community with common interests.

In their local governments they know their representatives intimately, and they can hold them accountable for their actions and decisions.

A devolved federation restores the power to the people - where it belongs.

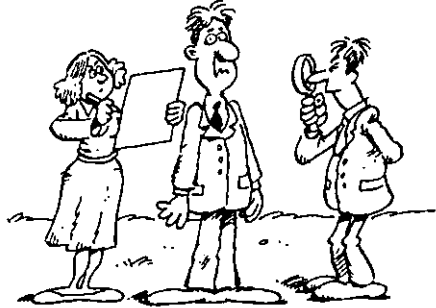


WHICH SYSTEM WORKS BEST?

So far we have seen that not all democratic systems result in prosperity. We have seen how special interest minorities and majorities with unlimited power, can burden us with unwanted laws and violate our rights.

Which type of system then, has the best chance of bringing us prosperity, freedom, and justice?

Well, it should be a system in which everyone can participate, where our fundamental rights as human beings are protected, and where neither minorities nor majorities can use the government to favour themselves at the expense of others.



So, let's see if we can design such an ideal system.

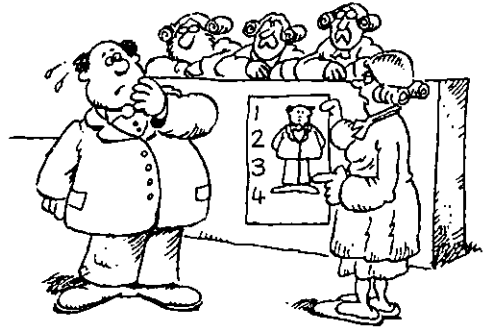
Firstly, we will make it a **multi-party democracy** where competing political parties are allowed, elected on the basis of **proportional representation**, and where every adult citizen can vote.

Then, to prevent abuse by special interest groups or oppressive majorities, we will introduce a **bi-cameral system** of government with a **constitution** and a **bill of rights**.

The bill of rights will guarantee certain individual freedoms, like freedom of speech, religion, and the press, as well as the freedom to own and control property.

The constitution will spell out clearly how the government should function, and what it may and may not do. In this respect, we must remember that those societies where governments are restricted mainly to the protection of person and property are generally the most prosperous.

We will institute a special **constitutional court**, which will see to it that the government does not make any law that violates the terms of the constitution or the bill of rights. The judges of this court will be democratically elected.



In the same way, the rest of the judiciary will also be independent. Its members will not be appointed by politicians, and the government will not be able to overrule their decisions.

As a further safeguard against abuse, we will devolve government power to regional and local levels. We will make sure that local governments have much more decision-making power in their areas than the central government.

At the same time, we will see to it that the constitution guarantees freedom of movement between various regions.

Finally, to make absolutely sure that people are not burdened with unwanted laws, we will make provision for a **referendum** at national, regional and local level. Such a referendum will ensure that the citizens can remove bad laws, and that politicians are accountable for their actions.

This **constitutional democracy**, with its bill of rights and devolved power structure, will ensure the freedom of every individual. At the same time, it will encourage **diversity** and promote the general welfare.

People will be free to develop and use their talents, to create wealth, and to choose as much or as little diversity in their lives as they care for. The government will be the protector of people, and not their master. It will be impossible to use such a government for personal gain at the expense of others. Its laws will become more and more like the common law of old.

In this society the wealth creation process will be protected and all poverty will soon disappear.

It is important that every citizen in our society becomes aware of these common sense principles of freedom and prosperity. In fact, our future depends on the understanding, acceptance, and implementation of sound economic and political practices.

Only then will there be peace, prosperity, and **justice for all**.

Part 2

DEMOCRACY IN
PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

In a democratic society, the citizens play a very important role in the selection of those political parties and individuals that govern the country. The citizens 'elect' the parties or politicians who will represent them.

Of course, in a 'constitutional' democracy, such elected parties or politicians cannot just do what they want. They have to govern the country within the rules spelled out in certain important documents - a Constitution and a Bill of Rights. In a way, one can compare politicians to the referee and linesmen in a game of soccer. They cannot suddenly invent their own rules on the field. They have to blow their whistles according to the rules of the game.

Soccer rules are almost impossible to change. And, if a specific soccer club would like them changed, it has to go through a very long and difficult procedure to do so. However, if the referee always turns up drunk for matches, or does not blow according to the accepted rules, it is normally very easy to get rid of him.

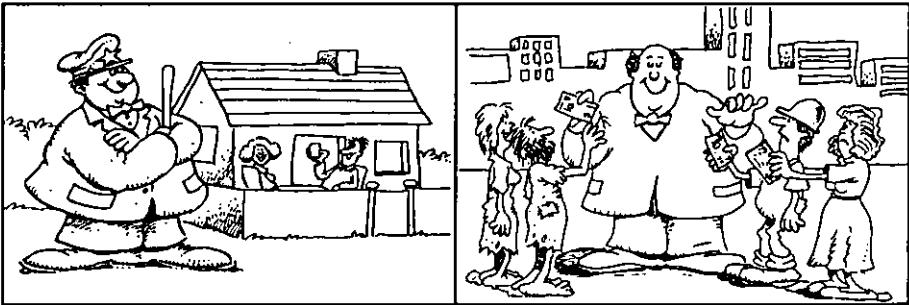


It is the same in a Democracy. In such a society, it is usually quite easy to change the politicians, but it should be much more difficult to change the Constitution or Bill of Rights.

THE 'RULES OF THE GAME' IN A DEMOCRACY.

Just as in soccer, Democracy also has certain 'rules of the game'. These rules are contained in two very important documents - a Constitution and a Bill of Rights. And this brings us immediately to one of the biggest problems in any Democratic society: Who should make these rules?

People differ greatly in their choice of the rules that they believe should go into a constitution and a bill of rights. Some, for example, see government as an organisation which should protect people's property and their safety, and which should otherwise leave them alone. Others see government as an organisation which should be much more involved in people's lives.



PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

One can clearly see that, as in the case of soccer, it is not an easy task to decide which rules are best for bringing about a stable, prosperous, and just society.

How then, does one solve this problem?

Many people believe that this should be done by an organisation, called a **constituent assembly**.

THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

A Constituent Assembly is a group of people that has the task of drawing up the Constitution and the Bill of Rights of a country.

Who are these people and how do they become part of this constituent assembly?

The most democratic way, of course, is to have the citizens of the country 'elect' them in a country-wide election. In modern societies, this election normally takes place on a party political basis, where each party is represented in proportion to the number of votes it receives. This is called a system of proportional representation.

How can such a democratically elected Constituent Assembly make sure that the rules of the Democratic Game will be drawn up in such a way that they do not only favour the majority, but that they also make provision for the protection of smaller groups or individuals, as well as for the protection of certain basic rights?

Well, there are a few ways in which this could be achieved.

For example, the Constituent Assembly can agree to rely on a high degree of **consensus**, or general agreement, among all the representatives before a rule or provision is taken up in either the constitution or bill of rights. In this way, those provisions that are included will be acceptable to a large percentage of the citizens.

Or, the various parties can agree beforehand, at a multi-party conference and on the basis of consensus, on the basic principles or guidelines which will determine the contents of the constitution or bill of rights. Here again, the contents of the constitution or bill of rights will then reflect the wishes of most citizens .

THE CITIZEN AS VOTER

In a democracy, citizens will often be required to **vote** on certain issues, or to **elect** the representatives for certain organisations. A democratically chosen constituent assembly is but one such organisation elected by the citizens. Other examples are local representatives in a community council, a local authority, a city council, regional bodies, or the central government. In each of these cases, the citizen will be required to **elect** the party or individual of his or her choice.

It is therefore important that all citizens should understand very clearly how and when they can use their democratic right to vote.

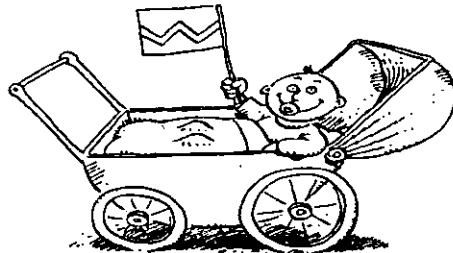
WHO CAN VOTE?

In all countries, there are certain requirements that a person must meet before he or she can vote.

Firstly, one has to be a **citizen** of the country or region where one wants to vote. A visitor from another country, cannot vote.

How does one become a citizen?

Well, anybody who is born in a country is automatically a citizen of that country. That is, he or she is a citizen by birth.



People who were not born in a specific country, cannot automatically become citizens of that country. If they are in the country for a short time only, then they are only visitors and they cannot vote. If,

however, they want to stay in the country on a permanent basis, then they firstly have to apply to become **permanent residents**. Once they have been permanent residents for a period of at least five years, they can apply for citizenship of that country. If the government is happy with their application, they will become citizens, and they will have the right to vote.

Are there any other requirements apart from citizenship before one can vote in an election? Yes, there are. One also has to be 'of voting age'. That is, in most countries, one has to be eighteen years old before one can vote.

If you are a citizen of a country, and if you are at least 18 years old, then you may vote, provided that you can prove you are who you say you are. That is, you must provide positive identification of yourself. Otherwise, somebody else may vote by using **your** name.

POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION

The best way to provide positive identification is by means of an identity document, or, in some instances, by means of a passport. However, in many countries only official identification documents are accepted as positive identification during an election. It is therefore important that, if you are a citizen and if you are at least eighteen years old, then you have to make sure that you have an identity document. Only then will you be able to take part in an election.

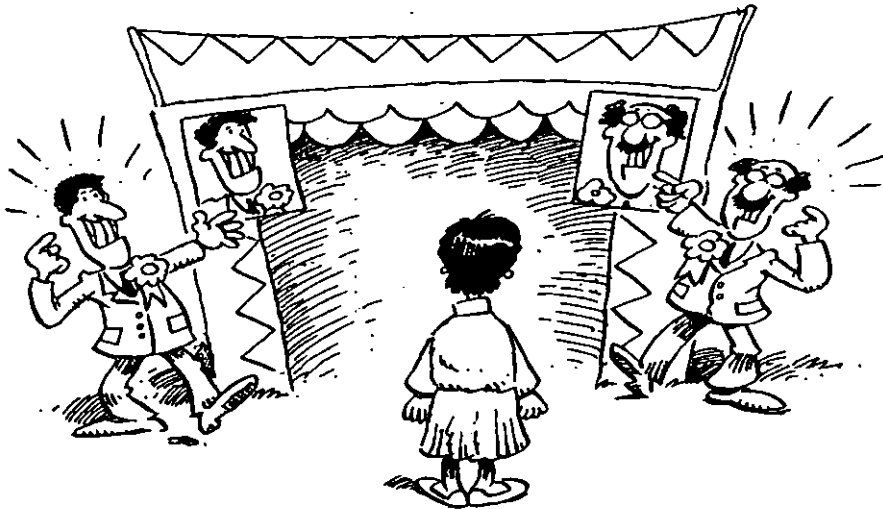


WHAT HAPPENS ON ELECTION DAY?

If you are entitled to vote, then, on election day, you can elect the party or individual of your choice. This is a very important democratic right. It is also important to know that the election process is the same for municipal elections, regional elections and national elections.

Let's see what happens on the day of an election.

Firstly, you will have to go to a specified place where you can cast your vote. This is also called a **polling station**. It is normally the local school hall, or town hall, or municipal office, or some other suitable place. The location of the **polling station** is normally advertised in the local newspaper long before election day. You can also be sure that the political party that you belong to, will make sure that you know exactly where to cast your vote.



At the polling station one will normally find that the various political parties will try to influence one at the last moment to vote for them. Each party will have its posters up, and will treat you like a king or queen. Just remember, only **you** can decide who you want to vote for.

Inside the election hall there will be a row of election officers sitting at tables. These election officers cannot tell you who to vote for. They are only there to make sure that you are a citizen, that you are over eighteen years of age, that you can identify yourself, and that you do not vote more than once.

Once you have identified yourself, one of the election officers will check your identity document to see if you are really who you say you are. At the same time, your identity document will be stamped to show that you have already used it for election purposes.

INVISIBLE INK

The election officer may also ask you to put your hands under a special light which will check if you have not already voted somewhere else. This light can pick up a special type of invisible ink that is put on your hands when you leave the voting hall. If somebody did vote at another station (maybe he or she has an extra identity document) then the light will show the invisible ink on the person's hands. Such a person will be in trouble.

THE BALLOT PAPER

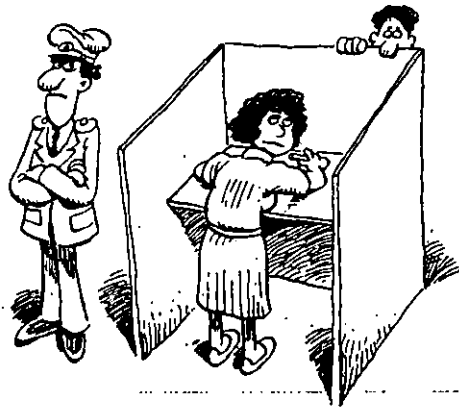
As soon as the election officer is happy that you have been positively identified, and that you have not already voted somewhere else, you will receive a piece of paper called a **ballot paper**. This piece of paper will contain the names of all the different political parties or individuals you can vote for. Behind the name of each party or individual will be a space where you can make an 'X' if you want to vote **for** that party or individual. When individuals are standing for election, they are called **candidates**.

For people who cannot read or write, special arrangements are made that each party is represented by a special symbol or sign on the ballot

=====	☆	
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paper. Each ballot paper will thus contain not only the names of each represented party, but also the symbols or signs of each of those parties. Before the election, the various political parties and the newspapers will make sure that all the citizens know exactly what the symbol or sign of each party looks like.

When you have your ballot paper, you will go into a special little compartment known as a 'voting booth.' In the voting booth you will have the opportunity to choose the party or candidate that **you** want to vote for. You will vote for the party or candidate of your choice by making your 'X' in the block provided behind the name of every party or candidate. Make very sure that you make your 'X' in the correct block. If you make it incorrectly, and you then want to scratch out your mistake, your ballot paper will be **spoilt** and will not be counted.

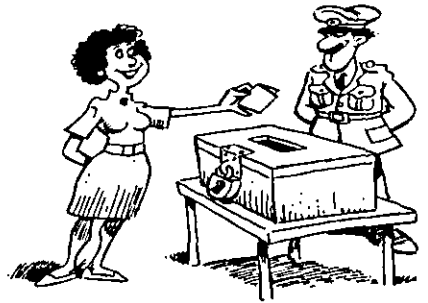


THE SECRECY OF VOTING

Once you have made your choice, you will put your ballot paper in a special locked box called a **ballot box**. Nobody will know who you have voted for. Your name does not appear on the ballot paper and

nobody can see where you make your 'X'. Who you vote for, is your own business.

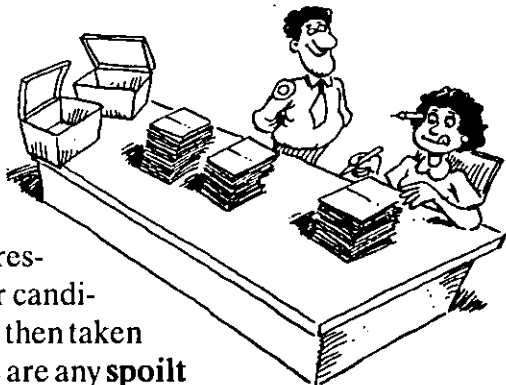
So, don't let anyone tell you that they will find out who you have voted for. This is simply not possible. Nobody but yourself will know what your choice was. Not during the time of voting, and also not after the time. Unless **you** choose to tell somebody who you voted for, your choice will truly be secret.



THE COUNTING OF THE VOTES

Voting normally takes place from early morning until late at night on election day. When voting closes, all the polling boxes are sealed in the presence of the various political parties and the election officers. They are then transported, under the watchful eyes of the same political parties and election officers, together with the polling boxes from the other polling stations, to a place where the votes will be counted.

At this **counting hall** the seals on the boxes are checked to see that they have not been tampered with. If everybody is happy with the situation, all the boxes are opened in the presence of the political parties or candidates. All the ballot papers are then taken out and checked to see if there are any **spoilt**



papers. The remaining ones are then put in different piles. Each pile will contain those ballot papers with an 'X' in the block behind the name of a specific party or candidate.

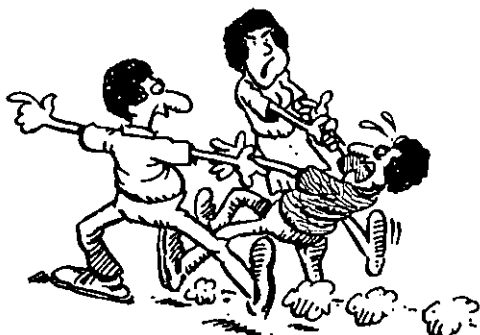
When this separation of the ballot papers is completed, the number of ballot papers in each pile is checked and counted. Only when this counting is finished, will one know how many votes each party or candidate received.

INTIMIDATION, INTOLERANCE, AND VIOLENCE

In a democracy, everyone has the right to vote for any party or candidate of his or her choice. Unfortunately, some people do not really believe in democracy although they continuously pretend that they do.

In a democratic culture, one does not force anybody to vote for one's party. Citizens must have the right to vote for whoever **they** want to. Intimidation is therefore not tolerated. At the same time, it is important to be tolerant of the ideas of others. If another political party wants to tell people why they should vote for that specific party,

then, in a democracy, they should have the right to do so. Remember, only in a democracy does one have the right to hear about and vote for different ideas.



they believe in, be aware that these actions are not democratic at all. If we all act like that, democracy will never have a chance in our country.

INDEPENDENT MONITORS

It is very important that the elections in a country should be **free** and **fair**. This simply means that nobody should be forced to vote in a certain way, or be prevented from voting for the party or candidate of his or her choice. There should therefore be no intimidation, no favouring of the ruling party's candidates by the security forces, and every party should have the right to hold meetings freely and openly.

To make sure that elections are free and fair, people called **monitors** or **observers** normally visit various parts of the country before and during elections. Their task is to 'monitor' or check the activities of all the political parties, individuals and the security forces and to ensure that all citizens have a fair chance to hold election meetings, and of voting for whoever they want to.

Such monitors can be members of the various political parties, church groups and other local organisations, or independent people from overseas. The more monitors there are, the more unlikely it will be that any party or individual will intimidate others, or interfere unfairly in the election process. If the monitors do a good job, then it is also very difficult for any political party to question the results **after** the election.

POLITICAL PROMISES

Many political parties would like to have our votes. Politicians are very good at telling us why we should vote for **them** and not for anybody else. But, there can be a danger in political promises. Only after the results of the election may we discover that the party cannot deliver what they have promised.

It is therefore very important to listen very **critically** to what **all**

political parties are saying. If they make promises, try to find out if they can **deliver** on those promises. Promises normally cost money, and very often we will find that we ourselves have to pay very dearly for the things promised by politicians.

It does not really matter if the promises are about housing, education, jobs, or whatever. In each instance we should ask ourselves who will pay for all those nice goodies.



POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

Politics and Economics are normally two sides of the same coin. One cannot have a healthy political system without a healthy economy. Therefore, when we make our choice during any election, we should ask ourselves whether the policies of the party or candidate we prefer will result in high economic growth. Will it create the wealth and jobs which a prosperous society requires. Only if we are satisfied that the

policies of our chosen party will lead to a prosperous future, should we vote for it.

Voting is a very important democratic activity. The result of voting can make or break a society. Make sure that you have thought very deeply about your choice before you make it. When you make your 'X', you have taken on the responsibility of helping to determine who will rule our society. Remember, the country's future is in your hands.

SUMMARY

The word 'DEMOCRACY' means different things to different people. Unfortunately, experience shows that not all types of democracy will bring either peace or prosperity.

Prosperous democracies always tend to limit the power of government. They guard the freedom of the individual, and they make politicians accountable for their actions.

Such democracies have proper constitutions and bills of rights which spell out the 'rules of the game' very clearly. They have many checks and balances which make the abuse of power very difficult, and they normally empower communities to solve their own problems.

True democracies allow people the freedom to live their lives as they see fit, provided that they do not violate the freedom and rights of others. Such democracies ensure that power is not concentrated in the hands of politicians, but that it remains in the hands of the people - where it belongs.

The principles of

DEMOCRACY

This book explains the political requirements for a successful society. It discusses democracy, constitutions, bills of rights, the rule of law, and shows how prosperity depends on a specific type of democratic system.

It looks at ways of making government accountable, its proper role, and the importance of community structures.

It explains how the protection of certain fundamental freedoms is essential for ensuring democracy, prosperity, and justice for all.

The book also explains the practical aspects of voting. It shows who can vote, what happens on election day, what a ballot paper is, how votes are counted, and why the secrecy of voting is so important. It also stresses the importance of free and fair elections and the responsibility that voting places on the shoulders of all citizens.

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