

FACTORS RELEVANT TO DEMOCRACY

Paper read by Szczesny Górski DŚ:
head of Radiophysical Laboratory
Institute of Radiology
Medical Academy,
Poznań, Poland

to

2nd Conference of the European Region
ICEA¹ European Conference for Communities in Europe:
'A Challenge for Communities in Europe: Economy, Environment, Education'
Budapest, Hungary 21 – 25 June 1992

In co-operation with

Hungarian Association for Community Education Development

¹ ICEA - International Community Education Association

FACTORS RELEVANT TO DEMOCRACY

I would like to share with you some comments about a set of factors relevant to democracy the most decisive ones as far as I am able to judge them.

Let's class them under philosophical, psychological, communicational, organisational, financial and technological headings

Let's start with the philosophy. By philosophy I simply mean the personal sense of the meaning of our existence as individuals in the society and in the broadest ecological context.

This term philosophy has rather bad connotations as something not very practical

However one feels that real personal philosophy is the foundation without which our most logically coherent ideological structures are built on the quicksands and our life would be lacking momentum and drive

So as far as one can see one's philosophy is the central, the most practical factor in our life.

So what about philosophy and democracy?

Here one acknowledges one's individual uniqueness but not a final separateness from others, from the world. The difference but not dissociation. A uniqueness merged in the stream of other uniquenesses everywhere, rather than something unique among trivial repeatable things of the nature and opposed to others

Who am I? A private individual with neatly private rights and interests or rather a unique expression of the ancestors, of the whole field of life, of culture, and ultimately the child of this earth and the whole universe.

If I feel really to be a self-made entity, I am like a dwarf on the giants shoulders, proclaiming: me the bigger and so cutting myself off from my basis where all my strength comes from. I put myself in an orphaned voluntary expatriate situation: wretched beggar who has renounced his royalty shares

So one feels a full rights member of the huge family, equipped by it for one's unique exploratory journey, bringing

back to one's house all the discovered riches, sharing them with others.

So the abiding, accepted sense of the uniqueness of one's journey and happily familial sharing seems the foundation, without which our efforts for democracy will be probably in vain.

On this soil perhaps democracy could blossom not as an idea but as a real thing

Now let's turn to the other factors:

First the psychological: the most subtle and so the most powerful. One is the many - one is the whole world's history living now. One can only be acquainted with the history. Any attempt to change it can only result in a falsification. Then a conflict begins between 'what is' and 'what should be'. This internal conflict is bound to exteriorize as conflict between individuals and groups.

Conflicts are most destructive for democracy

Communication will come next. The great art is to discover and to communicate clearly, dispassionately one's fundamental assumptions and preconceptions.

Not till then a democratic cooperation would be possible

Let's shift our attention to the organizational aspect: It seems that both the vertical - hierarchical, as well as horizontal patterns have their proper place.

A horizontal is needed, for instance, when sharing personal meanings in view of coming to the common consensus. Whereas the effective execution of things needs an hierarchical order.

The formal structure of administrative and general law regulations is another important factor.

Let's class these structures as open and closed or feed-backed.

In the open one, one's behaviour is observed and compared, by some official, with the law requirements. The effect of the

possible offence comes back to the offender by the intermediary of the same official or a group of them.

For instance there is a regulation forbidding to leave wrecked cars on the public grounds

Imagine how much manpower it takes and how hopelessly ineffective is its execution.

The open formal structure of regulation is a perfect soil for bureaucracy expansion with all its detrimental effects for democracy

In the closed or feed - backed regulation structure, the effect of the offence is feed-backed automatically to the offender, without or with a minimum of the intermediary action of an official. In the example with old cars, the regulation demands the first buyer of the car to pay a deposit, reimbursed when the wreck is returned to the scrap-heap.

This simple elegant formula solved the so far hopeless problem with above 30.000 car - wrecks in Scandinavian countries, without inflating bureaucracy

Let's turn now to the financial factor of democracy. All money (financial credit) are by now put to circulation by banks. And banks put it to circulation as a debt. This indebted money has to come back to the bank increased by interest.

With the development of production and services (the real credit) there is a growing need for money (financial credit). So the bigger the economy, the bigger indebtedness of the people. The biggest economies of the world are the most indebted ones.

Individuals and whole nations are in pawn with the banks. Taxation is growing with each budget, nevertheless the deficit is growing too. Great part of tax income goes to the debt service without ever redeeming the original public debt.

Money power is the greatest power. It is the power to give and the power to take. The power to destroy and the power to create. The power to crush opposition or bestow favours. This power is exercised through the control of the press, the radio and TV and Parliament itself - the three greatest media of controlling public expression and conditioning public mind.

The debt system results not only in growing political and economic centralization inside nations; it is also being used as an attempt to impose an international dictatorship

What can one do?

Nations have a sovereign prerogative to create their own money, their financial credit, without any indebtedness; to create it according to the production and services available and annulate it according to the consumption

Without executing this prerogative, democracy is lacking its most important material instrument.

Let's end by paying our attention to the technological aspect.

High technology is developing enormously

Let's consider two results of this fact

First - the notoriously decreasing number of persons produces more and more goods. If wages and salaries will continue to be the main source of purchasing power, the economy is doomed and democracy along with it

I do not know about any better solution than the general social dividend as proposed by C H Douglas and the worldwide Social Credit Movement. This proposal is the direct consequence of the fact that every member of the community is heir to all the inventions and scientific knowledge which have made this abundant production possible, as well as they are heirs to all the natural resources of their country

The second result of high technology is the growing cost per work place. The costliness of capital equipment has been skyrocketing, so there are increasingly only the multinational companies left which can afford to create workplaces, and ordinary people are left out.

Can't we make it our own business to create a technology which is cheap per workplace? Can't we create a technology which is not so complex?

The big complex technology only fits into the big concentrations of population. Are we really so limited that we can't create an appropriate small - scale technology?

The modern technology has become increasingly violent: In agriculture where we scatter around very violent chemicals. On this thin living layer of the earth, on which all life depends, we are scattering millions of tons of killer substances. In our attempts to cope with the energy problem and many others, we practise the same violent greed.

We want quick results with violent means.

This whole approach leads to the fateful polarization, under which the rich become richer and the poor becomes more desperate, and ecological milieu as well as society disintegrates.

All this leads us in a direction quite opposite to democracy.

We cannot kill off the high technology. But we could perhaps create the intermediary technology - of small scale, much simpler, much cheaper and not so violent.

Even a third rate engineer can make a complicated thing more complicated. It takes a bit of genius to recapture the basics and simplicity - as Fritz Schumacher says in his testamentary lecture on Technology for a democratic society.

This was a very short summary of what we propose to discuss as a subject for a seminar "Dialogues on Democracy", planned for the next school year, for adults of all the walks of life, mainly for the young ones.

There is not much time left for an effective action.

What do I certainly not want? (among others)

I do not want the pursuit of Europe, the West
The one who sets off in pursuit of another will not be able to be
oneself

I do not want the rule of banks. I regard it illegal and
inevitably destructive; their service - very valuable

I do not want money to exceed its role. Let working medium
circulate efficiently. When pumping station becomes a temple I
smell deception. Bread is born in the field not in the mill.

I do not want the whole social effort to be devoted to the
highest technique. Technique should be first of all applied to
meet the main needs of ourselves and our neighbors. We need
technique by our standards, technique that West will not give to
the East for it discarded it long ago.

I do not want us to be doomed to provide for our basic needs
mainly through exchange with other nations if we could do it on
our own.

I do not want mass media to be free to nourish us the
patterns of made up violence, crime and every possible deviation.
We have enough real ones. Information is a sort of subtle food.
Evidently harmful food is not allowed and at least its
accessibility must be limited. Computers are protected against
viruses; and brain ...? The automatism of simulation is
inevitable. Let us not sow the wind.

I do not want us to be forced to live in freely polluted
environment. The one who while walking in the street beats other
passers by is going to be stopped. Drivers - for instance - do
the same to our lungs but unhindered.

I do not want the house to be littered with things that can
be dangerous or still useful. I do not want materials and poisons
to be in the care of people who are interested only in throwing
them away "elsewhere". I would be better to leave them to special-
ists interested in using them. Safe "elsewhere" is only a
delusion, surely.

I do not want the stress to be stronger on repair and
treatment than on prevention. Prevention - to the best of our
abilities - is probably the cheapest and the most effective.

Finally I think that it would be better for the politicians
not to expect me to tell clearly what, and especially how to do
it is, I believe, rather their and expert's task. I would rather
be asked what I do not want. This is easier for me to state,
being neither a politician nor an expert.
A pointed question will get an answer.

With confidence for our very respectable politicians,
experts, information people and for us all.