A Consideration of Democratic Participation in Switzerland and Britain with Reference to the Management of an Educational Issue at Local Level in both Countries

ROBERT KENRICK JONES

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Institute of Education
University of London

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ABSTRACT

A consideration of democratic participation in Switzerland and Britain with reference to the management of an educational issue at local level in both countries

This thesis is concerned with participatory democracy and its effectiveness in action. The aim of the underlying research has been to examine this form of democracy as it is revealed in one country (Switzerland) and within that to focus on a specific canton (Geneva); secondly to compare it with the democratic structure of the United Kingdom and again focusing on a particular region - the County of Buckinghamshire. In each case, at the local level, I have chosen one sensitive issue - education- and considered how far people participated in their own destinies, written from a United Kingdom background.

It happened that an issue concerning selection of pupils arose in both areas at roughly the same time and which generated much discussion. I analysed the situation within the context of the systems of government and educational strategy of each country, my purpose being to discover whether the British representative democratic system or the Swiss direct democracy served their citizens best. In the chosen provincial areas of both states it happened that both grammar and non-selective schools existed.

The main findings showed that in Switzerland the launching of a Popular Initiative involved the citizen at all stages thereafter – collecting signatures, a commission, and a final constitutionally approved referendum to decide the outcome. In the British county, however, the voter was offered a non-binding public opinion poll and had then to await the verdict of the county council. Finally, I consider the prospect of introducing a participatory democratic structure, akin to the Swiss model, into the British scene, as it might well encourage the United Kingdom voter into feeling a greater sense of personal involvement in the outcome of political events.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Democracy (‘demos the people and kratos strength’) as a political concept has many facets. The word can embrace popular government as practised in Britain, the one-party democracies of emergent Africa, the fictional democracy of Stalinist Russia or the comprehensive participation as practised in such countries as Denmark, Switzerland or parts of the USA. The term has been made to serve the interests of dictators, monarchs and republicans throughout history. All definitions, however, include the essential element of participation in some form or other. Nevertheless, democratic methods boil down to two main concepts, namely Representative or Participatory Democracy. In representative democracy, as for instance obtains in Britain and much of the western world, the voter has direct control over their political destinies only at election times. On other occasions the voter relies on their member of parliament to legislate and guide their destinies. Participatory democracy, however, extends the citizen’s powers of direct decision-making to areas such as direct taxation, schools, laws, defence, the environment and health. It can also cover powers to repeal national laws.

This thesis is an examination of the effectiveness of two democratic systems (one representative, the other participatory) when confronted by a very sensitive issue locally. I took as examples an important matter in a Swiss canton – Geneva, and also an English shire county - Buckinghamshire. Both provincial areas were faced with a similar political problem at roughly the same time. This concerned selection in education. How would each community deal with the issue?

I have traced the course of events in both cases. Both types of democracy have their strong body of supporters and these I analyse, the underlying purpose of the thesis being to assess the quality of the solutions provided for the respective electorates and come to a judgement. One could argue that where each community has never experienced the political system of the other, comparisons are impossible. However human beings are the same worldwide with very much the same hopes and fears so that very different concepts may nevertheless appeal across systems and nations.

Many political issues pass through ‘on the nod.’ It is however when something of great significance occurs that voters look to their political system to serve their interests. When
a matter of educational selection and parental concerns arose in both Switzerland and Britain it was possible that the different political instruments handled the issues very differently indeed.

I decided to select two local government areas in order to study aspects of democracy for several reasons. Political participation if desired is more manageable at local levels. UK opinion polls show that voters will often consult their councillor rather than their MP (Parry 1992, cited by Topf in Ch.3, Table 3:1, Klingemann 1995). There are many community issues unique to one area which cry out for action. In Switzerland polls show that the popularity of participation increases in the lower levels of administration i.e. cantons and communes.

So when one such matter arose in a Swiss and British local government area I felt that a good opportunity had materialised to study political participation. There was a final advantage in choosing Geneva and Buckinghamshire. The educational issue over selection arose in areas both of which had grammar and non selective schools to add point to the problem.

After all participatory democracy in Athens was practised effectively partly because the voice of the town crier (Stentor) could be heard by all in the community. So choosing a local area in both countries seemed to give participatory democracy a good context to see it in action and in a setting which was readily comprehensible in its entire operation. Of course in the case of Switzerland it also expands to include the entire state

**An Hypothesis**

The format of the forthcoming thesis is to examine the very different types of democracy which obtain in Switzerland and the United Kingdom and through this to reveal the extensive participatory democracy practised in Switzerland which enables the people to not only express their opinions in a recognised and constitutional manner, but also to judge on new laws and formulate their own at all three levels of national administrations. It also considers the democratic pattern of Britain in the same way analysing the various methods available to achieve UK ends.

In an article ‘Democratic Theory and Indices of Democratization’ Saward (1994) defines
democracy in its basic principle:

‘There should be a necessary correspondence between acts of government and the equally weighted express wishes of citizens with respect to those acts’ (pp.13 and 20)

He goes on to state that a political system is democratic only if it involves responsive rule. Saward further lists a number of principles which he feels are at variance with the democratic concept e.g. justice, the environmental imperative, nationalism etc. Crucially he asks: ‘Is there a trade off between them when faced with conflicting values?’ In my four principles (see start of Chapter 3), trade offs are implied to make democracy succeed today. My hypothesis upon which this thesis is founded and in which I hope to demonstrate its truth is that:

**Participatory democracy as practiced in the state of Switzerland is more effective in representing the will of its electorate than the representative style as practiced in the United Kingdom is in looking after the interests of the British electorate**

my general objective being to compare the political structures operating in Britain and Switzerland particularly as they affect provincial government in both countries. I especially consider the widely differing impacts which the respective national political systems have when confronted, as indeed both were, by an ‘explosive issue’. In the course of this I also hope to show that the possibilities offered by Swiss participatory democracy, in all its many ramifications, provides wider opportunities for people to register their views whatever they may be than does the corresponding British pattern.

Democracy can be defined in many ways. A good all round example is provided by Holden (1988) (cited in Parry and Moran 1994, p.273):

‘A political system in which the whole people, positively or negatively, make and are entitled to make the basic determining decisions on important matters of public policy.’ (p.5)

Even with this definition there is no clear guidance over the extent and how often ‘the whole people’ actually participate in their own political affairs.
Overview

Following Chapter 1 (introduction, hypothesis, rationale and origins), Chapter 2 considers the background to the research and the books and articles I found helpful. The groundwork, Chapter 3, is laid with a theoretical chapter on democracy and political participation in general. The scope of interpretations and recent work in this field are considered: the watershed between such writers as Schumpeter, Sartori and to an extent, Nozick as against Pateman, Held, Heater and writers in the collected essays of Parry and Moran including the editors. All this is designed to form the *raison d'être* for looking at participatory democracy as it actually exists in Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

I consider next, in Chapter 4, the general governmental design of both countries in order to obtain some overview of the parameters of national systems of administration e.g. parliaments, leadership, electoral methods and the priorities which each country gives to its economic and financial bases. The nature of these basic national foundations can crucially affect the kind of democracy employed. As Ian Holliday (1994) (see also Heater, 1994, Ch.3) writes: ‘Models of democracy depend on models of state’ (cited in Parry and Moran 1994, p.242). The fact that Switzerland is a federal state and Britain a highly centralised nation clearly weighs in the balance.

The next chapter, Chapter 5, clothes, as it were, the foregoing structures with the democratic machinery that they espouse. Public consultations, commissions, referenda and, equally important, the extent that each nation generates voluntary social groups in the whole field of welfare, health, education and citizen support. I compare the degree to which these groups have or have not the ear of central government. I believe that the examination will show that Switzerland has a far greater and more meaningful political participation in most of these fields than Britain.

Whereas the general outline of my methodology appears in Chapter 1, the main section constitutes Chapter 6, immediately preceding the heart of the thesis, i.e. Chapters 7 and 8.

The central part of the thesis is designed to test the degree of political participation which Swiss and UK citizens are able to display in tackling a controversial local problem on educational selection. I examine a Swiss Popular Initiative in Chapter 7 which expresses
grave reservations about educational opportunities. Similarly in Buckinghamshire (Chapter 8) I consider the way in which controversy over creating a new grammar school is handled democratically and this is analysed and comparisons made on the respective outcomes.

Chapter 9 is a possible scenario for the introduction into Britain of a participatory democratic structure – initially at local level. It is intended to be a natural way of introducing it to the nation. I felt it necessary to examine whether it would be feasible in the light of the rest of the thesis.

This thesis advances three basic propositions. First that Swiss participatory democracy answers the needs of its people more satisfactorily than the British system. Secondly that such a comprehensive political structure can operate in the context of a capitalist state (a situation which the advocates of participation like Macpherson and Pateman deemed impossible). Thirdly that popular direct and semi-direct democracy can co-exist alongside a representative style of government i.e. with elections, constituencies and parliamentary cabinet as in Switzerland. I end this chapter with my concluding remarks.

Rationale and origins
Considering how to tackle a subject divided between two nations presented some clear needs. I hope the following pages illustrate the path I took and why. How then to present the subject, working on my own, as economically yet as rigorously as possible?

The raison d’être behind my approach to political participation and consequently how I set about it arose initially from the dissertation on participation which formed part of the MA I took in the early 1980s at the Institute of Education. The subject was that in Britain participation, whether political, industrial or educational, did not seem to work. Therefore a decade or so later I sought to discover whether and where it did in fact succeed. I have been for some years a co-opted member of the Buckinghamshire County Education committees and involved at a fairly senior level in local Constituency work so knew the county scene. I also knew Switzerland and its cantons.

I chose the canton of Geneva partly because I am literate in French but not German, partly because it has very convenient travel links with Britain and was also an important centre of many activities with a full range of the participatory political instruments so
characteristic of the Swiss. Together with the other five French speaking cantons they form a sizeable portion of the country. There was an added advantage in choosing Geneva. It comprises a fairly compact area which is easily traversed and contains within it 40 communes with their own systems and levels of democratic process.

Both Geneva canton and Buckinghamshire were involved in similar controversial issues and at the same time. The situation in each state centred on the perennial and specific question of selection in education. The issues were sufficiently similar as to justify comparisons in political treatment.

However, my aim in the research is to evaluate how successfully or not the two different forms of democracy were in dealing with their respective problems, which happened to be educational, not to consider education as an issue above every other democratic dimension.

After all, the established political machinery in Switzerland constantly handles a wide variety of topics in much the same way. In Britain too such political machinery as exists will deal with any particular matter in its own manner. The burning issue referred to above was in both areas educational and in both areas tested the resources of the political means at citizens’ disposal. The resolutions of the respective issues proved to be very different and interesting.

**Recent Changes**
The empirical research covers the period from the mid 1980’s to the mid 1990’s. The case studies carried out in England and Switzerland respectively occurred within four years of each other. They thus provide a basis for a comparative analysis of how democratic participation can be exercised in both countries during that period.

Initially the proximity in time of the two issues chosen made it convenient to set up the face to face interviews and the questionnaires involving those people in the then current policy making processes in each country. However the decade was also significant for other reasons. By the mid eighties in Britain it was already clear that the Thatcher government was not only intent upon educational changes but also intended to alter drastically local government powers and so affected my research cases.
Ridley for the government, saw ‘only a residual role for local government’ 1 In Switzerland too the introduction of the Cycle d’Orientation in Geneva became a focus for controversy as will be demonstrated later on in the thesis.

In the period since 1997 when New Labour came to power considerable changes have occurred. Labour pledged to make ‘education….a number one priority’ and to ‘decentralise political power throughout the United Kingdom’ (Labour party Manifesto 1997). Certainly this research would have been enriched if one could replicate the original research pattern fifteen years on. This thesis and its accompanying arguments is considered in the context of the particular time frame chosen. Changes have occurred in the last decade and have to an extent narrowed the gap between the countries. There is far more participation in British society and educational opportunities have greatly expanded. These developments do not, I believe, invalidate the original conclusions which are based on the benefits of participation as they then existed.

(The detail of the methodology used to evaluate and compare the outcomes of the issues and the two forms of democracy is given in Chapter 6.)

Since the mid 1990’s there have been a number of changes in educational policy which have accelerated under New Labour. Seven White Papers have been published since 2001- of these that on Higher Education (2005)2 highlighted an enhanced role for local government through commissioning new schemes rather than managing local services. This certainly increased local participatory democracy and was later confirmed in the Education Act (2005) a great contrast to the Thatcher years. The variety of schools has been expanded many offering specialist subjects skills. The Schools Standard and Framework Act of 1998 provided the legislative support for this latter move. The ending of the assisted places scheme Education Schools Act (1997) however broke an interesting link between public and private sector schools. All this plus the aspiration that up to 50% of secondary pupils should be able to go to university has materially changed the educational scene.

In Switzerland, there have been changes in secondary education. By 1997 there had developed a stringent evaluation of education and training schemes with a tightening of

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1 Nicholas Ridley as cited in ‘Changing Organisation and Management of local Government’ p.235
2 DfES Publications 2006
standards. The introduction of the 'Reforme de la perequation financiere de la RPT' by easing the financial plight of some cantons with socio-economic problems will have an indirect benefit on the education resources of the area. However the most significant change has been the introduction of the new Constitutional articles on education adopted by more than 80% of the voters in the referendum on 21st May 2006. These changes to the Constitutions had already been overwhelmingly accepted the previous Autumn by the National Council and the Council of States (176 to 3 with 7 abstentions in the former and 44 to 1 in the latter).

Three facts stand out. First, the syllabus which is still 'canton driven' must in future accord with national standards. Second, parity of esteem between academic and practical subjects is in future obligatory and thirdly, any canton which rejects these and other new regulations will be compelled by the federal government to enforce them. These are major reforms but they still preserve the basic room for manoeuvre which the cantons have enjoyed.

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3 Brunschwig Graf 'Switzerland in a Changing World' Prospects vol 21 No4 1997
4 Departement federale des finances Berne 2002
5 publie par la Chancellerie federale 2006
CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

This thesis is founded upon the concept of democracy and its impact, in its various forms, upon the life of two countries in particular, that is Britain and Switzerland. Chapter 2 considers the several areas into which the thesis falls together with the literature relevant to those areas of research. After considering democracy in the abstract, there follow the ways it has been incorporated into the community life of Switzerland and the United Kingdom. I needed authors who could talk about democracy as it is seen within the past decade or so. Then, within this general concept, what writers thought of participatory democracy which is the driving force underpinning Swiss policy. What are the ingredients of Britain’s democratic system along representative lines?

Arising from the structure of the thesis, I have divided this chapter into sections representing the chapters in the thesis in which I mention writers from whom I have drawn ideas, even inspiration. It is emphatically not a booklist as such. There are many others but those mentioned have helped to set the tone of the discourse. After the introductory Chapter 1, (including an outline of the methodology and the hypothesis) there follows Chapter 3 dealing with democracy in the abstract and participatory democracy as one of its manifestations. Chapter 4 concerns governmental structures and the handling of national resources etc. Chapter 5 analyses the political instruments preferred by each nation in reflecting its way of life e.g. referenda, voting systems, popular initiatives, etc. Chapter 6 sets out the methodology used in this examination in detail. Finally Chapters 7 and 8 deal with the question of how the cantonal education policy of Geneva and that of the county of Buckinghamshire relate to their respective political systems and problems. As educational issues cross national boundaries I have combined Chapters 7 and 8 together. I have grouped the books and articles which I have consulted in the thesis according to the chapters. (This does not apply to Chapter 1).
Democracy and political participation

There are very many writers on democracy from Aristotle down to the present dealing with the theory and its application to various forms of community life throughout the centuries. Some of these occur in the thesis. However I have picked out four contemporary writers from those I have studied. I believe, in their several approaches they provide a basis for democracy itself which forms the theme in different forms running through the thesis.

First, Saward (1994): Saward’s definition of democracy seemed to me to be better than most in that he arrives at one by demolishing a series of obstacles he erects through pointing out their inconsistencies. Thus he examines the idea that specialist knowledge or ‘contingent knowledge’ such as is found in health, education or energy (pp.8/9) although fine, does not constitute grounds for superior voting abilities of some people over others. Again Saward argues that although the idea that all men are equal is rendered untrue in some respects because they have very different abilities, yet this does not constitute any reason for selective democracy.

Finally he, on the basis that true democracy relies on non contingent qualities in mankind, defines democracy in a way upon which, I believe, I can ground this thesis. He claims that: ‘Across the full range of a given citizen’s relevant concerns, individuals must be adjudged the best judges of their own interests’ (pp.12-13). Saward therefore states that democracy as substantive policy and political and administrative actions must correspond to the expressed preferences of a majority of the citizens.

There is a further point in that Saward believes that such a definition favours direct popular participation. This seems to provide a definition and a link to the thesis. Within a democratic framework what kind of society can exist?

The second author is M. Walzer in an essay on ‘The Civil Society’ in Mouffe’s ‘Dimensions of Radical Democracy’ edited by Chantal Mouffe, Verso 1992. Walzer sets out four kinds of society i.e. Marxist, Nationalist, Participationist (Greek style) and Free Market. All have flaws he believes and so offers a fifth way: ‘the civil society’. This combines all the others in a ‘live and let live’ way. How these can live happily side by side is partially answered. He claims that civil society is sustained by groups much
smaller than the demos and that all these are necessarily pluralized as they are incorporated.

This approach seemed to offer some justification for the curious mixture of participation and representation which I have discovered in researching this thesis and which makes up Swiss democracy today and, potentially, Britain in the future.

There is a healthy ‘civil society’ functioning in modern Switzerland and potentially exists in Britain. Furthermore the Swiss citizen despite his sense of collectivity and the General Will has a keen sense of his own particular worth. This forms the basis of much that makes individual Initiatives work and is portrayed by Walzer in his patchwork picture of a multi-driven society with a strong sense of community. Walzer makes a strong point in saying that when Communism collapsed in Eastern Europe the people yearned to replace totalitarianism with ‘the exhilarating experience of associational independence’ (p.106), i.e. a civil society. He adds that it is a long term goal.

The central theme in my thesis is citizen political participation and the problems and successes of its application in Switzerland and elsewhere in the World. The following books or articles analyse and evaluate political participation and its practical outcome in governments. Beetham’s and Parry and Moran’s collection of essays on democracy blending theory and practice from a wide range of approaches enabled me to establish some basic parameters.

In Chapter 3 of Beetham’s (1994) volume of contributors, Parry and Moran stress the fact that whereas in classical Athenian times the people actually ruled and voted decisions en masse in the town square – today this is numerically impossible (although the Landsgemeinden in Switzerland come close). Thus democracy must be participatory in a ‘different modern way’. The authors say ‘citizen participation has ceased to be the paramount indicator of democracy’ (p.45). They produce a useful table on p.47 (3.1) showing a breakdown of the various activities in the UK which can be construed as political participation. They reveal only two areas of real participation namely petition signing and voting. Petitioning in Switzerland is also popular. Parry and Moran also point out the links between class, education and joining societies. As a comparison with
Switzerland it forms an interesting study taken in conjunction with Finger and Sciarini’s work on these trends.

In ‘Democracy and Democratization’ Parry and Moran (1994), a series of eleven writers tackle democracy as a concept and then consider how this can be put into practice. A very helpful contribution I found, was the chapter (11) by Holliday. His article entitled ‘Democracy and Democratization’ (the same as the book title) is a perceptive critique of what is good and bad about our own home grown brand.

He makes an important point when he asserts that models of democracy depend on models of the state. By this he means the nature of government itself. This seems logical. He believes that piece-meal reform (in the UK) would certainly produce progress but would surely alienate many. Therefore the government and people must be of one mind about what the overall plan is - not easy to achieve. Holliday contrasts the participatory states envisaged by Pateman, Macpherson and others with the minimalist state envisaged by Nozick. All this is valuable in pointing the way towards a matching relationship between the state and political systems.

He also covers the reduction of democratic representation in the ever increasing centralizing of UK governments since the 1970s to eliminate small areas of local administrations through mergers. This is again in marked contrast with the Swiss Federal system where small is beautiful.

Papadopolous (1995) examines the ramifications of direct democracy in Switzerland in some detail, both the right to veto governmental legislation and to initiate new measures all subject to referendum. He also casts a critical eye on the down side of Swiss democracy - its capacity to hamstring government progress and the complicated process whereby reform of policy itself is well nigh impossible owing to the nature of cantonal power.

He considers two main forms of popular consultation. His arguments impinge directly on this thesis. First he examines what he calls ‘the abrogation of old legislation’ (i.e. the Swiss Facultative Referendum), and secondly the ‘propositional’ referenda, namely the Popular Initiatives.
He marshals the arguments for and against direct democracy in Switzerland. Positively he points out that popular referenda can substantially increase the degree of scrutiny which parliament has to devote to law-making, something that could well apply in the UK if ever enacted. Papadopoulos goes on to point out that popular consultation in Switzerland frequently avoids violent strife. Furthermore a negative ‘good’ can emerge when insufficient signatures are collected to launch a referendum. This really reinforces parliament’s authority in passing laws.

The writer shows that the beneficial effects of a ‘top’ elite being denied an objective through direct democracy (‘all bottom up’) may then seek ways to foster an ‘integrative attitude to defuse the opposition.’ He believes that a ‘majority rule would be foolish to disregard a minority with access to direct democratic mechanisms’. Papadopoulos complains that the ‘electorate does not behave according to the same pattern as professional politicians’. Surely, however, this is the electorate’s strength. Undoubtedly many measures can fall by the wayside at the hands of the deeply conservative Swiss.

Structural levels of governments, parliaments and distribution of resources in Britain and Switzerland

Governmental structures provide the means of implementing any political system. In this thesis the political developments arise directly from the respective systems in being in either Switzerland or Britain. I have chosen the following books either because they draw out the essential characteristics of the British or Swiss governing systems within the respective state structures or they dwell on important features such as popular participation.

Norton (1998) gives us a thorough description of modern governments in Western Europe, in particular chapter two on the UK. In stating authoritatively the position of British sovereignty and parliament he provides an excellent contrast to the comparable situation in Switzerland. Norton classifies European parliaments as very institutionalised (i.e. great powers to self legislate or take initiatives), moderately so, or unable to do so. Italy and Sweden come in the top group whilst Britain and Ireland are in the bottom. Norton traces parliament from its beginnings under the model parliament to the present
with its many committees. In particular he explains its role in the overall polity of the country.

So far as this thesis is concerned this article is valuable in pointing up the contrast between the UK parliament and the Swiss federal assembly. Unlike the Swiss parliament, the role in the United Kingdom allotted to an official opposition is well described together with the resultant outcome of one party government and adversarial debates. When Norton writes that ‘If a government with a parliamentary majority is intent on getting its way then there is little to stop it achieving its goals’ (p.43), he is right as regards the UK. However in Switzerland with not only a powerful legislature and a collective leadership but also the threat of a facultative referendum at the end of a year vetoing a law, the situation is very different.

The authors Punnett and Bogdanor show that Britain is not entirely divorced politically from popular participation. Punnett’s (1994) book is important because it analyses current British democratic and parliamentary practice and also poses the question ‘to what extent do the British people participate in political processes?’ - one of the main themes of this thesis. His answer was - to a very little extent. Punnett’s description of the power of the British trade unions and the driving force of their dogma was in marked contrast to that of the whole Labour movement in Switzerland. It also puts Norton’s work into a wider context. However Punnett reveals the surprising amount of underlying ‘health’ there is in UK democracy despite its downside e.g. the power in central government, ‘client’ local administrations etc. Under a sub heading ‘The Art of the Possible’ Punnett describes the checks and balances which help to ameliorate the power of Westminster central government. One feels that the missing element is some form of real citizen participation.

Vernon Bogdanor (1999) in his work on ‘Devolution in the United Kingdom’ points up the problems and advantages for Scotland and Wales in the devolvement of powers from Westminster. This may not on the face of it seem connected with this thesis. However the greater reliance on local sovereignty implied, blends in with greater local political independence and participation and offsets the otherwise major influence of the hitherto dominant Westminster centred system of government, and so leans a little towards the Swiss political way of life. He examines the stresses and strains of devolved government including the ambivalence of Scottish MPs continuing to have influence at Westminster.
Despite devolution he calls this ‘The West Lothian Question’, an update of Gladstone’s dilemma plus some virtues. He believes that devolution may lead to a loose federation rather than separation. He deals with the economics of separation. I think all this may help set the scene for, eventually, the British people to embrace participatory government more easily as I outline in Chapter 9.

Bognador’s book although not concerned with Switzerland nevertheless was helpful in enabling me to construct contrasting patterns of state practice in these two democratic countries. Devolution has a strong kinship to federalism and in turn to local political participation and sovereignty.

In his book ‘Le Système Politique Suisse’, Kriesi (1995) analyses the entire political system of Switzerland both its representative and direct structures. He emphasises the crucial role played by the myriad associations throughout the state covering a vast range of social activities and their links to referenda. As far as my research goes, Kriesi’s detailed tome performed three important functions.

First it provided me with the facts concerning the real power enjoyed by cantons and communes in the modern Swiss polity. Secondly, through his analysis of the various kinds of referenda employed by the Swiss, I could glimpse some sense of the direction to which Britain might move in the future if political participation was to become a reality. Thirdly, his view of the Swiss economic state chimes in with that of Katzenstein and explains much of what constitutes the social and economic stability of Switzerland.

I found the book of Ham and Hill (1993) on policy processes in a modern nation very helpful in establishing the nature of such elements as national ‘input’ and ‘output’ plus the increasing power of UK national administrations over the nation and especially the consequent waning of local governments. The authors consider whether the United Kingdom constitutes a post parliamentary democracy owing to the increasing use by governments of pressure groups seemingly bypassing parliament. This applies also in Switzerland too.
All this helped to form a contrast with the dispersed units of cantonal government in Switzerland and their (still) very considerable degree of sovereignty vis à vis the federal government in Berne.

**Political means employed at English and Swiss national and local levels**

In both Switzerland and Britain political participation and suitable instruments of delivery are crucial factors. Chapter 5 considers which authors have contributed towards an understanding of these matters so far as my thesis is concerned.

In Chapter 5 I discuss the various instruments each country has to enable it to exploit its own brand of political democracy. There is in Britain much political representation at all levels from parliament down to the parish councils and in the many social organisations. However, direct democratic participation is rare (although what there is, is not negligible). In Switzerland the opposite is true. I found that Parry and Moyser’s book (1992) on participation in Britain very helpful in analysing the nature and extent of such participation as there is. The authors take certain areas of Britain of different class natures and examine participation in each. A mining village in Wales and Sevenoaks in Kent being at the extremes. They show that although only 25% of those polled were politically active, yet their activity and numerous encounters with the public created an impact adding up to 43%.

C. B. Cochrane’s article on Communitarians was useful in that it aired the development of participation. The nature of a given community gives authority (or not) to its participation. This fact applies equally, although in different ways, to both nations being studied. He believes that the community is superior to the individual although, as Barber wrote, only if the individuals have come together as free men. The dangers of communitarianism are listed: no freedom of choice, no moral autonomy, no self realisation etc. None of these, as I see it, are likely to arise in either Switzerland or Britain.

However, one Swiss respondent in my questionnaire said that for him the gain to the community outweighed any personal advantage he might have acquired from a popular initiative. The dead hand of uniformity never seems to smother the Swiss voter.
Mads Qvortrup (1998) provides a good study of referenda, their operation, stimuli and electoral make up. He considers these two politically participatory countries – Denmark and Switzerland. In particular he analyses the impact of referenda on the voters in terms of their status, knowledge, turnout, etc. The value of this contribution to me lies in the way he breaks down the amorphous mass of voters into recognisable groups and their voting intentions. Without setting out to prove any preconceived points he examines the facts *vis à vis* his native Denmark and Switzerland and, I believe, adds substance to the thesis.

He stresses that the frequency of Swiss voting clearly affects turnout (as the voting on the referendum in chapter 5 shows). Quortrup also shows that ‘frequent referendums can be consistent with the ideal of the relatively knowledgeable citizen’ (p.263).

All in all this political scientist and referendum specialist believes that direct voter participation in Denmark, California and Switzerland is a strong and visible form of democracy. The article includes a number of useful charts and diagrams illustrating the political facts.

As my thesis is partly about direct democracy, and the fact that the Popular Initiative in Geneva being considered was launched by a political party i.e. The Geneva Liberal party, an article by Ladner and Brandle (1999) seemed to be particularly relevant. The authors survey the general scene and produce some interesting points. There is no clear answer. Direct democracy, whilst bypassing the traditional parties, does however stimulate the growth of new small party groups who use it to gain recognition in the party arena and thus consolidate a political base.

It seems that whereas the central party structures are weak and financially poor, yet at cantonal level they flourish in conjunction with Direct Democracy (DD). To quote the writers: ‘In Switzerland, state level parties resemble umbrella organisations lacking financial resources’ (p.284). It is also pointed out that the federal system means that organising at cantonal level from Berne is a hopeless task. Some parties see direct democratic methods as an arm not an alternative. This fits the pattern of the Genevan Liberal party initiative ‘*L’Ecole Notre Avenir*’ (see relevant chapters). As Ladner and Brandle say, the old established parties originally ‘took a large dose of direct democracy’.
This article is helpful in explaining the undoubtedly strong and varied political activity in the canton.

One aspect of the Swiss polity is the apparent element of corporatism which emerges in the nature of the Federal Government with its seven members. Katzenstein (1984) in his work ‘Corporatism and Change’ explains the peculiar nature of Swiss corporatism. He defines this as neo corporatism. This he believes consists of an ongoing working relationship between government, industry, commissions and the structure of participatory democracy (Swiss style). His book blends in with this thesis.

He explains the symbiotic relationship which exists between Swiss business and industry on the one hand and their political system on the other, how both realise that total co-operation between them plus belief in the structure makes the Swiss state work. He calls this ‘the politics of industry’. Katzenstein regards the numerous commissions as an integral factor in the whole.

Educational policy, democracy and implementation in Britain and Switzerland

Education forms an important thread running through the central chapters. To evaluate the significance of either participatory or representative democracy on a given issue (in this instance education) it seemed essential to set out the facts of the Swiss and British educational policies respectively.

There is a further consideration. In each country the issues centred to some extent upon the matter of matching abilities to courses in a developing technological world. The following authors provide either facts on the respective structures obtaining in each nation or attitudes towards what education is about and where it is leading so far as this thesis is concerned.

As Bierhoff and Prais (1997) say in their introduction, they describe their book about children in Britain and Switzerland as concerning ‘what they learn, how they choose their careers and how they train to produce goods and services’. It analyses the respective virtues and failings of different types of schools in both countries - the merits of small secondary schools in Switzerland - the weaknesses of the cantonal system regarding poorer cantons in providing services. They contrast the literacy and productive work in both nations and relate national economic success to the respective standards of
education. They also highlight the better UK system of comprehensive schools in terms of equipment. However there is far greater success at apprenticeship for technicians and craftsmen in Switzerland compared with Britain or Germany.

The critique they offer of Swiss comprehensive school experiments (p.132) reveals the basis for the fears expressed by the parents and others over the *Cycle d’Orientation* scheme. The authors show that in general Swiss education means the absorption of knowledge taking precedence over social activities and class room experiments. Comprehensive efforts in Zurich and Geneva are superior in social integration but fail academically. In general this is a detailed and accurate insight to education in these two countries.

The two volumes by Mackinnon *et al* on educational organisations, one on Europe (1997) and the other on UK (1996), contain a wide variety of foundation facts across the respective nations regarding structures, organisation and finance which have helped to construct a background to the issues arising in the thesis. In Switzerland they stress the autonomous nature of cantonal education. The wide disparity in funding between local and central government funding in Switzerland - and Britain - is examined together with the university, college and school structures.

In the volume on British education Mackinnon and Statham are especially helpful on the financing of the British system. The extent to which local government is beholden to Westminster is in stark contrast to the very real autonomy of the Swiss cantons (p.139). This is mainly over the crucial areas of finance and extent of powers.

Although I have quoted Denis Lawton (2002) elsewhere in the thesis this comparatively recent book by him is particularly valuable for the discussion within the last chapter. The author sees modern orthodox education in peril from the various current attitudes. After covering ‘the history of western educational ideas’ Lawton tackles the question of education in a postmodern world where he believes its essence i.e. planning, a purposive process and rationality, will prove anathema to the ideals of the postmodernists, who Lawton claims question the absolute nature of such values as truth and goodness. The postmodern idea in promoting a fragmented society seems to give community a body blow. At any rate today's social mores must be difficult to explain to growing children.
All this is in contrast to the very pragmatic Swiss (see below) who see education as a means to equip young people for employment.

The educational organisation in Britain is very different to that prevailing in Switzerland. I found Hega’s article on Federalism, Subsidiarity and Education Policy of real value in analysing Swiss educational policy. The underlying significance of the ‘L’Ecole Notre Avenir’ Initiative in this thesis and the motives of parents in the intimate atmosphere of a Swiss canton are brought out. He reveals the key difference between the two nations. Swiss educational policy, including its financing, is created and implemented within the twenty-six separate cantons and so varies considerably across the state. The federal level is only concerned with écoles de maturité and further education. Hega notes that in eastern Switzerland policy is often geared to local needs rather than any national possibilities - ‘tools for local jobs’ as he puts it. He sees a future with greater federal–cantonal links to offset excessive Swiss parochialism.

I have included Kriesi’s ‘Stein Rokker’ lecture (1997) as an educational source book because it may help to explain the new thrusting Swiss middle class managerial class of parent making up much of the opposition to the Initiative L’Ecole Notre Avenir. This itself is, according to Kriesi, very conservative in its nature as distinct from what he terms the academics or socio-cultural professionals of the same ‘new’ middle class. Kriesi calls these groups respectively ‘right authoritarian’ and ‘left libertarian’. The cleavage politics which he says have arisen on the ashes of the old middle class (not only in Switzerland) could also help to explain the rise of the People’s Party and this impinges on education as much as anywhere else in the social scene.

The essay by George Papadopoulos (1998) within the volume of UNESCO educational topics (pp 26-31) reaches across both Britain and Switzerland. He deals with the developments world wide in cultural, social and economic trends which are impacting directly on conventional education (in both Switzerland and Britain): such topics as the vast growth and spread of knowledge via the media, technological expansion, demographic changes and new social and community concerns.

All these I believe influence both parents and children in the new social classes, probably world wide, but certainly in Britain and Switzerland and within the context of the political
moves discussed in the thesis. Taken together with the existing educational patterns in both Geneva and Milton Keynes, in the County of Buckinghamshire, these trends have provoked parents into action.

Devolution, the spread of popular knowledge and the general sophistication of the modern electorates may help to lead on to a form of democracy which can flow naturally from these, namely participatory democracy as I discuss in the final chapter.

The so called Black Paper documents produced by Cox & Boyson (1977) are not cited as examples of best practice but I mention them because of the points they raised about experimentation in classes ('guinea pig' teaching as they castigated it). This resulted in a weakening of systematic teaching and was almost exactly the burden of complaint from the parents represented in the Liberal Initiative for L'Ecole Notre Avenir. The emphasis on work, qualifications and social status combined with the desire of the parents for their offspring to achieve a greater position in some professional occupation than they themselves ever did, seems to have been a common springboard for both UK and Swiss parents. It also reflected particularly the Swiss work ethic.
CHAPTER 3: DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In this chapter I shall consider the concept of democracy. Fundamentally the entire thesis is centred upon the types of democracy practised in both Great Britain and Switzerland and how successful in both cases the kind adopted has proved to be. If one considers that in Britain representative democracy holds sway whilst in Switzerland a very comprehensive form of participation dominates the political life of the country, it becomes clear that the contrast is very great. Constructing a democratic framework for a nation is not merely an academic exercise for constitutionalists, but the product has vast implications for all the people of both countries.

The political life of any nation is centred on the polis - the way the community is organised, the protection or otherwise afforded to its citizens in their daily lives and the benefits they might reasonably expect to accrue from their own form of citizenship. Thomas Jefferson (1776, cited Margolis, 1979) summed it up well:

‘All men are created equal, they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights...... among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness....Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.’ (p.26)

I propose to consider the component parts of a democratic concept against which the actual systems operating in Britain and Switzerland can be measured. First, however, I should like to indicate what kind of democratic concept I am looking for:

1. A society which matches the democratic framework used.
2. One in which direct and equal participation by the citizen takes place both during and, if a clear demand arises, between general elections.
3. One in which no government or section of society can impose its own agenda willy nilly on the rest.
4. A voting system which combines a reasonable spread of political opinion without a ludicrous dilution of executive power.

The ingredients constituting the makeup of a viable citizen democracy
Any democratic system however structured must, as Jefferson observed, ‘derive its just
powers from the consent of the governed'. Anything less than this and democracy becomes meaningless. Such consent however, is only likely to be forthcoming when the 'governed' know that they are being treated as equal citizens with no qualifications, grades or ranks. One writer gets to the heart of this theme of equality. Michael Saward (1994) defines democracy as being primarily a matter of equality on the grounds that no one person or group has a better insight into politics than any other. He develops this theme by suggesting that special expertise groups in fields such as medicine, science, etc are justified in claiming to be leaders but that in politics, which he labels a 'non-contingent activity', all are equal and meritocracy does not enter in. This certainly seems to enshrine the essence of a democratic society, even if ideally. Saward then builds on his insistence for equality. I believe he is right in stating that a nation’s policy, politics and administrative apparatus must ‘correspond to the preferences of a majority of the citizens’. He entitles this ‘responsive rule’. This definition would certainly seem to be at variance with the actions of the East European satellite nations, notably East Germany, prior to the ending of the ‘Iron Curtain.’ (pp 6-21)

An important precursor of Saward's concept of equality being part and parcel of the democratic notion is to be found in the view of Rawls (1987). Equality for Rawls lies in, what for him, is more important than the good of the community as a whole or their equality of voting rights. Rather it consists of an equality based on justice for the individual. All citizens are equal and entitled to pursue their own ends as long as such goals are not attained at the expense of someone else. Mouffe (1992) paraphrases Rawls (below). She agrees that Rawls (1987) is right basically in his own statement: ‘We must abandon the hope of a political community if by such a community we mean a society united in affirming a general and comprehensive doctrine’ (p.10). After all, such a society could very well become a tyranny yet Mouffe believes that Rawls goes too far:

'It hardly seems likely (says Rawls) that persons who regard themselves as equals.....would agree to a principle which may require lesser life-prospects for some simply for the sake of a greater sum of advantages enjoyed by others' (p.10)

This is where Mouffe thinks Rawls errs. (She) believes that it is not possible today to have a totally libertarian society in which individual goals can be pursued regardless of ones neighbour. (Mouffe 1992, p.229). I believe that both views, that is the Rawls independency plus the Mouffe partial reservations, form the right kind of background for
Mouffe thinks Rawls’ second point is equally important. This is the idea that ‘principles of justice must not privilege a particular conception of the good life’ (p.229). No government, however moral, should ‘steamroller’ its views over the electorate. Certainly this, to me, means that in this modern interdependent society in which western Democratic nations live a sensible amalgam of an essential individual liberty allied to the need for corporate activity from time to time will constitute the foundation stone of a democracy.

**Participation in the 21st century**

Although this form of politics is at the basis of this thesis, yet clearly the citizen participation experienced in the Athens of the fifth century BC in which all eligible male citizens took part is impossible today. The sheer size of urban populations precludes mass parliaments. Even in those countries which operate some direct participation by citizens such city state assemblies are largely obsolete. When John Dunn (1992, cited in Beetham, 1994, p.44) proclaimed:

‘In no modern state do its members, male or female, decide what is in fact done, or hold their destiny in their own hands. They do not because they cannot.’

He was right in the sense that all citizens cannot continuously make decisions on how their nation should be run. However he implied very much more. In his book on Western political theory Dunn (1979) speaks of modern capitalist democracy as against the more innocent (as he puts it) participatory democracy of Pateman's school. He sums up the essence by stating that:

‘We shall not readily lose the modern state and we have no really good reason to suppose that the human race as a whole will survive its passing.’ (And he concludes) ‘Today democracy is the name for what we cannot have yet never cease to want.’ (p.27)

However, I hope to show in subsequent chapters that the Swiss come nearer to this ideal than most countries. Recognising that pure participation is today a chimera the Danes, Swiss, Italians and Americans have wedded true participation to a modern capitalist economy.
The kind of political democracy which I believe exists in Switzerland has been well summed up in Finer’s (1972) definition of citizen involvement: ‘Sharing in the framing and/or execution of public policies’ (p.59). This kind of political participation can often be seen to produce the results demanded by the petitioners. Any consideration of participatory politics immediately raises the question of in what context it is being practised. Participation can be, at its most literal, all the eligible voters (barring women and slaves) of a community assembling to debate and vote, as occurred in Athenian democracy. The present Swiss direct democracy and similar but less comprehensive systems in USA, Denmark, Austria and Italy come close to true participation, as will be seen in subsequent chapters.

Views of democracy

S.E. Finer (1970) describes the modern relationship of the public to its rulers in the final analysis:

‘We can thus recognise a spectrum in which the ruler–ruled relationship ranges from popular participation, to popular control, then to popular acquiescence and finally to popular submission to the coercive capability of the authorities’ (p.42).

In this pattern Switzerland comes in the first category while the British electorate adopts what Finer calls ‘popular control’. Held (1992) looks at democracy down the ages from Athenian times where full participation by the eligible electorate occurred openly in the town in the presence of contemporaries.

David Held (1986) considers in detail what he regards as the very essence of democracy in light of the competing political movements still apparent today, i.e. dictatorships and Marxist regimes trading under some ‘umbrella’ of democracy. Anxieties about what he considers the directionless nature of the modern state has, he believes, fuelled protest from the far left and right for change, the essence being that there seems to be no clear division between ‘civil society’ and ‘the state’. Thus people feel helpless. The western form of liberal democracy, excellent in its original concept, is undergoing a struggle between its corporatist elements and truly democratic factors (Held & Politt 1986, p.126). The state is inescapably locked into the maintenance and reproduction of the inequalities of everyday life (Pateman 1985) cited in Held & Politt (1986).
The encroachment by the national government in Britain on territory hitherto the province of local government is a case in point. This extension of central government influence has occurred under both Conservative and Labour administrations and is often characterised more gently as the ‘nanny state’. Held’s solution to the problems raised lies in what he entitles ‘double democratisation’ that is both government and society being transformed along democratic lines and thus would work in harness and not constantly compete.

Held also, this time writing in (1992), couples ‘double democratisation’ with the idea that: ‘power to make decisions must be free from the capitalist restraints’ (pp 30-35). Why should this be so? After all Switzerland is a full blooded capitalist state.

In Denmark, Austria, Switzerland and part of the USA where participatory democracy flourishes so also do capitalist economies. I believe that, apart from this obstacle for Held, succeeding chapters of this thesis will however show that Held’s ‘double democratisation’ does otherwise hold good in these same countries notably Switzerland. Carr (1991) makes the same point regarding matching education to the society in which corporate ideas are second nature to the student. Whereas in Carr’s instance the dangers of indoctrination lurk, yet in ‘Double Democratisation’ a citizenry amenable to participating in its own democratic structure makes sense. Carr advocates what he calls a ‘socially embodied way of life’ - that is creating a society in which education and society become identical. This he especially applies to the sphere of education in its broad sense.

If democracy means representation then Held also points out the dangers for domestic democracy, say in Britain, being overwhelmed by supranational forces. International commerce and finance and above all the powers of the EEC are in danger of depriving the people of direct control over their own affairs.

Held argues for democratic government at world level: what he calls ‘cosmopolitan government’. He readily agrees that there are real snags at this level primarily through an inability to agree really good means of enforcing peace between warring powers, this latter weakness being due to the reluctance of major members to support any joint action in their own zones as, sadly, the United Nations sometimes shows.
Arguing powerfully against this view of Held’s (in the world context) is Philip Cerny (1999). He believes the present trends towards internationalism in trade, political areas (e.g. the European Union) and international finance are in danger of eroding democracy - participatory or otherwise. He believes democracy and the nation state are essential for each other. He puts it thus: (Democracy) ‘requires that state actors possess a certain capacity for collective action through a centripetal institutional structure if it is to be more than mere pluralism’ (p.7). Nation states which pursue their own agendas whatever the rest of the world think are, he believes, likely thus to preserve a flame of genuine national democracy.

*Political participation - European and other views*

In comparing democratic methods in Great Britain and Switzerland it will, I hope, be seen that the Swiss citizen either does participate or has the opportunity to so do on a continuous basis in the government of his region and country. What, ask Fuchs and Klingemann (1995) in a profoundly acute remark, does ‘political participation’ actually produce? They state that: ‘It seems obvious to regard greater participation in political decision making processes as the political expression of the general value of self-actualisation’ (p.16-17).

Participation must surely be at the heart of any democratic concept. As we have seen (pp 44-47 on modes of participation Parry and Moyser’s 1994; see also Barber, 1984; Verba & Nie, 1971) the approach to democracy dwells on the participatory quality present, their premise being that ‘Democracy originally meant the “rule” or “power” of the people’. They, like Held, go on to show that whereas popular direct assembly rule occurred in, say, Athens, yet during the subsequent ‘two thousand years, when no such forms of direct democracy existed, no person could be said to have lived in a democracy’. This only changed at the time of the French Revolution. This surely did not apply to the cantons of Switzerland. Ever since the Rutli oath in 1291 there has been a rudimentary democracy scattered about the early cantons even if, as Professor Masnata (1991) says, it was the rule of merchants yet it was far removed from the feudal domination of the Hapsburgs (pp 27-28). But nevertheless, it is true when they further state that modern democracy is not and cannot be like the original:
Because of the size and complexity of industrial communities;
Owing to the inevitable division between government and citizen body.

Parry crystallizes the whole problem of democracy for the modern state. He and his colleague characterise the effectiveness of democratic participation in two areas:

(a) the extent to which the most active participants are representative of the concerns of the mass of inactive population;
(b) the degree to which the elite appear to respond to citizen participation.

On (b) again, elites dangle menus before voters not solutions. For the representative ‘school’ agreement on agendas is about all that people can expect.

Parry (1994) quotes Sartori (1987) whose attitude would seem to be appropriate in any study of modern UK politics in particular:

‘Responsiveness is but one of the elements of representative government. A government that simply yields to demands...... turns out to be a highly irresponsible government..... A representative is not only responsible to, but also responsible for’. (Sartori 1987 cited in Beetham 1994 p.58)

So as Parry and Moyser write, they start from the assumption that ‘citizen participation has ceased to be the paramount indicator of democracy’. (p.45) Therefore they look to find alternative ways in which citizen power can influence events. Parry (1972) himself seems to present the situation accurately:

‘It has long been, and may still be a problem, for radical theorists whether the new participatory society will transform man or whether only transformed man can manage the transformed society.’ (p.38)

In those countries practising some participatory political system the outcome is a cross fertilisation between both alternatives. All this has polarised opinion into sharply contrasting schools: the advocates of broadly the representationalist school i.e. Schumpeter (1942), Sartori (1987) and others, as against the participators like Pateman (1970), Macpherson (1973) and Barber (1988). Sartori believed that ‘democracy still results from the sheer fact that the power of deciding between competitors is in the hands
of the demos’ (Beetham 1994, p.46).

No country wants weak government, smoke filled committee rooms, horse trading, etc, but strong administrations, however constructed, which can be held to account by popular power between elections. It is this remark of Sartori’s which the participatory nations, I believe, more nearly put into practice than most nations. Sartori was right but in his view and, echoing Rousseau, only at general election time! Also, although the Sartori comment would certainly apply to the Swiss at election times yet he would never countenance continuing demos influence not only between elections but over issues chosen by the voters.

In both Britain and Switzerland much the same local political activity occurs, yet in the case of the Swiss they have the added incentive that their voters frequently have the chance directly to affect local affairs by participating in one or other of many Initiatives and referenda which are constantly occurring. As Mads Qvortrup (1998) writes, frequent referenda are compatible with ‘the ideal of enlightened participation’. (p.263) Also success at such votes at local level is as Guigni (1991; also Kriesi, 1995) shows at 39% which considering their frequency is reasonable. This increase of political participation in Swiss affairs from the federal to the communal is indirectly reflected in Parry and Moyser’s table (1994, p.47) showing that in Britain voters contact their local councillor twice as often as their Member of Parliament (20.7% to 9.7%).

Schumpeter’s fear of subversive movements in pre-war Germany certainly coloured his view of populism, whilst Sartori’s more up to date attitude than Schumpeter’s version, especially to participatory democracy via computers, speaks for itself. One cannot dismiss Sartori’s strictures on some of the weaknesses of participation. In particular the dangers of political gridlock:

‘the idea that the government of our fantastically complex, interconnected and fragile society could be entrusted to millions of discrete wills that are bound to decide at random with a zero sum is monumental proof of the under-comprehension that menaces us’ (Sartori, 1987, quoted Parry & Moran 1994 p.6).

On the other side of the argument Pateman advocates strongly for as participatory democracy as possible. The core of her argument for political participation is in her own
view that individuals and their institutions cannot be considered in isolation from one another’ (Pateman 1970). For her no representative group, however worthy, should come between the people and their governing powers. However in ‘Problems of Obligation’ (1985) she damns liberal democratic states on the grounds that they are really ‘liberal with democrat tacked on’ (p.6). She further asserted that (political obligation) ‘cannot be given expression in a liberal democratic institution’. Only in a self managing democracy can a proper theory and practice of participation be realised, she claimed.

Unlike the egalitarian Pateman approach to community, Mouffe (1992) believes that a communitarian spirit allied to a liberal set of principals provide the best solution to political management’ (p.226). She believes, like Rawls, that a particular conception of the Good Life should not be imposed upon people. There is a harshness about communitarian rule which she feels spoils the ethos of cooperation. She goes on: ‘Modern democracy is characterised by the absence of a substantive good’.

This must run counter to the communitarian who believes in a public good superior to individual wishes. The ‘liberal community’ is, I believe, the setting for good participatory politics.

Rose (2000) in a very perceptive article deals with Swiss participatory politics today. He points out in his ‘End of Consensus in Austria and Switzerland’ that participation can create its own problems. He argues that in Austria the rise of Jorg Haider sprang from the sheer frustration voters experienced from the endless coalition monopoly and thus no alternative outlet. In Switzerland, too, Rose attributes the rise of the far less extreme Peoples Party to the Grand Coalition (40 years) which has inhibited voters from straying into other issues. He lists three that the Peoples Party have exploited:

- anti-immigrant undercurrent
- anti European prejudice
- ‘Switzerland First’

Rose also quotes Schumpeter (1952), the arch anti-participator, who considered
Switzerland as a unique example in the modern world of a society that does ‘not harbour any problems’. But it does. Today it is the sheer stagnation arising from the perpetual consensus, believes Rose, that may alter the political balance in middle Europe. This does not affect the ongoing benefits of political participation in Switzerland (pp 26-40).

There are undoubtedly very strongly held positions on both sides of the democratic divide. Representative democracy is widespread today not only in Britain under both major political parties but also, says Parry, across the civilised world. Its danger lies in the increasing isolation of the ordinary voter from any real decision making. The authors make the interesting point (as does Cerny p.44 line 6) that the interdependence of the modern world ‘may gradually be rendering it more difficult for a country to embark on a ‘deviant’ political path just as economic ‘deviance’ has become more difficult’. They argue the cases for and against types of democracy, representative or participatory, citing the respective proponents (see p.1 para.5).

Turner (1992) sets out to provide a sensible framework for a good participatory democracy. In a somewhat similar vein to Papadopoulos (1995) he defines, historically, democracy as either a ‘descending or ascending view’ of citizenship. (A concept of some form or other of citizenship is central to a number of writers like Walzer pp 56/57). Turner characterises European democratic citizenship as being either like Germany or Britain, for UK a passive acceptance as subjects of government laws, or in Germany the state being merely a reflection of its power. He contrasts the above with an ‘ascending’ order whereby in France and Switzerland the philosophy of Rousseau’s direct power moves from the people upwards. He finally makes the point that in order for Britain to enjoy a system of participatory politics, a change in our idea of citizenship would have to emerge first (pp 52-53).

There was a previous attempt not only to define but actually introduce democracy in Britain. During the Commonwealth period in the 17th century the so called Levellers demanded manhood suffrage, land reform and government devolved down to local units. Lilburne and Wildman, the leaders of these radicals, believed that everyone in England had as much a right to elect his representatives to parliament as the most prestigious noble in the land (Ashley, 1952).
The ambitious ideals of the Levellers could not take root in the context of their historic period. Parliamentarians like Cromwell and Milton, whilst being in favour of the supremacy of Parliament over monarch, were hostile towards anything which might upset the prevailing structure of land ownership and social stratification. Derek Heater (1990) writing of the Levellers much more recently than Ashley nevertheless makes the same point. He quotes Colonel Rainsborough during the Civil War:

‘I think the poorest he that is in England has a life as the greatest he. I do think that the poorest man in England is not at all bound in a Strictest sense to that government that he has not had a voice to put himself under.’ (p.32)

The quaint 17th century prose does not disguise the underlying message.

A proportional voting system

No modern system of democracy can ignore the importance of the vote as such. It is the citizens main source of strength. Nevertheless it is not a clear-cut subject. Thus basically the citizen does not want to waste his/her vote by piling up huge majorities beyond what is necessary. This can result from ‘first past the post’.

Hadenius (1994) analyses the differences between the above system and proportional representation. ‘Clear cut majorities in parliaments and, as a result, strong and stable governments’ (p.70) result from ‘First Past the Post’ (see also Madgewick, 1994, p.280). Whereas, ‘The basic premise of proportional representation (PR) is that the diversity of opinions in society should be reflected in the political bodies’(p.71).

Hadenius, however, warns that ‘PR elections are usually less decisive with respect to the making of government’. It would appear that strong majority governments (albeit with wasted votes in constituencies) contrast with a large number of smaller parties in uneasy coalitions. Where does democracy stand? How can efficient government and popular support both be served? In discussing the differences between ‘first past the post’ and the various forms of PR, Weir (1994) in his ‘Primary Control and Auxiliary Precautions’ makes the point that, in Britain, the disproportion between votes and party representation in UK governments means that the party securing two-fifths of the vote can have unrestricted power between elections (p.125). He continues with a crucial point. The disproportion ‘offends against the basic principal of political equality each vote should
have an equal value’. (Madgewick, 1994, p.280-81) In British General Elections (since the 1950s) the winning candidate would often take the seat with fewer votes than the combined votes of the other parties which were effectively disenfranchised.

However, as he puts it, Weir does admit that when UK government alternated between two well matched parties good strong government resulted. At present (2002/3) the government’s majority is overwhelming and parliamentary democracy may be endangered. Significantly, for my thesis, which deals in part with Switzerland, he shows that Denmark somewhat similar in its political set-up to Switzerland with its degree of direct democracy has by far the lowest ‘imbalance’ between people and government of all the six nations covered. Weir defines imbalance as the degree of deviation from proportionality in elections. That is to say how far apart total party votes in the country are from actual seats gained in an assembly. Denmark has, beside PR voting, a similar ballot flexibility to the Swiss whereby voters can register their candidate preferences in a variety of ways. Denmark also has referendum voting. So political participation is advanced in both countries (see Quortrup, p263, 1998).

Apart from his remarks on PR already referred to, Weir’s ‘Primary Control and Auxiliary Precautions’ consists of a survey of national structures. It is interesting to step back, as it were, and see the countries one is studying in relation to the shape of others. His analysis of democracy, consists of an extensive series of tables (17 in all) covering the main planks in a nation’s polity, i.e. constitution, secrecy, appointments to high office and government accountability to the people via types of elections etc. All these criteria are compared across six nations - Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, the USA and Britain. According to Weir, Britain fares badly against the other countries in most areas, his main point being that Britain’s not having a ‘written constitution’ does not allow its electorate sufficient input or control over its elected governments.

**Written constitutions and implications**

It does seem to me that the many excellent elements in the British unwritten constitution such as separating the judiciary from the legislature should be formalised into a written document. When Bentham (1843) poured cold water on the idea of ‘natural and imprescribable rights’ and described them as ‘nonsense on stilts’ (p.501) he expressed a truth but not perhaps all embracing. Saward believes that in our polyglot world carefully
prescribed statements of political rights are indeed necessary. So the democratic rights of free speech, assembly, movement, worship and equality under the law which Saward lists should, he feels, be ‘constitutionalised’; by this he means incorporated into a written national constitution. This would protect a community and its democracy from either ‘the will of a majority or minority of its citizens’. He believed that a judicial system outside the majoritarian decision process would protect the citizens (1994, p.17). Holmes (1988) makes a valuable point echoing Rawls that ‘a constitution must limit the power of any given majority’ (p.18).

In the instances of Britain and Switzerland I believe that a written constitution as implemented in many European countries including Switzerland constitute a strong bulwark against arbitrary rule and an essential element in a democratic polity. Conversely Britain’s lack of any written structure allows much leeway to unscrupulous leaders should they arise. Of course such constitutions must be with the genuine consent of the citizens as distinct from the farcical 1932 Russian constitution promulgated by Stalin and never enacted.

Holliday (cited in Parry & Moran 1994) critically, in writing about constitutions, surveys in the context of democracy the arguments surrounding either a written constitution or the present British unwritten kind. He quotes David Willetts ‘Why mend the constitution when it isn’t broken’ (p.252) when gradual change is taking place over the centuries. Holliday continues by arguing that a written constitution by ‘virtue of its rigid nature might give rise to problems in a changing society’. By this he means that a constitution which had been ‘codified as recently as the middle of the twentieth century might be considered to have entrenched unwarranted social rights’ (pp 241-258).

However, says Holliday, any amendment might be ‘entirely anodyne and, moreover, excessively prone to judicial interpretation’ (p.253). Holliday is an extremely even handed thinker on this subject. This real problem however has been overcome in a number of European countries by the continuous capacity to change and update their constitution by means of Initiatives and national referenda under the right conditions.

**Accountability**

A very interesting analysis of the concept of democracy is to be had in Beetham’s so
called ‘democratic audit’. Beetham (1994) establishes initially a basic definition which is that Democracy embraces both popular control and political equality. This idea of equality blends in with Saward. From there he creates subdivisions open to audit. Popular control, claims Beetham (1994), requires ‘the continuous accountability of government: directly to the electorate through the public justification of its policies’ (ch.2, p.226).

When Beetham wrote of popular control requiring ‘the continuous accountability of government’ he was underlining the need for real links between governed and governments so that democratic participation becomes more than a mere catchphrase.

The climax to Beetham’s essay are his ‘Thirty Indices of Democracy’. This exhaustive list of conditions in a variety of national/governmental situations cover a huge range. As he says, however, they must be considered in the light of the specific conditions which may exist in individual countries. Fair enough. He instances the US Congress as being apparently more democratic than the UK House of Commons, yet in the Commons there is a full alternative government waiting to take over. Indeed in the Commons there is instantly available a body of men and women, democratically elected, who have been shadowing their opposite numbers. It seems to me that Beetham in his plan for democracy goes too far when he tries to incorporate civil society ‘with its stress on independence’ into a democratic one. His democracy would be imposed on private corporations, the political culture and the education system. This raises the question of who would decide the nature of such ‘democracy’ and its extent. He does address these criticisms and as an exercise in defining the ramifications of democracy it performs a valuable service.

In a comparatively recent article Beetham and Weir (1999) consider some of the practical realities of participation and consultation. They write that (even as recently as 1999):

‘The closed nature of British governance astonishes American visitors. Obsessive secrecy is one aspect of this. Another is the quality of such consultation as does take place.’ (p.136)

The writers go on to show how Whitehall issues ‘streams of consultation papers and official guidance’ but ‘open consultation’ (p.43) remains rare. Departmental publications are rarely published in full and the public has no access to quangos. The Swiss system of commissions at all levels goes a long way towards meeting this isolation.
Swiss governmental structure on Weir’s model

Swiss democracy has been exhaustively studied by a number of writers: Auer, Barber, Girod, Kriesi, Hertig & Gruner, Kerr and Papadopoulos and Rohr, and from Britain - Hughes, Steinberg and Church. In terms of some of Weir’s criteria the state fares well. As Switzerland figures largely in this thesis it seemed useful to set it alongside Weir’s other list of countries. Using Weir’s table on basic constitutional structures (p.118), Switzerland would emerge as follows:

- State Form - A Con-Federation
- Head of State- An annual president (rotating in a Federal Council of seven members)
- Effective Executive - The above Federal Council (a collective leadership in contrast to the single individuals of all the other nations picked.)
- First and Second Chambers - elected
- Second Chambers powers - equal in all areas with National Council
- Voting Systems - PR (Hondt system) for National Council mixed for Council of States

All the above leaves out of the equation Initiatives and referenda. Dealing with this, one Swiss academic, H P Kriesi (1995) states: ‘Switzerland is the only country in the whole world where political life is truly determined by direct democracy.’ (p.80, line 3) Kriesi’s apparently exaggerated statement does not take into consideration the extensive direct democracy practised in USA and Denmark. However in terms of sheer scale of implementation Switzerland would seem to be at the top, especially in relation to the power of the electorate over federal legislation.

Amidst the welter of conflicting views on what constitutes a modern genuine democracy, views which are necessarily influenced by the position of the writer and naturally so, the standpoint of Mouffe (1992) seems to strike a balanced note. She argues (admittedly from a broadly left stance) that it is a mistake to ‘rubbish’ liberal democracy. As she puts it:

‘How do we defend the gains of the democratic revolution and acknowledge the constitutive role of liberalism in the emergence of a pluralistic democracy, while
trying to redress the negative consequences of individualism.’ (p.5).

She does this through her contributors, e.g. Walzer, and quotations from Rawls. There are three important themes to be drawn from Mouffe’s book. First the above point of not throwing out the baby with the bathwater: Mouffe points out the error of the extreme Left, which was that, because of a perceived gap between the practices and principals of the liberals, the Left therefore denounced them as a sham and opted for a new society. This says Mouffe was disastrous and led to Stalinist repression.

Secondly she cites Rawls (1987) in upholding the importance of the individual’s right to equal civic opportunities with anyone else but thinks he accords the state too little power. However she agrees with Rawls point:

‘We must abandon the hope of a political community if by such a community we mean a political society united in affirming a general and comprehensive doctrine.’ (p. 229)

In somewhat the same political area as Rawls although an even more rigid libertarian is Nozick (1974). I mention him not because he advanced the cause of the participatory democrats, indeed far from it, but because he seems to provide an important bench mark of political definition as an example to exponents of all approaches.

Nozick ridicules the welfare state calling the state provision of benefits ‘patterned principals of re-distribution.’ They allow ‘people to choose to expend upon themselves but not upon others’. He vividly contrasts this with the liberty of the individual to distribute his own assets as he sees fit. These he calls ‘entitlement principals’. (p.167). He argues a case for private property along Locke’s lines and a minimalist state. This is a bleak but understandable position. It seems to me that it behoves the large majority of opposing views to argue their case equally ably including the participatory democrats.

Benewick (1992), although deploring Nozick’s extreme libertarianism, makes, I believe, a very valuable point when he writes: ‘Nozick’s deductive theory remains valuable as a rigorous demonstration of just what and how much has to be assessed in order to legitimise the minimalist state’ (p.187).
Next there is the contribution of Walzer (1992). He looks pragmatically at the community with its multifarious activities many of which are not really political at all being commercial, social etc. and he believes that: ‘Civil society is sufficiently democratic when in some, at least, of its parts, we are able to recognise ourselves as authoritative and responsible participants’ (p.105, para.2).

**Matching state democracy and society**

Holliday (1994) addresses the need to match political structures to the philosophy of the state which they are intended to serve. He puts it thus:

‘Models of democracy depend on models of state......They are participatory and legal democracy, which relate to visions of the state in which compulsory collective action is respectively extensive or minimal.’ (p.242)

Thus the state should be such that:

‘The political domain should be extended as a means of securing certain collective values including equality. (or on the other hand) Others contend that it should be reduced as a means of liberating the individual from the claims of an over-mighty collective’ (p.242).

This surely gets to the heart of the problem. Is the state suited to the kind of democracy practised? Holliday describes two kinds of democratic structure which could compete for supremacy in Britain. They are either ‘compulsory participation’ whose advocates are Macpherson et al set against the ‘legal democracy’ which numbers among its devotees Hayek. Of course the national context in which a democratic system can be nurtured is important. Many perfectly valid West European democracies have adopted quite different forms of state governance from each other e.g. Britain, France, Germany plus the ‘referendum’ nations to which I have already referred.

Considerations of the struggle for power together with a need to organise social patterns lie at the heart of political thought. Midway between the representative and participatory advocates stands Dahl (1961) - a pluralist. The importance for participatory democracy is his insistence that there was no ‘majestic march’ towards a common goal (quoted in Held 1987 p.223). Rather there were differing aims of many competing pressure groups often pulling against each other. This latter remark aptly describes Swiss democracy. In his ‘Who Governs?’ Dahl (1961) makes the important point that ‘in pluralistic societies there are powerful self-limiting tendencies which help to maintain the stability of the whole
Gideon Baker (1998) quoting Habermas sums up the boundaries of participatory democracy in action showing that so called ‘people power’ must be integrated with the official structure of the state:

‘The public opinion that is worked up via democratic procedures into communicative power cannot ‘rule’ of itself, but only point the use of administrative power in specific directions.’ (p.84).

There must be, and are, checks against anarchy as in Switzerland. This is not a recipe for disaster but each canton going about its business in the way that suits it best. Dahl (1956) sums up the situation by claiming that even a ‘healthy majority’ in electoral terms was no more than ‘an arithmetic expression’ When Held sums up Dahl’s pluralists position of believing in:

‘The importance of interest groups competing openly on political issues and with good access to government’ and also believes that democracy is advanced ‘If interest groups as well as political parties are an accepted part of the political process’ (p.68)

he is describing much of what makes federal states like Switzerland tick. Dahl (1970) also commented that in general ‘it’s meaningless to talk of wielding power unless the context is stated’ (p.223). Dahl (1961) wrote of the diffusion of power in local democracy in, for instance, Newport Connecticut, ‘the Citizen Action Committees are the key to local democracy’. Surely this multiplied up constitutes Dahl’s pluralist society. The dominating local council leader may well be dwarfed by the power of central government. But the totality of disbursed government as in federal states produces national citizen participation.

On the question of plurality a more recent view is put by Baumeister (1996) quoting Berlin: ‘Morality is characterised by numerous conflicting values which cannot be harmoniously combined in a single life or a single society’ (pp 442-451).

Although Berlin was speaking of the concept of ‘value pluralism’ in general his remarks, I believe, on ‘numerous conflicting values’ will be seen to fit Swiss society with its
endless succession of multi-issue referenda. All these are recognised officially and voted on. Even if not successful they surely strengthen the nation.

So what is needed to really make political participation work? Surely the nature of the society in which it is supposed to operate. This has already been referred to in general by Held (on page 35). A writer who examines the quality of the ‘good society’ is Walzer (already briefly mentioned). It seems to me that a participatory democracy flourishes not only because the right democratic instruments are at hand, but also because the people naturally and actively embrace it. So Walzer (1992) states that:

‘It would appear to be an elementary requirement of social democracy that there exist a society of lively, engaged and effective men and women where the honour of action belongs to the many and not just the few’. (p.107)

This phrase of Walzer’s ‘honour of action.............the few’ would seem to sum up the essence of the kind of democracy I have been looking for in my study of Great Britain and Switzerland. His whole essay on ‘the civil society argument’ lists the ingredients of a good society. This in turn forms the groundwork for a stable and participatory democracy. Beyond this, when Walzer talks of society having a background of ‘violence, homelessness, divorce, abandonment, alienation and addiction’ (p.107), he concludes that a civil society therefore ‘looks more like a necessary achievement than a comfortable reality’. However I contend that some societies are, at any rate, well on the road to their goal. Of course any link between political stability and the good society cannot be instantly formed!

Walzer deals with a problem which I believe is difficult for any direct political participation by the very individualistic British voters. He writes ‘the good life of entrepreneurial initiative and consumer choice is led by individuals’. However he blends individuality and association in his remark ‘civil society encompasses a variety of market agents: family businesses, publicly owned companies, workers communes and non-profit organisations’ (p.100).

This, I believe, forms the key to my concept of a participatory society whereby the psychological and social environment for participatory democracy can flourish and, of course, without either Pateman’s compulsion or the hostility to capitalism so evidenced
by most of the participatory writers such as Macpherson, Held and others. In particular this is so in Baker (1998) writing on the emergence of a civil society culture in Eastern Europe (post Stalinism). Baker’s society, in maintaining its separation from the state, could become so self operating that it would deny the very freedoms that free political participation demands. He quotes Keane who says that a society separated from the state may become so lawless and anarchic that:

‘It is seen to require a framework of state institutions which can help prevent the outbreak of serious domestic conflict......Hence the aim is not to abolish political power, but prevent its encroachment on matters which are, simply, none of its business.’ (p.84)

That degree of large or small community action in a political sense which exists in many modern states creates a kind of good-natured tension between electors who know their powers and a national government which recognises it. Such a friendly tension seems to be markedly absent in Baker’s account and is in contrast to Walzer’s description.

Gaventa (1993) reviews a book published in 1993 by Bachrach in which he updates his theories on participation. Bachrach makes a shrewd point in saying that participatory democracy ‘encompasses self-exploration and self-development by the citizenry’ (pp.10-11), a concept very hard to prove although espoused by Pateman and others. However in advocating a new class aligned struggle by workers for participatory rights, he seems to endanger the very fabric of society without any compensating gains. Like others, Bachrach’s book, says Gaventa, is ‘stronger in its theoretical analysis than in its empirical description’. I do not see that a class struggle (virtually unknown in participatory Switzerland) is a likely ingredient today for furthering the cause that Bachrach supports.

Almond and Verba (1963) have created some essential steps in the participatory story. In their exhaustive consideration of the ‘Civic Culture’ they deal with the vital area of elites versus citizens. They argue that to an extent citizen power and the power of elites are incompatible. In, for example, Switzerland elites are a firm element of the political scene (Tschani (1984) wrote ‘Switzerland is ruled by 1200 people’). However in the final reckoning the Swiss voter holds the ultimate whip hand over primary and initiated legislation. For Almond and Verba it is the responsiveness of the governors to peoples’ just demands which constitutes participation. As they put it ‘certain things are demanded
of the ordinary citizen if elites are to be responsive to them’. However, and interestingly, the authors believe ‘The ordinary citizen must turn power over to the elites and let them rule’. This is implicit in the Swiss participatory democracy where the elite certainly govern on a day to day basis. The author’s ‘Civic Society’ thus has some affinity with the mixture of central and popular rule that is Switzerland.

In separate articles Miller (1992) raises the basic question of what kind of democracy we need - i.e. a liberal and individualistic approach or a deliberative and more collective one. This latter and participatory type involves, he says, much open discussion and ‘initial preferences will be ‘transformed’ to take account of others. Miller’s other article (1995) discusses an even more polarised pair i.e. ‘libertarian’ or ‘republican’ democracy. He defines the former as being a society in which ‘citizenship’ is not valued for its own sake but only ‘because we demand goods that require public provision.’ and the latter as a society in which:

‘a citizen identifies with the political community to which he or she belongs, and is committed to promoting its common good through active participation in its political life.’ (pp 440-444)

I deal with Miller because whereas the above quotation aptly sums up Swiss participatory democracy to the letter yet his other notion of ‘deliberative democracy’ with its moulding of open discussion to suit the majority mood simply does not accord with the trenchant views of Swiss minorities in commissions, where minority reports are faithfully recorded. The theory of participatory democracy as propounded by many writers emerges in practice, it seems, honed by the reality of that very practice.

In summing up his views on ‘libertarian’ politics Miller weighs up the balance between individualism and collective citizenship which seems to me to constitute an ideal amalgam of concepts. He makes three points which would appear to epitomise participatory democracy, as practised in some states.

First, the libertarian approach in which people are ‘assumed to have radically different conceptions of the good life’ fits in with the widespread opportunities for direct democracy culminating in referenda. Second, Miller believes the ‘Libertarian’ theory:
'founders on the fact that citizenship at its core concerns common rights and goods enjoyed in common'.

Third, and crucially, when turning to the 'republican' approach Miller believes that:

'The republican conception of citizenship conceives the citizen as someone who plays an active role in shaping the future direction of his or her society through political debate and decision making' (1995, p.443).

Parry and Moyser's (1994) remark regarding the modern representative democracy 'Citizen participation thus ceased to be the paramount indicator of democracy' (p.45). It is a danger in all democracies, in fact in all states. Governments proceed apparently heedless of popular sentiment. It happens in participatory democracies but, as I hope this thesis shows, to a very much lesser extent. This gap between governors and governed is highlighted by Kaase and Newton (1995) in a way which seems particularly apt in Britain in the years 1997-2004. They put it thus:

'Where government and parliament are largely the same group parts of the establishment designed to be independent become 'in hock' to the government.' (ch.6)

This is not the same as saying that the government of the day actively tries to exploit this power but the subconscious tendency must be ever present as with the current New Labour administration (1997 – 2004).

Increasingly today there seems to be a gap between the aspirations of people and the actions of governments. This is underlined in the minds of writers such as both O'Sullivan here and Baker (on page 54). They express their unease with the gulf between governments and the people and O'Sullivan (1997) believes there is a basic dilemma at the heart of modern democratic politics.

It is as he puts it 'the two faces of the political - that is the civil and the managerial - may in principal conflict with one another' (p.754). We see this today in our representative style democracy. He says that in the final analysis the civil should prevail. He reviews the various political theories extant e.g. liberal founded on rights and justice, Habermas\(^6\)

\(^6\) Habermas (1973) to whom both Baker and O'Sullivan and others refer believes that there is an inevitable
with a Marxist view of the capital people clash and finally suggests a civil Society approach.7

Habermas makes some telling points on popular democracy made all the more effective, I believe, because, as Lukes (1982) writes:

‘Habermas reveals his firm commitment to the view (fundamentally at odds with any Leninist assumption of privileged access in the imputation of interests) that the people are the sole judges of their own interests, which are formed through dialogue on the part of all concerned’.

Lukes quotes Habermas’s definition on the above as ‘The conversation of the people’ (Ch.7 pp.137-38). This phrase ‘the conversation of the people’ does seem to reflect much of what is summed up in participatory democracy. Habermas also denounces the ‘depoliticisation of the people and the decline of the public realm as a political institution’.

Interestingly, to me at any rate, both O’Sullivan and Kriesi (in the latter’s case taking a European context in his Stein Rokkan lecture of 1997) stress another strand of modern political participation. This is the fundamental shift in class and political allegiances. The disappearance of the old (19th century) British ruling class has meant, according to O’Sullivan, a realignment of what defines class politics. In Kriesi’s view the great increase of wealth since World War II has shrunk the Labour vote and increased the cleavage of modern new ‘middle class’ groups and political participation enters a new phase (p168). This Mr Blair has clearly seen as a recipe for electoral success with New Labour in UK.

Barber writing in 1984 quoted Theodore Roosevelt ‘the majority of people will day in day out make fewer mistakes in governing themselves than any smaller body of men will make in trying to govern them’ (p.143). Undoubtedly in recent years, coinciding with the obvious impotence of parliament, British people have participated more in many areas of...
life. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, citizen representation on Health boards, school governors, many different protest and watch dog style organisations, help fill the gap which direct democracy can supply.

Morrell (1995) in an article evaluating participation says that ‘participation in which citizens can vote on subjects provided by an elite prevent quarrelsome interfaces’ (pp 318-19). This is hard to see when citizens argue over the very topics permitted. However she does concede that ‘this does not preclude that citizens may eventually be able to participate in more interaction’ and that this will be good for them. I would contend that this latter scene is enacted year in and year out throughout Switzerland. Indeed this implies endless variations on themes nationwide without any elite lists or obvious rancour.

Of course one can go too far in trying to offset the power and aloofness of modern government by adopting a siege mentality on behalf of ‘society’. Baker (1998) writes of the re-emergence of civil society as a concept in Britain in contrast to the supremacy of the individual. However he presupposes that such a society is quite separate from the state. So at variance is his model of a civil society with the power of the state that there is ‘a liberal separation of state and society’ which he admits leads to a loss of ‘popular participation’. This, says Baker, must be because otherwise there would be ‘ceaseless violent engagement with the state’. This not a ground plan for peace and conciliation in either Britain or Switzerland (pp 81-87). Therefore, despite Baker, how is it possible to temper the interface between state and society without too much detriment to either? It is not necessary therefore to separate off civil society from the state in order to preserve it.

In considering the various interpretations which writers draw from the term Democracy I conclude by examining two authors, one British and one Swiss. First Beetham's (1992) own study (Political studies XL): in ‘Liberal Studies and the Limits of Democracy’ he sums up the Liberal democratic claims. He defines Liberal democracy under five headings:

1. Individual rights - expression of opinions, free association subject to legal protection;
2. Separate Judiciary, Executive and Legislature;

some respects O’Sullivan is echoing Almond and Verba (1963, p.33).
3. Representative assemblies;
4. Separate public and private lives;
5. There is no overall and final truth about democratic government.

On the other hand Beetham feels that participatory democracy as an ideal is ‘good
providing the autonomy inherent in it recognises the constraints of regular meetings, with
rules and equality of opinion and does not expect anarchy’. His participatory democracy
is clearly less structured than the liberal variety. In view of the subsequent chapters on the
provisions of the ‘welfare state’, Beetham’s remark that the decline of such a state is due
to the ‘large disappearance of the working class dependency culture’ gives cause for
reflection in an increasingly affluent age in both Britain and the western world in general
(see p.62, para.2; also Turner, 1992, p.39).

Secondly, from Lausanne University Papadopoulos (1998) in an article in ‘Le Temps’
(16/Dec/98) poses the general question ‘Can Democracy survive into the 21st Century?’.
Bearing in mind that the following view is not espoused by many of his peers,
Papadopoulos writes regarding the future of direct democracy in the new millennium. I
have placed it in a general chapter on democratic theory partly because his main point
seems to have universal application today and partly owing to the nature of this thesis on
participatory democracy.

He believes that the original impetus for direct democracy in Switzerland in 1874 arose
because the citizenry were then more powerful than the federal power. He further
contends that in 2000 AD and beyond, central governments have become so involved
with world organisations - UNO, EU and international business - that overturning their
decisions by popular vote may do great national harm. He cites a theoretical case. Who
decides on an extension to Geneva airport - France, neighbouring cantons or the federal
power? He also believes that direct democracy ‘institutionalises the immediate’. It
becomes as it were an irrevocable part of the constitution. Therefore it cannot survive into
the 21st century. But he points out it will be impossible to eradicate! The present system
favours direct democratic decisions. Popular democracy has prevented lorries passing
through Alpine villages (see Chapter on Popular Initiatives).

Koopmans (1996) sheds an interesting sidelight on participatory political government
putting Switzerland into the context of his article. He describes the impact of the growth of New Social Movements (NSMs) throughout Europe in the period since the 1960s - the Green movements, Third World plights, peace activities etc. He then believes that unlike the generally held belief that these activities have brought in their wake a great upsurge of what he calls ‘unconventional mobilisation’, i.e. extra parliamentary civil disorder, in fact this has been limited in an odd way. Thus in countries like Germany, Holland and Switzerland where NSMs are plentiful, civil disorder is small (only 7.7% of the groups he researched). In a country like France where there has often been violence, NSMs are rare and there is a correspondingly high civil disorder figure (20.6%), Britain being in a ‘halfway house’ situation.

His answer is that where Proportional Representation exists and where NSMs flourish they have introduced an agenda of an individual and participatory based set of humanitarian interests – refugees, environment, health care, etc., which appeal to the modern voter. In this context Koopmans places the Swiss system of democracy which he believes blends in with the new individual, non party based phalanxes of the old obedience culture. He makes the interesting point that as people have become more individualistic in the past 30-40 years and large political formations no longer attract support so therefore NSMs have responded to this trend (1996, pp 28-50).

In this chapter I have given the views of a range of writers on the general subject of Democracy and especially in its participatory mode. From this study I believe the kinds of democracy practised in both Great Britain and Switzerland can be drawn.

Swiss society preserves its independence and engages powerfully with the state. The body politic in Swiss civil society is constantly being invoked in large or small groups, sometimes to reject or accept state laws or again to propose others. Swiss civil society plays a pivotal, at times destructive, role in fashioning the fortunes of the state. I believe this is implicit in the form of democracy practised. In Britain representation dominates the political pattern nationwide. The centralised government of the UK as against the federal Swiss system clearly influences matters greatly.

This chapter has considered how the four views for the kind of democracy I am looking for can be validated (see p.31). I have tried to subject the variations on democratic themes which writers have espoused to the foregoing criteria. One can, I think, at this stage focus
more closely on the strands making up my concept.

First, on the question of open government, Hadenius (1994) writes castigating the lack of accountability of modern governments (he writes of PR) but it equally applies to other systems. ‘The casting of votes (and other involvements) may appear a politically empty undertaking.’ (p.72) He argues that governments and cabinets plus their decisions are beyond voting power. Elites are encouraged ‘at the risk of eroding the popular trust and engagements in the political institutions’ (p.72). So where does participation come in?

Equality too is crucial to citizen engagement as the section on voting systems describes but it is a far wider concept than that. In one sense it is integral to political participation in that without equality, participation becomes an incomplete concept. I have said that the pluralism espoused by Dahl, Lindblom and others which sees many separate centres of activity expressing their democratic freedom reject a central authoritarian government because it would have perpetuated ‘just those elements of authority, hierarchy and bureaucracy against which participatory democracy is in protest’ (Lindblom, p.277). This, I believe, does indeed spread participation but not egalitarianism. In neither Switzerland nor Britain is citizen equality total or even desirable. People are different and are not clones. Participatory democracy and the real political equality and opportunity it generates exists in a number of European countries and co-exists happily with democratic capitalism as practised.

Direct participation by the electorate, when the need arises, not in three to four years’ time, must be available with suitable safeguards. This would mean initiatives and referenda along the lines successfully adopted by certain countries. The mechanism to overturn unpopular laws can also be used to keep governments aware of their constituents.

In considering the chapter as a whole, one can discern the patterns which Britain and Switzerland, respectively, have grown into over the centuries. Britain has over many years embraced a strong and representative form of democracy based essentially on the supremacy of the London based national parliament (see Chapter 4 on national structures).
At no time was there any general extension of representation to the public at large until the upheavals of the 19th century Reform Bills when, in stages, real participation by the public became a reality, even if in the representative mould, and when later the enfranchisement of women occurred in 1918 and 1928. Furthermore the allegiance to individualism reflected in the vigorous and often acrimonious debates in Parliament is part of the British psyche. Walzer however has shown that strong individualism is not necessarily incompatible with a vigorous community spirit. In Britain although individualism is very strong yet in the absence of collective political democracy there is considerable collective action in the undergrowth of communal life (see chapter on politics in the context of UK government structures). One can also see that local government political life in the UK was dominated for centuries by a squirearchy which enjoyed almost feudal powers. Today even such powers as have been acquired since the local government Acts of the late Victorian period have been curtailed by the recent encroachment of central government powers - incidentally across administrations of very different political outlook.

Switzerland has had since 1848 a constitution which embraced referendum democracy which has become over the years part and parcel of the natural Swiss way of life. In 1891 the instrument of the Popular Initiative was added at all administrative levels of society (see Chapter 5).

The place of women (see Chapter 5 for expansion)

In one important respect, the Swiss desire for political participation lagged behind Britain and many other countries - namely the enfranchisement of women. (Swiss women only received the vote nationally in 1971 and in Appenzell, a typical rural canton, in 1990). Of course any democratic structure must embrace what amounts to half the population of any country - namely women.

How do Britain and Switzerland fare generally in this area? On the subject of Swiss women, Banaszak (1990) says that only well organised groups in the cantons with money could launch initiatives promoting enfranchisement. Therefore some did but clearly Appenzell lagged behind. Today this is no longer a factor. In fact in Switzerland on the 12th March 2000 in a popular referendum one of the four issues submitted to vote was to increase the number of women in Parliament to parity. Interestingly another was to speed
up the processing of Popular Initiatives, the point being that whether successful or not such Swiss Initiatives and referenda do allow the people to feel that their views are being heard.

Of course such political participation whether limited or not is not confined to either Switzerland or UK. USA (to an extent), Denmark, Austria and Italy all practise citizen participation and referenda as even Britain has done in a limited way with varying degrees of success (see Chapter 5 on democracy at work in both countries).

Again one can say that the benefits of referenda are not always perceived as such by some. Writing in *New Forms of Democracy* Iain MacLain (1986) says:

‘The power to set questions (referenda) is both great and open to abuse. It is not clear whether a democracy with provision for referenda is more ‘democratic’ than one without.’ (p.147)

However Kobach essentially makes a vital point in saying that referenda have a powerful influence upon legislative progress in the Swiss parliament (para 1 p.360). I believe that in view of the above one must ponder how the borders of popular democracy and legislative progress can be reconciled? Certainly where national governments only can initiate referenda the instrument may become merely a useful device to augment central power. However in participatory countries the popularly generated referenda mitigate this danger greatly. Meanwhile in Britain this lack of a political safety valve except at election times generates much resentment for which there is no peaceful and at times effective catharsis - a notable example being the poll tax civil unrest in the late 1980s.

I referred to Holliday’s gulf between participatory democracy and legal democracy (page 42). He rightly points out that for many advocates, Pateman, Macpherson and others, this participation is compulsory and extends into many non political areas - social educational, etc. However I will contend that although Switzerland is an enthusiastic exponent of political participation yet this all takes place in a very vigorous free state in which the compulsive element of the theorists is markedly absent. There is certainly a sense of corporate community feeling in Switzerland.

One writer seems to sum up at least part of what makes Switzerland ‘tick’. Katzenstein’s
(1984) contribution to democratic theory is his capacity to explain how different models of democratic government have developed according to the varied social and political environments adopted by nations. This is a valuable approach to the system which the Swiss have adopted for the past 150 years. He believed in corporatism (refined into neo-corporatism) i.e. the existence of powerful economic and industrial groups co-operating fully with governments yet combined in the case of Switzerland with an acceptance of the direct democratic machinery and commission network of the Swiss. He observes:

‘The secret of Swiss success and stability is the neat interplay between market forces and the successful political framework designed to achieve consensus’ (pp.27-28, 124-132).

Katzenstein attributes Swiss economic and political success to the widespread dissemination of decision making power in the state. He details at length the network of commissions at all levels constantly working for outright or compromise success on a wide range of state projects. Thus he reflects:

‘Complex political bargaining by all interested groups are directly represented at every site of policy debate, and at every stage of the process. Representatives and bureaucrats argue with each other ‘again and again’ until workable compromise is reached’ (p.124).

He also makes two other points. First that Switzerland is a ‘prescription for central non government’ in that between big business, cantonal independence and the pull of direct democracy, central government is very restricted. Secondly, he sums up the situation:

‘Switzerland’s political strategies and structures make it an exception to all the easy generalisations that proponents of ‘Left and Right’ see as the structure of capitalism’ (p.132).

Katzenstein’s view does ‘marry’, I believe, the participatory democracy of the Swiss with their own style of state management. His point about ‘easy generalisations of Left and Right opponents’ is important. Pateman and Macpherson imply a particular political stance must underpin their participation. Katzenstein shows that a viable political participation can, not necessarily will, exist alongside a capitalist economy. Besides this he was, in the book I quoted, studying both Switzerland and Austria which have similarities but his title ‘the politics of industry’ provide an essential clue, I believe, to
democracy in such countries. This underlines the points made earlier on in this chapter by both Held and Carr that society must be in tune with the style of politics practised in a nation. I hope there is ample evidence that the kind of sensible and pragmatic political participation which I believe best fits the aspirations of ordinary citizens in how their country should be managed has emerged in this chapter.

On the constitution where Saward argues over the question of the so called tyranny of majorities, the Swiss system of popular initiatives enables various minorities to exert their own particular point of view without suffering a permanent sense of exclusion. In an interesting study of democratic values, Jacques Thomassen (1995) separates western Europe into two main categories: first an individualist approach and secondly a collectivist one. He further believes that there is a trend away from the participatory fashions of the 1960s towards a much more self centred approach. This is borne out in a series of polls carried out among ten Western European countries. It is illustrated from a poll conducted in Holland.

**Table 3.1: What voters think of with the word ‘democracy’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just being free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a say in political decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Sovereignty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Only answers given by more than 20 respondents to the questions are included so the percentages do not add up to 100.

Source: Thomassen (1995)

This, concludes Thomassen, shows a decline in support for participatory democracy. This is difficult to refute. He does not mention Switzerland. However there is a further factor: none of the above countries have had full participatory democracy as have the Swiss for the past 150 years.
All the above may be true but, as Papadopoulos (1995) points out, the value of participatory democratic instruments being ‘on hand’ as it were means that the views of the actual voters (as distinct from the governments and parliaments) can be reflected.

He cites the case of France and the EU when the political establishment were keen to ratify the Treaty of Maastricht to an 89% extent, yet the popular referendum revealed only as he put it ‘a very thin majority in favour.’ Similarly over the Swiss vote on joining the EU in 1992 the government and both Chambers were ready but the cantons voted 16-7 against the move.

In an article illustrating the difficulties of settling on any one type of democratic government, Mather (1995) surveys the main forms of democratic government structures from Schumpeter on the representational wing to Pateman on the opposite axis. However she focuses on two models in particular: first, what she entitles ‘Enabling popular decision taking’ and secondly ‘Enabling popular decision making’. Both are practised extensively in Switzerland, the former through government legislation being subject to challenge after a year in operation (under the facultative referendum) providing 50,000 electors or 8 cantons agree, and the latter by means of Popular Initiatives at different administrative levels in the nation. She considers that no one system of democratic participation is perfect.

Two comments by Fuchs and Klingemann (1995) in ‘Citizens and the State’ seem to me to provide part of the raison d’être of this thesis. The first concerns the versatility of democracy. They write:

‘The representative system is understood as the indispensable framework within which the institutions of direct democracy can, or even must be introduced in order to restore congruence between citizen and state’ (p.8).

The other remark in a sense justifies the above quotation in that:

‘Comparisons between existing democracies in particular countries have inestimable advantages: not only do the alleged merits represent a future possibility, but they can be scrutinised within the democratic reality of the countries concerned’ (p.8).

This is what I shall examine during the course of the following chapters. I intend
therefore in subsequent chapters to examine both Britain and Switzerland in the light of the criteria I established in this chapter, the whole purpose being to measure the systems operating in Switzerland and Britain against my four points with which I started this chapter

1. A society which matches the kind of democratic framework used;
2. One in which direct and equal participation by citizens takes place both during and, if a clear issue is perceived to arise, between General elections;
3. One where no government or section of society can impose its own agenda ‘willy nilly’ on the rest;
4. A voting system which combines a reasonable spread of political opinion without such a ludicrous dilution of executive power that good government is rendered impossible.

In my hypothesis I referred to the test of ‘effectiveness’ as being the proof of participatory democracy. The four points above are, I believe, a definition of the word as I used it. If a nation can, in general, fulfil the above conditions then the system in place must surely be effective in the sense of literally putting into practice these sentiments.

The following remark by Connolly (1987) crucially draws attention to another vital need in a political system. In his ‘Politics and Ambiguity’ he observes:

‘Without authority politics degenerates into violence and coercion, but politics also provides an indispensable corrective to the intensification and overextension of authority’ (p.141).

This chapter has examined the attitudes of various political authors towards the ideal of democracy. Clearly it strikes people in very different ways. Underlying it all is the notion that people of a nation must be involved in their own destiny to a greater or lesser extent. In particular, participatory democracy must be included in the context. Parry and Moyser (1990) conclude that the involvement in government by electors is measured by: ‘The extent and nature of the citizen participation which is thought to be required if a democracy is worthy of its name’ (pp.147-69). It will, I hope, become clear that the scope of Swiss democracy is nearer to fulfilling the above aspiration than that prevailing in the United Kingdom.
Similarly, in an overarching view of democracy, Jacques Thomassen (1995) writes:

‘Dissatisfaction with democracy does not necessarily mean that people do not support democratic principles . . . people may be dissatisfied that the actual process does not meet their high democratic standards’ (p.383, para.2).

This seems to me a vital point. Throughout Western Europe the concept of democracy burns fairly brightly. It is its practical application which is the problem.

Many of the authors considered in this chapter embrace some, maybe many, of the democratic principles which I seek to examine. I began this chapter with a quotation from Thomas Jefferson. I end with some remarks from the past and the present. de Tocqueville, having been very sceptical of US democracy on his visit, concluded: ‘the benefits of democracy were less obvious than its defects but much more important.’ (Lively, 1965, p.108)

Writing two hundred years later than de Tocqueville, Ian Holliday (1994) believes that prior even to democracy is the kind of government which is contemplated. ‘If democracy is understood as government ‘by the people’ – the central element in Lincoln’s classic formulation - then the logically prior consideration concerns the nature of government itself’. (p.241) I believe the following chapters will show how far the governmental structures of Britain and Switzerland measure up to a democratic ideal. I shall try to keep these thoughts uppermost in the course of the rest of the thesis.

CHAPTER 4: THE STRUCTURAL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN SWITZERLAND AND ENGLAND

This chapter deals with the ways in which two very different states organise their people’s way of life at national and local levels. As Ham and Hill (1993) put it: ‘Converting the demands of the people via the support which government typifies into decisions and actions’ (pp 1-10). They further say that ‘the state is very powerful in the 20th century controlling welfare, economy, subsidies, health and defence’. The way this is carried out in Switzerland and Britain shows very sharp differences. When Ham and Hill talk of ‘a description and explanation of the causes and consequences of government action’ in order to define ‘policy’ this springs from the basic structures which nations adopt for the
purpose of running their country. It is these structures which I examine in the following pages. There is a further point which Ham and Hill (1993) make (in chapter 4) which would seem to be particularly relevant to UK in the period 1997-2001 and was emerging even in 1989 but which equally has never risen in Switzerland. This is the increasing isolation of government elites from the legislature. The nature of the Swiss governmental structure precludes such isolated power.

I have chosen to compare Switzerland with Britain because although both are West European democracies they have adopted very different definitions of what political participation actually means. The purpose then of this chapter is to give an overview of the existing systems in both countries from national to local areas. I hope in subsequent chapters then to clothe these systems with the democratic powers which each country has adopted - laying stress on the degree of popular participation which the country enjoys. I shall hope also to consider the implications which arise from the degree of participation which emerge in both countries i.e. the relationship between a nation’s form of democracy and the practical outcome for the administrations and people.

**Switzerland**

Switzerland is located geographically in the centre of western Europe and within a ring of mountainous frontiers. It is surrounded by four important nations - France, Germany, Austria and Italy. These are some of the factors which have made it somewhat atypical in the polity of European nations. In 1291, three communities in central Europe, Unterwalden, Uri and Schwyz collectively known as the Waldstaten (forest cantons) near Lucerne, angered by the oppressiveness of the Hapsburg suzerainty, formed a pact – the Rutli - of mutual assistance and owning no overlord. Masnata and Rubattel (1991) of Lausanne university consider the pact to be generally seen as the starting point of Switzerland, ‘no revolutionary act but rather a decision by local traders anxious to conserve, defend and expand their own local influence beyond the Alps’ (p.28). In fact, as Masnata puts it ‘The history of the development of the Swiss is a history of a succession of markets always getting larger’ (p.29). Masnata stresses again the economic basis to the nascent country. They were wary of the Hapsburgs but kept their eyes on the north-south trade possibilities of the favourable position which nature had placed them.
They were then and remain essentially pragmatists.

From this starting point the Helvetic confederation grew slowly over the centuries. Thus after successful battles against the Hapsburgs more communities joined the group. Rudolph Head (1995) speaking of canton Grison in the period 1520-1620 writes that the citizens of Grison spent the stormy years of the 16th century governed by 'communal democracy according to majoritarian principals'. This in an age of the Divine Right of Kings. The young state grew. Lucerne Zurich, Glarus, Zug and Berne joined in the 14th century. Beside these cantons mentioned there were two in the 15th - Fribourg and Solothurn, five in the 16th, eight in the 19th (including Geneva) and one in 1979 namely Jura.

Table 4.1: Establishment of Swiss Cantons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Canton</th>
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<th>Canton</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1291</td>
<td>Uri</td>
<td>1501</td>
<td>Schaffhausen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1291</td>
<td>Obwald</td>
<td>1513</td>
<td>Appenzel-IR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1291</td>
<td>Schwyz</td>
<td>1513</td>
<td>Appenzel-AR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1291</td>
<td>Nidwald</td>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Aargau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1332</td>
<td>Lucerne</td>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Grison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1351</td>
<td>Zurich</td>
<td>1803</td>
<td>St Gallen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1352</td>
<td>Zug</td>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Thurgau</td>
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<tr>
<td>1352</td>
<td>Glarus</td>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Ticino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1353</td>
<td>Berne</td>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Vaud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1481</td>
<td>Solothern</td>
<td>1815</td>
<td>Geneva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1481</td>
<td>Fribourg</td>
<td>1815</td>
<td>Neuchatel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1501</td>
<td>Basle-Landt</td>
<td>1815</td>
<td>Valais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1501</td>
<td>Basle-Stadt</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Jura</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(see Coddin, 1979, p.8 and Rohr, 1987, p.182)

This list is printed in full because it shows at a glance how the country slowly but surely expanded over many centuries. Trade rivalries, religious disputes and sheer dislike of

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8 "The rapprochement between Zurich and Lucerne was originally because Zurich found that together they..."
neighbours are some of the undercurrents which have prevailed throughout the period as the cantons grouped and re-grouped.

Language too is a factor. With three major and one minority language in the state the concept of unity has never been far from the minds of the founding fathers. During the next 400 years others linked up. Eventually in 1848 the confederal state of Switzerland was officially formed. As Kriesi (1995) says 'It was necessitated by the collapse of the old confederation between 1798 and 1848' (p.44). He further points out that the driving force is 'a strong mood of anti-centralism'. Why Confederation? This is by definition 'an association of more or less autonomous states (cantons) united permanently by treaty'(Chambers Dictionary 2003).

Switzerland, then, is divided up into 26 separate and semi-autonomous units i.e. the Cantons many of which date from the Middle Ages and enjoy considerable status.

It is this jigsaw pattern which forms the heart of the Swiss political system which has evolved down the centuries and especially since the 19th century when constitutions were drawn up in 1848 and 1874. There is a mixture of local independence and the perception of national unity reflected in that both houses of parliament in Berne must be agreed on state measures whilst giving the cantons a significant say in the Council of States (see references on constitution through the thesis).

_Demi-cantons_

One of the tensions experienced in the growth of Switzerland is embodied in the concept of the half canton. 3 cantons were each divided into two smaller ones. This arose because of internal cantonal rivalries which could not be contained. Thus in 1597, following the reformation, Appenzell split into the catholic Innerhodes, whilst the Protestants formed Ausserrhodes. Again in 1833 the rural parts of Basle objected to the dominance of the city guilds of Basle town and so Basle-Stadt and Basle-Land were created. The canton of Unterwalden, as Professor Coding (1979) points out, was in the 15th century also split into two: Obwald and Nidwald. This then is the general shape of Switzerland as it exists in the 21st century.

_began to form a logical bloc for trading through the Gotthard pass (p.28)._

9 There are 18 German speaking cantons, 6 French, 1 Italian and 1 Romansh-German mixed canton. (Rohr, 1979, p.111)
Britain

In vivid comparison with Switzerland Britain is an island state which has been fashioned by successive waves of immigration - the Romans during the first 500 years A.D., the Danes in the 8th century and the Normans from 1066. However as a result of the strong pattern of central government established by these latter conquerors, Britain has been free from invading armies ever since.

Britain has had a continuous monarchy since the Act of Union with Scotland in 1707 and in England since the 10th century. Unlike Switzerland Britain was fashioned by the power of men like Cnut and the conquest of kings like William the Conquerer. Furthermore since 1265, as Norton (1998), points out English knights and worthy burgesses have met under the king’s aegis in the House of Commons together with the lords and bishops in the House of Lords (p.16). They dealt with the nation as one. Thus, unlike many European thrones, the British monarchy failed to establish a despotism on the ruins of medieval institutions. Rather it formed a partnership with parliament which enabled it to survive and ultimately lead a centralised parliamentary democracy, perhaps the key to its peacefulness in the succeeding centuries.

Whilst Switzerland has had, since 1874, a written constitution albeit sometimes amended (the most recent in 1998), Britain is unique in Western Europe in having no such written document. As Weir (1994) says ‘The well known exceptionalism is the British system of government. It is the only state without a written constitution’ (p.116). This may be technically true but as Holt (1992) writes: ‘Magna Carta was not a sudden intrusion into English society and politics. On the contrary it grew out of them.’ (p.295)

It confirmed that free men and local power were already at work in 13th century England. Like the men of Rutli it established guidelines and gave monarchs notice that the people counted.

Considering both national scenes in the round we can see that Swiss federalism in practice implies sharing responsibility and power widely around the country. It represents for the Swiss, just as for the Americans, a diffusion of power so that as Hadenius (1994) said: ‘Beside the national scene there exist a large number of political areas of
importance.' (p.73) In the case of Switzerland the 26 cantons therefore enjoy their own national council. These two facts, that is to say of a federal versus a centralised system, profoundly affect the distribution of responsibilities and the exercise of power in a state and mark out the differences that separate the two nations.

Britain by contrast is a centralised state directed largely from Westminster and Whitehall. It would be surprising in any case, apart from the particular model of democracy adopted by each state if both nations had been governed in similar ways.

I have sketched in the background of both countries in order to show the very different origins from which each country has grown. In comparing the history of both nations the view of Steinberg (1987) is germane. Writing of the old and historic cantonal area of Raetia in medieval times he quotes Barber:

‘The first and most obvious point is the importance of geography.’ He goes on to write that Raetia (i.e. modern Graubunden) contained ‘150 distinct valleys in an area of 7,113 square kms….. it was simply impossible to control’. (p.15)

Thus in this and many other areas of Switzerland an independence from tyranny and a need to agree amongst themselves bred the Swiss sense of autonomy and self-government and this in an age of great class inequality.

This form of democratic liberty in Elizabethan, Stuart or Cromwellian politics is hard to imagine, the treatment of the Levellers being a case in point. This however was the situation in Switzerland.

**Switzerland - The National Parliament**

Switzerland today has at the apex of government bicameral legislative chambers. The larger is the National Council with 200 members. (Article 149)\(^{10}\) This body, rather like the British House of Commons, consists of members elected from the Swiss adult suffrage but on a proportional representation basis. Because of PR there are a large number of parties or groups. Andreas Ladner has analysed the workings of the National

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\(^{10}\) Art. 149 New Constitution ‘Le Conseil national se compose de 200 députés du people. Le Conseil national est renouvelé intégralement tous les quatre ans. Les sièges sont….proportionelle à leur population.’ I refer to both the 1974 and 1998 Constitutions: ‘le conseil national se compare de deux cents députés du people Suisse; le conseil est élu pour quatre ans.’ Art. 72 (Old)
Council. There are upwards of 20 groupings ranging from the large Radical, Socialist and Christian Democrat groups down to the Protestant Evangelicals, League of Tessin and the alternative Green Party.

The other chamber known as the Council of States has 46 members who sit for their respective cantons. The political balance here is very different. As Ladner (1992) writes:

‘In the Standerat (Upper house)’[by contrast with the National Council] ‘each canton has two seats and the representatives are generally elected according to a majority formula, thus giving the small catholic and (therefore) conservative cantons in the heart of Switzerland a bigger share of the seats’ (pp.528-536).

One feature therefore of the Council of States is a remit particularly to represent the interests of the 20 full and 6 demi-cantons. In the Council of States each full canton qualifies for 2 seats and the half cantons for one seat each making a total of 46 seats (Art. 80). There is one other important feature of the bicameral system. Despite Ladner’s comment above, both federal chambers have basically exactly the same powers. (Article 148 (ii) New). Both Swiss national bodies i.e. the National Council and the Council of States consist entirely of elected members who sit for four years. Part of the apparatus of Swiss unity is the requirement that both Houses must be unanimous before bills are passed. (Article 156 New Constitution, Section 2)\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{Figure 4.2: Structures of National Government}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SWITZERLAND</th>
<th>BRITAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEAD OF STATE</td>
<td>President (Elected Annually)</td>
<td>Hereditary Monarch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIEF MINISTER</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE</td>
<td>Federal Government</td>
<td>Cabinet (25 Members)  \textsuperscript{12}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGISLATIVE</td>
<td>Federal Parliament</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{11} Art. 89 (i) Les lois fédérales et les arrêts fédéraux ne peuvent être rendus qu’à l’accord des deux conseils (1974). The 1998 model is virtually the same. The reference in the text above to Art. 150 refers to the composition of the council of nations. ‘...se compose de quarante-six députés. Chaque canton nomme deux députés, chaque demi-canton en élit un’.

\textsuperscript{12} This has been the average of late years – David Butler – ‘British Political Facts’ 1900-1994 p.66 Ed. Newman 1999
Britain - The Houses of Parliament

As Norton (1998) writes: ‘Governments derive their legitimacy from parliamentary elections.’ In the case of Britain:

‘the value of British experience with parliamentary procedure and the British attention to recording that experience can be seen in the tendency of other countries to borrow from Britain.’ (p.18)

So there was some unique quality which seemed exportable. Until about 180 years ago when the series of Reform Bills multiplied the electorate enormously, our parliament consisted of men of independent means meeting to ‘deliberate on the affairs of the nation’.

The British bi-cameral system is very different to that of the Swiss. Only the House of Commons is composed of elected parliamentarians who are elected for 5 years. There are 650 members of the Commons. Each of these representatives sit for one of the 650 constituencies into which the United Kingdom is divided. The political parties are New Labour, Conservative, and Liberal Democrat. Then there are the Irish contingent i.e. Social Democratic and Labour Party, the Unionists, Democratic Unionists and Sein Fein. Finally there are the Welsh (Plaid Cymru) and the Scottish Nationalists plus one Independent, one Referendum Party and the Speaker of the House of Commons. All are elected by the ‘first past the post’ system.

The House of Lords (the upper house) are either wholly appointed (the Life Peers) or are there by virtue of heredity as amended by the Labour government or sit as specifically representing certain interests e.g. the Law Lords or the Bishops.

Apart from this the purpose of the Swiss and English legislatures vary greatly. The
English House of Commons is essentially the primary chamber where legislation is debated and produced. From the start the Commons was essentially expansive in its aim. As Norton (1998) puts it:

‘In the first few centuries of its existence it [the House of Commons]… made use of committees on a number of occasions. Since the seventeenth century both Houses have been regularly meeting bodies. Since the beginning of the twentieth century bills in the House of Commons have been regularly sent for detailed consideration in standing committees’ (pp.16-18).

Kavanagh and Jones (1998) show the growth and waning of Parliament over the centuries:

‘The Commons was a powerful defender of liberty against over-mighty monarchs in the 17th/18th centuries and against the Lords in the 19th (viz. the reform Bills).’

However they go on to show that ‘a decline set in with the expansion of large party governments, with party agendas dominating debates, with the growth of prime ministerial patronage and with the proliferation of parliamentary committees’ (p.209).

The House of Lords by contrast is a chamber which scrutinises all Commons legislation before approving it. Occasionally it vetoes a bill offered by the Commons. Although since 1911 the ultimate power of the upper chamber to prevail on any matter over the Commons has been drastically curtailed (e.g. a finance bill must eventually be passed by the Lords), yet often a measure rejected by the lower house is passed or possibly refashioned by the Lords. In the case of Switzerland by contrast, as mentioned, all bills must be approved by a joint agreement of both houses.

In Britain, however, being a centralised nation, centripetal forces are strong and local government may well ‘wither on the vine’ if its role is not actively encouraged. Ham and Hill (1993) make this point directly. They regard Britain, their own starting point, as being ‘one of the most unified capitalist states.’ They go on to state:

‘that the constitution of a state sets the context in which politics operate. This is particularly important where federal systems make the respective layers of government significant actors in relation to each other’ (p.38),

This point of Ham and Hill’s applies particularly to a country like Switzerland where its federalism prevents any damaging interface between the central administration and the
very vigorous and largely autonomous cantons.

In terms of seating arrangements too there is a vivid contrast between the British and Swiss Houses of Parliament. Whereas the Swiss councils sit in the semi-circular arrangements common in Europe, the British Houses of Parliament are arranged so that the governing party sit facing the Opposition in parallel rows of benches. ‘The characteristic face of the House of Commons was and remains the opposition mode, involving conflict between the parties.’ This forms the core of parliamentary drama. As Steinberg (1987) pointed out such drama would be regarded as very ‘un-Swiss’. (p.93) The Swiss legislators are polite and devoid of flights of colourful rhetoric and of course enmeshed in their concept of consensus.

National Cabinets
The shape and purpose of the governing ‘cabinets’ in each country differ widely. Although both nations draw their members from the respective legislative chambers yet the whole ethos is different in each country.

Switzerland
The Swiss Conseil Federal comprises seven members drawn from the three major parties. Why seven members? The federal constitution states (Article 175)13 ‘The direction of the confederation is to be exercised by a cabinet of seven members’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radical party</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Democrats</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Party</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoples Party</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Swiss Federal Statistical Office - Election 1999)

(In 2003 the People’s Party gained one seat and the Christian Democrats lost one seat)

These seven represent proportionally the four largest political groups in the state. However the so called ‘magic formula’ mentioned below looks like undergoing change.

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13 Old Constitution - Art 95 ‘L’autorité directorial et exécutive supérieur est exercisé par un conseil de sept membres.’ (The 1998 model nations that the members are elected from the Federal Assembly Art. 174/175.)
The hitherto powerful bloc of the Radical, Christian Democrat and latterly Freedom Parties have suffered at the hands of the Socialists and Peoples Party (see Hardmeir, 1998 pp 531-538):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>+28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoples party</td>
<td>+20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Democrats</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical Party</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Party</td>
<td>-23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sibylle Hardmeier believes this shift is due to such basic factors as criticism of Swiss consociational democracy. This consociational democracy is the cement which many Swiss say holds the country together. Kriesi (1995) defines it thus:

1. A society which is fragmented
2. Political elites co-operate
3. A stable society (p.313)

Switzerland is indeed heterogeneous in its languages, religion and tribal mix, so that in future the nature of the 'magic formula' may be less certain. Its purpose was, in the case of a federal state like Switzerland, the need to maintain the fabric of such a society with its German, French, Romansch and Italian elements.

The waning of the Christian Democrats has been examined by Simon Geissbuhler (1996). He puts it down to the pan-European decline in religious observance in particular Catholic church-going in Switzerland. However he points out that the resulting Christian democratic party today (1999) although much slimmer is still one of the major constituents of the Federal Council. He also believes that the current catholic church-goers have become more ardent in their devotion to catholic politics. Geissbuhler says:

’While Catholics as a whole no longer differ much from the non-Catholics in their self placement on a ‘left right’ scale, devout Catholics are still considerably more to the right.’ (p.229)

This may weigh significantly if there is ever a change in the apparently hitherto
unchanging ‘magic formula’.

The principal parties in the Federal Council form a coalition one of whose members act as President of Switzerland in rotation annually, but this coalition has existed for the past 30 years through compromise and agreement, i.e. the so called ‘Magic Formula’. The change in relative strength of the main Swiss political parties ultimately affect the composition of the federal council. Each of the members of the Federal Council serve the interests of one of the so called heights of the Swiss economy. This gives rise to a semi-corporatist style of government (see p 62 on Katzenstein in chapter on ‘Democracy and Participation’).

Britain

England in contrast, writes Butler (1999), is governed by a cabinet which has varied from 19 members in 1900, to 22 in both 1994 and 1999 chaired by the Prime Minister of the day. The cabinet is exclusively from one party (the governing party) except in time of war and its members enjoy a period of office at the behest of the Prime Minister. Such cabinets usually contain one or two members from the upper house i.e. the Lord Chancellor and the Leader of the House of Lords. The choice of people for these cabinets is exclusively within the prerogative of the Prime minister. This patronage confers great powers of patronage on the first minister. Whereas the President of Switzerland is one of the seven councillors in the Federal Council and holds office for only one year in rotation and is therefore very much primus inter pares, yet a British prime minister can dominate his or her cabinet by a mixture of patronage, length of time in office (up to five years) and personality.

The differences between the Swiss coalition with its semi-corporatist government and the United Kingdom cabinet plus the parent bodies from which each sprang lie really in the contrast between polarised politics of the English parliament compared to the more fluid and compromising atmosphere of Swiss and indeed much of European parliamentary business.

Katzenstein (1984) sums all this up by describing Swiss government methods as a form off neo-corporatism. Corporatism, in Switzerland, means government, finance, industry and the unions being constantly linked in a consultative and decision making process. In
Britain consultation occurs less frequently. Democratic corporatism is a success in Switzerland, says Katzenstein, because (a) the ideology of social partnership at national level (b) the voluntary co-ordination of political objectives through continuous bargaining among interest groups (p 61 see also pp 110-113).

All this arises also in part from the commissions. Jean Rohr (1987) details one such. Representatives from the banks, academia, unions, commerce and industry together with cantonal and federal input meet to thrash out an agreed policy. (p.287).

Powers and Responsibilities
These vary greatly between the two national governments in London and Berne. The administration in Berne has control over the senior direction of national defence, currency, customs, foreign policy, nuclear power, telecommunications and the Swiss railways. This is an important list of matters but contrasts vividly with its Westminster counterpart. The English government besides an obligation in the above areas also directly controls national taxation, education, health, the judiciary and the police.14 In Switzerland a number of national utilities which in Britain would be exclusively in the Westminster remit are shared between Berne and the cantons. Thus, as Rohr points out, defence, taxation, sickness benefit and the banks are shared areas.

A stark difference between Switzerland and Britain is seen between the amount of taxation collected by the governments. In Switzerland the central government receives only 29% whilst in the rest of the EEC governments claw back 58% on average (see Katzenstein, 1987). These figures are borne out by Rohr (1987), but law and order, health, education and the judiciary are almost entirely cantonal responsibilities. These latter are participatory factors in any body especially a local cantonal community. Below are some items in the division of finance between areas.

National resources and expenditure in Switzerland and Britain
Finance drives most national business over the world. A glance at the difference in the respective apportionment of revenue at comparable levels in both countries highlights the position.

All countries have to ensure that the major areas of national life are adequately funded.
Such matters as health, housing and defence spring to mind. The following tables show
the ways in which two countries, England and Switzerland tackle these issues. It is hoped
that this will show how the distribution of tasks conferring very different responsibilities
and powers in the two countries creates different political strengths. It is important to bear
in mind that the population of Switzerland is seven times smaller than that of the United
kingdom.

Table 4.3: British Government Annual Expenditure: 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>£ Billions</th>
<th>%GDP</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Local Auth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N.H.S.</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>16.05</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>12.10</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>27.00</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soc. Security</td>
<td>159.00</td>
<td>41.04</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; Order</td>
<td>19.20</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* British GDP is £380 billion


Table 4.4: Swiss Comparative Table of Financial Responsibilities - (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Confederation</th>
<th>Canton</th>
<th>Commune</th>
<th>SF millions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Policy</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence (Military)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence (Civilian)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Insurance</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educ: Gymnasia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educ: Primary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>21971</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Swiss GDP is 120,000 SF


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14 Europa 2003 p. 4268
Considering the above costs in relation to the financial obligations of local government in Switzerland it is clear, even over a period of ten years, that far more of the national tasks are borne by local government in Switzerland than in England. For instance Health and Defence expenditure which in Britain are borne entirely by central government are shared out between the federal and cantonal authorities.

Thus for instance at communal level a part of the local share is responsibility for army transport. All this adds to a sense of participating in the vital areas of state business. In the case of Health the ratio of responsibility between federation and canton is particularly striking. Whereas the federation supplies SF 177m francs, the cantons and communes shoulder no less than SF 14,386m francs. These powers relate directly to the significance of the new Swiss constitution for education (see footnote 32 p160). This forms not only a vivid comparison with the UK position but also underlines the crucial importance politically of the status of Swiss local government. Much the same applies in the case of the judicial systems where most of the burden is shouldered by the cantons as is the case with health, education and some militia expenditure. These tasks inevitably bring in their wake heavy responsibilities for Swiss local government (both cantonal and communal). Thus in the case of Geneva, the total call upon the annual cantonal budget for Health and Social security alone is 61% plus a further 38.5% from the communes. (p.331) Even when obligations are shared between cantons and central government the cost is still significant for Swiss local authorities.

In their book on policy in the capitalist state, Ham and Hill make the point that the more functions that society takes up ‘these functions are clearly fundamental to the persistence of stable relationships within that society’. This indeed gives Swiss provincial life its peculiar sense of worthwhileness.

A diagram of the British legal system
Perhaps, following the establishment of the fundamental organs of national government, the nature of a country’s legal system looms largest and characterises its whole approach to life. ‘Man is the more vulnerable to self-destruction the more he is detached from any collectivity’ said Durkheim in ‘Moral Education’ (1925) and British law essentially relies on the community actively protecting itself through supporting protection for the individual - a form of participation if ever there was one. One important area which
emphasises the gap between Swiss and English practice in the local sphere is the
devolvement of law making. Like much else the legal pattern of England is steeped in
history (p.27 Marsh and Soulsby, 1994). Of the three branches of law namely Statute
law, Common law and Equity law, the second is unique to this country and consists of
individual judgements built up by judges over many centuries operating on the principal
of precedent. Statute law consists of acts of parliament and Equity, within the Lord
Chancellor’s purview, mitigates the strictness of common law decisions. Recently some
European law has been added to these. There is no written British constitution so no laws
are codified in the European manner. The other outstanding feature of English law is the
widespread use of the jury system. This brings popular participation to the legal
framework.

The British legal system like others exists at several levels. The six stages in descending
order of importance comprise:

(1) A final level to appeal in the Lords;
(2) The Court of Appeal as such consisting of five law lords;
(3) Crown courts exist throughout the land. These courts try serious criminal cases
   before a High Court judge. These courts include the Old Bailey in London;
(4) The County courts which try lesser criminal cases and a whole range of matters
   including marital problems;
(5) The local magistracy.

These courts act as areas of first reference in all cases. All appointments are made to all
offices via the centrally appointed Lord Chancellor. The magistracy apart from the
stipendiaries are largely unpaid. This level is the only one which can be said to be raised
locally, being staffed by honorary Justices of the Peace. These men and women sit in
magistrates courts of first instance. While they consider all cases as a first step, they can
only administer moderate punishment for minor infringements of the law. Although run
by local authorities, magistrates courts are, as Marshall and Soulby point out, 80% funded
by Whitehall. All other cases must be heard in one of a series of subsequent higher
bodies, as mentioned (see Table 4.5). Weir (1994) in his chapter on ‘Primary Control’
points out the uniqueness of Britain in being able to appoint High Court judges on the
word of the Lord Chancellor, Monarch and Executive without any general parliamentary
or popular approval.
Swiss Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLAND</th>
<th>SWITZERLAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. House of Lords (Final Arbiter)</td>
<td>1. The Federal Tribunal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Court of Appeal</td>
<td>2. Court of Appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. County Courts</td>
<td>4. Judges of First Instance (Magistrates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Local Magistracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In Switzerland levels 2-4 (c.f. British Law) are funded and staffed within the canton’s jurisdiction leaving just the appeals court to be dealt with under federal arrangements. An important fact is that the people in a canton elect their own judges and magistrates. All law makers including magistrates are paid. All this adds weight to the importance of the Swiss canton in the eyes of the state.

In Geneva canton, for instance, judges are elected for a six-year period. Criminal cases are, as in Britain, tried before a judge and a jury of 12 citizens. The canton also runs a full service of courts for appeal to the federation and juvenile courts. All this implies prisons and probation services. This whole judicial structure is run and very largely financed by the canton. A Swiss canton is therefore an indispensable element in the confederation’s law making structure. Even the Judges of Appeal at federal level are elected from their fellow members of the Federal Assembly (cf Weir on UK above). They now have to be lawyers in fact, whereas previously could be any legislator.

All the above distribution of manpower and resources in Switzerland is underlined by the

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15 The Swiss legal system differs from the British in two major respects. First even the equivalent of UK magistrates are paid. Secondly all judicial power over all criminal cases are decided at cantonal level subject to a final appeal to the Federal court. Therefore, levels 2-4 of the Swiss system are entirely the province of the canton. This gives immense authority to cantons.
fact that no less than 89% of finance for the Swiss legal system is provided by the cantons and communes between them. In Britain only the local magistracy including any stipendiary magistrates are financed by the local authority.

**Taxation (Switzerland)**

The list of duties that cantons and communes can levy is, by comparison with UK counties, immense. In 2002 Geneva collected 84% of the taxation it needed. It received 16% of its revenue from the federal authorities in Berne (Standard and Poor’s République via internet 2002).

By comparison with the UK a Swiss canton like Geneva itself obtains its income from taxes levied on individuals and commercial companies at both income and capital levels. They also charge a property tax analogous to the old UK rates. Part of the tax obligation at both federal and local regional levels is, as in UK, indirect. Thus, for the federation, duties such as customs, tobacco, fuel and wines and a tax on business turn-over are part of its revenue.

In the cantonal and communal spheres, taxes (which because of cantonal independence vary greatly from canton to canton) include vehicle licensing, insurance, road taxes, entertainment, death duty and a church tax. Central government subsidies do not exist except in the case of some support for housing and 7% towards universities. All this underlines the comparatively small fiscal part played by the federation in taxation matters. Although of course Berne’s influence within the cantons is considerable in an overall sense, not least over strategic national defence, yet it leaves the cantons and communes with a much greater part within the country wide scene than in that of the UK local areas and moreover with considerable political power to control events. One tax, namely purchase tax, is levied on an *ad hoc* basis rather than across the board as in UK.

A further important refinement of Swiss local finance is the major role played by the communes (i.e. roughly, district or even parish level in Great Britain) in terms of financial and social obligations (see details below under ‘Local Government Scene’ and ‘Communes’).

**Taxation (British)**
British central government collects directly from its citizens a national income tax on a sliding scale (Report of National Statistics, 1997). It also charges value added taxation at 17.5% on most goods sold. As with Switzerland, charges are made for buying fuel, tobacco, wines and customs, motor vehicle licensing and entertainment. Death duties and taxes on investments and company profits are all within the central government’s responsibility. It must be borne in mind that much government revenue returns in the form of support grants to local authorities (up to 50+% of their budget). The average UK county basically levies a general council tax and non-domestic rates plus charges for services it renders amounting in all to 47% of a county budget. The remaining 53% of local income is provided by central government subsidies.

British local government does not have to finance hospitals and in general law courts as the Swiss cantons do and, of course, are heavily subsidised towards education.

**The Local Government scene: Switzerland and United Kingdom**

In one sense it is possible to describe the majority of Swiss communal life as local. The cantonal system of 26 semi-autonomous units geographically, constitutionally and politically is dominated by the provincial nature of federal government.

We have seen, en passant, how important the role of the cantons and, one must emphasise, the communes also are in the Swiss polity both in terms of their obligations and their residual powers including direct democracy. It is true that in recent years, as Rohr says, Berne has claimed more control over the cantons but this still remains small compared with the constitutional powers of self-government they still possess. Both the old constitution and the revised model of Dec. 1998 enshrine the basic sovereignty of the cantons. This can be illustrated from the former Swiss Constitution Article. 54 which states ‘Les cantons sont compétents dans les domaines que la constitution fédérale n’attribue pas à la confédération.’ Since 1998 the same clauses run: ‘les cantons définissent les tâches qu’ils accomplissent dans le cadre de leurs compétences’ (Article 43). This renewed mandate has resulted today in both separate powers and some shared ones being implemented by both federation and canton while ensuring that cantons retain a very considerable degree of local independence.

It is clear therefore that local government in Switzerland carries very considerable weight.
Whilst it is true that on matters like treaties between nations, war and peace, joining the EEC and customs the federal government has the major role yet in the vast area of Swiss communal life, local government dominates. Below the cantonal level and incorporated within it, Switzerland has over 3,000 communes.

**Communes**

These very local units constitute the foundation blocks, in one sense, of the state. They vary in size from well populated urban councils i.e. those of Berne, Zurich or Geneva with 100 members in council and in the case of the Geneva commune of Carouge 173,000 people, down to Russin in the canton of Geneva with 600 inhabitants and corresponding budgets. Communes have in their own right powers of taxation, obligation to build schools, to furnish military transport, and also the usual amenity requirements of a British district body i.e. sewerage, street cleaning parking etc (see Momento Genevoise, pp.113-114). They also are the bodies in which all Swiss citizens are registered. They take the place in this respect of that occupied in Britain by the National Registrar’s department.

Kriesi (1995) draws attention especially to the role of the communes in the Swiss governmental polity by specifying the important role they play as distinct from the cantons. In terms of percentages in key areas he lists (p.63):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traffic &amp; energy</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police, Fire</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture leisure sport</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Kriesi (1995)*

This renders communes a major factor in Swiss community life. When one considers that there are over 3,000 such units in the country, the spread of responsibilities assumes a significant factor.

**Table 4.7: British and Swiss Local Government Structural Comparisons**

82
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLAND</th>
<th>SWITZERLAND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legislative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unitary Councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Borough</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish</td>
<td>6,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

81,232 32,998

Municipal Year Book 1998
Europa Year Book 1998
Ed. Newman Books
Office of Statistics Berne 1998

Population - England 49,997,000
- Switzerland 6,873,897

Note: As England and Wales have a population seven to eight times the size of Switzerland the ratio of Swiss councillors to population is far greater.

In terms of organisation nationwide there are wide differences between the two countries.

Until 1996 British local government was run on a two tier system:
(a) England and Wales had county and district areas;
(b) Scotland was divided into regional and district levels. Effectively the centuries old shire counties of England (left after the Redcliffe-Maud revisions) remained intact.

In 1997 (Municipal Year Book, 2000):
(a) A draconian re-arrangement of local government resulted in the end of 4 county councils and many of the former district councils. These were replaced by new unitary authorities which combined all local services under one umbrella.
(b) 36 metropolitan councils (all unitary) covered the urban populations
(c) 34 County Councils remained with the same responsibilities
(d) 238 District Councils
(e) 100 Unitary Councils spread over England, Scotland and Wales
(f) A myriad of Parish Councils

(p.209)
The upshot was fewer separate authorities and more power to the central government. Jones and Kavanagh (1998) claim that: ‘by reducing the number of authorities and hence councillors the new system has reduced participation and hence accountability’ (p.209, para.3).

In practice, counties like Buckinghamshire retained responsibilities for education, social services, libraries, sewerage, the fire service and police, but under financial constraints from Westminster (Office of National Statistics, 1997). Districts like Wycombe dealt with housing, refuse collection and electoral registration (Audit Commission, Wycombe District profile, 1997). The main difference with Switzerland lay in the limited autonomy granted to UK bodies and to the range of duties expected.

An English county like Buckinghamshire is provided with a central government subsidy (the Revenue Support grant) comprising 53% of its annual income. This effectively makes the county an agent of state policy and thus deprives it of much of its autonomy. The rest of its income accrues from the business rate, Community charge and any entrepreneurial income it can generate. Its total spending is limited by central government edict - the Standard Spending Assessment. Education is still by far the largest cause of expenditure in the county but even this area of responsibility has been eroded recently through the Local Management of Schools scheme. As Weir puts it: ‘Britain unlike other European countries has no autonomous local government’. This really pinpoints the great handicap which counties and boroughs labour under as distinct from Swiss cantons and communes.

The budget of an English District shows both the extent of responsibilities and the degree of autonomy in this area. Any comparisons should be related to the very large element of national government subsidy which colours local English expenditure. This subsidy, as has been mentioned in the case of Buckinghamshire amounts to 53%. In Geneva canton it is only 8% of income. In the case of these two areas however it is necessary to consider the fact that, alongside the difference in subsidies, between the two authorities Geneva unlike Buckinghamshire has to meet the costs of Health (15.3 %) and Social Security (14.9%). There would be lower spending in an English district than a comparable Swiss one in any case, not through parsimony, but because of the greater number of tasks for which Swiss local authorities are responsible. Thus for example a large proportion of the
expenses involved in such areas as police, educational building provision and water treatment are carried by the Swiss communes but never by comparable English authorities. Districts (like High Wycombe) raise their income largely from the Council tax which is levied on properties.

We can see by examining the comparative tables in this chapter how very different the two countries’ approach to the tasks and revenue raising opportunities are. The foundation of independence lies in the ability of an individual or community to ‘call its own shots’. A Swiss canton can raise its revenue in its own way. In the same way any decisions and actions in terms of output by the authority, as Ham (1993) characterises results, can be taken untrammelled by a list of central government edicts.

**General Comparisons**

What political picture emerges from the various statistics which have helped to identify the organisation of each country? Ham and Hill (1993) list some interesting statistics about national resource management. Firstly, they point out that in most advanced countries the national governments control such areas as welfare, Health and economic subsidies and defence as, for example, in UK.

However in Switzerland, as we have seen, much in this area is farmed out to the cantons and federal subsidies are at a minimum. This surely draws the electorate closer to the reins of power. It also strengthens the value of participatory democracy at any level. In the growing field of partnership between governments and industry, commerce etc both nations practise measures to achieve this. In Britain, Government ministers frequently meet the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) but mainly on a voluntary basis. Similarly in Switzerland but on a more organised and even prescriptive manner the numerous commissions maintain a constant liaison with both sides (see Katzenstein p. 62 Ch.3 ‘Democracy and Participation’).

The next chapter will be devoted to the kinds of democracy which have grown up in the contexts of Switzerland and Britain respectively and on the framework of governments described in this. However some preliminary thoughts arise. First, the basic difference between a federal as distinct from a centralised country shows in the importance which local or provincial government assumes in the former instance. Writing on, for example,
the vexed subject of nuclear sites in Switzerland, Christine Mironesco (1993) shows that ‘the co-existence of the two national councils shows that national and regional interests will be taken into account’ and further ‘that the High Court ruled in one case that the federal government was wrong to impose a nuclear plant on a region against its will’. Central government is not in the final analysis necessarily supreme. Many matters are divided between local and federal areas which are in Britain exclusively in the prerogative of Westminster. (pp 81/82)

Leach (1996) sums up the dilemma existing between central and local government. He writes ‘money and authority’ are the key to significance in this area (p.199). So it is in both Britain and Switzerland. Swiss local authorities possess far more of each than their British counterparts.

Secondly, Hadenius (1994) links federalism directly to democracy. Political participation is greatly helped by this form of government, indeed it becomes imperative in order that small and large communities can shoulder civic burdens. Set against this Britain appears as a country in which the ‘heights of the economy’ are controlled from Westminster. The accompanying power of finance in central government’s hands sets the seal on this. Local government unlike the Swiss variety has even its residual powers influenced by the substantial subsidies provided by the national administration.

Norton (1998) emphasises that central government could easily deal with any policies that the country needed: ‘up to and including much of the 19th century public business was not extensive and the issues not overly complex’ (p.17). In a unified kingdom largely unchanged for centuries this sufficed.

But in Switzerland where, even down to the 19th/20th centuries, new cantons were being incorporated into the federation, such as Geneva the subject of this thesis and more recently Jura, national unity was still in the making. Cantons were not simply a zone small or large of local government, they were little independent states. George Codding wrote in 1979 that the ‘Sonderbund war’ of 1848 pitted the liberal majority of ‘states’ against an alliance of conservative Catholic cantons’ (p.5). Independency remains to this day to a considerable extent as will be seen. Kriesi (1995) describes the situation:
‘The cantons organise themselves in an autonomous fashion, create their own constitutions, their own authorities, distribute amongst them powers and define both the conditions and nature of citizens rights’ (p.51).

The title of the second chamber in the federal parliament - the Council of States - emphasises this sense of separate entity. William Connolly (1987) well illustrates the aspirations of citizens in all democracies:

‘The democratic citizen is less willing than members of other societies to be a mere stone in an edifice. The unwillingness to be a stone in an edifice contributes over the long term to the health of a democratic society.’ (p.4)

I believe it will become clear that, as the thesis develops, the Swiss have come very close to fulfilling the above thoughts of Connolly. From a different standpoint Bryan Turner (1992) in his ‘Outline of the Theory of Citizenship’ emphasises the difference between ‘top-down and bottom-up states. He cites, on p.48, Hegel as describing Germany as an all powerful state with citizens in a secondary role. Switzerland is at the opposite pole, being citizen influenced with the state operating as a strengthening device. The Swiss are not either subjects or pawns but a collective citizenship (often underlined by the Swiss councillors in their questionnaire responses).

Britain would appear to be between the two. Turner says ‘Britain is sovereign in parliament and common law but with a gradualist approach for citizens’. There was a debate in the UK House of Lords16 in 1995 on the motion ‘Can the federal constitution of Switzerland serve as a model for others?’ The verbatim report in Hansard filled 28 pages and provoked lively debate. The upshot was that, although as Lord Simon (1995) observed: ‘Swiss democracy is an example to the world’, yet the Lords felt that

‘A system that has flourished at the heart of Europe and succeeded in marrying nationalism and decentralisation provides an inspiration not a model for others’ (column 488)

and so echoes Turner. However I have approached this thesis, and especially Switzerland, in trying to portray as unvarnished a picture as possible. Clive Church (2000) in an article entitled ‘Switzerland: A Paradigm in Evolution’ does just this. Although accepting that

16 Hansard Lords debate on Switzerland (Swiss Constitutional system 19 April 1995 column 488)
language differences between areas of the country cause tensions and the reality of the European Union is a huge challenge to this neutral state plus other weaknesses, yet he firmly states:

‘The Swiss have unparalleled opportunities for participation and so are willing to accept public decisions even when these go against them.’ (pp 101-102)

He goes on to say that federalism and proportional representation make power sharing an essential element of Swiss politics.

**The Swiss educational framework**

Switzerland differs almost entirely from the UK in its approach to education in that while Britain has developed a national education policy which is largely directed from Whitehall, in contrast, the Swiss now experience twenty six separate education policies as interpreted by that number of cantons. Nevertheless, federally approved standards of higher school leaving certificates prevail, that is, the Maturité examination and, in the case of Medicine, of entry to university. Furthermore two institutions of advanced learning in Lausanne and Zurich are funded from Berne. That said, the rest of the entire educational system, including the nine universities, is the responsibility of the various cantonal authorities. There is, therefore, a substantial political connotation to educational issues at Swiss local levels. So the factor of cantonal independence and the right of cantons to set their own educational policies are central to the issue to be examined in this chapter together with the political participation involved in cantonal affairs. In Switzerland it is virtually impossible to divorce, say, education from the ingrained sense of independence enjoyed by the 26 cantons. This independence is from both the federal government and often from other cantons. Furthermore the need to emphasise local autonomy can well overrule other considerations.

The great differences in democratic practices between Switzerland and Britain are well drawn out by Gunther Hega (2000) in which in the course of a detailed consideration of

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17 Swiss Constitution Art. 27 of the Old and Art 62 of the 1998 Constitution nation that ‘L’instruction publique est du ressort des cantons’. This is a jealously guarded right.

18 Swiss constitution 1998 Art. 63 (2) and Art. 27(i) Old: ‘The Confederation has the right to operate and maintain Federal Polytechnics’. It also has the right to founded a federal university but in fact leaves this to the cantons.
Swiss education, placed in the context of the country’s federalist framework, he stresses the trenchant local loyalties within the cantons. He shows the extreme views on subsidiarity which the state adopts as a matter of course. Swiss subsidiarity which is enshrined in the constitution (Article 40 Old, Art 43 New) devolves power down to the smallest authority capable of carrying out a given task. All this is reflected in education just as much as in other aspects of the economy. Hega writes that:

‘While some of the Swiss issue networks are strongly integrated at the national level, for instance that of labour relations and banking policy, the educational policy networks have retained a highly ‘pluri-centric’ character.’ (p.28)

In addition the Swiss not only are responsible almost entirely for the direction of education in their cantons, but also, through direct democracy, ensure that the voters have a crucial role to play.

Martine Brunschwig, who is responsible for education in the canton of Geneva and is also a member of the Federal Commission on specialist High Schools and of the Council of Federal Polytechnic Schools, writes on the subject of democracy and Swiss schools in a short article (‘Prospects’ 1997):

‘The democratic system in Switzerland and Geneva is so designed that it offers many possibilities of intervening at parliamentary level. Any reform introduced into schools may be contested.’ (p.545)

The emphasis on local power has, in German speaking cantons, resulted in many part-time educational staff with entrenched local loyalties. In Suisse Romande, however, the educational staffing is more centralised by the canton and somewhat similar to UK practice. This therefore renders the issue to be discussed in Geneva a reasonable comparison with British methods but, of course, transformed by Swiss direct democracy and the evident power inherent in Swiss local government

**The United Kingdom educational framework**

In order to understand the depth of feeling which arose in Buckinghamshire during the period 1988-90 over education, it is necessary to consider the general UK educational policy and see how the particular county situation fitted into this. Here lies the cause of the dispute.
The outstanding fact of British Education, in marked contrast to that of Switzerland, is the huge and pervading influence which the central government in Westminster exercises over the whole national scene. Since the 1870 Education Act establishing elementary junior schools and inspectors there have been 23 other major education acts of parliament. Milestones include the 1899 Education Act which established a national Board of Education, the 1902 Act setting up organised secondary schooling, and the major reform of 1944 when a tripartite system of institutions was systematised - namely Grammar, Technical and Secondary Modern schools. The selection by the 11 plus examination at 11 years governed entry to schools. Of course all the above new categories had existed for many years separately albeit in the case of secondary modern schools under another name (see McKinnon, Statham and Hales, 1996, pp52 and 54). The culmination was the 1988 Education Reform Act which superseded all of the preceding measures.

Today the Westminster government exercises a dominant role in the nation’s schools and education policy. British governments of all persuasions have enjoyed a major role down the years in the fashioning of a national education policy. This influence covers both financial leverage and the direction of education policy itself. ‘A national system locally administered’ although a catchphrase sums up the essential difference from the Swiss way (Booth, cited in Postlethwaite, 1988, p.692). Like the Swiss, British Local Education Authorities (LEAs) provide teachers and school buildings as well as books and equipment. However under the UK Rate Support Grant the national government has a powerful lever into all local financing including education which constitutes the largest element in its accounts. For the county of Buckinghamshire (the area covered in this thesis) 65.8% of its annual budget goes on education. The national average is 63.6% (Office of National Statistics, 1998). This means that the national administration through its rate support for local government must influence local affairs.

The fabric of schools, even the provision of materials and staff, are one thing but educational policy, that is to say the syllabus, examinations and levels of schools, is surely crucial. Here too successive British governments have had the major input. There is one national Secretary of State for Education and Science. The Education Reform Act of 1988 greatly increased the central government’s power in three main ways.
First, it reduced the role of local government by making schools accountable to their own governing bodies. Secondly it removed polytechnics and colleges of higher education from local control and made their funding more directly accountable to Westminster. It also altered the universities funding bodies which were not in any case subject to local government control. Thirdly the central government introduced a National Curriculum. As Sharp and Dunford observed (1990) there was created a paradox. Schools were given unheard of powers of autonomy on the one hand whilst being compelled to implement a government sponsored national curriculum. However, in direct contrast to Switzerland, the 1988 Education Act ‘imposed what should be taught for the vast majority of the time’ (p.39). All the above reforms were introduced by a Conservative government. This underlines the fact that educational policy in the UK since 1870 has indeed been national irrespective of the political party in power.

The 1988 Education Act created a government-appointed School Curriculum Authority, which became the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority under the 1997 Education Act, and which basically ordains a core group of vital subjects which must be taught (English Maths and Science) nationwide in all state schools from 5 years to 16 years (Education Reform Act sec. 3 1988). Thus 57% of all schools’ timetables are nationally decreed. This is in marked contrast to the Swiss way where the only input to cantonal schools, important though it is, concerns the types of Maturité examinations roughly equivalent to our advanced level general certificate of education. This too is confined to examinations in Swiss grammar schools. Meanwhile previous reforms by the then Labour government in the 1960s continued especially the expansion of comprehensive education. By 1982 80% of all secondary schools in Britain were of the comprehensive type and this figure has risen so that in 1991 84% were Comprehensive, 5% Grammar, 5% Secondary Modern and 6% Technical. (McKinnon & Hales, 1997 p.76). This meant in fact that 160 Grammar schools survived across the nation. Regional boards also control the standards of examinations.

The comparable table of UK education which makes an interesting comparison with Switzerland is as the following shows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England &amp; Wales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Primary stage itself covers 3 elements
(a) Infant 5-7 years
(b) Junior 7-11 years
or
(c) Combined 5-11 years

Whereas the Swiss officially start at 6 years and nursery classes form a minority, yet in
UK out of 7 typical families:

2 retain children at home until 2yrs
2 retain children at home until 3yrs
1 retains children at home until 5yrs
2 send their children to preschool from 2-5yrs.

*Secondary schools*
All children 11/12 - 16yrs. 84% enter Comprehensive schools, 5% selective Grammar
establishments and 11% to Secondary Modern schools in grammar areas.
(McKinnon & Hales p.72 1997)

*Universities*
Unlike the Swiss, the British finance tertiary education entirely from public grants to
those bodies, apart from private bequests and bursaries applying to many Oxbridge
colleges and a few provincial ones.

It is in this whole general context that the specific question of the Buckinghamshire
education issue should be seen. The county is (and was in 1989) one of the above small
minority of selective authorities.

*Buckinghamshire educational approaches*
The population of Buckinghamshire is marginally bigger than that of Geneva canton -
Buckinghamshire 468,700 and Geneva 379,811, i.e. one fifth larger. Buckinghamshire is
far larger in area than the 200 square miles of canton Geneva. In 1989 the county owned
both grammar, secondary and comprehensive schools. There were and still are 13
Grammar schools all with significant reputations for excellence (see Education Directory,
Buckinghamshire County Council, 1999). There were also 20 Secondary schools and five
comprehensive institutions, the last named being exclusively in Milton Keynes, the new
satellite city forming an enclave on the east side of the county. (Milton Keynes is no
longer in Buckinghamshire so there are no comprehensive schools in the county at present (in the year 2000)).

**Conclusion**

Ham and Hill’s (1993) simplified diagram of a typical political system involves four actions: first the input elements, i.e. demands and support, and secondly the opposite axis, namely decisions and actions. In relation to this, how do Switzerland and Britain measure up? The most obvious difference fundamental to both nations and affecting all else is the contrast between a federal system and a centralised parliamentary monarchy. A glance at Figure 1 shows the wide variations between Switzerland and England at the highest level epitomised by the charisma and tradition attaching to a monarchy and an annual workaday president. Essentially power is handled differently. We have seen that the Swiss cantons and communes play a major part in the national economy and this role is ratified by the constitution. Thus large areas of the national life - education, law and Health are almost entirely within the cantonal remit whilst in UK these needs are the responsibility of central government. The upshot is the creation of a far larger ‘beehive’ of activity and political participation by the people of a canton than is the case with their counterparts in Britain at any rate on an official level.

In comparing the various governmental structures of Britain and Switzerland, one particular fact emerges which must surely weigh in the argument. To the English citizen his or her freedoms as an individual are paramount and have shaped the kind of governments we have i.e. property rights, polarised politics, jury trials and a network of entrenched laws and by-laws buttressing a citizen’s rights in the enjoyment of his own liberty. All this personal autonomy is to an extent enshrined in such acts as Magna Carta (1215) with its emphasis on the ‘free man’ or the Act of *Habeas Corpus* which ensured the release from minimum detention if no charge is brought.

For the Swiss, the legacy of Rousseau persists, especially his idea of the General Will. To the Swiss man or woman, belonging to the corporate body of the citizenry is as important as the citizen’s individual rights. Barber (1988) puts it thus:

‘The collegial federal executive with its anonymous rotating presidency continues to embody this predilection of direct democracy for treating the citizenry as the real government and the elected government as powerless attendants’ (p.176).
Thus endless *ad hoc* committees and commissions of the people abound in the confederation. They are thin on the ground, in an official sense, in Britain. Figures 1-3 show the wide variations in both countries of the national and local government structures, while the Tables of Expenditure etc, although ostensibly comparable in each country, disguise the distribution of responsibilities between levels of government in Switzerland and Britain as described. Finally the organisation of the respective judiciaries show marked differences between both nations especially in the freedom of the cantons to choose and implement their own judicial system (see Memento Genevois, 1990).

In considering the very different paths that Switzerland and England have pursued in creating viable and democratic governments, an analysis of the differences can be noted. First, the Swiss love of consensus ensures that all acts of parliament must be approved by both houses simultaneously. No one chamber can hold up legislation for prolonged periods as is the case in Britain. Secondly, there are no appointed members in either Swiss House unlike the English House of Lords. Thirdly, whereas in England so called ‘national ‘ affairs are controlled from Westminster, yet in Switzerland items such as health, taxation, the judiciary, education and housing are handled largely at local level. Again, as distinct from English practice, the lowest grade of authority i.e. the Commune plays an important role in furnishing military transport for the Army and school buildings, matters which are quite outside the jurisdiction of an English District or Parish. The basic structure of a nation’s government, whether it be federal or centralised, inevitably influences life throughout the community. Federalism on the Swiss model distributes responsibilities over a much wider area than a centralised state like Britain.

Consequently political power and the participation in its deployment at provincial level enhance the significance of local government. In contrast in Britain the importance of Westminster lies in its near monopoly to distribute responsibilities as it sees fit. This chapter has taken the form of an analysis of what governmental structures, resources and responsibilities Britain and Switzerland possess. It was not intended to be an exposé of one against the other as such but to show the nature of governmental structures as they happen to be.

In the next chapter I hope to show how a variety of democratic instruments, especially of
the participatory kind, clothe the foregoing national structures. Switzerland is not all sweetness and light but certainly deploys far greater responsibilities across the country than its British counterpart, albeit the British are far from passive units dominated by a Leviathan state.

Regional responsibilities in nations however named - county, region, canton, commune or district - carry corresponding political power in one form or another. It is surely unfair to make savage comparisons between one democracy in the UK or Switzerland.

What I shall do is to consider whether, assuming all human beings are roughly equal in aspirations and needs, one political system caters more successfully than the other for those needs.
CHAPTER 5: POLITICAL MEANS EMPLOYED AT ENGLISH AND SWISS NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL GOVERNMENT LEVELS LINKING THEM TO CITIZENS’ NEEDS

Introduction
As we have seen from the last chapter, all governments in the western democracies choose to employ a network of organisations to maintain the life of its citizens. The needs of a modern democratic state are so varied e.g. defence, health, industrial production, social services and education that such division of labour is inevitable. In this chapter I shall consider how far the areas of government already mentioned in Switzerland and Britain have embraced citizen participation into their practices. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as Heater (1990) quotes, reflects this problem accurately:

‘Everyone has a right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives…..the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government.’ (p.211)

Geraint Parry considered that in participation the people exercise control over policy by direct acts of will. More pessimistically, Dunn (1992), believed:

‘The history of the 20th century suggests strongly that however effusive the assertion of equality of status among modern citizens, the structure of the state itself will always ensure a drastic alienation of power from virtually all of them!’ (p.262)

This is emphatically not true, I contend, for Switzerland.

This chapter will explore three areas:
(a) The political instruments and usages in both countries in relation to participatory democracy;
(b) The degree of political accountability of those who are responsible for the various state activities such as health service et al together with the input that citizen participation has achieved in them;
(c) The range and frequency in use of democratic instruments.

First therefore to consider how far ordinary citizens in England and Switzerland, through their own active participation, have access to instruments of one kind or another so that
they can bring their influence to bear in the various sectors of national or local administration. This could be through persuading a government to change direction or possibly to suggest an entirely new plan by means of voting, referenda or committees of enquiry etc.

In essence this part forms a consideration of the second half of what Papadopoulos (1995) calls ‘the Top-Down and Bottom-Up’ aspects of democracy. This is how he sees the Swiss political situation i.e. he defines ‘top down’ democracy as being political moves within the power of the political establishment to ‘legitimise a position already taken’ or constitutional imperatives which the government has to implement such as modifying the constitution or joining the EEC. Papadopoulos regards ‘Bottom-up’ as two-pronged (in the Swiss context), firstly in the right for the people by their own volition to veto laws on a parliamentary ‘decision already taken’, and secondly in the ‘right of the people themselves to consider new legislative proposals and have them submitted to a popular vote’ (pp 421-425).

In recent years unofficial political protest both in Switzerland and England has burgeoned. This fact, together with the ongoing traditional political pressures, will be examined and the instruments which exist in both countries to meet these needs.

Policy gives meaning to the structures of government. Ham and Hill (1993) in their analysis of policy define it in three ways. First, it is a course of action by governments. Second it is a web of decisions and thirdly (quoting Cunningham) it is like an elephant - you know it when you see it but cannot define it. The following chapter on Britain and Switzerland may reveal how far this is true. A further point the authors make on p.38 is ‘Is the UK a post parliamentary democracy?’ i.e. have pressure groups and committees usurped its authority. Switzerland abounds in pressure groups but, direct democratic machinery reasserts popular sovereignty.

**Popular democratic machinery and its variations in each state**

Participation as considered in this thesis is well defined by Alan Cochrane: ‘It is opening up the democratic process to involve wider sections of the population more directly in decision making’ (Cochrane 1986, p.72). Parry and Moyser (1990), in sketching out a map of political participation in Britain, defined such activity as: ‘the extent and nature of
the citizen participation which is thought to be required if a democracy is worthy of its name’ (p.147).

*United Kingdom*

R. M. Punnett (1994) sees modern United Kingdom governments as being very responsive to various community pressures. He cites the Civil Service, the political parties, local authorities, trade unions and industry. He goes on:

> ‘Thus governments frequently declare that the extension of national prosperity depends on a partnership between government and the various elements and interests in the state.’ (p.497)

Political party organisations date from the 19th century when the gradual enfranchisement of the people through the three great reform bills presented the leaders with such an opportunity for exploiting grass roots power. From 1870 J. E. Gorst virtually created the Conservative Central Office for the Tories (see Blake, 1986, p.144). The Liberals and Joseph Chamberlain did not appoint a full time agent until 1886 although initially more provincially in Birmingham. British political parties became and have remained essentially nationally directed concerns. The various local political provinces and county organisations are simply off shoots from the centre. The Labour party was the latest of the three largest to be formed. The party really dates from 1900 when the labour representation committee was formed - a careful blend as Pelling (1996) writes (in chapter 1 ‘The New Party’) of trades union delegates, Fabians and radical liberals. The infant Labour adherents had come, in large part, from the Gladstonian liberals. In 1906 Labour formed a body of Members of Parliament 29 strong. The fortunes of the Labour and Liberal parties were to exchange power bases in the next twenty years. How do voters participate in all this? In an extensive review of British political participation Parry and Moyser (1990) consider this question. First, they conclude that British voters can be roughly divided into three main sections.

1. 51.0% of citizens simply vote and nothing else;
2. 25.8% never vote regularly;
3. 23.2% constitute the activists.

This, of course, occurs in a nation in which elections are fairly infrequent and direct
democracy not available. In fact political activists themselves, the authors subdivide into those who contact MPs or councillors (7.7%), collective groups (8.7%), party workers (2.2%), direct action people (3.1%), and finally ‘complete’ or true activists (1.5%). Parry and Moyser conclude from this that: ‘Clearly this is a long way from a participatory democracy’. They add that such a level of public interest however might, from the standpoint of Schumpeter the realist democrat, suffice. The opportunity for volunteers to show support for the various political parties by joining as paid up members are widespread.

Canvassing, telling, monitoring election night counts, and running social events for party funds proliferate around the nation. Making people feel important attracts many supporters. Today all the main parties have their headquarters in London from where operations are directed. It is true, as Parry and Moyser point out, that party campaigning forms only one of five modes of political participation viz. groups, protest, party campaigning and contacting individual political figures, and is numerically the weakest of them, but the effect on very large numbers of voters of small dedicated bands has proved crucial in close contests. As Parry (1994) puts it:

‘The core of people sustaining participation is proportionately small although in absolute numbers they may appear to have a greater presence’ (pp.47-48)

Just as a small trained body of soldiers can control a mob better than an undisciplined crowd so a dedicated band of canvassers can influence a vast number of voters.

As with parties Europe-wide, education and class tend to enrich a voter’s political involvement in general. Thus with no academic qualifications a voter scores with a factor of 6.6, ranging up to 10.8 for Further Education trained citizens, and 13.9 for the graduate (see Parry & Moyser, 1994, Table 3.3). As against this in Crewe & Fox’s (1995) work on the ‘British Electorate’, party preference voting shows, over the period 1963-1992, that age and social class are vital factors. So that in the middle range of people between the extremes of managerial and older manual workers, voting is well shared between the Tories and Labour. Thus middle and non manual classes voters, a psephologically vital part of the electorate, tend to be Conservative by an average margin of 72/62.2 % over the period 1963-92, whereas the working classes of all ages remain
loyal to Labour by 68/58%. An important exception to all this occurred in 1997 when the affinities of the British electorate were re-aligned in the voting patterns. The studied middle class image projected by ‘New Labour’ persuaded many Conservative voters to switch to Labour which retained, of course, its normal core support.

**Swiss political parties**

As in the case of Britain during the 19th century reform era, it took a major constitutional step for political parties in Switzerland to launch themselves. This was the 1848 federal constitution. As Gruner (1983) puts it: ‘The federal organisation of the Swiss state strongly influenced the development of the countries political parties’ (p.31). In fact the birth of the national parties is rather similar to the UK developments. The Socialists were established in 1888, the Radicals in 1894, the Christian Democrats in 1912, but the Peoples Party (the erstwhile Farmers) much later in 1937.

What do these Swiss parties represent? Of the four main parties the largest is the Radical party. Like British groups there are strands within the whole. As Gruner (1984) remarks:

‘There are a Liberal right wing inspired by liberal-individualistic ideals.... a radical main stream drawing on radical egalitarian precepts which succeeded in establishing the centralised Swiss federal state in 1848 and third a Democratic left wing driven by populist convictions such as grafting the Referendum into the 1874 constitution.’ (p.34 para 3)

It supports business interests of a national and multi-national nature views which are shared between the Radicals and the Christian Democrats.

In second place are the Christian Democrats. These in contrast to the Radicals are unashamedly conservative in their love for the cantonal tradition of sturdy independence within the federation, but also representing the considerable Catholic element in the country. Their veneration for parochial Switzerland often allies them with Protestant evangelicals. Simon Geissbuhler (1999) in his article ‘Are Catholics Still Different?’ writes that although declining in strength, Catholics in Switzerland still strongly support the Christian Democrats. Added to this he has noted that ‘devout Catholics’ strongly support right wing policies (tables 1&2 p.219 of his article). This may account in part for the great increase in popularity of the Peoples Party.
Thirdly, there is the Socialist Party of Switzerland. Their credo may be explained in the words of the 1935 programme. It condemned capitalism but accepted the Swiss state as it existed. This was a far cry from its near Communist attitude in the 1920s. Socialist moderation was strengthened when in 1959 the Socialists raised their strength to two members on the federal council.

Finally, there is the so called Peoples Party. This group, formerly known as the Farmers Party represents a middle ground between the nationally minded big parties, either reflecting big business or the opposite axis of organised urban labour. This middle zone attracts what Kerr called ‘a middle class’ small trader or farmer element fearful of multi national companies. They command one seat on the national federal council (see Penniman, 1983, pp.34-37) but were becoming, in 2000, increasingly important.

In the elections for the Swiss Parliament in 1999 to the National Council and the Federal Council of States, the Peoples Party made significant gains. From 25 seats in the former Assembly they rose to 44. They achieved the largest increase proportionally of any of the political parties (see Hardmeier, 1998, pp.531-538). Today they are larger than the Christian Democrats and Radicals in the Council. This induced them to petition for a second seat on the federal council. They failed to gain this. The ‘Greens’ lost 5 seats.

An analysis of the reasons for the Swiss Peoples Party success would show that the party has exploited the perceived threats to Swiss independence from immigrants, the European Union and from boredom with the traditional major players. They have abjured their own extreme right wing elements whilst embracing a generally ‘Switzerland First’ approach. Whereas in Britain all major parties tend to contest all seats even in opponents’ strongholds, yet in Switzerland, as Kriesi (1995) writes, certain cantons, i.e. in this context electoral areas, are virtually the permanent fiefdoms of the old catholic Sonderbund legacy. Nine cantons and demi-cantons are the preserve of the Christian Democrats only. Three others are controlled by the Radicals or Socialists (Kriesi 1995, Fig. 5.2). Thirdly, political writers once thought that the ever present influence of referenda and initiatives in Switzerland tended to weaken party influence and was one reason for slender organisations and meagre finances.
This has been discounted by Andreas Ladner and Michael Brandle (1999). The authors make some interesting points. First, they show that frequent use of direct democracy results in the stimulation and growth of many smaller Swiss parties (which have certainly ‘mushroomed’ of recent years - the Greens and Automobilists in Geneva being two such). Secondly:

‘political parties are not universally weaker in cantons with an extensive use of referendums and initiatives. On the contrary direct democracy seems to go hand in hand with more professional and formalised party organisations’ (pp 295/6).

These conclusions certainly seem to have been borne out in Geneva in the issues examined in detail in this thesis where the parties were in the thick of events.

An interesting contrast with Britain is revealed in the voting patterns of the party electorates in Switzerland. In Britain the Labour party as we have seen commands the allegiance of 67-72% of manual workers (albeit the Tories also have strong support 30% from them in that party, see Crewe, Fox & Day, 1995, p.162). In Switzerland however even the Socialists have very weak support from workers (13%), while all parties claim the allegiance of people in the upper echelons of society. Kriesi (1995) says ‘workers and artisans are poorly represented in all parties - even the socialist party’ (p.132).

**Turn-out at elections**

Voting figures in both countries provide a strong contrast between the states. Thus UK general elections taking place as they do once in a five year cycle produce a substantial turnout. In 1945 73.3% of citizens voted, and forty or so years later in 1992 77.7% did likewise with similar figures in the intervening years (see Butler 1995, p.62). The comparative rarity of the event builds up to a satisfactory electoral climax each time and reflects the absence of other electoral distractions in Britain as well as the focus on national centralised politics.

By contrast in Switzerland since World War Two participation in national elections has declined from 60% to 46.2% on average. However variations between cantons are great as Kriesi (1995 table 4.4) points out (a marked difference from UK). So turnout can be 69% in Schaffhausen ranging down to 26.7% in Obwald. This is reflected in the case of Schaffhausen’s compulsory voting (although not 100%!) and in the others what Kriesi
calls ‘the sheer partisanship over specific issues’ which causes clashes between cantons. In the army vote in 1989, for instance, Jura differed sharply from the rest owing to the military damage caused during manoeuvres in Jura. As will be shown later a decline in turn-out at general elections can be due, apart from apathy and contentment, to the numerous other calls on the Swiss electorate to vote on many other matters - a marked contrast to Britain.

Direct comparisons with British parties, therefore, are inappropriate. An instance of this, however, is to be seen in the differences between a Swiss and an English ballot form. Although both are equally secret the format of a UK ballot paper shows the list of named candidates and their parties only one of whom can be elected in a general election while at local level several of the listed names may be ticked. The Swiss general election ballot reveals no less that six voter choices containing a plethora of alternative actions.

*The Swiss Electoral Ballot Form*
1. Under Swiss PR there may well be e.g. 7 places for cantonal representatives so with three or four parties there could be up to 18 candidates from whom to choose;
2. The voter can opt for all seven of his party’s candidates;
3. He/she may cross out candidates names;
4. Vote twice for one candidate (*le cumul*);
5. Transfer names from one list to another;
6. Compose own list of seven names by transfer from other lists (see Penniman, p.178, Appendix A).

This flexibility in Swiss electoral practice obviously gives the voter a wider power of discretion than a UK counterpart and is in a real sense participatory. Voting takes place on Sundays in Switzerland, as in much of Europe, whereas it is Thursday in England. Although in UK postal voting is permitted under strict regulations, in Switzerland it is now widespread (see *Feuille d'Avis officielle du Canton de Genève*, 1990).

**Referenda**
The referendum, i.e. the device whereby a government or some other body directly consults the people, is not definable in a single neat way. Iain McLean (1987) expresses it concisely:
'It is not clear whether a regime with provision for referenda is more democratic than one without. It depends who has the power to ask the questions’ (p.147).

In the Winter edition (1998) of ‘Representation’ there are many varieties of referenda described across different nations. Who sets the questions? Some governments retain the exclusive power to launch referenda i.e. Britain.

Governments use the device to bolster their own position such as the de Gaulle series. Yet others like Switzerland and the USA permit the people to initiate referenda. So it is not a straight forward matter. Finally there is the question of what questions are set - and how phrased. In a recent article, Hug and Sciarini (2000) analyse the whole question of referenda. They postulate three main points based on Vernon Bogdanor’s view:

‘For the evaluation of the political consequences of the referendum it is necessary to identify which person or institution triggers the decision to call one and what discretion that person or institution has in making the decision. Where the power to call a referendum lies in the governments hands, it is likely to prove a tactical weapon in strengthening its powers’ (pp.3-36)

This does seem to focus upon the raison d’être of these democratic instruments. Hug and Sciarini consider the differences between binding and non binding votes and above all the reasons behind the decisions voters actually took. The article considers 14 of the European referendums covering the integration of the European Union. They concluded that:

1. In non required but binding votes government supporters vote solidly out of political loyalty;
2. For constitutionally binding votes a greater freedom (because no government pressure) is observed;
3. In non binding referendums the lack of sanctions allows voters to ‘punish governments’.

British referenda
So as Held (1986) observed, ‘In the UK citizens have no right to demand a referendum … but politicians may decide to have one’ (p.147). Referenda have not played a great part in
British politics down the years. The overshadowing power of the Westminster parliament has influenced political practice. Here lies a crucial difference between the two countries. The local nature of cantonal sovereignty and the ‘Rousseauan’ tradition of the sovereignty of the Swiss people enables national or local referenda to fit easily into the national scene. Swiss democracy includes the right of Swiss citizens to initiate referenda at all levels of society and therefore greatly extends the country’s participatory powers. A recent analysis of Swiss referenda vividly underlines this point. Between 1970 and 1990 there were no less than 117 referenda of various kinds at federal level only (see Treschal, 1998). During approximately the same period only five were held in Britain:

1973 March - poll on whether N.Ireland should remain part of UK (passed);  
1975 June - on ratification of EEC membership (passed);  
1979 March - on legislative devolution for Scotland (voted no);  
1979 March - on future status of N.Ireland (591,000 for integration in UK passed);  
1997 Sept. - on devolved legislative authority in Scotland (passed) and in Wales (passed by only 50.3% to 49.7%).

The present government has promised referenda on the issues of whether to join the Euro currency and whether to accept a European constitution. Part of the significance of the above moves lies in the fact that they occurred at all. Referenda according to the late Earl Attlee (letter to Churchill, 21 May 1945) are a denial of parliamentary sovereignty. Whatever the truth of Attlee’s comment may be, the fact is that every one of the above electoral decisions was initially promoted by the national government in Westminster. All the above parliamentary votes have been augmented in recent years by many locally sponsored votes on matters of concern in the counties and districts. In Buckinghamshire in 1990 the county council sponsored a referendum on the advisability of grammar schools in Milton Keynes carried out by private poll (County Council Minutes, September 1993). In Wycombe District regular polls are carried out on voter satisfaction with council policies. These polls are extremely detailed covering 30 pages of questions over the whole range of community life from housing to vandalism and are incorporated in council policy when possible. In interview with Pamela Priestley, the Chairman of Wycombe District Council (see Appendix, No.77), she pointed out that regular meetings take place in which District Councils in a wide area meet government officials in plenary sessions to participate in discussions of mutual interest. This is reflected round the nation.
However again the local polls were produced by local governmental bodies. Besides these are all consultative in character. There are no voter conceived legislative referenda in this country as exist in the USA, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria or Italy.

Swiss Referenda and Popular Initiatives

Here lies the greatest comparison between the two countries in terms of popular democracy. A view of the referendum as a democratic instrument given by Michael Steed (1972) seems to reflect what this thesis is about, ie the importance of political participation and is as relevant today as it was 30 years ago. He refers to the fact that the referendum is ‘obviously attractive to advocates of increased participation widely used in Switzerland and parts of the United Nations but also occasionally in other parts of Western democratic Europe’ (p.94). He then makes three important points. First that it is ‘self evidently instrumental participation.’ Secondly that so far as Switzerland is concerned it is used in conjunction with other instruments of democracy e.g. the Popular Initiative. Thirdly that although clearly a very participatory democracy yet Switzerland ‘does possess the main features of a representative democracy.’ (p.94) As we have already seen Switzerland has political parties, bicameral chambers, general elections, parliamentary government and participation.

Problems of Participatory Democracy

Switzerland has a very extensive participatory structure operating throughout the state. It is not, however, Shangri-la. The very participatory nature of Swiss democracy is marred by a social and political problem. There is an immigrant population in the country including short and long term numbers amounting to 20%. This large group (1,500,907) comprising groups from a dozen European countries still has 13% from other continents. These people from disadvantaged social backgrounds do not possess the vote at national level although attempts have been made to grant a local franchise. In 1988 the immigrant population was 13% of the national total. In 2005 it rose to 20% although the national population only increased by 600,000. During 2004 proposals to grant citizenship to third generation immigrants were defeated. Even a relaxation in citizenship applications failed to gain acceptance. This serious democratic deficit has to be addressed sooner or later.

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19 Swiss Federal Statistics Office 2003
20 Lane T and Ersson S. Politics Politics and Society in Western Europe Sage 1994
21 Europa World Year Book Routledge 2006
Again, although Swiss political participation confers great benefits upon its citizens, yet in its wake the duplication of issues, their sheer volume and sometimes complexity, acts as a brake upon progress. The time lag between between proposals and action is often exasperatingly long. Raising the percentage for launching an Initiative could help. There is also the mechanism wielded by the cantons in their vote which is separate from that of the citizens. Thus, in a referendum the federal government may have agreed a proposal, the peoples’ individual votes may accept it but the cantons collectively may turn it down. This can be a necessary check on government or, at times, a hindrance to essential legislation.

In an article devoted to the legitimacy (or otherwise) of the referendum Patricia Roberts-Thompson (1996) referring to the various government inspired referenda which have occurred in post war Europe differentiates between legal referenda and legitimate ones. As she puts it:

‘All referenda held since 1970 have been legal in the sense that it has been a lawful activity of the government of the day. However the degree that they have been legitimate actions is more open to question.’ (pp.136-137)

her point being that so often governments (i.e. the French under de Gaulle) have simply used the device for their own ends rather than as an expression of the people’s free will. The Swiss referenda are virtually all popularly generated either at federal or local levels. To quote Papadopoulos (1995):

‘for the citizenry ... the plebiscitary process has been seen as a supplementary means of making its voice heard and redressing the balance of power.’ (p.422)

This is the essence of Swiss democracy. He expands this into what he considers to be the two essential elements of Swiss referendum democracy. These are deliberative consultation and propositional consultation. The first refers to the right of Swiss voters to veto legislation already enacted (subject to certain conditions i.e. providing 50,000 citizens or eight cantons agree). This is a substantial democratic right whereby a voting public can destroy a piece of legislation already enacted by parliament and is known as a facultative referendum. As Papadopoulos says: ‘This introduces a supplementary element of uncertainty into the decision making process’ (p.425). The second description of

22 Op cit above.
propositional consultation refers to the right that all Swiss citizens enjoy of being able to launch a Popular Initiative on some issue providing the local conditions are observed (i.e. the right number of initial signatures). This applies at both cantonal and federal levels.

Kris Kobach (1993) gives some hard facts on facultative referenda. As he says many Swiss laws go through unchallenged but of those which have been contested he gives some interesting figures. Of the 267 challenged pieces of legislation since 1848 only 47.8% of those strictly facultative (as distinct from constitutional) survived. In fact from 1848-1993 alone 16/20 referendums succeeded. This is indeed, despite faults, real participatory democracy, laws challenged, requisite signatures obtained, cantons agree and a vote. Kobach also points out that in most years Swiss are called upon to vote 6 to 12 times on national questions plus numerous cantonal and cantonal referendums. (p.342)

On rates of participation Kobach agrees with Mads Qvortrup in that people choose the issues they vote on and the turnover of voters is higher overall than the 40+% would indicate. Lane and Ersson (1994) have pointed out that Switzerland is far and away the 'top'state using direct democracy in the world. Between 1945-1993 there were 302 popular votes world wide. Of these 250 were Swiss’ (p.234).

Since 1848 the Swiss public have had the right to vote, via a referendum, all changes to the Swiss constitution. Following an Initiative this is an obligatory referendum. After the new 1874 constitution the voter has the further privilege of being able to veto any federal laws that emerge from parliament (see previous page also). The effect is that all Swiss citizens have the right to participate in rejecting or accepting federal laws and an absolute right to vote on constitutional changes. Now these measures constitute an important form of citizen power.

‘When elections of national, cantonal and communal representatives are added to’ (national referenda in general) ‘it is no exaggeration to say that the average Swiss citizen is called to the polls more times in a year than a UK citizen in in his/her lifetime.’ (see Kobach, 1993, p.342)

This is popular participation indeed even if at times it may become too much of the tail

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23 Swiss Constitution 1998 Art. 138 (1974 Art. 121 ii). Since 1977 votes needed for initiative to be launched - doubled from 50,000 to 100,000
wagging the dog. However this is not all. At cantonal level the above rights also apply but are augmented by a specially useful additional referendum. This is the referendum financial - the right to veto local government budgets. However as each canton and commune have their own constitutions, the spread of direct democracy varies (see Kriesi, 1995, p.85). In 1891 the device of the Popular Initiative was introduced. Andreas Auer (1987) defines the Popular Initiative as it exists in the canton of Geneva and, with variations, in the other 25 cantons:

‘A right which allows a certain number of citizens to bring about a popular vote in proposing to the Grand Council a project of law’ (p.12)

initially as a means of revising the country’s constitution. This gives Swiss voters the right to launch a move to change the federal constitution providing 100,000 initial signatures can be acquired. In the case of the cantonal constitutions where as Auer has pointed out above a varied scale of signatures are required. This gathering of initial views constitutes in itself a valuable form of popular participation.

A further refinement of the Popular Initiative is the Counter Proposal. This enables any group (often the government) to table an amendment, as it were, which modifies the original Initiative so as to make it more acceptable but without destroying the essential base of the original. Often this device ensures that even controversial measures are accepted roughly in the form that the sponsors had wished.

Who are the people taking part in all these votes? Mads Qvortrup (1998), a Danish political scientist, has analysed the class participation in Swiss referenda. Qvortrup shows that in Switzerland the upper elites and well educated vote more readily than the unskilled workers. (In the recent British Euro elections the Conservatives vote was far higher than that of Labour on a low poll.) Yet in Switzerland the bulk of voters as Qvortrup shows, 70% in the lower manager and lower non manual groups, voted in normal strength (his fig 3). Qvortrup concludes that voting in Switzerland by groups compares favourably with other countries but that referenda needed to be backed up by orthodox candidate elections which of course they are. He also adds that the spread of votes across the classes in Switzerland shows that participatory democracy is not just the monopoly of interested
middle class elites. I would add that the sheer scale of the number of direct democratic votes small or large do give the Swiss an incomparable opportunity for participation.

Writing of ‘turn-out’ in the Western democracies in general, Blais and Dobrzynska (1998), when referring to Switzerland, make two points:

1. Political participation is greatly governed by the excessive number of referenda which occur;
2. The permanent ‘magic coalition’ creates a dearth in voting for parties (p.243).

An alternative view was advanced by M. Phillipe Joye, immediate past President of the Christian Democrats in Geneva. Speaking of ‘turn-out’ and apathy amongst Swiss voters, he believed:

‘So far as today’s participatory democracy is concerned it seems to be grinding to a halt. Too many initiatives are clogging the system.....There are no charismatic leaders.’ (Interview February 1991)

This last point ties in with Mads Quortrup’s selectivity view.

I have dwelt more on Swiss referenda than on those in the UK simply because they are so much more a feature of Swiss life. The British votes listed (on page 104) constitute the totality of such votes. However since World War Two and down to 1998 there have been 308 votes through direct democracy in Switzerland at Federal level alone. 156 have been accepted. These consist of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obligatory Referenda</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facultative</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Initiatives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Treschel 1998.)

The above votes give a good example of the range of participation open to electors. In addition to the above there have been a multitude of referenda at cantonal and communal levels. All this is popularly driven through individuals or pressure groups.
Cantonal Democracy - frequency of voting

To understand the impact that direct democracy has on a Swiss canton over different periods of time, one can consider the number of times the average Swiss is called upon to take part within his/her canton.

1. During the thirty years 1966-1996 the people of canton Geneva were asked, at the federal level alone to vote on 113 decrees and laws to be ratified or rejected (see *Annuaire Statistiques, Votations Federales et Cantonales* (1966-96) Genève). These often consist of measures which the federal government brought in under a plea of urgency and which must within a year be ratified by a national vote. Kriesi (1995) points out that these measures, approved by the parliament, will lose their validity if not ratified by the people. Subsequently they cannot be resurrected. This kind of participatory democracy has real substance.

2. Federal voting also occurred for 58 Popular Initiatives and 12 Counter-Proposals in the same period. The vast majority of these are rejected by the citizens and cantons, although the cumulative effect on the national government, especially over immigration, often leads to a tempering of the original national policy. In order to comprehend the scale of this voting one must add to this total:

3. Votes which occurred for cantonal matters only. (1966-96) These amount to:

   Popular Initiatives 27
   Counter Proposals 6

In some ways just as important are the number of occasions the voters of Geneva were called upon to ratify or reject various cantonal laws during this 30 year period. This shows the great power that the electorate have over the executive.

Projects of Law 89
Accepted 68

Finally, all voters of Switzerland have the opportunity to decide on communal issues. In Geneva alone there are 46 such communes. Thus during the period 1966-96 whilst Britain went to the polls about 35 times at either national, county or district levels, the Swiss in Geneva voted about 218 times in the same period plus numerous forays into the communes. The scale of rejections indicates that the electorate cannot be railroaded into
establishment decisions. Certainly the ballot papers would contain local and federal measures for convenience but decisions had to be made on each.

Matters covered the entire gamut of activity which one would expect to see in a city and canton of 300,000 souls. Topics included motor taxation, sickness benefit, shopping hours, education, health, etc. (Annuaire statistique du Canton de Geneve 1945-1998). At federal level alone in the canton of Geneva during 1998 there were 10 issues to be decided. These covered such matters as the countrywide budget, protection against genetic engineering, the police, pensions, a reasonable policy on drugs etc. International commerce and finance and above all the powers of the EEC are in danger of depriving the people of direct control over their own affairs.

This was graphically illustrated in Switzerland in 1992. The Federal government approved legislation enabling the state to apply for membership to the European Union. This was defeated when the people voted on the issue by a small margin of 24,000 votes in a total of over 1.5 million yes/no votes in a high turnout of 78.7%. However this was reinforced by 16 cantons. Only 7 were in favour of joining. Democracy, arising out of the Swiss system, was clearly was strong enough to prevail over the central government.25

Some Swiss academics see the system as being overloaded. Silvio Borner, an economist, believes that Swiss direct democracy is outdated, that it is a hindrance to progress, that a modern government cannot be held to ransom and that it is preventing the state from joining in the concert of nations (see Borno, 1990). Papadopoulos (1995) considers reform is impossible, that joining the EEC is hampered and that ‘it introduces a note of unpredictability to government’. Points, of course, that advocates consider advantages. Gruner and Hertig (1984) the psephologists believe that only 30% of voters show true competence in decision making during Initiatives and referenda and 24% show no competence. But these same voters would be there in any political system! In my discussion with the director of federal information in the Berne parliament (M. Mauroux Appendix 80) he revealed that the entire military plans and appointments for the future were on hold until the result of the army initiative of 1989 was known, an indication of the potential power of citizen voting.

To give a realistic overview of the practical impact of Swiss referenda democracy Andreas Ladner (1995, pp.488) lists during the year 1994 alone 13 national referenda and Initiatives which occurred. They show not only the range of topics which concerned the electorate but also the power of cantonal and public opinion to actually influence the course of national progress. I have listed the groups of issues because they as much as anything reveal that participatory democracy is possible in a liberal democracy driven by capital and a free enterprise culture.

There were 12 out of 13 national referenda which were laws passed by the Swiss parliament and which according to the Swiss constitution can be challenged providing either 50,000 citizens or 8 cantons wish it. These are the facultative referenda. This is indeed political participation of a literally popular nature. It is no small thing to be able to abort national laws. I list the topics because they concern the real issues that concern people in nations.

Referenda topics in Switzerland

- Motorway taxes, tax on consumption of fuel to save pollution and a tax on mileage to enable the true cost of road maintenance to be assessed. All these passed with majorities from 67-72%;

- A law to permit Swiss troops to serve in UN peace-keeping roles was defeated. There was a strong coalition of left/right groups plus others of the Swiss Neutrality tendency against this.

- Two laws, one on promoting culture at national level the other granting citizenship to young foreign residents were passed by the voters (just) but defeated by the cantons, although a measure combating racialism was well supported.

- Finally a popular Initiative to improve sick benefit was defeated but surprisingly the country passed another Popular Initiative (at federal level) concerning the nuisance of lorry traffic through the Alpine passes. This forces road freight to go by rail. It was supported by 16 cantons and a very strong ‘Green’ lobby.
What the British people have at their disposal

Madgwick (1994) writes that:

‘In Britain the minimum participation is to abstain in a general election. Most people vote; and a tiny minority join a political party and engage in political activity. Many more people belong to, or support, interest groups and so contribute indirectly to political activity. This is a very thin basis for a vigorous democracy.’ (p.306)

However, the association of local governments meets regularly with Whitehall. Taken into account with the public participation in the great institutions of state described in the rest of this chapter, one can fairly say that in a generally unofficial i.e. non statutory way the British public makes its presence felt vis à vis central government.

According to Weir (1994) our democracy in Britain is endangered by three great obstacles: first, the absence of pluralism of legal powers shared between central, regional and local governments; secondly, in the executive’s unrestrained power to enter into treaties and wars with no parliamentary oversight; and thirdly the absence of a Bill of Rights (p.152). Beetham (1992) on the other hand stresses an essentially British element which seems to go a long way to off-set Weir’s criticisms. This is, that Britain is what Beetham calls a ‘limited state’. This is based on freedom for the individual through free markets, personal liberty fostered from multiple power centres and the sacredness of private property. However in an article entitled ‘Deliberative Democracy and Social Choice’ Miller (1992) goes to the heart of participation. For him deliberative democracy is where people openly debate and decide matters and where minority voices may be persuaded to conform. Liberal democracy is rather that there is an aggregate of individual choices which become a collective choice. But, yet, our preferences are sacrosanct because they represent the individual. His analysis is very fair, pointing out as he does the possibility of open democracy majorities trying to ‘persuade’ the minority to conform. When observing the Landesgemeinde in Appenzell in 1994, which was as open as one could wish, I did not notice any obvious arm-twisting of minorities.

Today however, Swiss participatory democracy may be ‘deliberative’ but it is very individualistic and combines the freedom of popular initiatives and referenda with the triumph of individualism, secret ballots and the aggregation of individual choices.
described by Miller.

All these matters are incorporated in the Swiss constitution. However in weighing the balance between the two countries’ systems, allowing for the legitimate criticisms which can be levelled at both sets of political arrangements, the balance does seem to come down significantly on the Swiss side in that popular frustration in Britain can only be assuaged when the government chooses to act. In Switzerland resentments and aspirations can often be dealt with by popular direct action through the ballot box. A cautionary, and very recent, note is struck by Rose (2000, pp 52-53).

In the last chapter I considered the various major areas of national activity through which Britain functions. I now propose to relate the concept of political participation to each of these and consider how much each part is involved.

The public services of Britain and political participation

Participatory democracy in Britain, despite a lack of direct democratic machinery, is far from dead. A number of writers have examined British participatory democracy. Held, Weir, Crick, Richardson and Parry and Moyser. I have dwelt on these last two because they seem to combine fieldwork and theory in a particularly convincing way. Like Nie and Verba they believe the more participation there is in decisions the more democracy there is. The authors (1992) describe the essence of British participation by describing British voters as:

‘Happy either with their attempts to stop local pollution to keep a hospital ward open or to obtain the support of a councillor in getting a flat for an elderly disabled relative’ (p.430)

What emerges from the above view is that, multiplied many times over nationwide, the British participate extensively at a level where citizen impact resulting directly in new or blocked legislation either locally or nationally is desirable but not possible. The authors conclude by observing ‘A system which responds as described may not seem inspiring but is worthy of some respect.’

The following group of national public services play such a very large part in the lives of everyone in Britain that, if political participation is to have any meaning on a national
scale, citizens should have a role of influence in each one.

Although Britain lacks the extensive political participation of Switzerland, participation by the public occurs widely throughout public life. Jacques Thomassen (1995) writes:

‘The welfare state can be seen as one...in which social rights and social equality are seen as fundamental rights.’ (p.388)

Health

Britain today is a far cry from the practice of the 1920s when bed patients in hospital were identified by their numbers! Today there are community health councils throughout the nation where medical staff and lay people meet to discuss matters of concern to the public. One such, in Buckinghamshire, comprises beside representatives of the national government, council members from e.g. the League of Hospital Friends, the Federation of Women’s Institutes, St John Ambulance, Age Concern, County Association for the Blind and councillors from the county and district councils. All these speak for ordinary citizens. As does another health committee, Aylesbury Vale Healthcare, nine of whose members are lay and three medical. The general public are also admitted to their deliberations.

Across the nation the spread of such bodies injects a real participatory element in a vast state organisation. In the post war period there have grown up specific pressure groups of citizens who highlight concerns regarding particular illnesses e.g cancer, rheumatism, AIDS and many others. Finally today the very flexible visiting times for hospitals allows the public to be treated as an interested party in the total health equation.

All the above representatives constitute watch dogs of the health service and therefore abound at varying levels of importance. Yet central government holds the whip hand through its control of the purse strings and monopoly management (see Baggott, 1998; Payne, 1995). Occasionally too a Royal Commission is set up by the government. One such in the late seventies recommended strengthening the financial and manpower bases of the service. What is participatory about this? Bulmer (1993) defines it as ‘A means of incorporating into the governmental process the views of different social groups through a contribution to policy formulation’ (p.43).
The law (in Britain)

Ever since the 13th century the people have had the right to participate in the judgement of their fellow men i.e. the jury system. A further important measure has been the use of tribunals of enquiry presided over by a High Court judge in which the public participate as interested parties. As Anthony Barker (1993) points out ‘These enquiries are prepared to find criminal wrongdoing and are highly investigative.’ (p.28) They are participatory in that over such cases of banking corruption discovered in the Radcliffe tribunal of 1957 or the Lynskey enquiry over currency abuse in 1948 many witnesses are called to give evidence and the whole affair is a public occasion. However the British law system is centrally directed from London. Even local magistrates are appointed by the Lord Chancellor.

Education

Today in Britain the public have a far greater access to the educational system than ever before. The oldest form of participation is the public gallery whereby anybody can observe an education committee at work. In schools today governing bodies will directly participate in the management and running of schools especially since the introduction of Local Management of Schools. Parent/Teacher bodies participate actively - often running sports and extra curricular activities, even assisting in class teaching with reading, all of this resulting from government legislation. Again as with health, central government calls the tune through government subsidies and nationally directed curricular reforms. Participation brings added responsibilities which of course strengthen voluntary status. From time to time government commissions are invoked such as the Robbins report on higher education. In 1998 the present UK government piloted a bill through parliament giving parents the right to vote for or against grammar schools in their area.

All this participation even exists in organisations which at one time were synonymous with an almost feudal or hierarchical order - an area where the laity performed a comparatively minor role i.e. religion. An area Superintendent of the Baptist Union of Churches in Great Britain writes:

‘As a nationwide organisation outside politics the Baptist Union has a well developed participatory organisation. All major policy decisions affecting the faith
are taken by the rank and file at regional or national levels.’

‘When the Ecumenical issue was top of the agenda nationally, the Baptist Union was the only main stream denomination to refer the matter directly to the constituent churches and their members’ (Freestone R. correspondence 10 July 2002). (Appendix 82)

Social Welfare
Access to information for the public is provided by Citizens Advice Bureau in most towns. Payne (1995) believes that between 25 and 50% of the UK population provide voluntary help for the welfare services through such services as ‘meals on wheels’ etc. This voluntary help is of real social value to both deliverers and recipients. In the case of one local authority, Aylesbury, a non professional healthcare committee deals with problems of old people’s homes and welfare in general with free access for the public to attend (see Aylesbury Vale Health Care Minutes, April 1999). However as in other British national provision ultimately there is no direct political challenge possible to national or local decisions.

Housing
For the past decade house building has been in the hands of Housing Associations. Local authority property is built by private enterprise but supervised by committees of councillors, public representatives and developers. Public participation is encouraged not only through citizens’ housing associations but by attendance and discussion at land tribunals, enquiries and citizens’ rent committees.

Other activities
Although political support remains low in this country yet according to Jones and Kavanagh the ‘Green’ groups have blossomed as they have in Switzerland. Between 1971 and 1988 organisations such as the Civic Trust, Nature Conservancy, the National Trust, have multiplied between six and ten times. However they do not carry any political power via any parliamentary representation.

The Swiss public services and political participation
As far as housing is concerned, the Swiss operate somewhat differently. All housing is privately built and rented. Apart from a relatively small federal housing subsidy for indigent people, it is in effect a free for all. However here again an association dealing
with land and building is available to focus citizens concerns to the authorities. Here too
direct democracy reveals its continuing influence. Building, property and rents etc loom
large in Swiss civic life. In December 1986 both the country and Geneva canton voted
decisively on a compromise resolution of parliament for strengthening the rights of
tenants supported by a high cantonal vote of 18.5 cantons. A decade later however a
proposed cantonal tax on profits gained through property rents was defeated by the
citizens, many of whom, of course, own flats for rent. The vote was:

For an increase in rents 34.67%
Against 67.61%26

Swiss law
In Switzerland the bulk of the legal system, as noted in the previous chapter, is locally
established. Judges, in contrast to their UK colleagues are elected by a popular vote of the
cantonal electors as are local magistrates. A jury system of twelve citizens similar to the
British prevails in Geneva (see Département de l’Instruction Publique, 1990, p. 34). So
in fact popular participation enters into cantonal politics to a considerable degree.

Swiss health
Switzerland in general and Geneva in particular operate a wide network of citizen groups.
To provide the public with an influential voice in the spending of the whole budget there
are a myriad of local associations catering for each area of expenditure. These are the so
called Associations d’ Intérêts. One of these deals with health affairs. They are citizen run
and are described as ‘truly pressure groups keeping a close watch on the activities of the
communal and cantonal authorities as also the large pharmaceutical companies’
(Département de l’Instruction Publique, 1990). These Associations are also called upon
to take part in any commissions which result from a possible Popular Initiative within
either the canton or commune.

Unlike Britain Switzerland does not run a national health service. Each canton has a
major part to play both in provision and funding. Thus in the canton of Geneva in a total
budget of about £2.5 billion pounds £400 million goes on health alone and the same on

26 Office cantonal de la statistique Genève (p.3 7th June 1999)
social security. When matters reach a crisis the weapon of a local Popular Initiative lies at hand to add muscle in any particular field. One such launched in Geneva dealt with a perceived need for a wider hospital network in the city.27 The range of topics of these Associations ranges from health, pensions, taxes, estate duty and roads to sports and social activities. In June of 1998 the voters of Geneva rejected the above plan for a joint research centre between the hospital and university of Geneva

Swiss education

In Switzerland also, as the case study on Geneva’s L’Ecole Notre Avenir shows, the citizen can have a strong input in schools. Through the Association des Parents d’Elèves du Cycle d’Orientation constant pressure is brought to bear on the authorities be they institutional or public.28 Once again as with any political controversy recourse for citizens is at hand with a Popular Initiative. A commission on education detailed in this thesis brought together a wide range of people with some input to education and this directly preceded the Popular Initiative referred to above. Swiss citizens have the added immediacy that education is primarily a cantonal responsibility and so their involvement as voters is direct. In June 1997 there was a typical Swiss democratic modification. A Popular Initiative proposing higher professional training in Geneva was narrowly rejected (37,960 to 34,137), but a Counter-Proposal proposing better training for employment was accepted (44,230 to 27,177). Thus not only did the people have immediate access to decision making but the goal was eventually reached via a typical Swiss compromise.29

Swiss welfare practice

Les Associations à Caractère Social is a group devoted to the interests of crèches, old peoples homes and clubs and similar activities. Mostly concerned with welfare, it monitors their standards. One residential home I entered in Berne could have been mistaken for a first class hotel! Whereas in UK the county or equivalent sized authorities fund most welfare activity (in Buckinghamshire this amounts to 24% of its annual expenditure), in Switzerland by contrast the commune level of administration fund this. Geneva commune, the largest, devotes 4.5% to welfare and there are 45 other communes in the canton all of which contribute pro rata. In June 1995 improvements in insurance

27 Office cantonal de la statistique Genève (p.3 June 1998)
29 Annuaire Statistique du canton de Genève p.353 June 1997
Defence
There is one particular area in which the UK citizen has very little influence at all. This is on the subject of defence. The British government together with the Committee of the Services Joint Chiefs of Staff plan and execute military actions. As we have seen in the Balkan conflict this can occur without even a vote of the House of Commons!

In Switzerland there is a committee of defence. On this sit representatives of cantonal directors of justice, police and health, civil protection delegates, professional, economic and cultural associations, women, young people and finally Swiss army officers and N.C.Os (see Rohr, 1989, p.402). I have dwelt on the above body simply because it seems to encapsulate the sense of community that Swiss people have. In 1997 the voters both nationally and in Geneva (via an Initiative) rejected a plea to forbid the export of arms. They had similarly refused to abandon the Swiss army in 1989. Idealism goes hand in hand with common sense.

30 Annuaire Statistique du canton de Genève p.351 1998
Commissions in Britain

The device whereby governments select small groups of specialist representative citizens to examine a particular matter is not uncommon. However these commissions are discretionary and governments may well ignore them. Martin Bulmer (1993) characterises British royal commissions as being ‘useful for the elucidation of difficult subjects which are attracting public attention.’ (p.38) This description covers most of these bodies.

The justification for including commissions in a consideration of participatory democracy is as Bulmer (1993) says:

‘It is the opportunity to bring in representatives of a great variety of view-points which is facilitated by the appointment of commissions which contributes to this participative image’ (p.43)

The peak of British public representation is, in a sense, the instrument of the commission - royal or otherwise.

These public bodies set up by the government can, unless merely acting as a cynical delaying tactic, provide a real opportunity for discerning public figures to confer on a controversial national topic. The lack of any constitutional list of rights for local authorities in the UK undermines their attempts at autonomy (see Swiss cantons). This is summed up well by Gerry Stokes (1996) in his paper, ‘Hearing but not Listening’. He writes:

‘Having set up an independent roving commission the government seems to have sought to impose a national solution rather than follow the original logic of local solutions based on local views.’ (p.474)

Subjects have ranged from enquiries into the police, the press, the (unwritten) constitution, the national health service and gambling. Kavanagh’s description of one actual commission illustrates well the above definition. In 1995 the Commission for Local Democracy revealed that 80% of local councillors were over 45 years of age and one in three actually retired. Furthermore, because of high turn-over, only one in four had more than three years’ council experience. Thus the groundwork was laid for subsequent meaningful decisions by the government.
However because these bodies are very much centrally led, there have grown up in Britain a myriad of pressure groups. In discussing these latter Paul Smith (1999) highlights their weaknesses:

‘Pressure groups are units of the democratic process which are neither political parties nor formal agencies e.g. Friends of the Earth, Council for Civil Liberties and many others. Most pressure groups are ‘resource poor.’ (pp.24-25)

Again, consultation in Britain by Government and people over controversial issues is a very mixed patchwork of effectiveness. Beetham and Weir writing in 1999 on this topic of consultation make some pertinent points regarding British ‘secrecy’ arising from government power:

‘The closed nature of British governance astonishes American visitors. Much formative consultation takes place within narrow policy communities of government officials and organised interests which are generally closed to outside scrutiny and tend to pre-empt more formal public exercises where these take place.’ (p.136)

This all tends to by pass the previously mentioned ‘poor’ pressure groups who lack weight and publicity. Beetham and Weir add that often ‘powerful interest groups, enjoy preferential access to ministers and their officials.’ (See below on Swiss Commissions)

*Examples of British commissions*

All the participation referred to in the preceding paragraphs in Britain has been augmented by commissions. In Britain commissions are comparatively rare events especially royal commissions. Thus there have been commissions on education - the Robbins 1963, Health 1976 and civil disorder Scarman 1981. At a less than national level many Public Enquiries are set up to carry out much the same task. The public are invited to take part in meetings concerned with land use e.g. airport sitings at Stansted or Wing being cases in point in 1970.

In the case of Wing, a small rural village in Buckinghamshire, the public outcry headed by an eminent lawyer, Desmond Fennell QC, and other influential figures with vested interests in preserving the amenities of the area, made strenuous efforts to prevent the
threat of a relief airport for London coming to this rural site. It was in vain. The Roskill Commission appointed by the government chose Wing as the site for the future airport. The airport did not, in fact, materialise in Wing because the Heath government over-rode the Commission.

This illustrates the value of a Swiss style Commission, backed as it would be by a Popular Initiative launched locally and terminating in a binding referendum. Participation does exist in Britain but spasmodically. Beauty zones or housing developments come within such enquiries and are often of great popular concern.

**Swiss Commissions**

British commissions are, as we have seen, fairly few and far between in the political landscape. Switzerland by contrast has very many commissions some local coupled with Initiatives some federal of a permanent nature. There is one major difference between UK and Swiss commissions. Federal (Parliamentary) Swiss commissions’ mandates are determined by the Federal Constitution (Article 153, 1998 constitution).31 British commissions are at the behest of the government of the day. However in Switzerland each canton can set up such bodies to deal with local affairs. Rohr (1989, p.286) lists 82 such commissions created within the minimum time span of 1974-76. These dealt with topics ranging from justice, economy, banking, women and the police. At cantonal level issues such as Saturday schooling, opening hours for shops, a new road and the subject for later discussion in this thesis - education are all of great interest to the community as a whole. These all help to underline the constant pressure exerted upon government at all times by a kaleidoscope of public opinion. Popular Initiatives at cantonal or communal levels make a local commission part of the decision process.

Pressure groups, of course, abound in Switzerland but unlike their British counterparts they do not stand alone. There will usually be an issue plus its accompanying commission which will arise at either federal, cantonal or communal levels to which the pressure group can turn for further exploitation of its particular concerns. In any case Swiss commissions are so numerous and often in the case of standing committees so prestigious and as a comment on Beetham’s remark (page 44) contain so many different bodies that

31 Swiss Commissions are given wide powers under the Constitution. The old Federal Constitution is
these in themselves constitute pressure groups and cannot be easily ‘bought.’

The essence lies in the importance of the Swiss commission of enquiry. Every Popular Initiative at every level sets up a commission of enquiry. Thus for instance, in a commission on shop opening hours in Geneva in 1990 representatives from watchmakers, clothing shops, unions, customers, and a committee against extending opening became part of the total democratic process (*Secrétariat du Grand Conseil de Genève*). Throughout the canton local interest groups (*Associations de Quartiers*) flourish: sport, leisure, health, parents in schools, social welfare, etc. In one commune alone, Vernier, there are 50 such interests. When a local commission is established they and many others in the 46 communes stand by ready to take part if appropriate as happened over opening hours (see above).

Similarly over the education issue (see **Annex 3**) a commission summoned all interested parties numbering over 100 people. Whatever the outcome on a given issue, the Swiss people feel they have been given an opportunity one way or another to take part in the democratic process. Equally important is the role played by the *Associations d’Intérêt*. Such a part is according to Kriesi (1995) ‘absolutely crucial’ (p.244). The selection of members is provided by cantons and by the organisations which represent the particular topic under review. Thus trade, professional and welfare groups, many of which exist in Britain, would in Switzerland become part of the decision making process as of right by being invited to join any commission of enquiry appropriate to their area of interest.

A fundamental difference between the dynamics of a Swiss and British commission lies in the nature of the respective governmental procedures, as Katzenstein (1984, p.124) writes in his ‘Corporatism and Change’ (see Chapter 3 on ‘Democracy and Political Participation’). This is what he calls ‘neo corporatism’. He sums it up as a mixture of informal contacts, mixed ‘trade’ commissions, consultative commissions with the federal government actively involved and finally political consensus. So commissions form a vital and constitutional link in the chain of decision making. As against this British commissions are entirely at the government’s behest and are relatively infrequent by Swiss standards. But above all Britain is not a corporatist state and the automatic trawling virtually identical in this respect and allows both Chambers to have joint commissions where appropriate.
of interests which regularly occurs in Switzerland simply does not operate in the UK.

A typical Swiss Commission at federal level would contain (see Rohr, 1987, p.287):

Economic representatives
Science
Cantonal
Banking
Federal

Another mix will include Trades Unions, shop keepers, and, in the case of the Genevan educational matter ‘L’Ecole Notre Avenir’, seventeen groups comprising over 100 representatives both parental, teaching, political and administrative. Lane and Ersson (1994) set the basis for Swiss commissions:

‘Swiss consociational democracy is institutionalised through an elaborate system of hearings and bargaining procedures and an extensive series of committees.’ (p.261)

and Rohr (1987) defines the actual roles of commissions:

‘In their totality they play a fundamental role in the preparation of texts and, through the diversity of the members which compose them, they produce a compromise solution judged to be reasonable.’ (p.288)

In effect the federal government relies heavily on the various commissions as valuable adjuncts to good government with a built-in constitutional legitimacy.

Public demonstrations in the United Kingdom
The nature of British parliamentary democracy, and the scant means for legislative expression of an immediate nature, makes public unrest likely from time to time. Over the past twenty years there have been quite explosive civil upheavals or strikes against government policies:

1979 Unofficial strikes and unrest in the ‘winter of discontent’
1980 The Toxteth riots
1985 Miners confrontation over pit closures
1985 Broadwater farm riots, destruction of property and lives
1990 Widespread and organised civil disorders around the UK arising from the Poll Tax, culminating in the Trafalgar Square riot
Greenham Common protest against US missiles

It must be stressed that all the above unrest, by no means typical of British society, could not be assuaged through recourse to immediate direct democracy.

The peaceable Swiss
Protest and civil disorder are markedly absent in Switzerland. There are several reasons for this. According to Kriesi (1995, p. 86) because the number of signatures required to launch a local Initiative in German Switzerland, an area which is far larger demographically and geographically than any other sector, is markedly lower than in the French areas (in the decade 1980-90 there were 2 Initiatives in Geneva but 11 in Berne) and so civil unrest in German areas was far lower than in the French.

Also the state is naturally consensus minded. With permanent coalitions at both national and often local levels there are less controversial interfaces. Thus beside the same citizen involvement which the British voter enjoys as described in a previous section, the Swiss elector can, as it were, focus the various needs and longings of the community into direct political action at all levels of national life. He may not succeed it is true but will more often than not give the administration food for thought.

Swiss and British practices in democratic procedures
It is true that in Britain there are many bodies, ad hoc or otherwise, which the government consult from time to time, the CBI, the Trades Unions, the General Medical Council and the Association of Local Government Officers being some. However there are two crucial differences between these and similar Swiss representative bodies. Swiss commissions and committees generally consist of mixed elements so that the central government cannot play one pressure group against another. Secondly unlike Britain there is always the Damoclean sword of a referendum hanging over the deliberations and which must give them added urgency.
Local Government's Problems

Local community cohesion is a reflection of many things – family life or shared interests and responsibilities. The history of the past hundred and fifty years in Britain shows a fundamental change in local affairs. There has been a needful reform of corrupt electoral practices – the abolition of multi member constituencies and the Redistribution Act of 1885 equalising the size of constituencies and, moreover, thus expanding the electorate. But these changes eroded the sense of identity formerly enjoyed by the British provinces and turned eyes towards Westminster. Parry and Moyser (1992) focus on these elements in their volume on UK participation. They consider among other areas the strong sense of loyalty which pervades the Welsh valley scene in Penrhiceiber a mining village in South Wales. To quote the authors:

‘Between 85 and 92% of those interviewed described its population as displaying a sense of togetherness, of having similar needs and interests and the area as being “a real community”’ (p.430).

This arises from the industrial depression and the relatively isolated nature of the Welsh valleys. This sense of community was not typical of Britain as a whole. Similarly this sense of belonging pervades the Swiss cantons. What proof is there? Swiss citizens tend to remain in their own cantons and are far less of a fluid society than Britain. Cantonal life overshadows a national dimension. In ‘Le pouvoir Suisse’ Professor Masnata (1991) speaks of the ‘power resting in the hands of the ruling families’ (p.28). The very independence of cantons within the confederation coupled with the extensive array of citizen societies already mentioned and the direct democratic opportunities available engender a strong sense of community. A sense of community surely exists in many areas of Britain where local rural or urban needs draw people together. In 1996 Tam Dayell argued that Britain’s centrally directed nation rendered ‘the impossibility of having an Assembly or any kind of subordinate parliament, that is part of a unitary state.’

This is certainly not true today. There have been important changes, some implemented others projected, undermining Dayell’s proposition. Thus, (1) the government has granted a large measure of self government to Scotland and Wales (via referenda), (2) Created a mechanism for popularly elected mayors, and (3) Regional governing councils are being

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32 Contemporary Political Studies p.565 Mitchell Political Studies Association 1996
actively pursued. All this, however, has not really restored the old local government tradition. Westminster has the decisive say. Heater D (1990 p.294) makes the point:

‘Local control of housing, finance and education has been systematically assaulted. Civic initiative is difficult to sustain without autonomy’.

This latter sentence of Heater’s sums it up well.

Switzerland is not at heart a unitary country. Its Confederation spreads power widely round the country at the different levels federal cantonal and communal. There are for example over 3,300 communes in the land. Local democracy draws people together. Local powers are considerable and give meaning to community action.

The scale of activity and therefore political significance of Swiss communes is immense. In a table contrasting the financial obligations of Swiss authorities, Kriesi (1995, citing Rossini) shows in percentage terms:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Federation</th>
<th>Canton</th>
<th>Commune</th>
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<tr>
<td>Primary education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Assistance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police and Fire</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>18</td>
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Source: Rossini in Kriesi (1995)

These are just some of the duties which fall on communes. The comparison with British practice is pretty clear.

In interview with the then the president of the Christian Democratic party, M. Joye (Appendix item no.71) in February 1991 he said selection for local councillors is far more intense than for federal representatives. ‘If a man is not good enough for the canton then send him up to the national parliament.’

Finger and Sciarini (1991) have examined what they term ‘la nouvelle politique’, that is
to say the emergence of a strong ecology (‘Green’) party, powerful feminine groups and a mixed ‘peace’ element among students. These have introduced over the past two decades very uncharacteristically Swiss strikes, boycotts and demonstrations in the major conurbations. This according to the authors (themselves comparatively young men) is still a poor substitute for the conventional direct democratic methods.

The effects of democratic practices on political participation in Britain and Switzerland

I must enter a caveat here. I am aware of the apparent conflict which arises from the Swiss emphasis on dispersion of power both political and administrative compared with the British more centralised system. In particular the dilemma of whether the values of local and autonomous government are impoverished by the corresponding lack of universality which a central power structure can provide.

In Switzerland the sometimes slender resources at cantonal level are offset by the independence enshrined in the many constitutions and their range of self governing powers.

Wolf Linder writing in 1995 from the Institute of Politics at Berne University puts the matter thus:

‘Who holds power in Switzerland today? Who has the greatest influence on the policies of our country?.... the Federal Council is at the centre of the system but does not determine all policy. It is the mediator but not the most important player.’ (p.2)

He goes on to show that the numerous ‘associations de l’économie’ and the commissions draw the cantons into the means of power and resources. The sense of locally based activity is not merely political but shows in an international poll on labour. In the 1989 ‘Social Attitudes’ Jowell points out that in a survey of seven nations on the degree of self-employment, Switzerland came second after Italy with 23% so employed whilst Britain was sixth with 10% (p.26).

A Paradox

In a comprehensive survey on the attitude of the Swiss towards the European Union
carried out in 1989/90, Professor Linder (1990) writes of ‘European Fever’ having broken out in Switzerland. However Linder also points out that although there was a small majority of Swiss in favour of joining the Union (43% to 38%) yet 3 out of 4 voters cannot countenance any erosion of their own political system of direct and semi-direct democracy. (62% to 24%). He puts it thus:

‘The affective anchoring of initiative and referendum is extremely strong: three out of four Swiss have a positive fundamental attitude towards these principals of opinion formation. This is largely whether these principles are used or not.’ (p.16)

Wolf Linder (1990) and the Univox organisation 33 devoted the whole of a survey in 1990 contemporary with the events in this thesis on two issues: (1) Switzerland and the EU ‘to join or not to join’ and secondly (2) the importance of group of major issues to the Swiss. The results in terms of Swiss participatory democracy were clear cut.

Linder showed the double paradox facing the Swiss on the first point. A plebiscite is the only route whereby the country could become able to join. There was, as just mentioned, a small majority in favour of so doing (i.e. 43% to 38%). However any reform of the direct and semi-direct system would likely fail through the blocking mechanisms extant. Further, all Swiss, voting or not, joining EU or not, place allegiance to their own system of participatory democracy above every other issue so joining the EU could well be stymied!

<table>
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<th>Issue</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Chambers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role in world</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key (in percentages): A = very keen; B = fairly; C = probably not; D = not at all; E = don’t know; F = no information.

Note: columns A+B show Swiss democracy commands the clear support of most voters.

Source: Linder (1990)

33 Linder Wolf Univox II B-90 ‘Die Europäische Integrationspolitik in der Direkten Demokratie’ pp 1-14
So Swiss style democracy is pre-eminent. Conversely the Swiss see their world role as relatively unimportant (except of course for humanitarian reasons). Since the above statistics were compiled i.e. as recently as 1999 the sharp growth of the Swiss Peoples Party (SVP) has reinforced the above trends.

In 1990 in centralised Britain there has been separation of powers for both Scotland and Wales and there are tentative moves to consider regional governments in England. As was mentioned at the start of this chapter the different systems of government which prevail in Britain and Switzerland colour the whole national scene in both countries. Stuart Weir (1994) bluntly states that ‘local democracy’ which he says has been developed across Europe especially in the 80’s and 90’s, has been eroded in Britain by

‘reducing the financial and general autonomy of local councils and transferring responsibilities … to non elected bodies at national, regional and local levels’. (p.150).

Taken into account with the ongoing lack of opportunities for local bodies to appoint their own judiciary or to totally control their own spending without central government curbs, one can see the force of Weir’s comment. However as described on pages 104-105 all this has far from rendered citizen power in Britain impotent. Although not perhaps the panacea it is claimed to be Swiss democracy clearly occupies a space vacant in Britain.

It cannot be denied that local erosion of participation has steadily increased in the past 40 years. The county boundary changes resulting from the Redcliffe-Maud proposals in 1972 and more recently in 1986 the abolition of the Greater London Council and six metropolitan authorities strengthened central authority at the same time altering and diminishing the status of UK local authorities. The rich variety of British local government has therefore suffered greatly and in a way that Swiss cantons have not experienced.

A member of Parliament (David Lidington - Aylesbury Constituency) firmly stated in interview regarding late 20th century UK local government:

printed Uni-Vox Jahresbericht llb1990
There is a lack of accountability in local government. We are not sure if we want it to be autonomous with all that means in terms of variety and quality of services or an agency for delivering government services.’ (Appendix item 82)

Lidington’s view would seem to underline the great contrast between UK local government and the Swiss variety. Certainly public services and finance vary between cantons but the citizens in votes from time to time seem to be convinced that any weaknesses are more than compensated by the considerable autonomy they generally enjoy. In the final analysis the very real degree of local democratic participation which as Parry says exists in Britain does not provide as Weir (1994) suggests ‘local government with either constitutional protection or general powers to act independently of central government’ (p.150).

Swiss citizens and life in their democratic state

The Feminine Vote

A factor which in Britain is taken for granted but which in Switzerland is still sufficiently recent to arouse comment is women’s suffrage. In 1971 Swiss women obtained the right to vote in federal elections. This compares with 1928 for British women over 21. The dates when women’s suffrage was achieved in other countries as shown by Penniman (1983) are:

- Denmark 1914-15
- Netherlands 1917
- Germany 1919
- France 1945

(p.157 Ch.5)

The significance of this expansion of the vote in Switzerland from the participation viewpoint is complex. Thus, until 1991 women were denied the vote in the demi-canton of Appenzell the last canton to do so. However despite a late start compared with other countries, Swiss women since 1971 have increasingly participated in political life - not just as voters but in an active public life.
Table 5.3 Number of Women in Parliament 1971 to 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>National Council</th>
<th>Council of states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Federal Assembly Statistics and Tables, July 1999

In comparison with the British parliamentary scene vis à vis women in parliament the Swiss have 24% representation in the 200-seat National Council whilst the UK women parliamentarians muster 16.4% of their 650 Commons seats. Furthermore the Swiss have achieved this over 30 years.

British women have had the vote for 72 years. It must be remembered that there was no equivalent in Switzerland to the war work performed by women in Britain during World War 1 to enable Swiss women to exert leverage to compel attention to their cause. However, as Heater (1990) writes:

‘In 1888 the County Councils Act allowed some women to vote and be candidates in county elections.’ (p.70)

The enfranchisement of women in 1918 was the product of many factors – indispensable war work by women of all classes, the sense of a new age dawning, and the growing need to level out civic justice. It is hard to visualise the militant Pankhursts in a Swiss context.

It is noteworthy that in the far more conservative Council of States the Swiss figure is only 15.2%. Of course the Catholic and conservative forest cantons have a strong influence. Swiss parliaments meet far less frequently than the British and are much less confrontational. Swiss parliamentary practice has not the very irregular hours which Westminster operates and this alone tends to militate against British married women with young children.
On the general question of feminine political impact Ann Banaszak (1990) an American academic writing on Swiss women’s suffrage shows that in those cantons where women banded together to launch initiatives, success followed. However, nationally it was the major political parties only which had the resources to promote the vote for women and for a long time they did not. This arose, says Banaszak, from the consensus politics of Switzerland which meant that most parties were in government. Thus she writes:

‘Women’s suffrage activists were not always supportive of suffrage initiatives. In Zurich people were unhappy that women’s initiatives in 1947 and 1954 were introduced by the Communist Party’ (pp 187-208).

In another interesting feminine view of politics and the Swiss woman, Veronique Mottier (1995) writes that although women have had the vote since 1971 (not long) their social rights lag behind those in other countries, for example top salaries are 30% lower than the equivalent for men in Switzerland. In the period 1981-1982 Swiss women voted 14% more than men for equality of rights for both sexes, and at a much lower level over six other issues - including abortion, genetics and maternity benefit. (p.164)

Mottier however puts in a caveat in that Swiss women traditionally have a very conservative attitude to husband and home so that votes as between men and women often coincide on feminine issues (p.168). One could characterise it as their own version of ‘Kinder, Kuche and Kirche’. If the family is the foundation of the state then the influence is strong.

**Swiss and British Local Practices**

*Swiss Local Affairs*

In comparison with his or her British counterpart, a Swiss citizen’s life is far more bounded by the confines of the commune or canton with Berne and national affairs coming second. This arises from the importance which the canton (or state) assumes in Switzerland. This self sufficiency, which centuries of semi-independence has generated, means that there are as many varieties of educational policy as there are cantons. Again it explains the local nature of law making and enforcement. In a comment on Swiss democracy as seen through British eyes by a long term resident, Rev. Myra Blyth, European Secretary of the World Council of Churches:
In terms of democracy, the fact that the people of Geneva and elsewhere in Switzerland vote on issues makes democracy much more real than voting for parties as we do in Britain. (She goes on) ‘The Puritan ethic influences voters particularly in Geneva where Calvin lived’ (Appendix, doc.74).

There is some evidence of this in the care of homeless, clean streets and a general air of sobriety as one goes about the city, but above all in the work ethic. It would be dangerous to push Mrs Blyth’s view too far.

Putting the individual examples of direct and semi-direct democracy mentioned under separate headings (see pp 105-106) in a wider context, the picture is of a popular democracy in action.

At all levels of Swiss administrative areas Initiatives and Referenda occur. The range of topics is immense. It was so in 1980, 1990 and remains so decade after decade. During one short period - June to November 1998 - and at federal level only, the electorate of the canton of Geneva voted on budgetary adjustments, genetic protection, overloaded vehicles, raising the retirement age, public transport, drugs and wheat production.

In the same period at cantonal level 10 topics were dealt with - judiciary, rental profits, hospital university research and finance, and in the communes - new plans for Place de Nations and La Garance, construction of parking in the Place-Neuve and acquisition of a plot of land at Petit-Saconnex.

It must be noted that these matters and many others are scattered throughout the states’s 26 cantons and 3,000 communes, all of direct and local interest to voters (OCSTAT, 1999).

In interview, M. Kyburz (Appendix, doc.70) the mayor of Carouge, one of Geneva’s largest communes, expressed his views on Swiss communal life after a long career of leadership in that sector of Swiss life. Although much political activity occurred with many Initiatives these were often only of local interest. Thus he said ‘in Carouge a new parking lot, new road or demolishing an old building responded to direct democracy in Carouge’. Occasionally, he said, things went wrong and democracy (which he
passionately espoused) was costly. Three communes banded together to build a sports complex. After much progress one commune voted to pull out and the project collapsed. But this had to be set against the many successful schemes.

**Associations des Quartiers de Communes**

As briefly mentioned already, Swiss citizens naturally form official and unofficial pressure groups. These associations influence events greatly in the cantons. While associations exist at federal level in all areas of the Swiss economy, it is at the cantonal and communal point that participation both socially and politically begins.

In Geneva alone there are associations for promotion of health, pensions, education, consumers, sport, defence of the environment, and many others. All these crucially affect interest in and results in local referenda and Initiatives. In his major work on the Swiss political system Kriesi (1995) devotes a whole chapter to these *Associations d’Intérêts*. He shows their strength especially at cantonal level. In Geneva and its communes there is nearly always an association of citizens to meet a perceived need or to help promote an Initiative.

In a recent article, Hirst (2002) discusses the desirability of developing associations in Britain. He sees them as a valuable aid to producing a much more participatory and strengthened democratic framework. This would, he believes, offset the increasing corporatist and mega sized governmental and commercial pressures of today.

**British local activity**

Until the early 19th Century local life in the provinces was politically corrupt with multiple seat constituencies and a gross imbalance in the representation of the people in the industrial areas. However local government had a recognisable identity. The great reform bills of the Victorian age reduced the electoral value of land ownership. Voting became a national matter driven from Westminster.

As a direct contrast to Switzerland at the grass roots level, Jowell and Curtice (1999) analyse the extent of British involvement in community organisations. This is compared with similar activities in the USA. The contrast is striking. Whereas in Britain 74% of citizens interviewed belonged to no voluntary group such as neighbourhood watch, etc,
yet in America only 29% of people were not actively involved in such organisations. In both USA and Switzerland local groups abound. This must surely be, in part at any rate in the US/Swiss cases, because involvement leads to political action. Similarly as Kriesi points out, it is at the lower the level of administration, i.e. from federal to communal, that the greater participation and number of Initiatives occur. In contrast to this in Britain, according to Giddens (1985), ‘the crisis of democracy comes from its not being democratic enough’ at local level. Jowell also points out that a poll taken in 1999 showed:

Table 5.4: Results of Poll on Interest in Local Parties in Britain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A great deal/quite a lot</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very much</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Jowell, 2000, pp 182-184*

In contrast to the above Parry (cited by Topf, 1995) shows that more British voters would consult their local councillor in preference to their Member of Parliament. Kriesi writing in 1995 says that in 1975 and 1989 the parties of the Left alone employed direct democracy 38 times for federal referenda and launched 652 Popular Initiatives at cantonal level. This does imply reliance on the local party machines to implement this as Andreas Ladner (1999) points out in his article on page 284 para 4 dealing with direct democracy and political parties.

Swiss implementation

Guigni (1991) stated that the success rates for Initiatives at cantonal and communal levels was respectively 29 and 38% (p.182). So it would seem to work to Swiss voters satisfaction. The number of times the people of Switzerland were able to participate in their direct democracy in the period 1980-1990 at cantonal levels only is considerable: 54 times in Lausanne and Geneva and on no less than 178 occasions in Berne and Basle cantons, the difference being due to the previously mentioned lower threshold of votes needed to trigger popular democracy in the German speaking cantons. All this of course is set against a system that its critics claim cause log-jams and frustrate progress.

The current Labour government during its first ministry in 1998 published a white paper
suggesting ways in which local democracy could be made more user friendly. Since then much local democratic expansion has occurred.

An important consideration in a country like Switzerland in which there are competing forces both tribal and linguistic is the preservation of national unity. It must be remembered that 73% of the population is German speaking, 20% French, with the balance in Italian and a little Romansh (Europa Statistics, 2000). Similarly 47% are Protestant and 49% Catholic. As Masnata (1991) wrote ‘It is necessary to guard against the German speaking majority considering the linguistic minorities negligible factors’ (p.458). The instruments of direct democracy are one factor in offsetting any tentative attempts to enforce the will of any one group on the rest. It provides a nationwide network of democratic instruments to strengthen regions, communities and individuals.

Because the whole panoply of Swiss direct democracy which has been described plus the system of commissions of enquiry are available at local as well as national level the armlock on federal policy is very great even if at times blinkered and parochial. But then the Swiss and their country are essentially parochial anyway. The Swiss voter unlike the British knows that the ‘buck stops’ at the local level in so many areas of life. There is therefore real point in invoking democratic instruments to achieve ends. The comments of the mayor of Russin (Appendix, doc.72), the smallest commune in Geneva canton, add point to the Swiss love of local activity and seem to me to explain much of the significance of Swiss community life:

‘It has a population of 600. There is a folk assembly every four years. There is an executive of 3 people and a legislative of 9. Both meet one a month. The last Initiative was to increase the size of the hall for folk assemblies. Here we have a tiny commune; the concept of direct democracy and of a vibrant, if microscopic democratic organisation is really quite impressive.’

In a comparatively recent article entitled ‘Does Direct Democracy Matter for Political parties’ Andreas Ladner (1999) argues that Swiss democracy has actually stimulated political parties to exploit it. He claims that:

‘Direct democracy gives the parties a good opportunity to put forward their political ideas. Three or four times a year they are offered a platform.’ (p.287)
this platform being the frequent Initiatives that occur and need organising. He cites Gruner (a Swiss psephologist) to the effect that direct democracy has been a factor in mobilising voters and party ties. Indeed the principle of being involved in and taking advantage of political activity, of whatever kind, seems to accord with party vigour. After all the popular initiative on education cited in this thesis was actively supported by the local Liberal party in Geneva and the Christian Democrats filed a counter proposal.

When Fuchs and Klingemann (1995) wrote suggesting ways that the concepts of representative and direct democracy could be reconciled, their remarks actually would apply to contemporary Switzerland:

‘The representative system is understood as the indispensable institutional framework within which the institution of direct democracy can, or even must, be introduced in order to restore congruence between citizen and state.’ (p.8 line 16)

Switzerland may have the most comprehensive participatory political structure in Western Europe, but it also operates a fully representative and parliamentary system of government in parallel. I remarked in the last chapter that finance is the key to power in the modern state. So although financial referenda are forbidden at federal level, yet in some of the cantons like Zurich, Berne or the city of Winterthur - all important centres - financial referenda can effectively give citizens a real say in the conduct of affairs. The power of a financial referendum may be judged by the fact that such a device is banned at federal level. Mention has already been made of the flexibility the voter can exercise in arranging the list of candidates at elections. Similarly regarding issues which for the Swiss loom larger than names, a voter can simultaneously decide on a local and a national matter. A 1990 ballot paper shows seven issues to be decided. These range at federal level from halting a proposed new motorway between Morat and Yverdon to new laws on wine growing and reforms in the judicial system of appeal. On the same form is a matter of local cantonal concern. Thus the Swiss citizen is able to feel from his provincial base that he generates influence at federal and local level.

A recent and good example of Swiss direct democracy was the case of heavy lorries in Alpine villages. (This incidentally has overtones for many British townships.) Communities situated in the areas covering the routes across the Alps to the south complained about the pollution, damage and danger to their townships caused by the
constant passage of heavy lorries day and night. In the absence of government support the citizens in February 1994 launched a Popular Initiative against the nuisance as they saw it. To their delight it succeeded:

For the resolution 954,491  
Against 884,362  
Cantons for 16


This kind of successful bid not only keeps democracy alive in the state but also brought real relief to the hard pressed inhabitants of these mountain villages. Patricia Roberts-Thomson (1996) writing on the subject of the legitimacy of referenda in general makes a point which seems to apply particularly well to Switzerland when we see that the government’s will was decisively thwarted by the people:

‘Governments value legitimacy more in theory than practice, but the people accept the reality of referendum results as being the legitimate expression of their will.’ (p.142)

*The Swiss Militia army*

Finally in terms of Swiss participatory instruments one has to consider the unusual situation surrounding Swiss defence. Switzerland has a citizen army - a militia. This is enshrined in the modern constitution. All Swiss men are expected to serve for a period in the forces on a part-time basis. They maintain their personal weapons at home as Kurz (1985) shows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21-32</td>
<td>Active Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33-42</td>
<td>Landwehr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 43-50 | Landsturm  


Unlike many European countries Swiss local government plays a major role in staffing and equipping the various bodies of men. ‘The creation of cantonal military forces,

---

34 Swiss Constitution 1998. Article 58. (1) La Suisse a une armée. Celle-ci est organisée selon le principe de l’armée de milice. Articles 19/20 Old Constitution the wording of which is ‘La Confederation n’a pas le droit d’entre-tenir des troupes permanentes’. The cantons are charged with the task of furnishing significant troops for the Swiss Army, as are the communes in terms of military transport.
provision of officers and equipment are in the provenance of the cantons subject to federal arrangements’.35

All this constitutes a considerable political factor in the state. As the Secretary General of the Military administration in Geneva M. Gigi said in interview (Appendix, doc.69):

‘In terms of participation it may not be strictly political, as many other things in Switzerland are, but it forms a degree of participation in this state which is widespread and deeply felt amongst all people.’

It also adds a significant element on power and legitimacy to the status of cantons in the Swiss polity. I believe that Swiss military affairs are fundamentally political anyway.

A view both academic and military was provided in interview with the Rev. Dr Heinz Reugger, Secretary of the Swiss Protestant Ecumenical Council, a patriotic but unwilling conscript into the Swiss militia. He was serving his time as a medical orderly (in lieu of a fighting role). On the Swiss army itself, he claimed that ‘the myth of the Saviourhood of the nation’, a notion once deeply held by all Swiss, was blown away after the end of the Gorbachev era, hence the 30% vote against the army in the 1988 referendum. On politics he believed that whereas Catholics majored on the themes of ‘peace and justice’ the Protestants stuck to social and ethical issues (Appendix, doc.81).

The national perspectives
Having discussed the extent to which Britain and Switzerland implement and give life to their basic participatory structures, I now analyse the overall views of writers who have concentrated on various aspects of community life which contribute to participatory democracy from a national standpoint.

A national view taken in 1988 from the grass roots as a whole by Jowell and Topf (1988) provides an interesting background to the British scene. They polled citizens on the subject of trust in their local representatives in the police, administration, politicians, etc.:

35 Swiss Constitution Art. 60 (2) ‘La création de formations cantonales, la nomination et la promotion des officiers de ces formations ainsi que la fourniture d’une partie de l’habillement et de l’équipement relèvent de la compétence des cantons.... fixé par la droit fédérale. Old Constitution Article 21 (ii).
So councillors do not rate highly as key figures. Nor by and large do politicians as a whole. The authors feel that the low level of esteem shown for politicians could well be due to the fact that the then government was Conservative and younger people had known no other. It also could be that only police and civil servants had no ulterior motive and could be taken, therefore, at face value. The poll certainly seems to be a commentary on the relationship between councillors and constituents as shown in councillors’ replies regarding voters.

Another aspect by Rao and Young (1999) provides an interesting background to the British scene. They polled citizens on the subject of trust in their local representatives or on a jury of citizens chosen at random. The results were:

Table 5.6: UK Voters’ Trust in Councillors or a ‘Jury’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Councillors</th>
<th>‘Jury’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just about always</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the time</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost never</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rao and Young (1999)

As the authors point out in an earlier volume (1995) 47% of people felt that councillors lose touch with constituents quickly. In a later series (1999) the figure rose to 55%.

On the subject of citizen input to local decisions, UK voters felt that their votes did just
Table 5.7: Perceived Value of Citizen Input to Local Decisions in the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In deciding how things are run</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too complicated to know for whom to vote</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No point because it makes no difference</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


So low turnout or not, people do count.

However the authors Young and Rao do point out that the above 1995 report showed a marked decline in citizens’ sense of feeling politically important from a figure taken 30 years previously of 75%. This seems to explain the rather siege-like mentality which councillors have towards their voters. It emerges from the questionnaire as if councillors have little real rapport with their responsibilities. I think that the very strong growing influence of Whitehall on local government autonomy induces a sense of impotence in British representatives from which their Swiss counterparts do not suffer.

Rao and Young (1999) show that less central control was strongly espoused by respondents during the Thatcher years, however in 1998 this showed a marked decline from 39% to 27% in the first year of New Labour. This in the 21st century has swung back again as local elections indicate.

The apathy of the UK electorate was a strong theme. Yet despite this apparent apathy Topf (1995, Ch.3, Klingemann citing Parry et al 1992) shows that in Britain voters are far more inclined to consult their local councillors than their MP - 1 in 5 as against 1 in 10. Perhaps Whitehall has not after all sapped all local significance!

The imagined prestige and political importance of Westminster members is surely offset against the personal knowledge of and links with that voters have of local councillors. In an increasingly centralised age also, local representatives are the only rock to which voters can cling to acquire meaning in the local environment.
As a sidelight on British local elections being largely a publicity desert, in an article ‘More participation, More Democracy’, Parry and Moyser (1994) show that only signing petitions seems to arouse voters. 63% said they had undertaken this at least once. However on party matters such as canvassing, clerical work etc a mere 4% admitted participating.

The attitude of the British regarding active party political work has its parallel in Switzerland as shown below.

**The Swiss political scene**

General interest by the citizens in political party affairs is low. Four groups were chosen by Finger and Sciarini (1990): (a) those who claimed high political interest; (b) those average; (c) those a little; and finally (d) those not interested. Each group were then asked to state their activism in practice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Inactivity</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly interested</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averagely</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Finger and Sciarini (1990) (p.78)*

It looks as if voter indifference is higher in Switzerland than the UK (see table above) but whereas the Swiss are faced with almost a surfeit of polls, the British are not. Therefore the occasional voting pattern in the UK is almost a novelty when it occurs. However whereas in both cases party political activity seems to be in the doldrums yet only the Swiss can and do fall back on their numerous voting opportunities.

When I wrote about the barren four-year election cycle in Britain the following comparable Swiss local figures show a contrast (*Données statistiques*, 1999):

*Cantonal issues*

During 1988, 5 issues ranging from a halt to automatic increases in
taxation (a Popular Initiative which was passed), a new crossing of Geneva marina (passed), later opening of shops (failed) a new law proposing better transport facilities and a Counter Proposal (passed);

*Federal level*

A federal decree on co-ordination of Swiss communications and four Popular Initiatives on lowering pension ages to 62 for men and 60 for women, limiting immigration and curtailing property speculation (failed).

This inevitably keeps democracy ticking merrily away throughout the period of a council’s life and can explain political apathy regarding routine party politics bearing in mind that communal initiatives must be added to the totals. It also goes some way to explaining what Qvortrup meant on page 104.

**Political efficacy by education**

One area in each country forms a common link across the political scene and that is Education. Swiss and British academics are unanimous in their belief that the level of education is a vital factor in a voter’s decision making.

The link between education and political activity has interested pollsters in both Switzerland and Britain. In this thesis the study of political participation in each of the countries has been intimately connected with the discipline. In Britain Butler (1995) shows that in 1992 the background of Members of Parliament has been a vital factor in the make-up of the parliamentary parties. Thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Butler (1995) (p.82)*
Thus good academic and professional qualifications seem to apply in both parties and, in the case of Labour, the percentage of manual Parliamentarians has dropped from 37% in 1951 to 22% in 1992. Clearly education is a factor which influences political turnout and choice. However Topf (1995) has shown that generally in Europe at election times education does not seem to play a crucial role in deciding turn-out ‘educational attainment is not significant in national elections but is in other forms’.

This latter point could apply to the host of, at times, complex issues which occur in countries practising some form of direct participatory democracy, for example Denmark, Italy Switzerland and the USA. Indeed Topf adds that:

‘it appears from three data points we have available that in Austria and Switzerland the least well educated are far less likely to vote than the most highly educated.’ (page 48)

In Switzerland two Geneva University lecturers, Finger and Sciarini, carried out a similar poll in 1990. They found that of three levels of educational attainment in the population - Inferior, Average and Superior - the levels of political activity were sharply contrasted. Matthew Finger summed it up thus: ‘The level of education is the factor which exercises the greatest influence on political activity’ (p.72).

In the following chart he shows this in that the less educated have a far higher score in low political activity than either the average or above average groups - and vice versa.

Table 5.10: Educational Attainment Levels and Activity Levels in Politics in Switzerland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity levels in politics</th>
<th>Below average</th>
<th>average</th>
<th>above average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly active</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very active</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finger and Sciarini (1999)

In British Social Attitudes (12th Report), admittedly 5 years later than the above polls, Jowell and Curtice (1995) show that levels of educational attainment strongly affect people’s political efficacy. Even on the lowest rating of efficacy only 16% of degree
holders were rated as poor whereas 65% of CSE qualifiers did so. Similarly on High performance 32% of graduates registered compared to 2% of those with CSE qualifications only.

Admittedly the authors pose an interesting question. If education has expanded so greatly in recent years why has political efficacy not kept pace? It may be as they go on that political efficacy may be more linked to 'the perceived operation of the political system itself'. This brings me back to my main thesis that a good system of participatory democracy provides the greatest opportunities for multiple provision for all sorts and conditions of voters as in those countries which have adopted it.

Crewe, Mackay and Newton (1998) seem to sum up the current and recent weaknesses in British local government when they write: ‘Local accountability depends crucially on the relationship between paying for locals services and voting in local elections’ (p.446). As this link has been eroded so local democracy has been weakened. This points up the stark contrast in political terms between the very large autonomy of Swiss cantons and the more circumscribed power bases of British councils. The counter-balancing effect of UK local democracy over central government’s immense powers cannot be compared with the parallel effect in Swiss federal/local affairs.

In contrast to this the Swiss are at their most active very locally i.e. at communal level according to Finger and Sciarini (1990).

**Table 5.11: Political Parties Across Switzerland**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Christian Democrat</th>
<th>Socialist</th>
<th>People’s Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communal</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Finger and Sciarini (1990)*

As Finger points out this table shows the intensely local and parochial nature of Swiss federal politics and that direct democracy shows its greatest successes at
cantonal/communal levels as is borne out by Marco Guigni in ‘Les impacts de la directe démocratie’ (1990).

Militancy

Unofficial action from time to time by sections of the population are widespread throughout Western European countries. There is a crucial difference between civil action (outside voting) in Switzerland and the rest of Europe. Topf (1995) on page 78 shows that in Britain, Norway and Sweden ‘well over two thirds of their electorates are participants in some mode or other of unconventional activity’ but there is no immediate electoral advantage offered. In Switzerland as Kriesi and Wisher (1996) show the existence of direct democracy has absorbed much of the underlying resentment caused by sublimating this into (often) productive channels.

Direct democracy is utilised by Swiss social movements but very radical groups are more obvious in rest of Europe. This is borne out to an extent by the authors who show that of all labour unrest (official and non official):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France militancy</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss militancy</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(pp 10-24)

France looms large over the western part of Switzerland (where the French speaking cantons are situated - Geneva, Neuchatel, Valais et al). The authors make the point also that in the French speaking cantons where the threshold of entry to an Initiative is higher that in the German cantons so militancy and unofficial action in general are higher. All of the foregoing strengthens the value of local and popular government in Switzerland. Not one of respondents mentioned the influence, great or small, of the central government on cantonal politics. There was an implied assumption of local sovereignty being the arbiter of action. The overshadowing effect of Westminster was however a recurring theme of the British replies. All in all, considering some of the replies, Sartori’s (cited in Beetham, 1994) comment that ‘the lack of sense in politicians is worse than in the electorate’ may be less cynical than it seems.
British and Swiss - millenium up-date on surveys

A decade can produce significant changes in popular moods over various issues. Below are some more recent views on democracy in both Switzerland and Britain. Because one can say that the views of councillors, non professional and voluntary though they may be, are likely to support their own system, I have included the general views of the electorate in both countries on political affairs. Despite some evidence that freedom to express ones opinion rates more highly than the right to vote yet participatory democracy in Switzerland remains firmly entrenched in the electorate. The British despite the acceptance of central government direction nevertheless show a great keenness to participate in petition campaigns. Parry & Moyser (1994, Table 3.1) show that apart from voting, signing petitions fairly frequently rates at 40% a far higher citizen action that any other political activity most of which are in single figures, the sole exception being contacting ones local councillor. Perhaps councillors are not so divorced from public concerns as many have thought.

The vital difference between the Swiss and British signature collection is that in Switzerland such actions can lead to productive constitutional results, namely referenda. In the UK they frequently run into the sand.

Swiss grass-roots opinion

The University of Berne (Linder & Delgrande, 1995-99) has carried out a series of surveys during the 1990s on Swiss people’s attitudes to their own direct democracy. When they were asked to compare the relative importance of voting through direct democracy or just in elections (where ‘votes’ mean referenda), the results were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Votes more important</th>
<th>Elections more important</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So, participatory democracy appears to be far more popular than conventional elections. The next table seems to confirm this clear feeling.

In 1999 Swiss voters were asked to consider a number of options regarding political participation in general (figure are percentages):
Table 5.12: Voting Preferences – Swiss Citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of participation</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>No reply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voting (in DD)*</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signing a Popular Initiative</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Demonstrations</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Activist</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Direct democracy

Source: Univox (1999), p. 2, University of Berne

Like their British counterparts, Swiss citizens are loath to show party political loyalty but yet are far more reluctant to take part in public demonstrations than British people. Overall the Swiss are very strongly devoted to their direct democracy despite its acknowledged weaknesses and frequent ‘log-jams’.

Clive Church (2000) speaks of Switzerland as being ‘A Paradigm in Evolution.’ However, this paradigm he believes is in danger because of:

1. The famous neutrality being eroded by the ending of the ‘cold war’
2. The slump (Swiss style) of the 1990’s
3. 19% of the population (the immigrants) denied full citizenship
4. An aging population and the rise of nationalism.

(pp101-102)

He does not see the above as fundamental but symptomatic of unwelcome change. Despite all this Church believes that the unique blend of democracy, consocialism and give and take which has characterised the ‘evolution of the Swiss paradigm seems likely to continue’. He further avows that ‘civil society can be seen as having the upper hand over the state’ (p.99 of article).

All this may help to explain the rise in popularity of the Peoples Party - second to the Socialists in representation in the National Council since 1999. Their ‘rightish’ wing approach of ‘neutrality and independence’ fosters all things Swiss.
British political attitudes

On the specific issue of local taxation either in 1989 or 1994 voters are clear:

Table 5.13: UK Local Taxation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In 1989</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Councils</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Govt</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In 1994</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Councils</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Govt</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jowell & Curtice, 1995 (p.97)

When the votes are broken down into political party preferences, the position changes so that the Conservatives show only a small preference for local taxation whilst the Labour and Liberal parties demonstrate an overwhelming preference for local taxation. This shows, and the authors believe, that local support for local government is waning under the accretion of power by Westminster (a marked contrast with the cantons).

Despite the apparent acceptance by the electorate (table above) that central government is likely to continue to enjoy the support of its role in local affairs, yet indeed there are clear signs of an underlying yearning for action by the voters. Expressing ones view in public through petitions is a flourishing business as Parry and Moyser (1994) show. Out of twenty forms of UK citizen political activity analysed by the authors under two headings - (1) ‘at least once’ or (2) ‘often now and then’:

Table 5.14: Control over British County Councils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under (1)</th>
<th>(1) Only voting at 86% exceeded petitions</th>
<th>(63%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under (2)</td>
<td>(2) Only voting at 68%</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Parry and Moyser (1994) (p.47)
All the rest – groups, campaigning, protest or contacting local representatives - all scored single figures or in the teens. Interestingly of the contact group, ones local councillor had greater support than the Member of Parliament. In the case of the Swiss voter, too, signature collection was very popular also.

In the British case more often than not the petition would seem to disappear through the doors of No.10 Downing Street irrespective of the administration in power and is never heard of again.

The British national education policy however was deemed to be superior to that of the fragmented Swiss in terms of standardisation in examinations and guide lines in a nation which is far more mobile than the Swiss. The questionnaires express the attitudes and feelings of policy makers in two very different contexts on the implications and consequences of political participation as they see it for their respective communities.

The Swiss respondents show their desire for participatory democracy within the cantonal/commune framework and interestingly relegate national government interference to a relatively minor role. This arises from the fact that despite some modern encroachment by the federal government, the cantons still remain very largely autonomous in important areas as the chapters on structures and political ‘cladding’ show. This in turn engenders self confidence in the significance of local affairs.

Certainly political participation as embodied in referenda and initiatives show considerable success at cantonal/communal levels. According to the councillors they generate real enthusiasm in the community. The frustrations and log-jams in democracy were there to be overcome and were no excuse for jettisoning the system. Yet the enthusiasm of Swiss councillors is very much tempered by criticisms of the shortcomings of their system of direct democracy. The tedious delays between launching and voting on initiatives is castigated. Higher entry conditions are frequently advocated.

Switzerland, despite its widespread use of direct and semi-direct democracy, is no model participatory land as was the Yugoslav experiment which Pateman (1970) outlined. Participation exists in Switzerland side by side with a representative democracy not unlike the British: regular elections to parliament, the formulation of national legislation,
a federal machinery and above all a capitalist economy in which Marxism has no place live happily with a popular democracy.

Looking at the replies overall of both countries two features stand out in the Swiss questionnaire. First, the assured sense of their cantons importance in the context of Swiss sovereignty in the eyes of councillors. Secondly, the different contexts on the implications and consequences of political participation as they see it for their respective communities.

Kriesi and Wisher also point out that many small but genuine groups in cantons would launch an initiative had they the funds.

From the British standpoint the three main points of significance were first, the dislike for most respondents of any thoughts of extending our existing democratic representation on more direct lines; secondly, the less than enthusiastic attitude towards constituents by many councillors; thirdly a mixture of several factors: the dominance of Whitehall, the lack of knowledge by constituents of the political landscape locally and finally the very positive and, seemingly superior, educational system in Britain by comparison with the fragmented Swiss model.

It is important to consider that Swiss participatory democracy has grown steadily over the past century and more. The Edmund ‘Burkean’ and isolated nature of British representative democracy may explain many of the UK answers. The four-yearly cycle of British local elections, often uninterrupted by any issue, or by any issue which arises and cannot find an immediate outlet, explains much dissatisfaction. In Switzerland the frequency of issues, however unwelcome the number may be, at least maintains all concerned in a constant dialogue with one group or another.

Curiously whereas some Swiss respondents believed that the ‘hung’ parliament of Geneva canton plus the constant need to reach a consensus whenever possible often results in a lack of a true interface for ideas, yet some British councillors complain that the huge majority in the Buckinghamshire council ranged against them by the governing party induces a sense of despair and frustration.

Finally, we have been discussing local politicians and political activity. Ladner (1999)
writing in an article on the influence of direct democracy on political parties in Switzerland refutes the view that direct democracy weakens political parties. He makes two important points. First this question of parties: democracy must be studied at cantonal level rather than federal because the variety and extent of direct democracy makes empirical study more fruitful. Secondly political parties in the cantons find that many initiatives and referenda act as catalysts for activity by political parties rather than disincentives. This may explain the lack of anxiety by Swiss councillors of any damaging effect on them of local direct democracy. Ladner sums it up:

“This paper’s empirical test in the 26 cantons makes it clear that DD matters for political parties. The widespread thesis that direct democracy weakens parties can, in a generalised form, not be maintained.’ (p.295)

It might console British councillors who fear an expansion of such democracy in Britain. In the light of the apathy I outlined at party level in both countries the above remarks by Ladner apply to the flurry of party activity which an Initiative or referendum usually generates.

Conclusion

Political participation as we have seen takes many forms. The mere fact of voting regularly is one factor common to both Britain and Switzerland with variations. Beyond this, in the case of both countries, there is widespread participation by people either as members of pressure groups or of a multitude of voluntary organisations in health, education, social welfare, etc. In the case of Britain, as Parry and Moyser (1994) wrote, such activity within its parameters is quite successful.

Britain does make limited use of referenda but only through government sponsored motions and generally at national level. Plenty of local referenda and questionnaires by various bodies take place. These do not carry any real political cachet however. Commissions too are appointed from time to time in order to deal with contentious issues such as racial problems, drugs or disasters. When all these democratic outlets are exhausted however the UK citizen must fall back upon demonstrations - large or small, violent and otherwise, the poll tax controversy being a case in point.
The Swiss concept of the Popular Initiative available at all levels of government does not exist in Britain. Of course it may not need to exist in Britain. What must be remembered is as Fuchs and Klingemann (1995) say when writing of representative democracy that it may be the ‘second best solution’, in which case Switzerland points the way to another.

In Britain local councils do enjoy considerable powers to implement their policies despite central government curbs, capping or grants. They have their own pressure groups which can confer with central government. People voice their views to local land tribunals and polls are carried out nationwide at local level on contentious issues. British provincial government does however lack the degree of power, resources and clearly defined independence that Swiss cantons and communes enjoy. The picture in Switzerland although perhaps superficially similar is in reality very different.

The nature of the federal constitution means that cantons dispose of far more responsibilities than their British colleagues. Thus health, the judiciary, police schools, universities, education and some defence, as we have seen, are both run and largely funded by the cantons besides the other local matters for which UK councils are responsible such as parks, roads and sewage. On top of this the Swiss make extensive use of Initiatives and referenda to enforce the popular will either by vetoing legislation or by inhibiting government from launching such a measure in future. The existence of a network of Associations d’Intérêt in cantons and communes promotes participation and political involvement.

A caveat
The enthusiasm for Swiss participatory democracy which has emerged in this chapter must be set against some very real drawbacks which are obvious in the system. The President of the Radical party in Geneva, M. Hafner, an international lawyer and major in the Swiss army, believed that the Swiss are too parochial and rarely concentrate on a single great national issue. He also believed that direct democracy can militate against democracy itself because ‘minorities opt out of major votes when they are defeated’.

(Appendix, doc.65)

The Christian Democrats (see Appendix, doc.66) to the left of the Radicals also felt that the Swiss were weak on national issues and that direct democracy too could be
manipulated by minorities unable to fall in if they fail. In fact the political leaders, irrespective of party, stated two themes common to all, the first being the danger that too many Initiatives can block the system and secondly that minorities must not be allowed to totally dictate the direction of politics.

Nevertheless, again from all leaders, came the cry that the benefits far outweighed the drawbacks. Kris Kobach (1993) makes an important general point regarding the Swiss political instrument of the facultative referendum when he states:

‘The imperative to avoid a referendal challenge forces legislators to seek the broadest possible basis of support, because political majorities in the parliament do not guarantee popular majorities in referendums.’ (p.362)

The Damoclean sword of the challenge to federal laws, Kobach feels, actually promotes consensus even if under duress at times.

The effect of all this renders local government very important in Swiss eyes but also imbues the voter with perhaps a latent sense of his power over his own and the destinies of his country. However, some prominent figures in Swiss academe are aware of the downside in Swiss direct democracy - the excessive flow of Initiatives and referenda, logjams, and uneven opportunities between cantons. In the final analysis these and the vast bulk of the country cling tenaciously to their democracy. The Swiss voter knows that he or she has in their keeping a political system which is moulded to their local and national needs. It does seem to express the sovereign will in a Rousseauesque manner and even more prevents them becoming mere pawns in an overbearing majority regime. There is nothing of the rather rigid ‘communitarianism’ which Cochrane (1989) outlines. There is rather a strong emphasis on the role of the individual and his vote within the cantonal atmosphere. As we have seen political participation is taken seriously in both Switzerland and Britain. The UK may lag behind the Swiss in practical implementation but in the past 20 to 30 years there has been a conscious and successful growth in various forms of social awareness in this field in most of the major British ‘heights of the economy’.

Chapter 7 will place into the Swiss political scene an issue which arose over the ever present subject of education. It will examine as it were the end product of Swiss democracy i.e. the right of citizens, providing the preliminary conditions are met, to raise an issue and have it thoroughly exposed to public opinion finally culminating in a popular
vote. I shall compare this with a similar issue which occurred in Britain at about the same time and consider the course and outcome in both countries from the democratic viewpoint.

In the next chapter I describe more fully the way in which these comparisons were drawn.
CHAPTER 6: RATIONALE UNDERLYING THE METHODOLOGY FOR THE SWISS AND BRITISH RESEARCH

Rationale
The fundamental aim of this research has been to show that the Swiss model of direct and participatory democracy is more suited to citizens’ needs than the British variety. Local or even large provincial matters can often generate as much interest in the electorate as national matters. Both Switzerland, in the shape of Geneva canton, and Britain, in the County of Buckinghamshire, experienced socio-political issues which occurred at about the same time and so they were chosen.

Many issues, crucial or routine, come before a typical local council every year. I sought to discover the views of those who have to process them and what they felt about their own democratic structures. Did they measure up to citizens’ needs? Could they be improved? Having served as a non-political co-opted member of the Buckinghamshire Education Committee and having also talked to members of Geneva Grand Council, I decided to submit questionnaires to both the British and Swiss bodies as one means of discovering what kind of democratic system existed in each respective local area. Both sets of councillors were citizens rooted in their communities and were also local politicians. They represented all political shades of opinion. My methodology was based to an extent on the views of Burton (2000) in her volume on ‘Research Training’.

Questionnaires
The two sets of questionnaires, on which I comment, below vary from each to an extent because the social scenes, politics, religion and regional governments differ considerably in each country. As Burton (2000, p.335) says: ‘In extreme cases it may be necessary to use different questionnaires for different groups’. I have partially adapted this technique. However Questions 1 and 2 (Swiss) on direct democracy and Question 4 (British) on the same these, together with Question 4 (Swiss) and Question 1 (British) on ‘low turnout’, are directly comparable.

I picked the Buckinghamshire Council’s Education Committee partly because I had served on it and debated many different issues over a period of four years, partly because
my tenure covered the Milton Keynes Grammar School controversy, and because at 35 to 40 members it was the largest body within the Council. In the Swiss case I was advised by Dr Bollinger, the then Chef de l’Information, to canvass the whole council. Towards the end of each study on Switzerland and Britain I have incorporated sample answers from the questionnaires. Many of these, unlike tick-box polls, were three- to ten-line considered replies. I have also used British and Swiss national polls to incorporate a wider perspective.

Questions - United Kingdom (Buckinghamshire)

Qu.1: Why do you think that UK local elections produce such meagre turn-outs on fairly infrequent polls?

Low turnout has been a bugbear in British local politics for many years as it also has in Switzerland. I sought to probe the intimate connection between candidates and votes in terms of reasons or excuses, and the influence of central government etc.

Qu.2a In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?

The local media in Buckinghamshire differs from that in Geneva. The Swiss press cover continuously and extensively the party scenes as well as the numerous local initiatives. This is not so in Buckinghamshire and also councillors seem to feel there is great bias against the local Conservative party. Swiss democracy of itself generates a great deal of recurrent political argument arising from the many initiatives and referenda which occur annually and this is fuel for the press.

Qu.2b What is your view towards the church on politics?

The matter of the Church is quite different in both countries. Whereas Switzerland has a major political party representing the Catholics nationwide (the Christian Democrats) and minor ones in the protestant interest, we have none. I wanted to discover the views of British ‘non affiliated’ (in the religious sense) councillors towards the church on politics. The replies seemed to justify the exercise.

Qu.3. Do you think that education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential? If so, what?
The issue of education shows a stark contrast between the two countries in terms of control. I aimed to discover councillors’ feelings about the ‘balance’ adopted by Buckinghamshire in comparison with Geneva and what change they would ideally bring in. As for Geneva, education is rooted in cantonal sovereignty and is one constituent of the lifeblood of Swiss local government as Gunther Hega (2000, pp.1-35) shows. While a fairly open ended question on share of control of education per se makes sense to UK councillors, it would not to the Swiss.

Qu.4.  *Should Buckinghamshire citizens have a greater input into our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-options of people to represent committees on matters of local interest or perhaps local referenda?*

Direct democracy, for example through Initiatives, or referenda local or national, is either very rare or consultative only in the UK. My question was designed not only to envisage how democracy might be improved in Buckinghamshire but to see on what grounds respondents defended the status quo.

Qu.5.  *Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Buckinghamshire form such an integrated unit?*

Ever smaller units in Switzerland flourish at local level. What did councillors feel about the size of Buckinghamshire. Were there any snags?

Qu.6.  *What reasons would you advance for being a county councillor, especially on the education committee?*

What drives a councillor to become one? This basically was the purpose of this question. I did not put the same question to the Genevan councillors because the Swiss questions 1. and especially 2. brought out Swiss councillors’ role in public service.

*The Swiss questions*

Primarily I set out to discover how far Swiss direct democracy still holds the affections and allegiance of Swiss voters after 100 years of operation. I also questioned them as to the extent that they personally have been involved. The proliferation of splinter parties, arising from PR, also elicited good responses as did the question on voting apathy. (c.f. UK attitude).
Qu.1. *Switzerland is one of those countries which allows a very large participation in its political life. Does this system still retain its validity? Does it respond to the exigencies of modern life?*

This thesis aims to show the great value that direct participatory democracy can achieve. Therefore my first question to the Swiss was on their own attitudes to the system and whether it still worked well. A torrent of enthusiasm seemed to emerge in the replies. Even allowing for the desire of the Swiss to present ‘a good picture’ I felt that an underlying well of faith had been tapped.

Qu.2. *Have you already participated personally in a Popular Initiative or referendum? Have you benefited personally from one of these?*

Popular Initiatives are so widespread in every canton and commune of Switzerland as well as the federal level input that this question on councillors’ personal involvement and reactions seemed to be essential. I hoped to see how far councillors were practically involved and committed.

Qu.3. *Do you think that the new parties and movements (nationalist, ecologist, anti-nuclear, automobilist, independent, etc.) modify traditional democracy?*

This question arose from the prominence that the splinter groups, thrown up by the PR system of voting, seem to have, at any rate in Geneva. My object in this question was to probe councillors’ views, especially of the traditional parties, on whether they represented an opportunity or a threat to them.

Qu.4. *How do you explain the generally low rate of participation in voting?*

Why low rates of voting? I framed this question as I believed that low rates of turn-out might stem from very different causes in both countries. (They did). Mere apathy might be a cause but central government interference, as in Britain, it could not be! Could there be any relationship to political participation or what?

Qu.5. *The Swiss political system is considered an ideal model to the foreigner. Do you agree?*

The rationale behind this was that as the Swiss are so wedded to their particular kind of political participation, then perhaps they might feel it could be applied in other democracies. Here my object was to judge how far euphoria might lead answers to
become absurdly universal. The answers were surprising.

In composing these two sets of questionnaires, I hoped to gain an insight into the special features, good or bad, of the respective democratic political structures prevailing in these two countries. They are bound together by a common tie of free elections, free speech and a generally open media. Beyond this the differences are profound. It was these that I hoped to bring to the surface.

However in view of the many differences in life styles and approaches to democracy I saw no need to force comparisons where they would have been absurd (such as local control of schools) or even cause resentment. I limited the number of questions because as Burton (2000) writes ‘long questionnaires can put people off’ (p.340).

In general I had two goals in mind. First that both sets of councillors were tested on their attitudes towards, in the Swiss case, their ongoing feelings about direct democracy in practice and secondly for the UK representatives on their feelings about the possibility of direct democracy were such a system to be adopted in Britain.

My questions were as open ended as possible to avoid the pitfall cited by Burton (2000) when she writes: ‘In one sense survey answers are merely responses that are elicited in an artificial situation which is orchestrated by the researcher’ (p.340). The replies were sufficiently vigorous at times and seemed to justify the approach.

The questions are geared to the local and national circumstances prevailing in each country. This I felt would unravel the intricacies of political life in each country without either straining for comparisons, asking pointless questions or even giving offence.

**Interviews**

In the case of the interviews, however, my aim was to solicit the views of men and women in both countries of some standing in their communities, whether professional or amateur, on the subject of citizen participation, representing ‘A small number of face-to-face semi-structured interviews with key informants’ (Burton 2000). Their standing could be religious, political or administrative. I interviewed a British Member of Parliament, a Swiss member of federal committees, the Secretary of Geneva University,
two Buckinghamshire Directors of Education, and three religious leaders: a British Baptist Church Area Superintendent, the secretary of the Swiss Protestant Ecumenical Council (drafted unwillingly into his militia training) and the European Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

I also talked with the mayor who was president of all the Geneva communes, the Federal Director of Information in Berne, the presidents of the main political parties in Geneva canton and the Chairmen of a District Council plus the housing chief of Aylesbury Council. These very different people provided an interesting cross-section of what participation can mean. There are more political interviews in Geneva partly because I wanted to ask about the political-militia aspects of life. (Interviews were conducted with a note pad and subsequently written up the same evening.) Some of my more recent interviews were designed to see how far attitudes have changed in recent years.

Evaluating the evidence
The research methodology of questionnaires and personal interviews in both Britain and Switzerland was designed to draw out the considered opinions of key people in the local political scenes of each country, specifically in Buckinghamshire and the canton of Geneva. A wide spectrum of views emerged from these investigations. These varied views cannot be taken at face value. Their focus was on how well or badly these citizens perceived the democratic process to be working. By this methodology it has been possible to develop and compare an understanding of the political cultures of the two local government institutions.

However, there are between pages 142-153 a set of tables showing the national perspective in each country. These display a wider dimension of views not subject to the often narrow and parochial atmosphere generated by local politics. Other research methods such as triangulation whereby one set of results can be, to an extent, validated by those from two other different standpoints could be employed, or, sampling survey data or in depth interviews with central government politicians and these might well have resulted in a different ‘take’ and produced a different picture. A degree of sceptical distancing would have emerged from such an exercise. For the purposes of this thesis the methodology employed revealed, I believe, the institutional culture within which

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36 Marsh D. and Stoker G. “Theory and Method in Political Science” pps 237-238
educational and other policy was made, especially the value placed upon citizen participation.

CHAPTER 7: AN EXAMINATION OF SWISS PARTICIPATION OVER AN ISSUE IN EDUCATION WHICH OCCURRED IN THE SWISS CANTON OF GENEVA: 1960-1999

Introduction

Having examined the varying structures of government which exist in both Switzerland and Britain, followed by study of how much popular participation actually occurs at different levels of society in both states, whether strictly political or more social, it is now proposed to examine in some detail participation in practice on an important and often emotive issue - education. It so happened that twenty years ago in both Britain and Switzerland one such matter arose and in both countries at local levels.

My purpose is also to demonstrate the way in which two very different political systems cater for their respective voters when confronted by a burning issue. Fundamentally the matter that occurred in both countries, in the case of Britain at county level, and in Switzerland in a canton was: how can academic ability be fairly acknowledged?

I would state emphatically that the essence of the study is to consider how differently participatory or representative democratic systems cater for people’s needs. It so happened that the issue in this case was over selection. It could well have been concerned with any of scores of issues that crop up in community life. The two issues are treated separately, the Swiss matter here, and the British variant in the next chapter.

Having considered the existing educational framework which in fact obtained in the region in order to make sense of what subsequently transpired, I shall examine in detail the actual nature of the issue that exercised the Swiss in Geneva canton.

Education in Geneva before 1962

In Geneva education has for many years past been influenced by the radical approach adopted by the French speaking cantons, five in number of which Geneva is one which
stood in the van of pursuing such objectives. The revolutionary influence has persisted in these western regions because Geneva and its surrounding area were part of the Napoleonic empire and were infused by the drastic reorganisation then being imposed by metropolitan France.

When freedom returned after the fall of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna (1815), the bases of the political network and the economy remained but, as Masnata (1991) observed, ‘Les privilèges de lieu et de naissance ne sont pas rétablis.’ (p.38) Thus in effect the role of the communes, in other words of the people, was not evident because identity and place are at the heart of Swiss communal life. This still takes the form of a centralising tendency directed from the cantonal government at the expense of the communes owing to the Napoleonic legacy. One Genevan newspaper, the catholic ‘Courier’, complained:

‘Geneva and Basle town are the only cantons in Switzerland where the cantonal authority can disown the communal authority’ (13/9/90).

This centralising tendency and its attendant radical legacy has ensured that Geneva has often led the rest of Switzerland in the field of reform as will be demonstrated in this chapter. In the midst of this very selective Swiss educational system Geneva has introduced comprehensive education at secondary level.

The underlying reasons for the above radical departure from what had hitherto prevailed in Genevan education until 1963 was the simple fact that in Switzerland, as elsewhere in Europe, there has emerged in the post-war years an intense conflict of ideas. The virtues of Comprehension versus selection, the rise of private investment, the changes in class structures, etc. These movements generated ripples which spread even to Switzerland. Education was drawn inevitably into the debate. It was, in fact, the introduction of comprehensive education in Geneva which ultimately triggered the Popular Initiative to be discussed later in this chapter.

As if to emphasise the importance of education in practical life, Finger and Sciarini (1990) have identified the level of a person’s education as crucial to their involvement in political matters. Matthew Finger puts it thus:
‘The level of education is the factor which influences political activity. In other words it is the criteria for which political awareness varies so much from one category to another.’ (p.72)

The fact that, for different and often very understandable reasons (not least their own jealously guarded autonomy), by far the majority of cantons still adopt a selective form of secondary education results in variety of standards. Thus whereas the average size of lower secondary classes in the state is 17.5, yet in Glarus and Grison it is 14.5 but rises to 20.5 in Jura (McKinnon, Newbold and Hales, 1997, p.247).

Financial resources which might enable development and innovation are also often very slender in small cantons. All this helps to explain that while the average figure for non-selective education throughout the state was 81.5%, yet in Basle Land it was 61.5% and in Glarus 91.1%. (Office Federal de la Statistique, 1989).

As the Council of Europe state in a booklet (Secondary Education in Switzerland, 1995):

‘Different experiments in comprehensive schools have not survived the experimental stage with the exception of the pre specialization classes in the canton of Geneva.’ (p.22)

Therefore it is no co-incidence that Geneva which has introduced varieties of comprehensive education is a modern and affluent centre of international influence and has a strong radical tradition.

Bearing in mind the 90% control that cantonal authorities exercise over their own affairs, not least education, such drastic re-organisation as Geneva undertook would be bound to cause social and political controversy.

In general according to the statistics of the OECD (1993) report Switzerland spends slightly more of its GDP on education than the UK to the extent of 5.4% as against 5.3%. So education however organised is a very significant factor in Swiss life. All these elements produce a close relationship between the political democracies of the cantons and the world of education.

*Education in Geneva before the reforms were introduced*
Prior to 1962 a child entering upon the compulsory secondary level of education might be directed to a number of different schools all catering for separate specialities, e.g. Science, Classics or practical subjects. Each maintained its own social cachet, in that. Science and Classics carried more weight than practical subjects. The new plan envisaged eliminating the various types of schools and converting the buildings into establishments all of which would offer the same facilities as each other.

Masnata and Rubattel (1991) outline the problems of education and society in Switzerland in 1991. This situation certainly existed in 1963 in Geneva. Masnata argues that there is (and was) a need to bridge the socio-economic gap in families:

‘There are many who think that the equality of schooling will somehow heal the rifts in society. They believe that schools are ‘neutral’ and this belief has been compounded by the wide variety of autonomous cantonal organisation’ (pp.160-163)

They go on to say that this false belief of neutrality has inhibited most cantons from trying ‘toute étude globale du système scolaire’.

Masnatta quotes Walo Hutmacher who seems to crystallise the problem in a sensible and pragmatic way:

‘Attempts to democratise studies have taken into consideration the need to be sensible and the needs of well qualified manpower in a capitalist economy but, which does not allow elitism to mask a need for fostering all ‘young human resources’ (p.163).

The main outline of the comprehensive scheme as implemented was one such an attempt to launch a comprehensive structure. This met some of Masnata’s strictures.

During the early sixties Geneva council and educational authorities set an entirely new course for the canton. (as Britain did in its schools). To quote the chairman of the Education Committee, M. Follmi, writing nearly 30 years after the experiment was launched:

‘During the sixties Geneva instituted reforms, restructuring and experiments in the educational system. Was it change for the sake of change? No indeed! Co-education of children, democratisation of studies and responding to the needs of a
modern society and economy were the driving forces.’

(or again)

‘The insistence on acquiring knowledge ought not to blind us to the fact that we have a mission to extend education into a preparation for life in a complex and rapidly changing world’ (Department of Education ‘L’an 2000, c’est demain’ Dept de l’instruction publique – 1990)

Why should the views of an education committee chairman carry weight? Whereas in UK such a figure although perhaps important within narrow limits would not have the power to change government policy, yet in Switzerland they are powerful political figures controlling all aspects of educational reform and finance in the canton simply by virtue of the power inherent in a Swiss cantonal educational structure.

In 1962 the Genevan cantonal Grand Conseil had responded to the mounting socio-political and economic pressures then stirring in Europe and the radical canton of Geneva itself. The increasingly severe world economic climate was even affecting the hitherto invincible Swiss economy. Outdated industrial and educational practices appeared ripe for reform. It was deemed right in Geneva to respond to educational trends abroad. In Sweden and Great Britain comprehensive educational planning became government policy. The concept of parity of esteem in schools was considered to be in tune with the speed of technical advance in industry and commerce making use of all children’s talents. Wilfred Carr writing in 1991 (as an advocate of comprehensive education) clearly points to the dividing line between selection and comprehensive education in Britain but it applies world wide.

‘Education is only found embedded in the discourse, social relationships and practices of some form of social life.’ Education had to be inextricably linked to the pattern of society. It was (he goes on) defined as: ‘the primary role of education in a democracy is to provide all its future members with the opportunity to develop those intellectual qualities which meaningful participation in democratic life requires’ (pp.183-190).

All this may seem to agree with the priorities of the advocates of the Popular Initiative launched by the Liberal party (described later in this chapter and also the section on Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, and the parental attitudes there in Chapter 8). It is however the interpretation that is the key.
However in 1962 Geneva instituted the *Cycle d'Orientation* (below). In January 1999 thirty years later the bulletin of the department of the ‘*Cycle d'Orientation*’ put it: ‘This assembly of disciplines allows pupils to develop their own skill in the different areas through well directed practice.’ (p.2)

Meanwhile the Geneva Grand Council, in effect, converted the existing very compartmentalised and selective educational system in Geneva into Comprehensive schooling, namely *Le Cycle d'Orientation*. All this put Geneva in the forefront in introducing a major change in the cantonal system of education but still within cantonal jurisdiction. Its main purpose was to ‘democratise studies’. This meant so modernising the school structures of the canton that they could be brought into line with the needs of its younger generation faced with the increasing tempo of change in society.

The following plan was presented to the people of Geneva in 1962:

**Diagram 7.1 Canton of Geneva education system (*Cycle d'Orientation*)**
Notes on education plan

1. Prior to 1963 all schools in Geneva pursued their own highly selective curricula.
2. Even more than at present all pupils were committed to an ability range from which no escape was possible.
3. Today after the Primary level all schools teach the same three main bands of subjects – a high attainment group, an average group, and a below average section at the Lower Secondary level.
4. At the junction between Lower and Upper Secondary levels there is some movement and opportunity for pupils to escape from their broad band either up or down.
5. Throughout the rest of Switzerland the rigidly selective arrangements prevail.

The plan affected all state schools in the canton and covered the last three years of compulsory schooling (12 to 15 years). The first year (12/13) was to be an unstreamed one in which the strengths and weaknesses of the pupils were assessed. In subsequent years pupils gravitated to one of between three and five sections covering the main disciplines, viz, classical, science, general and practical. At all times movement between subjects and levels was permitted freely if deemed suitable. A high degree of parental involvement grew up, partly through parents’ associations, through an extensive mailing system for educational reforms as they occurred, and because schools for adults have been established. A Supremo was appointed to supervise the scheme across all 17 schools involved.

So in 1962 a new era in education opened in Geneva with the usual accompanying high hopes. It should be remembered that although comprehensive in style, the Cycle d’Orientation after year 1 provides for bands of ability and disciplines as before but with free movement between ‘streams’.

‘Parity of esteem’ like many catch phrases seems, initially, to be unquestionable. It is only later when the dust settles that doubts and reservations surface. Despite this new dawn in the life of Genevan schools, a glance back from a standpoint of nearly 30 years later shows that all was not well. Masnata (1991) put the matter thus:

‘Even Geneva at the top of cantons in terms of exploiting talents irrespective of educational elitism was unable to alter the inégalités réelles de chance because of the ‘limites des démocratisation des études.’” (p.163)

There was clearly a chasm, socially, in education even at its most progressive. Support for this theme, as it were, formed part of the very pragmatic basis of the Liberal party initiative to be examined later. Similarly in modern educational development there was a
visible neglect of high ability even under comprehension at its most progressive (a factor not unfamiliar in Britain today).

A reform of the *Cycle d’Orientation* during the past three years in Geneva has taken into account the above weakness regarding opportunities for able pupils an interesting sequel to the Liberal Initiative to be discussed. As the report in 1999 states highlighting weaknesses in the *Cycle d’Orientation*: 37 of course this was off-set to a great extent by the retention of some excellent grammar schools in the canton. (These comprise eight establishments preparing students for higher education.)

‘Too often when considering schemes of study and modalities of evaluation, each discipline took advantage of the fact that it had its position on the timetable but did not have to justify its position regarding the actual progress of pupils’. (p.2)

It is this phrase ‘actual progress of pupils’ which differentiates the current *Cycle d’Orientation* from its 1980s predecessor. Writing in the Salisbury Review and from a rabidly anti-comprehensive angle, Stewart Deuchar (December 1994) whilst castigating ‘progressive methods in education’ in Switzerland nevertheless admits that ‘the Swiss have possibly the best schools in Europe’. I believe the reforms now underway in Geneva may go a long way to stilling criticism of excessive egalitarianism.

**Cantonal finance**

Educational finance in Swiss cantons is very largely the responsibility of the cantons themselves. Professor Kriesi (1995) has analysed the separation of educational financial responsibilities between authorities in Switzerland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishment</th>
<th>Federation</th>
<th>Canton</th>
<th>Commune</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gymnasiums</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation professionelle</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Kriesi (1995) (p.64)*

Thus in 1998 of the total Swiss educational budget 7.8% was provided by the federal authorities, mostly for university funding, and the remaining 92.25% was up to the cantons and communes. A glance at the budget for the canton of Geneva shows that 33.3% of total expenditure was on education. In the case of the Genevan communes the picture is clear. The commune of Vernier spent 6 million SF out of a budget of 42 million SF. If sports amenities are added the total rises to nearly 10 million SF (Memento Genevois, 1990, p.114). One must bear in mind that there are 45 other communes in the canton.38

One of the crucial aspects of this whole educational issue is, however, the question of cantonal sovereignty to which I referred earlier. Rohr (1987) cites for instance canton Jura which lists all the various institutions from nursery school to grammar, arts and crafts, etc which are the responsibility of the cantons. There are two conclusions to be drawn from this: first almost total power over the fortunes of all pupils that a canton has, and secondly the reluctance of local authorities to accept interference from the federation.

Thus in 1973 (4th March) the state rejected a constitutional measure on education which stated that there should be extended federal influence at all levels of education. The average canton still felt that local sovereignty should prevail over central direction despite the possible advantages accruing from a national overall supervision.

The actual voting figures are interesting in this context of cantonal sovereignty.39 Thus:

507,414 voters (nationwide) agreed with more federal influence
454,428 voters disagreed, but:

only 10 cantons and one demi-canton supported the measure so it lapsed.

In May 1978 the state, but not Geneva, rejected a federal law giving aid to higher education and research. The figures were 792,458 voters in favour, but 1,037,020 against.

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39 Annuaire Statistique du Canton de Genève (4/03/73).
Finally in 1985 (10th March), a federal bill continuing subsidies for primary education was rejected by the electorate in that 570,221 voters supported the idea of continuing subsidies but 802,882 did not nor did 18 cantons. Rohr sees this as evidence of continuing suspicion of federal encroachment on what is essentially a cantonal matter. (p.353). All this coupled with the traditional desire of Swiss cantons to manage their own affairs combined to present a problem.

Thus area for area, a Swiss canton has a far higher profile and role in decision making than a comparable British county.

Girod (1991, p.24) of Geneva University has pinpointed weaknesses in the system which incidentally form one of the arguments of the Initiative to be discussed later. Writing in 1990, 30 years after the introduction of the Cycle d’Orientation, Girod says ‘The level of the basic elements of knowledge seem to have been higher in the past than today.’ (p.31) He goes on to say that the level of applied skills and its great expansion has been at the expense of the building blocks of reading, writing and numeracy. He backs this assertion up with charts going back to 1900 (parallels with UK opinion can be drawn such as Professor Cox and the Black paper activists (see p.175).

Again Matthew Finger (Geneva University) writing in 1991 reveals that 30 years of comprehensive education in Geneva at lower secondary level shows clearly that so far as middle and upper management careers are concerned across all the political parties those who left school with just a basic secondary education fared badly. Only between 7 and10% of former pupils attained management status whilst those with higher secondary or technical education scored between 55-68%. Reforms did not seem to have changed the former socio-economic structure of society. In Switzerland generally the picture was equally stark Masnata (1991) puts it bluntly (writing of educational repercussions in Vaud):

‘The top socio-economic classes comprised only 2.2% of the population yet their chances of reaching a degree qualification were 56.4%. By contrast, of the Farming group who form 14.3% of the population only 3.8% reached degree level’. (p.161)

So despite social and educational ‘engineering’ most human beings seem to remain
stubbornly in their national, intellectual and hereditary contexts.

**The political clash of 1984 in Geneva**

The *Cycle d’Orientation* (‘middle school change of direction’) had met with much approval from its inception. The citizens of Geneva in the sixties and seventies had enjoyed the fruits of the reformed school system. There was a much greater correspondence with north European states such as the UK than other parts of Switzerland. Modern Switzerland with its self governing and interlocking cantons has much in common with the fiefdoms of medieval Europe. The exercise of power within a small compact sovereignty such as Geneva, given the style of democracy prevailing in the state today, renders the term political participation meaningful.

The strong social intimacy which cantonal life naturally engenders, coupled to the participatory nature of Swiss democracy, would seem to have promoted family values from the start. Thus highly has Masnata (1991) rated the importance that the Swiss invest in the family concept:

> ‘It is difficult to understand the social structure of the first mountain communities. They were already ‘families’ which dominated life and made the laws’. (p.28)

So in the 13th century the family was a vital factor in Swiss life. In Switzerland family life is relatively more static than in Britain and this in the hot house and somewhat isolated atmosphere of the Swiss canton. As the Director General of the Genevan educational project said ‘The raising of social standards and changing way of life has led to strong pressure from hitherto quiescent parents to stretch their children’ (Schmidt, 1983). This sentiment was reflected in the attitude of UK parents in Milton Keynes as discussed in the next chapter.

State-educated pupils in Switzerland vastly outnumber those in the private sector by nine to one. This fact, by its egalitarian nature, is essentially more Swiss and therefore more acceptable. Very forcefully M. Joye, President of the Christian Democrats, himself a wealthy architect and Major in the Swiss army, claimed that there were no elite groups because Switzerland does not support a ‘Public School’ system in the British sense. (Interview Feb.1991). He was referring to the peculiarly British pattern of wealth and
tightly knit social codes generated by that system. Certainly M. Joye could not claim that class distinction in general was missing from the state because this is patently untrue. Indeed, Hans Tschani (1984) in his ‘Qui Directe La Suisse’, argues convincingly, quoting Kriesi, that Switzerland is actually run by an elite of about 1224 people! (p.11) Yet such a group would have climbed through the state school system. Swiss parents do not lightly withdraw their children from the majority structure.

One great advantage of the local autonomy enjoyed by all Swiss cantons is that local referenda or initiatives can reflect local concerns without any necessity to trim ones sails to any national wind. That is to say the cantonal view is paramount. There is usually no national feeling on a given issue. It may lead at times to great variations in education from canton to canton but there is supremely the feeling that local decisions mean local implementation and will not be the subject of a central government veto.

There is a keen interest in politics within the educational system extending into the schools. Genevan students are each year given an opportunity to participate as closely as possible in a ‘mock election’. (See p.186 for full details)

_Liberal Party opposition_

The resistance to the Geneva scheme of education was spearheaded by the cantonal Liberal party who invoked Swiss democracy by launching an Initiative in 1984 on the topic ‘The schools our future’ (L’ecole notre avenir, Cantonal Commission, 1984). The essence of a Popular Initiative is often an organised ploy by a determined group of citizens.

_Swiss educational methods_

A study by Bierhoff and Prais (1997) showing a comparison between British and Swiss pupil performances underlines a large part of the ongoing worries experienced by the Liberals and their supporters - indeed by many Swiss parents back in 1984. As has been outlined, Switzerland has operated an almost completely selective system of education. Additionally, traditional class teaching prevails and most importantly the size of schools, as the authors point out, vary between 250 and 500 pupils rather than the 1,000 or so of Britain. This provides a more friendly and ‘family’ atmosphere which, Bierhoff claims,
minimises confrontation between staff and pupils.

The authors point out that in extensive mathematics tests carried by the national Institute of Economic Research amongst the secondary children of both countries, the ‘average Swiss pupil reached the former UK grammar school standard.’ The emphasis on basic education and technical proficiency are strong in Switzerland whilst computer analysis, probability and statistics are dominant in UK. The benefits of comprehensive schooling did not attract many Swiss parents. Swiss ‘Liberal’ parents’ attitudes are well summed up in the terms of the Initiative. ‘Parity of esteem’ seems less important than ‘opportunity for ability.’

The original fully comprehensive syllabi of the early UK comprehensives have evolved into setting arrangements and generally greater selection within schools. The Swiss see their selection as merely banding in different schools at secondary level.

Prais (1997) sums up the situation facing both countries very concisely:

1. The variability of pupils attainments increases with age;
2. Teaching and learning in one class of widely different abilities is very difficult;
3. The success of the Swiss system forces us to consider without prejudice which of its structures contribute to its success;
4. This does not vitiate decisions as to the desirability or undesirability of different types of schooling.

All of this, the author concludes, must be seen in the context that Swiss education may be ‘elitist and contrary to democratic principals’ (Prais 1997, pp 29/30). Here is enshrined the origin of the Liberal initiative. Liberals like radicals are largely middle class and with a heavy bias towards the professions. Henry Kerr (1983) of Geneva University stated that 68.9% of Radicals acknowledged a middle class status whilst only 18.9% admitted a working class background.

The opposition to the educational status quo in the terms of the Initiative was a true reflection of the position of the sponsors i.e. the Liberal Party. The Liberals are certainly as professionally composed as the Radicals, perhaps more so, and have an equally high
allegiance to the qualities of drive, enterprise and hard work so characteristic of the Swiss middle class. This in turn postulates parents imbued with these qualities.

Why did the controversy arise? As I have mentioned earlier the reflections of academics and educational chiefs clearly showed that the 1963 reforms had not ushered in a period of egalitarianism and educational enrichment. Furthermore teachers in the *Cycle d’Orientation* had been experimenting with different class room methods. Basically Liberals therefore felt that comprehension was holding back their able children and that this was unfair. Especially the rejection of banding in the early years was felt to be to the disadvantage of their own children. These same children no doubt inherited their parents’ thrusting, high calibre and work conscious ethics.

Because this was Switzerland a commission was set up to examine the Liberal Popular Initiative and the Counter Proposal deposited on 24th May 1984. Here at cantonal level lies ready to hand a valuable political device for expressing a grievance backed by constitutional authority. The essence of the problem in Geneva was one familiar to educationists the world over. Undoubtedly the greater demand for higher qualifications and better skills in industry and commerce profoundly affected parents and children in Switzerland as elsewhere. This was acknowledged by the leaders of the ‘Genevan Guidance Stage’ when they admitted that parents desire their children to take up much more demanding courses of corresponding weight. Whereas the sixties’ scheme still seemed to enjoy much support the harsher economic climate of the eighties and even some rise in unemployment (by Swiss standards) induced parents to look closely at ‘parity of esteem’ as a concept and wonder if brighter pupils were penalised by being denied advancement.

Certainly some experimentation in classroom and teaching methods had taken place. M. Dubois (Director General of Secondary Education) even confessed that perhaps ‘des innovations pédagogiques’ had gone too far (*Rapport* pp 66-67 1984). The Liberals, however, felt that classroom experimentation was disruptive for all children and also held back the bright child in a non-streamed structure. Prais (1997) in an article on Swiss and English class make-up shows that unlike UK children in primary schools whose classes are composed of reasonably similar ages and abilities the Swiss classes often contain children misplaced by age and may number up to 2 in 25 in the first years rising to 10 in
25 by the fifth year in totally non selected groups. This affects teaching profoundly and was a major cause of the Liberal parents’ complaints.

The Liberal party’s complaint mirrors the so called ‘Black paper’ philosophy in the UK of the period 1977-86 led by Professor Cox et al:

‘While teachers should be free’, said Cox (1977) to teach by any reasonable method, provided they obtain good results, children should no longer be used as guinea pigs for untried and ineffective methods’ (Black Paper).

As Lawton and Gordon commented in 1993 such a view is in line with United Kingdom conservative educational thinking and moreover, I believe, with the terms of the Liberal Initiative (p.179).

However, Cox was not the ‘out and out’ backwoodsman that his earlier Black Paper appeared to suggest. As Lawton and Gordon (1993) write, Cox, when chairman of the Committee for English Curriculum, issued a report which was generally accepted and was so reasonable that right wing conservatives were incensed. Similarly the Swiss Liberals, although robustly conservative, were nevertheless fully Swiss in their desire to achieve consensus through rapprochement with their adversaries. The Swiss Liberals’ attitude was summed up in the preamble to their Initiative. ‘One goes to school to learn’ (p.4 Secretariat du Grand Conseil May 1984) before anything else. The Initiative seeks to control teaching experimentation. Confidence must be re-established between parents and schools.

Opinion split along predictable lines. The Socialists clung tenaciously to the idea of mixed-ability teaching mainly on the grounds that only thus could the lack of cultural inheritance for the disadvantaged child be ameliorated through contact with the more fortunate. The Radical and Christian Democratic parties, whilst agreeing that non-streaming must continue, expressed sympathy with the strictures on constant experimentation. ‘Une victoire toute relative’ was how ‘The Journal de Genève’ accurately put it regarding the terms of the Liberal Initiative. 40

Yet another view of Swiss thinking on education can be found in the Swiss High Schools report 1998. ‘The politics of education should mean not merely the acquisition of knowledge but also the interaction of the individual and his natural and cultural milieu.’

The term ‘High Schools’ in Switzerland refers not to grammar schools (as is the case in the UK) but in the case of Geneva the Institution of Management, the Engineering School and the Higher School of Applied Arts - significant trend setters. This approach was also supposedly enshrined in the Genevan *Cycle d’Orientation*. These periodic reports from the conference of Swiss Directors of Education often reflect world thinking on educational social trends and act as a catalyst for change. The educational politics of Geneva would be as responsive to the above as any in Switzerland.

In 1999 there were moves to reduce the gap between Swiss universities as such and the specialised high schools, a move analogous to the upgrading of UK polytechnics to university status. However in the case of the Swiss plan as the report in the magazine of Swiss Science and Innovation states: ‘It is theoretically possible to pass from one institution to the other but in fact it is exceptional.’

**The Liberal Party Popular Initiative (L’école notre avenir)**

Petitions by the electorate are high on a list of political priorities in public polls in the United Kingdom and also to a great extent in Switzerland. Effectively a Popular Initiative begins with a preliminary poll to test the enthusiasm of the electorate. In the case of ‘L’Ecole Notre Avenir’ (being Geneva) 10,000 signatures were necessary to launch it. This figure was in fact exceeded by a further 5,000 signatures.

As there is an almost total control of education by the cantonal parliament within the confines of a Swiss canton, so only the exercise of a direct Popular Initiative can, if successful, overrule the cantonal authorities. Thus in January 1982 the Liberal Party published details of its initiative - The Future of our Education (L’Ecole Notre Avenir). The Liberal Party initiative was drawn up under five headings. It encapsulates all the hidden frustrations of the group:

1. Children should go to school to learn.

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2. Experimentation in classrooms should be strictly controlled.
3. Confidence in the system should be restored.
4. Demanding levels of teaching should be enforced.
5. The Cantonal Council should monitor the above. 43

One can see in the above five guidelines evidence of attempts to accommodate waverers, for example that 'experimentation should be strictly controlled'. However the above statements were obviously so at variance with received opinion among the educational hierarchy in Geneva as embodied in the Cycle d'Orientation that a lively and genuine debate was sure to ensue.

A two-year time lag is common between the launching and publication of an Initiative. Clearly the Liberal Initiative rekindled all the fires lit by the original Cycle d'Orientation scheme. In April 1982 a Counter Proposal was launched on the same topic by the Christian Democratic Party. This was designed as an improvement on the original Liberal move. Counter Proposals to an Initiative are a well-tried Swiss device to find some via media which might command greater support than the original move. Time and again as an electoral device it has succeeded in welding warring factions into a consensus. It accepted the need for more stringent inspection of teaching methods but urged the continuance of local classroom and curricular planning, one of the Liberal bugbears.

Once an Initiative has been deposited with the appropriate governmental authority, a body of men and women outside the establishment are invited to sit on a committee to examine and test the nature of the issue. The Parliamentary Commission is one of the major features of both federal and cantonal democracy. By June 1982 the Grand Council of the canton having formally acknowledged receipt of these documents farmed them out to a parliamentary commission of enquiry. This device ensures that the proposals are subjected to a rigorous examination by a wide variety of interested parties. Representatives are selected according to the various interests involved in the particular matter (see Annex 3) When Dahl (1961) wrote 'There is no majestic march of a united public towards a common goal' and went on to defend the idea of many competing

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pressure groups, often pulling against each other, he could have been describing the Swiss democratic process.

The arguments in Commission over the school issue

A stage which a Popular Initiative makes on its way to the statute book lies in the hearings which take place in the parliamentary Commission set up to analyse the particular matter (for composition see Annex 3). Over the future of the schools affair the Commission met twenty one times in 1982/3. More than twenty different groups representing every school of opinion under the general umbrella of education met to thrash out the details. These groups reflected a wide range of views from school inspectors to parents. Irrespective of the arguments involved, the participation of so many discrete associations meeting under official sanction shows the strength of participatory democracy in action. This assembly of different interests, highlighted by a vigorous press, must keep the public aware that democracy, even if at times cumbersome, is seen to be at work. 44

Any Swiss parliamentary commission report constitutes solid evidence of both sides of a particular issue. Not only are a wide range of interest groups involved but the diverse arguments are marshalled carefully in separate sections, so the reader can form his or her own view of the weight and thrust of the debate and balance the opposing evidence. Thus from the implementers of the Cycle d'Orientation, the Director of Education and the 'supremo' of the scheme itself, came disapproval of the Liberal Initiative. It would, they said, solidify the flow of ideas into an educational mould and petrify all further progress. M. Dubois (the Director of Education) felt that the Initiative would stifle educational progress and might precipitate the kind of 'immobilism' so characteristic of the Swiss army organisation. 45

The secondary teachers (non-selective) of Geneva 46 saw any attempt to screen children or to control the syllabus through parliament as a covert method of both creating separate schools for workers and professional children and of subsuming education to the pragmatic, short term and essentially opportunistic politics of the Council chamber. This, for many teachers, was an anathema. In this one exchange can be seen the clash in the

45 Rapport de la commission de l'enseignement (as note 34) p.66.
cantonal educational world between the *avant garde* teachers and the bedrock traditional Swiss view of education as a preparation for the hardworking enterprising solid life of service.

In considering the contribution of the Association of Grammar School Parents towards the Initiative there is a marked contrast in tone:\(^47\) no mention of equality of opportunity but rather an emphasis upon teacher efficiency. However, like others, they fear that supervision by Parliament, as recommended by the Liberals, would be clumsy and rigid. In stressing that experiments in setting and mixed ability involving parents, pupils and teachers show success in their schools, they perhaps understate the fact that any experiment carried out with flexible motivated and perceptive children is more likely to succeed anyway. In fact opting out from the Genevan school system rose from 4.8% at the outset to 13.4% by 1981.

Many of the contributions to the commission reveal an informed democracy in action. Senior education officers, teachers, inspectors, unions and parents jointly submitted their proposals. This desire of groups, often with very different aims, to make out a case in an attractive way leads very often to a unique form of Swiss consensus. Divergences there certainly are but they seem to be debated without the rancour so often engendered in the UK. The very diversity of the groups and their number prevents too much polarisation. The actual exercise of participatory democracy throws up, incidentally, the clash of minds and temperaments all ostensibly heading for the same goal!

This 'staging post', embodied in the Commission, between the launching of the Initiative and the full parliamentary debate is an important and very Swiss element in the fabric of direct democracy. The commission process being described would of course apply to whatever issue was being considered via an Initiative be it education, transport or pensions. This is because the sovereignty of the people is crucial to the state and takes precedence over any legislative powers.

After all, pressure groups constitute a very important element in the fabric of the state's political life. Here, in the pre-parliamentary commissions, is the participatory cauldron of  

\(^{46}\) Rapport de la Commission (see note 34) p. 71. 
\(^{47}\) Rapport de la Commission pp 86-87.
arguments. The final public vote is the crowning stage of a painstaking route. The entire structure shows clearly the substantial nature of Swiss democracy at work (on one issue) as well as the intensively local nature of the matter. One can fairly claim that the state system inspires the citizen to use the participatory device of the Initiative to canalise frustrations into some electoral conclusion despite the low turn-out largely explained by Finger (on page 146). Over 50,000 voters were able to register their opinions in a decisive and constitutional way. One of the central tenets of Pateman's participatory theory is the need to bridge the gap between individuals and their institutions. They cannot 'be considered in isolation from one another'. The foregoing developments arising from this (or any other Initiative) in Switzerland forge that vital link to which Pateman refers between people and government.

A Swiss constitutionalist Andreas Auer (1987) emphasises that Parliamentary commissions exercise an institutional function of scrutinising potential laws in the domain relevant to that topic. As he wrote ‘Nothing should be allowed to prevent the commission from doing its duty.' (p.77) The conclusions of the commission having been conveyed to the Council of State this body may then submit the Initiative and Counter Proposal to the popular vote. In December 1984, both proposals were put to the people and both were lost. Interestingly, the Council of State voted against the Initiative by 51 to 31 with seven abstentions - a similar ratio to the figures given in Table 7.3 below.

Referendum voting figures in the canton

Table 7.3: Results of Popular Referendum in Geneva

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>Voting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/84</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>19,860</td>
<td>33,941</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/84</td>
<td>Cntr:Proposal</td>
<td>Christian Democrat</td>
<td>21,202</td>
<td>31,517</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Politique canton votations cantonales, p.335

So the views of a sizeable minority were officially recorded. It is noteworthy that, although in this case unsuccessful, the Counter Proposal by the Christian Democrats helped to raise the case for change by reducing the gap from 13,000 to 10,000. This in itself helped to underwrite the original Initiative.

As an electoral exercise this Initiative was quite typical. Modest turn-outs in Swiss
elections in general have been analysed by Professor Kriesi (1995). He lists several theories held. One is that voters are no longer up to the task of coping with modern, often very sophisticated, issues. Another indicates a loss of a sense of legitimacy in the whole system. Some have become much more sophisticated in handling issues. Yet others are perfectly happy with things as they are. However Kriesi believes that sophisticated voters are now in the ascendant (56%) (1995 pp 114-115 Ch.4).

However, he believes the other main reason for low turn-outs is the presence of direct democracy in that it is so widespread and so frequent. Interestingly he goes on to claim that incompetent voters as he puts it simply opt out of their democratic rights. This detached view corresponds to the party leaders’ views who, in interview, indicated selectivity rather than apathy by the voter (cf. Qvortrup, 1998, p.256). This popularly inspired democratic exercise in Switzerland contrasts sharply with Schumpeter's (1962) view that Democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule over them.

Analysis of the Issue

The educational issue emphasised two important strands in cantonal policy. Firstly, one is struck by the value that the Swiss citizen places upon the Initiative as a device of last resort. As Professor Girod (1991) wrote:

‘The public is far from being manipulated by the political class rather it exercises, on the contrary, in a clear enough fashion, in the round, a real control over the political class’ (p.80)

In the face of an apparently unbreakable coalition of forces supporting the Cycle d'Orientation the Popular Initiative may break the log-jam for its supporters. Secondly, the Counter Proposal will often produce an acceptable compromise suiting all parties to the dispute. The Genevan press regarded the vote as being 'a useful indication of parental concern' even though the Initiative was lost.

In passing one can note that in Geneva continuing contact between councillors and voters is encouraged through the use of a public forum in the Council House. The 'Salle des Pas Perdus' ('the room for walking to and fro') is in the heart of the medieval complex. It serves as a lobby where councillors and constituents mingle freely between debates and to
which access is entirely unrestricted. Here brisk conversations take place in a constant swirl of people. This not only deepens constituents respect for democracy and sharpens their perceptions but equally is a constant reminder to councillors of their own raison d’être.

As previously mentioned, it is often the case, though not so in the educational Initiative, that a Counter Proposal to an Initiative by incorporating much of the original matter in a new and more conciliatory framework will be accepted by the electorate. Over the Genevan case the supporters of the status quo quite simply outnumbered their opponents because the socio-economic class which benefited most from the existing scheme, the lower middle and working class, were far more numerous than the Liberals or even of those who favoured the amendments. However, cantonal laws permit the official publication of a minority report on the matter. As the Liberal Initiative stated, this Genevan school experiment has given rise to a fundamental divergence of views.

'Education is a ceaseless compromise between conservative and progressive factions.' (James, 1899) This aphorism seems to bridge the years and reflect the situation in the debate of 'L’école notre avenir'. The progressive view of the cantonal authority was diametrically opposed to that of the Liberals 'conservative' Initiative. This in turn led inevitably (for Switzerland) to the Christian Democrat Counter Proposal. This Swiss educational Initiative illustrates how a window of opportunity regarding a sincerely held grievance could be legitimately exploited. In a manner rather like an English cause célèbre in the High Court, so the arguments on both sides were marshalled. In the event the proposition was defeated but the smouldering resentment had been quelled and democracy vindicated. Be that as it may, the Initiative on schools shows that Swiss popular participation has a decisive voice in the affairs of a civic area. It may not always succeed, but effectively it reminds government of the changing voice of public feelings. The foregoing pages describing a Popular Initiative's progress would seem to bear this out.

This political upheaval awakens direct echoes within the UK educational field. To select or not to select, Grammar, Secondary Modern or Comprehensive? The crucial difference between the two regions is simply that in Geneva the electorate had an opportunity to make its opinion felt on the matter whereas in the English county the representational
democracy of the county council has the last say. The vastly greater opportunity for the expression of a point of view in Switzerland is very marked. After all, having a 'failed' attempt fully recorded through state means is a far cry from being sidelined and rendered powerless.

A further point of interest: whereas in theory any small group of citizens can launch an Initiative if the necessary conditions are fulfilled, in practice pressure groups with semi-professional backing usually front such measures. Jean Rohr (1987), professor of political science, emphasises that:

>'The political parties, socio-professional organisations and associations and groups of every kind have 'hijacked' the popular Initiative for their own ends.' (p.307)

This does not invalidate the essentially participatory nature of Swiss direct democracy. After all the French revolution of 1789 was none the less valid simply because it was led by a small group of middle class lawyers and other professionals in the Jacobin club. However, it is the mix of organising leadership backed by many signatures that make the Initiative such an effective democratic weapon. Many volunteers are recruited to collect these names. The fact is that so often a good Initiative will generate such support that the authorities are constrained to bring in Counter Proposals which, by embracing much of the matter, will be more acceptable. 48

In separate interviews during 1990 the leaders of all the main political parties in the canton declared forcefully that the relatively low turnout at elections, which averages 28% to 35%, was due to selectivity on the part of the voter faced with many issues in a year rather than from apathy. Madame Braunschwig, President of the Liberal Party, claimed that only 12% of voters never went to the polls (Appendix, doc.67). The researcher Matthias Finger (1990) states that about 19% never vote. So Madame Braunschwig was not far out.

The above figures cover the full spectrum of different kinds of elections. Considering the many times that citizens troop to the polls an average figure of 66% of people voting to a

48 Cantonal Rapport p.39 (see note 34).
The Swiss philosophy within the Initiative and Counter Proposal procedure

All political initiatives and votes in local matters are reflections of underlying concerns which can be expressed through democratic means. Therefore control of educational progress lies in a very real sense in the hands of the citizen. Reading the arguments of the respective camps one sees not only the divergent views but also the essential pragmatism of the Swiss in that issues are regarded on merit without overt party caucus constraints. While Liberals favoured ‘écoles dynamiques et ouvertes au progrès’, they felt that classroom reforms and experimentation over the twenty years of the Cycle d’Orientation had confused pupils and created an increasing unease at home for pupils and parents alike. Liberals also felt that foreign educational ideologies alien to the Swiss were supplanting the power of the elected representatives of the people.

The crux of the argument, according to the Grand Council, was the need to promote equality and opportunity for all. Experiments were an essential part of the ongoing process of education. Trying to ensure fairness all round was an integral part of a teacher's ethical 'baggage'. The Grand Council rejected the Liberal demand for Council oversight of syllabus changes because the infrequency of council meetings precluded councillors from being able to examine reforms in the rapidly changing world of educational reforms.

The Christian Democrats however counterclaimed in their Counter Initiative that political control by the Cantonal Council was no substitute for participation between parents, teachers and pupils. They further claimed that if education was to be so controlled why not all Municipal departments? (Minutes of the Secrétariat du Grand Conseil, 1984). On the Liberal demand for exacting standards of performance the Christian Democrats are in agreement. They also suggest that teaching experiments (the bugbear of the Liberals) should be submitted to committee supervision. 49

Thus the Swiss constantly try to find a middle way. This particular Popular Initiative was selected for the purpose of this study as it shows that, faced with the apparently impervious attitude shown by the authorities, in the eyes of Liberals the only way forward

was through an Initiative. This event enables us to see the machinery of the 'Swiss political clock' in action. In reality so far as Swiss democracy is concerned the hung parliament of Geneva, itself a product of the statewide PR system of elections, promotes deals and consensus as Madame Calmy-Rey the socialist leader admitted. (Appendix, doc.64) So clear cut divisions can often only be achieved by direct democracy in the shape of the Popular Initiative. This device effectively invokes the power of the General Will by allowing the sovereign people to be 'unfettered' whenever they so choose.

Ironically, the desire for compromise itself causes delays. These delays often cited in their answers to my poll are a real problem in modern Switzerland. One Swiss jurist, Raimund Germann (1990) argues 'that Swiss negotiate international treaties under the constraint imposed by direct democracy.' The task is impossible he claims. There is always the sword of Damocles of an adverse referendum vote ready to scupper efforts. Of course, he is an advocate for change. An economist, however, Silvio Bomer, believes that reforms, such as higher entry figures for referenda and initiatives, could be introduced. The Swiss argue that ultimately the product will be the better for having been refined in the fire of argument. 'Referenda and Initiatives stultify progress owing to the long delays involved but all this is offset by the exercise of democratic rights.' (Appendix, doc.67) The councillors of Geneva canton were overwhelmingly in favour of their direct methods of democracy despite the 'log-jams'.

In ‘A Dynamic Political Community’ Baumeister (1996) talks of making a ‘principled defence of diversity’. Its general implications for Switzerland will be considered elsewhere. In this chapter the many differing educational patterns in the state reflect part of this diversity. Thus what irked the Liberals in Geneva would not have been a problem in a canton like Berne, for example.

One does notice, from time to time, that deference arises from job and economic factors and rarely from social constraint. Thus all pass through the state democratic system of education and consequently respect each other as equals. M. Joye also cited the parliamentary commission as an excellent breeding ground for consensus. In the case of the Swiss the losers in an Initiative know they have been subject directly to their peers’ will, and not to an indirect representative.
As a footnote to Genevan education the department of Education in the canton carries out an annual exercise in all its secondary schools and colleges of adult training. In interview with M. Chevrot (Appendix, doc.68) Director of Education in 1991 he said:

‘Every year there is a mock parliament on specific issues: either a canton or federal one which is being considered by the adults. Speakers for and against the motion are chosen, votes taken. Proper ballot papers and ballot boxes are provided and the results are published in the cantonal press.’

The Swiss respondents to the questionnaire on direct democracy (see Annex 4 and Appendices 1-38)

After considering a Swiss initiative throughout its stages I now include the views of the Swiss councillors on Geneva Direct Democracy and its values or limitations together with their own attitudes. After each quotation from the questionnaire the figure in brackets denotes the number of the respondent’s sheet followed by the number of the question.

Swiss respondents’ views on direct democracy

Questions 1 and 2 in the Swiss questionnaire, and question 4 in the Buckinghamshire survey, dealt with this point. On the question of political participation in Switzerland where it is inextricably interwoven into the national fabric, the replies were revealing of the hold that participation would appear to have on them. Participatory democracy may not be widespread today in nations but as Dunn (1979) wrote: ‘participatory democracy is close to meaning simply the good society in operation’ (p.27)

Whether or not Swiss councillors fulfilled Dunn’s view may have become apparent in the course of this chapter. Participatory democracy like many other political concepts contains its own ambiguities. Is it truly free and people driven or is it initiated by central governments via referenda? How is it perceived by voters i.e. do they feel it is genuine?

To the Swiss councillors the validity and popular element in the states direct and semi-direct democracy was very obvious. A typically enthusiastic answer to whether it was still valid: (Qu1)

‘Absolutely! Thanks to initiatives and referenda, the people have great opportunity for expressing themselves, even to the extent of changing the laws. (Appendix 3:1)

Or again:
'More than ever. The population asks to be informed on everything and wishes to participate in all decisions in which they are concerned' (Appendix 32:1)

On a more cautious note (typically from a Radical councillor):

'The basic rules of our political system must remain intact. It is the best guarantee for a modern democracy which we can consider exemplary. Certain adjustments to the rules of application to trigger a Popular Initiative or a Referendum should be enacted'\(^ {50}\) (Appendix 7:1)

A large number of returns were in this vein, that is wedded inexorably to direct democracy but anxious to bring it up to date in a busy modern world, the slowness of the process being the bugbear.

Several respondents made the significant point:

'At the cantonal level the referendum or popular initiative allows for an interesting debate, for example where to build a nuclear plant or the construction of a new school in Vermont'\(^ {51}\) (Appendix 6:1)

The locally popular Initiatives and referenda are borne out by Marco Guigni. (1990)\(^ {52}\) Voters, lifting their eyes from the cantonal scene, were also keen to point out the power which rests in the facultative referendum whereby federal laws after operating for a year can be annulled by vote of the people providing 50,000 signatories or eight cantons can be persuaded to proceed: 'thanks to popular rights we can manage to change the laws.' (p.182). Conversely one answer suggested more direct democracy should be available within communes 'in quartiers ou milieux intéressés' (see Sciarini, 1991). Swiss democracy was seen as especially valuable for minorities to gain a hearing. Thus (regarding direct democracy):

'It is indispensable because thanks to it our minorities have the opportunity of expressing themselves in a forum where their views must be considered.' (Appendix 10:1)

The Memento Genevois, the 'house journal' of the canton, lists 50 associations in one commune, Vernier, alone.

\(^ {50}\) In order to reduce the flow of excessive and pointless initiatives.

\(^ {51}\) Being a new school in a Genevan commune.

\(^ {52}\) Guigni (1990): 'The rate of acceptance of Initiatives at federal level is 2%, but at cantonal it is 29% and communal 38% (p.182).
Considering that there is a significant ‘foreign’ element mixed within the indigenous population, any means whereby these people can become citizens is important.

On direct and semi-direct democracy some Swiss councillors clearly had reservations despite their overall enthusiasm. Finance was seen by some as a disincentive in taking part. After the usual praise of Swiss participatory democracy one respondent wrote:

‘One knows the power of decision making which resides in money and capital proprietorship and subjects our direct democracy to distortions so that the confidence of citizens in the system is shaken’ (Appendix 35:1)

This view makes sense because, as Kriesi (1995) wrote, launching Initiatives involves more money than small political groups can muster and ‘big business’ and powerful economic interests can work against popular democracy through undue influence. Thus in 1989, he points out, the finance house of Denner supported successfully the initiative of the farmers to the tune of 4 million Swiss francs. (p.94-95)

Many were in favour of increasing the number of signatures to qualify for a campaign as the only way to overcome the many log-jams in delivery. There were reservations from the left that pressure groups can ‘hi-jack’ a popular initiative on occasions but yet even then the price was worth paying. Thus on reforming the system: ‘Certain dispositions should be made to the ‘rules of application’ such that the number of signatures to trigger a referendum or Initiative should be increased’ (Appendix 7:1).

One councillor suggested:

‘We should copy Italy in that we should have a minimum number of votes needed to qualify for an eligible referendum/initiative.’ (Appendix 24:1)

Two further thoughts about Swiss direct democracy as seen through Swiss eyes. First in discussing the need to speed up the system to match with the modern age, the writer reveals the care taken to consult public opinion:

‘By reason of the many different ways in which a referendum is reached i.e. the many consultations - the commissions, the associations d'intérêts, or d'un quartier.’ (Appendix 36:1)

This emphasises the degree of social and political participation which occurs all the time at local level in Switzerland. However, the writer goes on to say that all this consultation can become chaotic and unmanageable (‘anarchique et ingérable’). This does show the
thoughtful and self critical approach of many pragmatic Swiss towards their own highly prized system. Certainly it tends to foster a narrow provincial outlook but this, in a state of localities as embodied in the canton concept, is the norm. The other comment is the one respondent who completely rejected direct democracy: 'No! it becomes a brake on continuing decision making' (Appendix 25:1).

The weight of opinions on Swiss direct democracy
Considering that these replies range across seven very different political groups the element of accord on this topic was remarkable showing their devotion to the concept of direct popular intervention. Only one answer complained that popular democratic control eroded the impact of councillors and parties. The many times that Swiss voters troop to the polls in a year (often 4 or 5 times at least) underlines Beetham’s (1994) comment that: ‘popular control requires the continuous accountability of government directly to the electorate.’ The upshot as far as Swiss Qu.1 was concerned was an overwhelming endorsement by respondents to Swiss direct participation:

(a) 35/36 - Swiss councillors considered it to be a *sine qua non* of political life (one member only was flatly against the idea);
(b) 27/35 - of the majority had reservations regarding hampering central government or causing delays and being exploited by some for their own party ends.

Although direct participatory democracy is supported by the overwhelming majority of respondents, yet, the reservations are interesting and numerous:

(1) one-third of replies complain of slowness of delivery and suggest that increasing the number of validating signatures would help to eliminate duplications;
(2) throughout the replies the constant emphasis on the local value of Initiatives and referenda and the almost complete absence of references to federal affairs underlines the latent strength of Swiss community life.

The involvement of councillors in their democracy
It is one thing to support a concept such as participatory democracy in theory but in question 2. the Swiss detailed how they had personally benefited from Popular Initiatives and referenda. One of the most important ofshoots of participatory democracy is the room for ordinary citizens to become significant. Taking part is exhilarating. Holliday
(1994) writing on participatory democracy cites the welter of compulsory socio-political activities which citizens undertake in the concepts of Pateman (1970) and Macpherson (1973). He goes on:

‘Therefore the domain of politics extends to a great number of social institutions, ranging from the work place to local regional and national communities. Here the domain is wide and the frontier of democracy extended.’ (p.242)

My point is that in Switzerland all these activities take place without any of the compulsion envisaged by Pateman et al (1970).

I have picked out answers which directly involve councillors as such. After all thousands of citizens sign petitions, serve on committees or simply vote at the end. Welfare is taken very seriously in Switzerland.

‘In my capacity as secretary of the cantonal Christian Democrats, I launched the Popular Initiative on the need for a ‘truly up to date’ family welfare policy. It met many obstacles in its journey through the Grand Council’ (Appendix 38:2)

Another dealt with the main Swiss educational issue of this thesis: ‘I participated in the launch of the Liberal Initiative ‘L’Ecole Notre Avenir’. This reply shows the purpose of Swiss direct democratic machinery in reality. (Appendix 26:2) All the pent up feelings about the need for selection in education so familiar in Britain could finally be formalised into direct political action. This councillor was therefore indicating his role in the first step to bring about the launching of a typical Popular Initiative.

A very practical matter was aired by one councillor: ‘I was president of the comité d’initiative for ‘later opening hours for Genevan shops and stores’ (Appendix 7:2). A Liberal councillor (i.e. very conservative!) made the interesting point: ‘The mere collection of signatures to launch an Initiative seems to induce a collective sense of political euphoria and liberated feelings’ (Appendix 36:2). This coming from a man who is otherwise critical of aspects of direct democracy underlines the basic devotion to Swiss community life. A similar view from the Leader of the parliamentary Liberals – the economist Madame Braunschwigg, who was equally scathing about the delays and frustrations of direct democracy:

‘A referendum and an initiative undoubtedly stultify progress due to the long delays in the exercise of its machinery. Nevertheless, these long and exasperating
delays are offset by the sheer exercise of popular democratic rights.' (Appendix doc: 67)

A number of replies appeared to show that benefiting personally from an initiative was anathema to them. The value was a community one. This kind of democracy can be seen to work - not always with a successful outcome it is true for the sponsors, but making a public and official protest on some perceived grievance is seen as ‘putting down a marker for the future’.

So respondents from all parties (and they are very different in their outlooks generally) endorsed Swiss direct democracy albeit with reservations about its cost and speed of delivery.

*Low rates of electoral participation in Switzerland*

This subject of low turn-out affected both states but for very different reasons. On the question of Swiss voting figures Mads Qvortrup (1998) speaking of referenda makes the point that ‘the fact that more than 30% of Swiss regularly vote on issues that in other countries would be decided behind closed doors indicates that such democracy has increased the participation of ordinary citizens’ (p.256). He goes on to state that low turnout for the Swiss means selective participation in view of the many issues that arise regularly. This reassurance, as it were, is implicit in the generally positive replies the respondents made to Qu. 4.

On the topic of a plethora of issues a Christian Democrat wrote:

‘The men and women go to the vote according to their preferences. It is not always the same people who abstain. With the complexity of the problems, with the technical and (at times) judicial language often employed, the electors experience difficulty in reaching an informed view.’ (Appendix 38:4)

The above view was common amongst most of the answers and bears out Qvortrup (1998). Another aspect, a view from the left-wing which frequently cropped up to account for poor turn-out, may be summed up in the following observation:

‘Because of the relatively high level of living and a strong sense of wellbeing, because also of the consensus established around the idea of on going materialism and the market economy superseding other political decisions, the imperatives of work and capital expansion prevail’ (Appendix 35:4).
Consensus according to some and the absence of political confrontation combine to render the mass of the electorate fairly passive.

A caveat must be entered here regarding voting percentages. Finger describes the national voting analysis thus:

(1) 20% always vote
(2) 22% often
(3) 22% sometimes
(4) 17% rarely
(5) 19% never

(p.66)

The delays between an initiative being launched and the final vote were a cause of complaint and often a reason for absenteeism at the polling station. Solutions to the problem were advanced by some. These may be characterised by the following observation: ‘Simply reduce the number of occasions that initiatives can be launched and place a limit on the percentage of votes necessary to secure a viable bill. (The figure of 15% was suggested). (Appendix 36:4)

There was, admittedly a minority of the Parti Ecologiste who believed that the Swiss had become so inward looking that many Third World problems were deliberately ignored and thus unsupported at the polls. The first of two oft repeated thoughts amongst respondents was that when an issue touched the voters hearts the vote rose too. Secondly the ineligibility of the so called ‘foreign workers’ to vote deprived the electorate of valuable opinions. A final thought: one cynical reply (a rare instance) cited ‘a lack of respect for the political classes and anyway nothing ever changes.’ (Appendix 4:4)

In general, answers implied that given a harsher economic climate or possibly a really explosive issue such as immigration or the EU, the turnout would greatly improve. The reasons chosen by respondents and interviewees for low turn-out are, in order of importance as follows:

1. The complexity and number of voting issues
2. Complacency arising from prosperity
3. Slowness of the process inhibits turn-out
4. People attracted by new parties
5. No real opposition so no clear controversies
6. Foreign workers disenfranchised

Of these the first was the sheer multiplicity of issues and the resulting lack of expertise for many voters when faced with choice. On 1. above the comment of Madame Calmy-Rey, Leader of the Parliamentary Socialists in Geneva, has direct bearing:

'The cycle of voting over a four year period in Geneva is something like this. In the first year there will be communal elections, in the second year national elections, in the third year nothing and in the fourth cantonal elections. Plus, of course, a host of initiatives and referenda which are scattered throughout the four year period. On average voters go to the polls four times a year. (Appendix, doc.64)

The figures vary greatly from canton to canton and many will vote far more frequently.

Swiss multiplicity of parties
Qu.3 in the Swiss questionnaire on the influence of the rash of new parties, arising from PR, elicited some interesting replies. On the straight question of whether they had influenced politics or not the result was unequivocal:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influenced</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons advanced emerged as follows:

First, the new parties were one-topic groups and uninterested in politics in the round.

Negative approach:
(1) They enjoyed the luxury of not being in government (14:3)
(2) They don’t last long (32:3)
(3) They reveal the ‘malaise’ of individualism (24:3)

Positive approach:
In the main the participation of the new was welcomed by the older parties. This attitude was not only adopted by the representatives of the new groups but was equally espoused those who would not benefit from their emergence.

Question 5 (Swiss)
The Swiss councillors were asked (Qu.5) about the ‘exportability’ of their participatory democracy. A number agreed but cautioning that Swiss democracy was really made for local affairs thus: ‘Yes, if there is a local sense of communal responsibility’ (13:5), and again: ‘I do not think it is suitable for large countries’ (2:5). Another respondent felt it would only work under a federal system of government.’

The answers from councillors underline the academic viewpoint of Andreas Ladner (1992) regarding the dominance of local affairs in the Swiss democratic framework. But then it is the effectiveness of political participation at local level which has occupied much of this thesis.

Sample of views on exportability of direct democracy:
‘There must be a civic culture dedicated to a sense of social responsibility’ (19:5)
‘Only if the system is confederal with real power to provinces’ (8:5)
‘Decentralisation is essential’ (5:2)
‘Especially for countries with racial, linguistic or religious differences’ (24:5)
‘Yes, if the various levels are self financing’ (13:5)
‘No! Direct democracy is bound up with Switzerland’ (28:5)

A view which was balanced and reflects the reality of Swiss direct democracy is printed in full:

‘The Swiss political system cannot be detached from the history of this country. Our system is designed to suit the characteristics of this state (multi lingual, multi
religious and interests very different in different parts of the country. It would be exportable to a country like Canada with its dual language problems in Quebec. Swiss democracy is suited to our constitution, federal system and ethnic mix’ (Appendix 24:5)

I think this answers the pertinent comment from one councillor who said: ‘Is Swiss democracy importable to Britain!’ (Appendix 29:5).

The Swiss Press
One of the widely read and respected Swiss broadsheets based in Geneva - *Le Journal de Genève* - devoted a substantial section of its coverage to the issue examined in this chapter, i.e. *L’Ecole Notre Avenir*. In its issue of 24/11/84 it considered the forthcoming Initiative and referendum due to be held on the 2nd December. One article crystallized the matter thus: ‘To democratise or to teach’ (p.33).

There was a description of the events since the advent of the *Cycle d’Orientation* in the 1960s. One headline read ‘The Liberal Initiative – an assault on the establishment.’ In this article Francoise Buffet sees the Liberal Initiative as a direct threat to the prevailing ‘liberal’ establishment by demanding that the existing total powers of control of teaching by the Dept of Education be subject in future to periodic approval by the Grand Council when new experiments are envisaged.

On 3rd December, the day of the vote, the paper devoted a whole page to direct democracy, mostly about the educational initiative, but also on the proposed maternity reforms. In describing the vote on education as a ‘relative victory’ for the winners, the writer sees the combined votes of the Liberals and the Counter Proposal as a majority of all votes cast. These desired some change.

So the popular Initiative ensured a pyrrhic victory for the status quo groups. The tabulated list of the results for every one of the 46 communes in Geneva underlines both the nature of the victory and also the importance that communes play in the Swiss body politic.

As a postscript to the above, an interesting debate took place in Geneva organised by the *Conférence Universitaire des Associations des Etudiants* (C.U.A.E.) (see ‘Le Temps’, 23rd November 1992). A liberal, M. Blondel, reviewed the origins of the Popular
Initiative and said that most people (on his side) still felt as strongly about the need for reform.

However the Radical spokesman Mme Martin re-iterated the view that 'les radicaux tiennent plus que jamais à la démocratisation des études.' This of course was the original bone of contention. However the Counter Proposal by the Christian Democrats, discussed earlier in this thesis, was a valuable compromise.

Nevertheless, the Comprehensive and Secondary school teachers (but not Grammar) still displayed a 'Luddite' attitude: 'Ce statu quo juridique doit être maintenu'. L'initiative libérale marque au contraire un net recul. Nous y sommes donc opposés'.

The spokesman for the secondary teachers, M. Marc Polli, in an echo of Councillor Robinson in the Buckinghamshire affair, said that holding a Commission of Enquiry was no solution thus ignoring the fact that this is a part of Swiss built in democracy.

**Impact of participatory democracy in the past five years at cantonal level in Geneva**

In the field of education, participatory democracy has continued its periodic impact and shows the pan continental nature of some educational issues. So in St Gall canton and other German areas there are now 'Super teachers' similar to the current plan in Britain, although not yet in Geneva. However, in this canton whilst a Popular Initiative to produce especially highly paid teachers was rejected, yet a Counter Proposal to lift the standards for all teachers was passed decisively by 44,230 votes to 27,177\(^2\), an interesting case of the compromising formula so often adopted by the Swiss. In 1998 a proposal to demand the return of student grants was defeated by 57,886 votes to 38,863\(^4\). I have cited the above instances because they show that, to the Swiss, their form of democracy produces tangible results for large or small groups of interested citizens.

Clearly the Swiss, as other states, are facing up to the expanding world of technology in a wide variety of trades and professions. The *Hautes Ecoles Specialisées* are expanding and catering to many just outside the traditional university level. As M. Meylan (1999) the secretary of the Swiss conference of cantonal directors of education wrote in ‘Vision’

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\(^2\) Annuaire Statistique du Canton de Geneve (8/06/97)  
\(^4\) Office cantonal de la statistique - Geneve (27/09/98)
July 1999, ‘there are differences but the same values as universities’. *Hautes Ecoles* are treated as having the same status as universities albeit emphasising a greater hands-on technology. This in turn has reacted on the *Cycle d’Orientation* which is modernising. In Geneva however all are subject to the people’s vote (as above) in due course.

In 1999 also the Swiss began to toy with the idea of paying teachers on merit, a move now adopted in Britain and attended by equal controversy.

In an article in ‘Prospects’ Brunschwig Graf (1997), an economist, Secretary of the Society for the Development of the Swiss Economy and Member of the Federal Commission on Higher Education, revues progress in education during recent years (to 1997). She makes three points:

1. A sharpening up of standards in compulsory education over attainment and assessment of pupils;
2. Major reforms at gymnasium level so that the *maturité* examination is no longer restricted to specific groups such as Latin, Science, and the Arts, but more flexible optional choices can be made;
3. Reforms of the vocational training system (traditionally a major part of the Swiss educational programme).

Mme Brunschwig Graf emphasises, albeit in passing, the crucial part played by the Swiss participatory democratic process.

‘The democratic system of Switzerland and in Geneva is so designed that it offers many possibilities of intervention at the parliamentary level. Any reform introduced in schools may be contested by petition, tabling a motion, or by bills brought in by cantonal parliaments.’ (p.545)

In an article, Maja Huber (1999) of the Berne Research Bureau, while analysing the role of schools in the recent (1999) discussions on educational policy, makes a significant point regarding the implementation of Swiss education:

‘Schools enjoy little autonomy in Switzerland, especially at the primary and lower secondary level. In most cantons problems are dealt with in detail (size of classes, curriculum, official teaching material) in a centralised way.’ (p.140)

This makes the outcome of a Popular Initiative, such as the one examined here, of crucial importance because political power to implement policies is in the hands of those who control the cantonal government. Parry writing on political education makes a point which well fits the Swiss political scene:
‘The product of schooling is likely to be a person who will be well tuned to approaching politics as a tradition in which to be inculcated; rather than a practice to be criticised and transformed’ (Parry, 1999, p.26)

All this can be seen as a form of sequel to the controversy in 1989-90 discussed in this thesis regarding *L’Ecole Notre Avenir*.

The next chapter will examine an analogous issue in a British county. However the democratic methods adopted by the British county are in marked contrast to those in the Swiss canton and the opportunities for involvement of the citizens in Britain were far smaller. The matter of Grammar versus Comprehensiveness, of how merit is to be rewarded, of experiments in classroom presentation of lessons – all these stir opinions and prejudices, in Britain as in Geneva.
CHAPTER 8: HOW A LOCALLY INSPIRED BRITISH EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE FARED UNDER REPRESENTATIONAL DEMOCRACY

Introduction

When a controversial issue commanding wide support in a community arises, meeting the anxieties of citizens becomes an important factor. We have seen how Swiss participatory democracy was able to canalise people’s feelings over an ever-present subject like education, even if in the example examined success at the poll eluded one faction.

I am not, in this chapter, claiming that the British example is a mirror reflection of the Swiss. What I do believe is that the underlying educational fears were similar in both states. It is the way in which the British people were involved in the decision making in contrast to the Swiss which is the concern of this thesis.

A example of Britain’s democratic processes presented itself in Buckinghamshire in 1989 coincidentally at about the same time as Geneva’s ‘L’école notre avenir’. How does a typical United Kingdom county compare with a Swiss canton in terms of popular participation?

Both are, undoubtedly, areas of political accountability operating at a local level within a greater national sovereignty. In each case they have a large network of civic obligations in the shape of provision for public services and amenities together with the need to raise local taxation obtains. A popularly elected assembly governs both Canton and County but after this the comparison begins to lose meaning.

Local politics in the county of Buckinghamshire differs markedly from its Swiss counterpart in two ways. Firstly, there is no UK equivalent to the direct and semi-direct democracy of the Swiss canton, i.e. the Popular Initiative and the various forms of referenda. Secondly, the powers inherent in the Buckinghamshire County Council are far more circumscribed than those resting in Geneva’s Grand Council. Whereas the Council of Geneva votes 88% of its educational expenditure, the English county derives over 60% of its finance from Westminster in the form of grants and has to find the other 40% itself which inevitably limits its own authority (see Mackinnon 1997), although as we have seen in Chapter 5 such powers are not inconsiderable. By comparison the average Swiss
canton receives only 14% of its education budget in federal money (most of this being funding for the university). So much of UK local government today, as has been described, is inextricably linked to Whitehall. Therefore a free rein in deciding on major developments is not accorded to British local government.

Of course in one sense power, via elections, flows from the periphery inwards in both countries. Yet this applies in the UK only at the national quinquennial and local quadrennial elections with the occasional by-election. Thereafter normally all plans and decisions take place within the council chamber or the local government bureaucracy. UK local councillors are not bound to respond immediately to popular feelings as are their peers in Geneva if matters are pursued through the Swiss constitutional channels. Clearly the pressure for reform in the UK depends upon the local legislators.

The grammar school issue
The issue in Buckinghamshire in 1989 came about through the inability of parents in Milton Keynes, to obtain selective school places within Milton Keynes.

In some ways this urban area forms the vital catalyst to the events described in this chapter. The Grammar school controversy arose because of the huge change that beset the hitherto rural countryside of Buckinghamshire in 1966. There was a need for a new London ‘overspill’ urban area partly to cater for the post war population boom. Plans were laid to build a large conurbation in the heart of a convenient home county. Taking its name from a small hamlet of 900 inhabitants a new city was built to include Bletchley and the important West Coast railway line. However as the city has developed it still remained in selective Buckinghamshire. A number of established grammar schools already existed 20 miles away, but there was no provision for the new large population. Again as the city grew, it is now 210,000 strong, the number of potential selective pupils grew. Later, when a public opinion polling firm was hired by the county council a significant minority of around 30% seemed to justify provision for one or two grammar schools. The minutes of 27th May 1993 of the Education Committee show that the number of applicants from Milton Keynes applying for places in Aylesbury Vale selective schools has steadily risen.

This new and rapidly expanding urban area had comprehensive secondary schools but no selective ones. Yet a 20-mile bus-ride away there flourished in the same county well
established selective schools in Aylesbury, Buckingham, Wycombe and Amersham, many with proven modern academic records (and traditions dating back in the case of Aylesbury Grammar school to the 17th century). Parents in Milton Keynes wishing to send their children to one of the grammar schools had to ‘bus’ them (in marked contrast to Genevan parents). The problem was compounded by the fact that whereas in the Buckinghamshire grammar schools’ examination results in 1989 were impressive by national standards, in Milton Keynes they were poor. Even in the year 2001 GCSEs results (5+ A*-C) averaged a pass rate in the 10 Milton Keynes schools (42.5%) but 94.6% in the 13 Buckinghamshire schools (Performance Tables 2001, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire). Of course the Buckinghamshire schools were selective and those in Milton Keynes were not, so comparisons may well seem unfair. The fact remains that the 30% or so of Milton Keynes parents with potential grammar school children looked at the raw figures and acted accordingly. It is perhaps worthy of note that in 1998 of the total number of pupils at secondary schools in Buckinghamshire just over 45% (45.2%) were at grammar schools (Buckinghamshire County Education Department, Statistics for Schools Provision, September 1998).

The 165 grammar schools of Britain are located in about 30 LEAs. Only Buckinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Kent have more than 10 grammar schools and of these three Buckinghamshire possesses thirteen. (Bulletin of Advisory Centre for Education, 1998). Probably the situation regarding selection would never have arisen had Milton Keynes been surrounded by an area of comprehensive education. The issue was therefore whether the Buckinghamshire County Council, still in 1989 responsible for Milton Keynes, could move to establish grammar schools in Milton Keynes? Certainly as in Geneva there were social, political and educational undercurrents running swiftly. The whole question of academic excellence versus equality of opportunity took centre stage as also did the attendant factors of socio-economic tension. This was the situation in 1989/90.

In a book published in 1999 Crook, Power & Whitty review the position. Ten years on (from 1989) there is no apparent change in the overall picture. Jack Straw as a Shadow Labour Minister in 1992 identified the problem neatly:

‘Grammar schools enjoy support across the political spectrum from parents of successful 11 plus pupils and opposition from those whose children were not’.
Crook, Power and Whitty (1999) quote John Marks that the standard of English in schools is ‘perilously low’ and secondly that ‘it is now time to abandon policies based on aspirations for a system of schools based on the same type’. Crook et al although disputing the scope of Mark’s figures, add ‘to those who argue that the promises of Comprehensiveness have not been realised may be attracted to it.

The 1944 Education Act referred to earlier attempted to provide a key to choice through the 11/12 plus examination. Selection was on intelligence test and aptitude test scores. The top 20 to 30% were sent to Grammar schools, the next tier to the then Technical schools and the majority to the new Secondary schools. When in the 1960s, however, Comprehensive education began to take over, parity of esteem and equality of opportunity became key phrases to describe the new era. So the Milton Keynes parents faced decisions for their children. With a Labour majority in the Milton Keynes Council in 1989 Comprehensive education was ‘the future’.

However, in the context of participation, the types of school, important although they undoubtedly were for the parties concerned, must be seen against the background of the attitudes of society and the political systems in both states. Carr (1991) believed:

“One of the inevitable results of our inability to democratically discuss the role of education in modern society has been to deprive the philosophy of education of any significant or practical role’ (p.183).

The English Councillors’ attitude towards minority groups, e.g. the parents of Milton Keynes, showed reluctance to incorporate any popular decision-making in future moves, as the responses to the survey questionnaires and Council minutes show. Basically the new arrangements were to be a fait accompli. The parents of potential grammar school children in Milton Keynes and those in the canton of Geneva were motivated by many forms of ambition for their children and the best, as they saw it, openings for them. So good teaching, recognition of merit and competitive examinations all played their part. As Sadler (1994) wrote: ‘examinations are key elements in the regulation of the curriculum and in the control of access to further education’ (p.115).
**Subsequent events**

In the event three stages materialised. This in itself provides an interesting contrast to Swiss methods. In April 1989 a group of councillors lodged a notice of motion to the effect that ‘Buckinghamshire adopt a policy of supporting choice in education by introducing grammar schools into Milton Keynes’ (Buckinghamshire County Council Minutes, April 1989). The following steps reflect the British approach to issue examination in local government and provide a contrast to the methods adopted in Swiss cantons like Geneva. I describe them in some detail to show that participation was carried as far as possible under the British system of local democracy.

After the bald statement of the above motion of intent the Chief Education Officer appended seven aspects of the situation in Milton Keynes. These included details of county selection procedures (i.e. the 30% of pupils who normally go to grammar schools in the rest of Buckinghamshire), the nine existing secondary comprehensive schools and the future building programme.

Mr Sharp, the Chief Education Officer, reminded members that in 1987 the Council (largely Tory) had voted to take no further action by 42-17 on a similar motion to build a grammar school in Milton Keynes. If grammar schools were built, extra places would be needed for an increase in non selected pupils. A collegiate scheme for all secondary pupils in Milton Keynes was just starting up. Many sixth forms already in existence would be adversely affected. Since 1987, he concluded, Local Management of Schools (LMS) had been introduced, a national curriculum and increased powers for governors.

However in the course of the report agreed by the Education Committee some significant phrases may be noted. These provide an interesting contrast to the parallel moves in Geneva.

In 1987 the Council rejected any moves. However in 1989 this time it was the joint Governors Committee of all the secondary schools who believed ‘that any process of consultation (of the public) about the notice of motion would cause disruption’.

Secondly in October of that year the full Education Committee agreed, after exhaustive debate in which I took part, that parents should indeed be consulted consequent upon the Director’s above report. Then, finally, in the following month the full County Council
rejected both parental consultation and any further movement on the grammar school front (Buckinghamshire County Council Minutes, May 1989). The views expressed by the county councillors form an interesting glimpse of British attitudes towards political participation. Some members, according to the minutes, felt ‘that even the prospect of consultation had caused blight and uncertainty, when the real need was for continuity and stability’ (p.9 lines 3-13).

Every kind of reason was advanced to thwart the idea of consultation. Thus: ‘Consultation on the grammar school issue could be confused by the public with consultation on ages of admission and transfer’ (line 13).

The County Council’s decision not to ratify the Education Committee’s approval was bizarre in its nature. The flag-bearers of the grammar school proponents on the council were eloquent but not popular. Milton Keynes was and is largely a Labour stronghold. The potential catchment for selective parents amounted to about 30% of adults, significant but not, of course, a majority. The opportunities for ‘bussing’ existed and were exploited. Why did a Conservative dominated council reject new grammar schools? The problem boiled down to the Benthamite doctrine of keeping the greatest number of people happy and thus maintaining a politically acceptable profile. This, plus an in-built reluctance to upset the status quo, acted as an effective brake on change at that time. During the upheaval over the grammar school issue in Milton Keynes, consultation with interested parties on both sides of the issue was very limited.

Groups consulted by the County Council
Teachers, the churches and industry were consulted, but only as represented on the education committee by their 4, 3 and 1 individual members respectively. Of the people of Milton Keynes, only those who were privately polled on the matter, and individual voters soliciting their own councillors could be said to have been consulted.

Although this certainly constituted consultation, decision-making dialogue was confined to the seven representatives above. Parents’ associations, bodies representing the different kinds of teachers, racial interests, etc., were not involved as such in any specific way.

The local press
In 1989 Buckinghamshire had five main local newspapers - The Bucks Herald, The
The controversy over Grammar Schools in Milton Keynes found a ready outlet in the national and local press. So, in 1989 the Daily Telegraph under a title ‘County move to set up Grammar Schools Plan’ (Education Correspondent, 13 November 1989) focused on the fact that Buckinghamshire had three of its fourteen grammar schools in easy reach of Milton Keynes which, with a population estimated to grow up to 150,000, had none. A little later as the affair deepened and the County approved the idea of a grammar school ‘The Independent’ (20 May 1995) highlighted the fact that Buckinghamshire organised two opinion polls one of which showed a majority of younger parents in favour of selection and the other substantially against. ‘The Independent’ also showed the extraordinary behaviour of the Conservative dominated county council in its voting. In February of 1992 the County Council voted by one vote to delay a decision on building a grammar school. The Chairman of the Education Committee voted with the opposition! However on the 18th May there was a final and decisive vote unanimously by the council to go ahead.

The underlying theme is that the press simply do not find enough of interest to excite their readers. In Switzerland, by contrast, the frequent spotlighting of issues consequent upon a local Initiative frequently secures banner headlines in a newspaper. I think that being overlooked creates British resentment and fuels charges of bias.

*The final irony*

So in 1995 after years of controversy, the Buckinghamshire County Council appeared to be fulfilling the dreams of the group of selectivists led by Councillor Dransfield. The ‘Independent’ summed it up well:

‘Teachers and many parents have waged a long battle against the grammar schools plan……..the council (of Milton Keynes) is due to become a unitary authority from April 1997. Labour and Liberal Democrats are incensed that the new selective school is being foisted on them just before they take over the borough’s schools.’ (20 May 1995)

When Milton Keynes became an independent authority the labour-controlled Council
opted for comprehensive education, and the grammar school was never built.

At the local level The *Bucks Herald* summed up the situation on June 11th 1992: ‘The issue which has been mulled over since 1988 finally looks set to go out to consultation to see just what the public think.’ ‘The county council has discussed the question of grammar schools in Milton Keynes three times in the past five years. It is clearly an issue that is not going to go away’ said Cllr Crispian Graves, Chairman of the Council’s Education Committee. It may be noted that Stephen Sharp the County Education Officer, even in 1992, said that if a grammar school were opened in Milton Keynes, up to 800 children would qualify for entry. Since then, the population has steadily increased to its present (2002 AD) size of 210,000.

The Milton Keynes ‘*Citizen*’ (25 June 1992) opened its pages to what it entitled week by week ‘The Great School Debate’. On the 25 June 1992 two facts of relevance to participation emerged. First a forum in Milton Keynes town hall was organised at which the public could question the main protagonists. The second was a comment by the Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council majority party, Councillor Robinson, ruling out a referendum because ‘councillors were elected to make decisions’, although he also added that ‘parents will be fully consulted’ on controversial plans to reintroduce grammar schools in Milton Keynes. This kind of attitude did not arouse confidence in the public.

A significant statement from an unbiased source was that of Stephen Sharp the Buckinghamshire Chief Education Officer who said that ‘the number of children from Milton Keynes attending grammar schools in other parts of the County continued to rise. This year (1992) 328 pupils would take part in the selection process compared to 279 last year (*The Citizen*, 25 June 1992). Another local paper ‘The Milton Keynes Herald’ printed a headline ‘Public to have their say in School debate’ and opened its own Grammar Schools ‘Newsdesk’. The whole situation was given an added edge because at the time Labour was just one vote short of a majority on the Milton Keynes Council.

*Voluntary groups and local participation*

It is salient to examine at this point to what extent the ordinary Buckinghamshire public as represented by its myriad voluntary organisations do or do not become involved directly in the decision making process.
All the activities cited by Parry & Moyser (1992) and others such as women’s voluntary organisations, the proliferation of a vast network of clubs, charitable bodies and committees galore which are certainly participatory and very numerous in Britain cannot ever assume that they will be summoned by the local council to debate issues which correspond to their particular interests and to participate in a vital stage of democratic government. The same pattern is repeated for every political matter which emerges on the council agenda with the exception that a public poll is not usually proposed. Certainly protest meetings are sometimes called at which council members present citizens with the facts. This occurred when proposals were floated for a vast increase in local property development in Buckinghamshire. These meetings were not however statutory or an integral part of decision making. In fact one of the most valuable local participatory pressure groups which existed in 1989 and still clings to its identity is scheduled to be abolished shortly by central government edict. This is the Community Health Council (Aylesbury) (Annual Report Community Health Council 1999-2000). Its remit has been, as its annual report shows, to demand on behalf of patients the right to:

‘relevant information about local health services, enter and inspect hospitals, monitor local health needs, observer status at public meetings of the NHS, be consulted on service changes with the right of appeal to the Health Secretary’ (p.1).

All this is likely to be abandoned. Its status was akin to the Swiss Associations d’Intérêts. Even that is likely to disappear.

**Educational moves in Buckinghamshire since 1989**

In interview during July 1999 with Mr McGahey (Appendix, doc.79), Director of Education for Buckinghamshire, a number of recent moves were discussed. In 1998 a new exercise in educational participation was launched in Buckinghamshire. This is entitled ‘The Bucks Task Force’ (Creating the Learning County: First Report, Bucks Task Force). Its aim is to ‘provide learning opportunities for all throughout life’. Mr. McGahey clearly thought this to be real participation at last.

Some 42 organisations drawn from business, trade unions, churches, Buckingham University, voluntary youth services, insurance companies and racial equality groups plus of course schools and colleges meet regularly to plan an enrichment of education for all
citizens. This move would seem to spread participation in the same kind of organised way that the Swiss Associations d'Intérêts operate. Obviously its success will be determined over the next few years and on its capacity to influence, decisively, local government actions. Its sheer size should enable it to achieve an impact that the individual groups could not do. An idea of the impact that the task force seeks to achieve can be seen in the liaison between 'increasing the number of skilled employees into the labour market' and 'raising the participation rate in learning activity for all groups, initially post-16 African Caribbean males'.

Mr McGahey also reminded me that not only do parents have a large input to schools but that school governors themselves have a joint committee where they all meet periodically. On the question of grammar schools in Buckinghamshire he also pointed out that parents can, if in a majority, veto the continuance of a grammar school - a fairly empty power in a shire county like Buckinghamshire.

An interesting contrast to the upbeat views of Mr McGahey (interviewed in 1998) was the view of his predecessor Stephen Sharp (in 1993). His brief was to produce a report outlining the pros and cons of a new grammar versus a comprehensive school for Milton Keynes (see minutes of February 1993). As he pointed out finance was a serious constraint on ideal plans leading to unenviable choices like a new grammar school but no extra secondary school to cater for non grammar pupils or provision for two grammar schools if need arose. In 1990 the same CEO had admired the Geneva booklet ‘Memento Genevois’ produced by the canton education department - he said there was no money for such enterprises.

During the past decades since the events surrounding the 1989 grammar school case in Milton Keynes described earlier the problem of citizen involvement is highlighted. Between 1989 and 1993 several more attempts by councillors and pressure groups were made to initiate some decision-making process in the full Conservative dominated council meetings. All proved abortive.

An interesting contrast to the official Commission set up in Geneva to discuss the varying views in the ‘L'Ecole Notre Avenir’ initiative was the debate which occurred in Milton Keynes in March 1994 sponsored by an ad hoc group of citizens. An audience of 70 or so
people mostly against the idea of a grammar school argued with the leader of the grammar school lobby. Nothing was official and no public records were kept. *(The Citizen, 10 March 1994)*

This whole debate is characterised by the Education Committee meetings of May/June 1993. The proposers of a new grammar school/s in Milton Keynes submitted a motion that:

> ‘Unless consultation shows that there is insufficient support, any planned future Milton Keynes secondary schools should be built as grammar schools until demand is satisfied’ *(Buckinghamshire County Council, Education Committee Minutes, 1993).*

Their argument was based on (1) the steadily rising numbers of grammar applicants (1990 175 pupils, 1993 391 pupils); (2) the likely increase of the population by the year 2000 to around 212,000; (3) The saturation point of existing grammar schools in adjacent parts of Buckinghamshire and (4) the cost in either case of building a new secondary school would be about the same £13.8 m. for a comprehensive school or a grammar school £13.5 million.

Despite all this the County Council in plenary session rejected any change to grammar schools as the following paragraphs show. The decisive step occurred in 1993 *(Buckinghamshire County Council, Education Committee Minutes, May/June 1993)* when it was discovered that unacceptably large numbers of Milton Keynes parents were sending their more able offspring to the areas of Buckinghamshire with selective schools. Clearly popular feelings had hardened. This was reflected in the Education Committee’s report which stated:

> ‘the Committee accepted the fact that that there was a strong wish to ensure that the Buckinghamshire selection arrangements are applied within Milton Keynes.’ *(Report of the Chief Education Officer, Item 10, 25 February 1993)*

The Council conceded that consultation should take place (a Public Opinion Poll - funded by the Council).

Thus the County Council decided to set up a schools public opinion poll through its provision panel to consider the matter of whether the new secondary school in Milton
Keynes should be selective or comprehensive. The panel decided ‘Every household in Buckinghamshire must know of the issue and be consulted’. Further, the Chief Education Officer was asked to submit advice on whether a grammar school was educationally feasible. A questionnaire was to be distributed to all Milton Keynes parents, teachers and governors to be returned in due course. Of 6,826 people interviewed 4,557 were in favour of comprehensive education with 2,099 (30.75%) wishing selective education.

This local but unenforceable invitation to the electorate to participate directly in an issue highlights the random nature of such exercises nationwide in the absence of a statutory obligation. One has to bear in mind that any local consultation is not legally binding on the council and therefore council action will be entirely dependent on the political scenario prevailing at the time. It was an important step for a Conservative council but yet is a far cry from the Swiss system. There was no in built capacity for open debate in an officially sponsored committee. Furthermore despite the very detailed examination that Buckinghamshire Council caused to be undertaken and even the public opinion poll carried out in Milton Keynes - all valuable moves in their own way - yet the electorate had no opportunity to register, in a binding referendum, their various views.

In considering the UK and Swiss schools issues, it seems clear that the British electorate through not experiencing the constant succession of Popular Initiatives and referenda together with the decision making process involved were denied the opportunity to officially express their views. This in turn blunted any decisive action they might have taken. After all, knowledge is often the ally of power.

In October 1994 the Local Government Commission recommended that Milton Keynes become a separate authority. This occurred in 1997. Just prior to this and after the prolonged agonising described, Buckinghamshire county had successfully applied to the Secretary of State for permission to build two Grammar schools in Milton Keynes. As the ‘Independent’ of 20/05/95 stated: ‘Last Tory County approves Grammar School’

The paper went on to explain the tortuous manoeuvres which had preceded the vote.

55 Buckinghamshire Council minutes of above C.E.O.’s report. (1) Numbers of applicants for places in Aylesbury Vale grammar schools from Milton Keynes rose from 175 in 1990 to 391 in 1993. (2) The provision of other school places in Milton Keynes and (3) A reiteration of the changed circumstances
However, with independence for Milton Keynes came a Labour dominated council! The grammar school plans were dropped and comprehensive schools remained. As it happens the present Labour government has handed over the onus of deciding the future of grammar schools to the local electorate. This scheme was first envisaged under the previous Conservative administration. Under the terms of the Schools Standard and Framework Bill sponsored by the present Labour administration parents of children in a given area have the right to ballot on the type of school. 20% of parents are needed to trigger a ballot. In Ripon such a vote decisively went in favour of retaining the present Grammar school (Bulletin of Advisory Centre for Education, April 1998).

It is noteworthy that in 1999 in Milton Keynes grammar school oriented parents are still bussing their children into the selective areas of Buckinghamshire. As these still constitute a sizeable minority the original problem is still a very live issue.

Voting, interest in politics and local polls such as that in Ripon, triggered by the legislation of the present government in the School Standard and Framework Act, are likely to loom larger in future. Others of the remaining selective areas are certainly likely to hold ballots. In this context views on social class and education may seem germane. Thus, for example, Buckinghamshire has remained a separate and selective authority. (Buckinghamshire County Council Minutes, September 1993) It is, I think, significant that Crew, Fox et al (1995) polled samples of both professional and managerial classes and also manual classes on the subject of voting. The results show considerable differences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managerial and professional classes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Those with great interest in voting</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>average</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not much</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

following upon Local Management of Schools and direct grant status.
The implication of this is: first, the articulate and presumably educated middle class professionals naturally opt for action to achieve their ends, educational or otherwise, their keener interest being twice that of the manual groups. Secondly, in the 1991 national Census (British National Population Census, 1991) there is a break-down in the new social class definition. These seem to bear out the ratio of votes in the Milton Keynes parental poll:

The breakdown of groups is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled working class</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower subsistence</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures show that the middle classes will tend to maximise their votes at between 30 and 40%. The Crew and Fox poll above is similar to the survey carried out in Geneva by Finger and Sciarini on apathy (see the Swiss section). Thus if, say, pro selectionists win the day as in Ripon, it may be through lack of opposition votes.

However in Switzerland minority groups can augment their strength by serving on commissions, committees of Initiative and the like. This is less available in the United Kingdom.
The whole tendency of local-central political organisation in Britain regarding education whereby Westminster has a large say in influencing events, is reflected constantly in the questionnaire replies from Buckinghamshire councillors. They were overwhelmingly in favour of national standards. Thus: ‘National input is needed …. but present levels are excessive’ (60: 3).

The fierce local pride shown by Swiss cantons in wishing to run their own educational affairs, not always for educational reasons, was absent. An interesting aspect regarding the differing demography of each country arose. There are weaknesses in the Swiss lack of state-wide uniformity and variable finance which do not exist in Britain. Many British respondents felt that the great mobility of the UK population necessitated national education standards. In Switzerland there is much less movement of families within its boundaries.

The British questionnaire (see Annex 4 and Appendices 39-63)

In the following pages I have analysed the Buckinghamshire councillors’ replies to my questionnaire. There are significant differences from their Swiss counterparts as would be expected but also some similarities. As with the Swiss questionnaires, I have incorporated into my narrative the British replies gathered from their question sheets. These are also referenced with the respondents sheet number followed by the number of the question.

Qu.1: Why do you think that UK local elections produce such meagre turn-outs on fairly infrequent polls?

The replies by councillors to this question on embody many of the reasons why a practical participatory democracy cannot, at present, develop in English contemporary local and central governmental structures. The weakness of the former and the dominance of the latter pervade the answers. There is also an underlying cynicism which seems to stem from the perceived impotence of local government. The obvious difference between the two sets of answers is that, whereas the British councillors castigated the voters for sheer ignorance of local structures and for general apathy, the Swiss did not mention this at all. I do not think this was mere Swiss politeness but rather the fact that ignorance was impossible owing to the extensive coverage by fly-posting, newspapers and TV of every Initiative and referendum as they crop up. There is also the longstanding tradition of direct democracy in Switzerland which, whether acted on or not, is seen as a built in
factor of life. Again whereas the Swiss were swamped by choice and complexity of issues, the British had little to stimulate them in the 4-5 year intervals between elections.

There was a general air of brutal honesty from UK respondents. (It could be interpreted as perhaps rudeness). Answers fell into six main areas:

(a) Apathy or sheer idleness (by voters) 41:1
(b) Lack of publicity and literature 44:1
(c) Ignorance of issues and of council structures 42:1
(d) Huge Tory majority 45:5
(e) Power of Westminster 39:1
(f) Too many levels of government 56:1

On (a) the extreme flavour of some of the replies may be summed up in the following full quotation from a councillor: ‘The average Briton is bone idle anyway. The antiquated voting system produces in people’s minds, the notion that the result is foregone anyway. The generally low level of candidate does not inspire confidence.’ (Appendix 61:1)

A recurring theme on low voting rates was the lack of knowledge by voters about the nature of local government and its various tiers. Thus:

‘There is ignorance among the electorate and over emphasis on national politics. It is a commonplace that, on knocking on doors, many of the electorate do not understand the range of local government responsibilities, and do not understand the difference between say, district and county areas’ (Appendix 53:1).

Not one councillor considered it was anyone’s responsibility to fill the gaps in people’s knowledge (i.e. council publicity or councillors themselves). One is left with a clear impression of these and other British answers that the poll on trust in councillors referred to in Table 5.6 by Rao and Young, influences many of the answers. There is no obvious rapport between representatives and voters.

‘People feel the councils serve no useful purpose and councillors are untrustworthy’ (Appendix 51:1).

An additional factor, absent in Switzerland, was voiced by a number of correspondents:
'Local authorities have to work within guidelines set by Westminster and it is a change of government which has the greater impact on the electorate. I think this the reason for poor turnout.' (Appendix 39:1)

Other interesting and different view was advanced:

‘It is not unusual for me to be told - now that you have troubled to call I will go out and vote’ (40:1);

‘Every house should be canvassed, but supporters won’t volunteer.’.

Although answered under question 5, the following replies clearly belong under Qu.1:

‘Bucks is a one party state’ (46:5)

(a reference to the huge Conservative majority which was up to the 1990s the norm in the county). Again another seemingly aggrieved councillor:

‘The majority right – minority rights ignored’ (59:5).

Although the dislike by the majority of British councillors of any extension of popular democracy was not matched at all by their Swiss counterparts, yet the remark by some UK councillors that ‘there is ignorance among the electorate’ found echoes in Geneva. The leader of the Socialists (Mdme Calmy-Rey) observed:

‘Part of the trouble for the poor vote is the fact that councillors simply do not lay out their stalls sufficiently for voters so folk are not interested and therefore do not vote.’ (Appendix, doc.64)

Qu.2a *In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?*

The answers were, I think, unconsciously governed by the nature of our representative democracy. Whereas in Switzerland the press has plenty of copy when an Initiative is being launched and run. In Buckinghamshire there is so little political substance made public to enable the press to exploit. This may account for the general hostility and accusations of political bias levelled.

One councillor puts it thus: ‘I do not think the press provide a fair view of local government. Selling newspapers depends on maintaining the level of interest’ (and) ‘I also believe there is a local bias in reporting against the Conservatives’ (obviously from a
Conservative councillor) (53:2a). A common complaint from councillors was the failure of papers to report council debates: ‘Drama and scandal sell; a balanced report of a well argued debate would turn most readers off’ (53:2a). He adds: ‘good news is no news’. The general attitude towards the press is sour. Where Whitehall seems to dictate so much local policy the newspapers will surely turn to other more socially interesting topics. There was an interesting comment on the alleged narrow parochialism of the press. ‘They rarely stand back and make articles of external comparison with other counties or countries’ (54:2a).

The replies to Qu.2a were fairly harsh:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Does the media help?</th>
<th>Does the media hinder?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments ranged from ‘Local government is not news. There has to be a scandal’ or ‘the Aylesbury local press support the SDL at election times’ to ‘not enough explanation in connection with duties of County, District and Parish’ (40:2a); those supporting the press ‘without any doubt - especially the press who do campaign and highlight local issues of concern’ (59:2a).

Qu.2b  What is your view towards the church on politics?

There are no politically Christian parties on Buckinghamshire County Council such as exist in the canton of Geneva, i.e. the Christian Democrats or the various evangelical groups throughout Switzerland. This possibly accounts for the hostility shown to the church in the UK answers:

’Definitely no. The Church for religion and religious morals – the politicians for politics’ (43:2(b));

’No not at all – never under any circumstances’ (50:2(b));

’Left wing hypocritical sermons do not help fill the churches’ (40:2(b).

One answer thoughtfully put - regarding the churches intervention: ‘Yes, especially in education where it was first in the field. No individual should put forward his own ideas as if they were the view of the whole church’ (39:2). This councillor summed up the
dilemma of having no church party. Of course there was the drastic point of view also: 
‘Definitely no. The church for religion and religious morals - the politicians for politics.’ (43:2), or again ‘The Christian party cannot be equated with the manifesto of one party’ (44:2).

Qu.3. Do you think that education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential? If so, what?
Responses to this question revealed, in marked contrast to the Swiss, a strong desire for greater local control of education but yet with overall national control of standards. There was some underlying sense of frustration or even impotence at the way the central government calls the tune via the large subsidies and Ministry policy over academic targets. This itself points to one of the factors in the national scales of impact that counties have compared with cantons. The other is nevertheless the strong belief that UK councillors have in the need for a substantial national educational input. So one respondent wrote: ‘a local emphasis should be pursued with absolute minimum input from central government.’ (Appendix 51:3)

Less drastically, another felt: ‘I find this difficult to answer. In general implementation and delivery should be local, but national curricular and guide lines and examinations allow mobility in a country far larger than Switzerland.’ (Appendix 48:3) This is an important point. The Swiss are geographically less mobile than the British so the need for standardised education across the state is less.

Unconsciously one person, speaking of the UK set-up, highlighted a weakness in the Swiss educational scheme of things by saying: ‘There must be a national input into financing, if only to enable the areas with the smallest resources to provide a service comparable with their richer neighbours’ (Appendix 53:3) (a serious fault in Switzerland). Small and economically poor cantons have not the resources to equip their educational programmes really well. This problem is compounded by a very parochial attitude towards education.

In general there was a strong desire for greater local control of education without sacrificing the very real advantage of a strong national input. It must be remembered that by contrast in Switzerland only 9.3% of federal resources go to swell cantonal revenues.
This compares with the 50+% common in Britain (Local Government Financial Statistics England, 1996). A number of British cited the need for uniformity of standards across the country because of the much greater social mobility of families today. The breakdown in family life, one-parent families, etc., has caused greater movement around the state.

The British Councillors on educational responsibilities

The division of views as between national and local control was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present system</th>
<th>Local monopoly</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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This local finding in Buckinghamshire on education in which a large proportion of councillors feel that government’s presence on education is necessary, is borne out by Jowell and Curtice (1995) whose national survey showed that a majority of voters (56%) believed in substantial central government control of education. (p.96)

If power begins and ends in the council chamber then that power is exercised by councillors. Milton Keynes parents were forced to rely on councillors in order to be able to pursue their claims for new grammar schools. This in turn left Conservative councillors who were in a majority situation especially a prey to many conflicting impulses: to speak out against their peers, to let sleeping dogs lie, to reflect some opinions or to defy the party whips. Councillors see their roles as primarily in the representational field. Public feelings either individual or collective are either channelled through their local councillors or via public demonstrations or petitions. In discussing representative democracy Parry and Moran (1994, p.274) describe very much what goes on in the average British constituency. An individual is chosen to represent that group of people. The replies from the British respondents seem to confirm this view.

A great contrast with the Swiss could be seen in these British answers. In general the feeling is that as one councillor said (Appendix 43:3): ‘The local council has not the expertise’. British councillors naturally cannot visualise local control of affairs by an

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56 Parry and Moran (1994): ‘Liberal democracy is grounded upon the autonomy of the individual and its system of votes is based on the votes of those individuals who are grouped for electoral purposes within arbitrary geographical boundaries ... it is the numerical equality of votes rather than the importance of the local communities which is the paramount concern.’
autonomous authority acting within the overall state.

Several took up the theme that teacher and pupil mobility across the state and the very strong value in having a national curriculum required a large government input. Others feared that a local curriculum would degenerate into a vocational one and that only a national standard would ensure a rounded education and common standards. Finance also loomed large and one correspondent (53:3) made the point that: ‘There must be a national input to financing, if only to enable the areas with the smallest local resources to provide a service comparable with their richer neighbours’.

The same councillor pinpointed the essence of the British approach: ‘Universities, polytechnics and the HECs must have a very large national input….because they serve a national clientele. Local demands but within national frameworks since there is a fairly high degree of mobility in the population of Britain.’ (53:3)

This latter view, if implemented, would save some poorer Swiss cantons from failing to meet the needs of their pupils as in fact still happens today. As one British councillor put it ‘national guide lines, national funding (say 2/3rds), local detail and practice.’ (57:3)

Qu.4. Should Buckinghamshire citizens have a greater input into our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-options of people to represent committees on matters of local interest or perhaps local referenda?

A typical answer to this question was:

‘I think Bucks citizens have the opportunity of using their vote to elect representatives to look after their interests. I do not believe that the unelected people should have voting rights say on county committees’ (Appendix 42:4)

A councillor holding an academic post in the open university: ‘representation should only be through elected representatives. There should be no elective pressure groups as in Switzerland. If they wish to become involved they should stand for election’ (Appendix 56:4).

Certainly the minority in favour expressed strong support: ‘I am totally supportive of any measures which give ordinary people a greater participation in local democracy, there is
merit in referenda for important matters such as retention of grammar schools’ (Appendix 55:4).

This latter point reflects the frustration of many over the apparently arbitrary manner in which the issue had been handled in Buckinghamshire (see section on the topic). A view showing the underlying philosophy of some councillors’ mindset is quoted in the following rather patrician view:

‘Co-option is anti-democratic and referenda usually undesirable because (a) it is impossible to obtain a representative opinion in percentage terms and (b) it is difficult to ensure that all are fully in formed.’ (Appendix 50:4)

In the case of those few councillors who supported more democracy one view was: ‘You are aware that the county has abolished co-options to committees’ (Appendix 48:4), the point of the remark being that this was one of the few ways whereby ‘caucus free’ citizens could sit on major committees and vote freely on their own judgement.

Another drastic but interesting view was: ‘County councils should be abolished and town/city district councils with direct representatives established, with education taken out of the democratic process.’ (Appendix 51:4)

However, in marked contrast to the Swiss views on direct democracy where no councillors feared any competition with their own responsibilities, the British stressed the importance of the elected representatives and the weakening of their position which more democracy might entail.

Nevertheless one perceptive respondent made the point that:

‘before exploring novel ways of bringing individuals into the decision making process, we should try to increase participation in the existing machinery - the local elections.’ (53:4)

It is here that some councillors, who rarely consult their constituents until an election is due, might help. Finally no British councillors, despite their criticisms of voters’ ignorance of local government, seemed to acknowledge any links with themselves.
The majority view is summed up by a Buckinghamshire councillor:

‘If they wish to become involved they should stand for office.’ Or again: ‘I do not believe unelected people should have voting rights on Council committees.’ (42:4)

The attitude of many Buckingham local representatives could be summed up in the words of one councillor: ‘Local referenda – costly and can be manipulated by the press’ (46:4).

One contribution showed a curious slant on the ‘cause and effect’ syndrome: ‘referenda produce demands for services but rarely resources.’ (49:4) One rather thoughtful view on Qu.4 was:

‘I consider that by voting in a representative for every local area, the Buckinghamshire electorate should be well represented. Local referenda on contentious issues might be useful.’ (59:4)

Certainly the view of one man showed a refreshingly different aspect. He believed that ways should be found to increase the present rate of participation in the existing system. Existing councillors should set their own house in order:

‘If the electorate won’t turn out for elections, how can we achieve a larger and more representative turnout for a referendum?’ (53:4)

The few respondents who answered in favour of direct democracy were conspicuous by their monosyllabic ‘Yes’ with rarely any context stated.

Qu.5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Buckinghamshire form such an integrated unit?

The question on Buckinghamshire as a suitably sized county arose because of much talk of its awkward shape. The frequent changes of local boundaries over the past 30 years or so have not helped to create stability. In Switzerland the centuries old cantons are an accepted fact of life much as the shape of Britain is to the UK citizen. However respondents either agreed:

‘The south is outer London, the middle is rural and the Milton Keynes in the north. There is no cohesion’ (60:5) or ‘Bucks is far too long and thin.
Communications are poor’. (61:5)

(One focused viewpoint on the shape of Buckinghamshire put it thus):

‘It is fragmented. North Bucks (including Buckingham) is alienated from Aylesbury. At District and county levels. Milton Keynes is a discrete area with totally different socio-economic foundations. The county is more split / less integrated than at first appears to be the case.’ (48:5)

On the matter of the size of the county:

- About right size: 6
- Unsatisfactory: 10

The remaining answers were split between those who concentrated on the dominance of one-party politics at the expense of democracy and those who felt that Buckinghamshire was a mixture of good and bad (8 and 2 respectively).

I chose to put this question to the British councillors only because of the numerous boundary and status changes that have occurred over the past thirty years or so since the Redcliffe - Maud Commission in the 1960s. (see Barker, 1993, p.35)

I did not put this question to the Swiss as, apart from Jura, all the cantons have remained virtually unchanged for nearly two hundred years and many since the Middle Ages.
CHAPTER 9: THE FUTURE OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

These last two chapters have sought to demonstrate how British and Swiss democracy handled, through their respective political systems, a local issue of considerable moment to their communities. Comparisons can inevitably be made with the respective methods adopted.

There has been no machinery of participatory democracy operating at all national levels in Britain to examine. This is part of the comparison I wish to draw between the two states and is the justification, in part, for this chapter on ‘The future of Political Participation in Britain’. The major factor dividing the two communities is that there is no way whereby the British public in Milton Keynes between 1988 and 1994 could have relied on a constitutional right to invoke an Initiative and referendum in order to meet the aspirations of voters on the immediate issue or on any number of other matters which constantly crop up. In the United Kingdom although public opinion polls occur fairly frequently, as does canvassing, they do not carry the weight of the Swiss collection of signatures, the public commission to examine evidence and the final official referendum, not to mention the valuable compromise so often achieved through the device of the Counter Proposal. In Britain the public is consulted: in Switzerland they decide.

The previous two chapters demonstrate a great difference in attitude regarding democracy on the part of the Swiss and British. There is an underlying mood of optimism over local politics in the Swiss cantonal environment. This is, I believe, derived from the history of notable successes over local issues in Switzerland gained through participatory democratic methods. Voters can see at all levels of government, from communal to federal, that their views have often prevailed at the polls. In Britain because of the very strong ongoing influence of central government in provincial affairs, there is a widespread feeling of cynicism that local government can so often be thwarted by Whitehall. This was illustrated during the events discussed in the last chapter. The grammar school factor in the population of Milton Keynes was apparently always a minority, yet firstly, as the new city increased in size to a significant 205,000 so the number of potential selective pupils swelled, as the Chief Education Officer pointed out in his report to the council. In 2004 it is 1,000 pupils. Secondly, amongst the younger
voters there was a majority for building a new selective school (*Independent*, 20 May 1995).

It is interesting and perhaps ironic to note that years later, the introduction of local referenda for parents over the future of existing selective schools in various parts of Britain such as Ripon as described in this thesis shows a move towards a greater participation in democracy by this state.

In both Britain and Switzerland people’s anxieties were similar. The differences arose over the degree of political participation by the electorate in each state respectively.

Geneva and Milton Keynes were two very different local areas yet the quality of education formed an issue common to both. In Geneva parents felt that the *Cycle d’Orientation* was blighting their children’s future prospects in that the first two years of secondary education formed a comprehensive and unstreamed scene yet in the rest of the state selection began at that stage.

In Buckinghamshire the failure to offer the parents of Milton Keynes, in 1989 an integral part of the county, the grammar school opportunities that their peers enjoyed 15 to 20 miles away was the *casus belli*. In both cases parents anxious to achieve what they considered to be the best chances for their offspring recoiled at the existing educational set-up. The anxiety also of ambitious parents and children cross national boundaries. This chapter has been designed to show two democracies at work over a particular issue. In both Switzerland and UK therefore sizeable minorities tried, quite legitimately, to influence the status quo. British people, although able to express their views in many ways, have no certainty that they will be both heeded and acted upon.

In Geneva the opportunity to bypass the cantonal government network by launching a Popular Initiative conferred a sense of purpose on the electorate which rendered any decision reached thereafter that much more acceptable. In the matter of local democracy, the contrast between the British and Swiss councillors is very marked. Whereas, as mentioned in the questionnaire, the UK councillors shied away from extending participation to their fellow citizens, their Swiss peers in their answers showed a whole hearted allegiance to direct democracy despite its acknowledged snags (*see* Annex 4) and also despite the possible challenge to the councillors’ own power.
Finally, in a Swiss canton any significant Initiative if unsuccessful will leave an indelible record of its impact and must be considered in any future legislative proposals, (much in the manner of the accumulation of precedent in British case law). This is not merely because it is entitled ‘direct democracy’ but rather owing to the very real degree of public participation that is necessarily involved. The pivotal role of the local commission of enquiry is obviously a vital factor. Of course the UK national educational standards are excellent and can teach the Swiss, but there is little room for citizens’ anxieties to be dealt with, as the Milton Keynes issue showed.

All the previously mentioned numerous *Associations d’Intérêts* covering virtually every civic interest which exist in all cantons and which have their counterparts in Buckinghamshire will have the added incentive that within the scope of initiatives and referenda their efforts will be officially acknowledged. In Britain all the excellent group endeavours which exist may well be ignored.

These chapters have sought to demonstrate the practical deployment of participation in two different communities operating under a broadly common umbrella of western democratic freedoms. In both Britain and Switzerland people’s anxieties were similar. The basic acceptance in both states of free elections, the rule of law, and a free press, are understood. The differences arose over the degree of political participation by the electorate and its nature.

There is no way whereby the British public have any constitutional right to express their democratic views in referenda and votes on specific issues outside the range of national and local elections, except in occasional and government inspired moves - e.g. the various referenda since 1973 (see Chapter 5 on the political means). This contrasts vividly with the situation in which the Swiss citizen finds him or herself.

As a footnote, the views of Dahl on pluralism in his ‘Who Governs? (1961, Ch.2) seem relevant. He believes that ‘in pluralistic societies, powerful self-limiting tendencies help to maintain stability in the system.’ This surely applies to the jigsaw of Swiss politics. However he also talks of ‘sub-leaders’ in society who, are ‘key folk.’ These are to be found throughout both UK and Swiss communities, the vital difference being that in
Switzerland their influence can ultimately count in votes on their particular issue.

People’s opinions world-wide are compounded from a number of very different strands: nationality, class, temperament, and personal inclinations such as party loyalty. When, in the case of these two groups of councillors, these and other traits have been considered then clearly its no surprise when very different attitudes towards politics emerge. After a century of Swiss referendum democracy the people regard it as a *sine qua non* for political activity locally or nationally. Very few Swiss respondents offered any criticism. Councillors’ own status was clearly deemed secondary to the needs of popular democracy. This is not surprising as we have noted Ladner and Brandle’s analysis which showed the almost symbiotic interrelationship between Swiss political parties and the instruments of popular democracy – each supporting the other.

The strong sense of corporate or communal feeling among the Swiss emerged in a reply which said that personal benefit accruing from an Initiative was less important than the general impact on constituents. There was underlying amazement that personal political gain from an Initiative should be a factor. The Swiss devotion to their own form of participatory democracy renders their vigorous criticism of its defects all the more credible.

These criticisms were largely on two fronts. First that the delays in reaching fruition for some initiative were far too excessive and secondly that there was too much duplication of issues. Some also felt that the systems of checks and balances valuable as they were as an internal binding factor in Swiss unity yet might prove a stumbling block in an increasingly global concept of relationships.

A picture of general satisfaction on the part of councillors in Geneva emerged in that despite its faults Swiss style participatory democracy, by weighing power so much in favour of provincial opinion, effectively prevented any threat of a dictatorship, elective or otherwise. Polls mentioned in Chapter 7 reveal that the Swiss elector gives more weight to direct democratic referenda than state or cantonal elections.

From the British viewpoint the picture that emerges is very different. Co-options, referenda and incorporating the public in decision making struck few sparks of approval.
Buckinghamshire councillors are far from convinced about the virtues of popular participation. Across the parties they appear to see themselves as the only mediators between the public and political action. They also demonstrated a lack of responsibility for the dearth of knowledge in voters about issues and local government practices. In 1998 whereas over 50% of British voters felt the present high level of central government control was right yet such a view would simply be anathema to the cantonal citizen.

Even allowing for the need to remember that direct political democracy is unavailable in Britain whereas it has been the norm for 150 years in Switzerland yet the hostility towards it shown by most Buckinghamshire councillors, judging by the respondents’ answers, would seem to be excessive. However the answer on educational control seemed to reveal a positive view which the Swiss could usefully adopt.

It must be said that the kind of federalism operating in Switzerland and the centuries old cantonal system of great sovereign independence breeds a robustness of outlook which Buckinghamshire councillors are unable to ever share in even if they may wish to. The answer to Question 1 underlines the problem: what gives Swiss Participatory Democracy its attraction for voters? I believe it is the obvious authority residing in cantonal sovereignty which persuades its citizens of the worthwhileness of their civic duty.

Undoubtedly there is a slow move towards greater participation in local affairs in the UK. Local Management of Schools, the votes on the retention of an established grammar school and referenda carried out by local councils, all point to a greater involvement of the public in one way or another.

Post-modernisation
Set into the scale of participation, it is seems reasonable to consider what, if any, influence ‘postmodernization’ is having on the socio-political scene. This theory as advanced by Crook, Pakulski & Waters (1992) may help to explain the decline in voting (as in Britain in 2001), the dwindling of the traditional political parties and the more individualistic and group centred electorates which are emerging. The new splinter groups, green movements and others plus the new social movements in Europe are gradually replacing our modern political society with a yet more radically different one. It is associated with the increase of wealth and the consequent reduction in the community
United Kingdom society with its traditional democratic structure appears to be less at ease with postmodernization than the Swiss with their Proportional Representation and myriad outlets through direct democracy which the system offers the more individualistic citizens of today.

**British Participatory Democracy: its future in Britain at local level?**

This thesis has been about participatory democracy and its influence on an issue in a Swiss canton and, by comparison, the effect of British democracy on a similar matter in a United Kingdom county. British political participation is far less organised or widespread than that of the Swiss state. A network of structures such as the *Associations d’Intérêts* which actively join with government Switzerland in solving problems are not in existence (see Chapter 5). However there is beginning to emerge a greater degree of popular involvement in the UK than in the past - at both national and provincial levels as I indicated in the course of the thesis.

In Chapter 5 I have detailed some of the areas where public participation has greatly increased. Beyond that the greater liaison between organisations generally which can be seen in society all contribute to a participatory state. In addition workers representatives on management boards and the ‘Bucks Task Force’ (see Chapter 8) are all moves in the right direction. All this vast network of participation in some form or other throughout the United Kingdom lacks the capacity to translate itself into direct political action with a concluding vote.

**The current background**

The year 2005 seems a particularly suitable time to consider a system of direct democracy for Britain and at local level where this thesis has been focused. Part of the justification for this is that at the present time there are a number of moves afoot in the general participatory field of research. For example:

1. The present government is seeking ways to make voting easier (Modern Local Government in Touch with the People, Department of the Environment, Transport
and the Regions, 1998); Chapter 4 discusses participation, referenda (not obligatory), voting, etc. This Government-inspired paper does at least initiate a debate.

2. The introduction in the autumn of 2000 of a ‘Citizenship’ syllabus in schools at Key Stages 3 & 4 (see Crick, 2001).

Therefore it seems appropriate to suggest an outline scheme for the introduction into British provincial life of a direct participatory democratic structure.

There does not appear to be any insuperable obstacle to introducing a participatory democratic structure at local level in Britain in the 21st century. People’s lives are greatly affected by local environmental and civic changes which can affect their whole domestic tenor of existence.

Although it is said that, because Switzerland is a federal state, it cannot be compared to Britain, this is not the main point. The guiding factor behind local government in Switzerland is subsidiarity. This as Gunter Hega (2000) shows gives real force and meaning to local affairs. It is the raison d’être behind cantonal sovereignty. This states that:

‘decisions should be taken at the lowest level of authority possible, and policy functions should be exercised by the lowest level of government capable of fulfilling the specific task’ (p.3 line 9)

As the Swiss democratic structure has been tried and tested for well over a century, I have considered how a similar system suitably adapted for provincial consumption could be implemented. In a participatory approach a ‘bottom up’ plan is implicit. Popular democracy starts with the electors as a whole. This is not in the realms of fantasy. Both Switzerland and Britain have well developed structures of representative government within which participatory instruments easily co-exist in the case of Switzerland (see Chapter 5) and could do so in Britain.

Parliamentary legislation

However suitable the atmosphere today may be for the introduction of direct democracy, the crucial need in Britain to enable a viable local direct democracy with its requisite instruments of referenda and possibly initiatives, is a national recognition of the role of local government.
What basic structure might emerge? It so happens that the present geographical outline of local government in Britain is not dissimilar to that of the Swiss. There are well-populated metropolitan areas not unlike the large industrial cantons of Zurich and Geneva, there are the shire counties which, varying in size as they do, have some similarity to the rural cantons, and finally the District Council areas of Britain have their counterparts in the very varied rural and urban communes of Switzerland.

As I believe that the Swiss system of expressing local concerns provides a better service for its citizens than do our present British arrangements, I have sketched out in Diagram 9.1 a possible framework for such a plan in Britain. However the plan is not to be ‘the be all and end all’ of political participation. It would however provide a logical end point to the burgeoning participation already happening across the United Kingdom. Thus some of the numerous voluntary surveys carried out by local councils of their citizens’ needs and aspirations could be channelled into a positive result. Indeed a successful direct democracy itself stimulates further voluntary activity in the community.
Diagram 9.1: Possible Structure for British Participatory Democracy

The steps for implementing a Popular Initiative

(1) The raw material is the British electorate in the provinces

(2) Catchment areas i.e. Metropolitan, County and District

(3) The myriad voluntary organisations which exist in provincial Britain: Health Committees, Sport, Social Welfare, Environment, Women’s Organisations, Ratepayers etc. provide the source for issues.

(4) Local committee for organising the Initiative set up including a percentage number of supporters to justify the exercise.

(5) Time scale for raising support starts

(6) Local Commission of Enquiry established for specific issue (composed of interested parties in the dispute)

(7) Report tabling the pros and cons of the arguments

(8) Statutory Public Referendum held

Implementation

An Act of Parliament could grant local statutory powers to implement the process. A permanent standing committee in parliament might be set up to monitor the progress of developments.

This would be enough to start the process. It need not impinge greatly upon the sovereignty of parliament in the way that a national participation would. Switzerland after

57 These citizen groups roughly equate to the Swiss Association d’Intérêts which abound in local life covering every interest from the environment and sanitation, to chess playing.
all has embraced direct democracy nationally and through the Council of States shares with the federal legislature of the state the discharge of business. Thus there is no infringement of parliament as would be the case in Britain if the powers of democracy were operated nationwide through national referenda and popular initiatives as in Switzerland.

Carried out in the areas detailed in steps (1) and (2) the numerous voluntary organisations in Britain with strong local connections (3) would seem to provide an excellent source for material to justify a British Initiative system. Success would also revive interest in many of these groups. An organising committee is essential to assess and marshal a percentage support at the outset (4) and to eliminate frivolous motions. Some of the answers to the Swiss questionnaire stressed the value of being a member of such a committee from those who had experienced it. A sense of urgency is injected if a time limit is fixed for gathering votes (5).

Item (6) is crucial – the local commission set up to consider the viability of an issue. Such an important step in a Swiss Initiative, could I feel be easily replicated in Britain. It has the dual virtue of both thoroughly airing the whole matter and producing a report stating the pros and cons. Voters can then see the balance of the arguments prior to a referendum (7).

Finally the public referendum (8) which concludes the exercise would need to be binding.

Finance
One crucially important matter arises at this point – how to finance this plan? If democratic control over people’s lives means power so equally does finance. Many of the comments in the responses to the UK county questionnaire dwelt on the futility of decision-making at local level owing to the predominance of Central government in their lives i.e. in subsidies, taxation and general regulation. One recurring theme was ‘local authorities have to work within guide lines set by Westminster’ (Appendix 39/1) which was reinforced by a feeling of apathy.

When considering the whole range of British government spending on behalf of the state at present and comparing it with that of the Swiss (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4) one could
reasonably say that only Defence and Foreign Policy appear to be purely national concerns. The others impinge on citizens’ lives to a very great extent and clearly demand large financial resources, however funded.

Kay and King (1991) in their ‘British Tax System’ believe that the annual computation of income tax which is common in Europe compared with the more flexible ‘rolling’ arrangements whereby tax can accumulate over more than one year in Britain enables local wealth to be worked out far more accurately. As they put it, there is a need for ‘a rough and ready deduction of income tax from pay and assess liability by the end of the years tax returns’ (pp.148-151). They conclude that a genuinely locally accountable arrangement would enhance the value and purpose of provincial government in Britain. The political impact on a British local government area (or in Switzerland a canton/commune) in which the power to tax ones own citizens according to their local needs as well as supplying the national requirements, gives provincial government a solid raison d'ètre and its citizens a focus of communal allegiance.

The Swiss cantons pay for their own Health, Law and Education in taxes through their local government. At present British local government receives large subsidies from central government: 23% in Rate Support Grant for this year plus a proportion of the nationally organised Non Domestic Rates (16%) and finally the Hypothecated Grants (21%) or ring-fenced allotments for specific work, the total of non locally raised money being 60%. The Swiss by comparison get only about 15% and mostly towards their local university expenses. All other expenses are funded by revenues raised in the canton.

The areas of Health, Social Security and the Law also concern us as citizens. They all intimately affect our lives in a given area and should be financed by that area. Democracy is given meaning when decisions taken at local level are seen to matter and can be funded at that point. Multiplied up round the country they produce a participating community.

**Comparisons – Britain and Switzerland**

Tables 9.2.1 and 9.2.2 compare an English County’s income and expenditure with that of a Swiss canton and give some idea of the wide differences between them and the political power wielded respectively:
### Table 9.2.1: United Kingdom: County of Buckinghamshire Income and Expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Council Tax</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Charges for Services</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Grants</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate Support Grant</td>
<td>23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Domestic Rate</td>
<td>16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothecated Grants</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social services</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highways</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Community Services Resources | |
| Finance | 34 |
| Policy performance | |
| Children & Teenagers | 100 |

*Pratchett & Wilson (1994) state 'The nationalization of the Non Domestic Rate had the effect of increasing the proportion of Central Funding for local government' (p.45)*

**In 2004 the Buckinghamshire County Government Rate Support Grant has increased to 32%.

### Table 9.2.2: Switzerland: The Canton of Geneva Income and Expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Cantonal Tax</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Tax on Societies</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Other revenue</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal rebates (mostly for University)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundries</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Standard & Poors République et Canton de Genève via internet (2002)*
However, there is the important consideration in all these responsibilities that local authorities and their catchment areas vary from walthy to impoverished. This dilemma has not been solved in many countries with provincial governments. It is here that the national government has a responsibility to intervene.

One obvious difference in income sources between both authorities is very large. It is in central government subsidies and the implied added political weight which this gives to the Swiss local citizen. Another is the range of obligations a canton has compared with the British. Thus Law and Health are largely cantonal responsibilities. Political participation for the cantonal voter in Switzerland has some real meaning in relation to the extent that they can affect the huge sums of money which are involved.

Table 9.3 showing the Swiss approach to sharing costs could provide a useful guide towards a British version of apportioning the burden of paying for the ‘heights of the economy’:

Table 9.3: Share of Federal and Cantonal Costs in Switzerland (2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Federal %</th>
<th>Cantonal %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Swiss Federal Statistics Office 2005

Although a British county like Buckinghamshire spends nearly £490 million per annum, Geneva canton with a comparable population averages £1.35 billion. However this latter sum has to cover all Health matters and a large percentage of Social Security as well, plus Law and Order. Again, whereas Buckinghamshire draws its income as shown, Geneva canton can call upon the personal income of its citizens to fund its very large responsibilities as well as various private receipts from business and industry. As can be seen in the Table 9.2.2, 84% of Geneva’s income is from local taxation (Impôts et Patentes), while only 15% comes in federal subsidies. The cantonal authorities saw fit to expend their income on: Education at 33.3%; Social Security at 14.9%; and Health at
15.3%. So to introduce direct democracy into Britain local income tax raising powers would be needed to provide the necessary financial autonomy. It also has the effect of holding government and people to account so that any local democratic decisions are no longer rendered powerless but have real ‘bite’.

Finance Bills would have to be drawn up and carried through both Houses of Parliament. Provisions would need to be inserted in order to determine the division of responsibilities and an equitable compensating element between rich and poor authorities. The Liberal Democrats suggested a scheme for local income tax to be collected by the Inland Revenue but this was, according to Kay and King, a very expensive method.

As can be seen in the Table 9.3, although the Swiss cantons enjoy considerable autonomy the central government does not leave them high and dry to cope financially on their own. The Berne government bears a substantial share of many important areas of state expenditure (Customs, communications, much defence, foreign policy, etc).

Minimum voting support
In other countries where direct democratic methods exist, for example in the USA, a percentage of support is required to start the process. This is what the Swiss call ‘*Le prix d’entrée*’. There are two aspects: the percentage of votes needed and also the time allowed to collect signatures. In Geneva with a population of 300,000 4.2% of votes are needed and for Initiatives 120 days (see Kriesi, 1995, Table 4.9). This gives some level to use in relation to Britain. Kriesi also points out that where direct democracy is very well developed the percentages of entry and time allowance are significantly lower. Practice can make perfect.

Signature collection is a valuable step in assessing local support. It has a twofold effect. First it acts as very specific canvass and secondly it creates an army of voluntary participators with a definite object in mind. A civic sense of some corporate responsibility has to be engendered in the electorate, but through voluntary acceptance not by diktat. This attitude is best epitomised by a Swiss respondent’s reply to the question ‘Have you personally benefited from an Initiative?’: ‘The benefit is collective and not personal’ (A. Novelen ref 33/2). This was typical of many of the replies by Swiss councillors but by only one or two British.
Local activity prior to a poll

In order to create the maximum impact on the poll of a given issue at local level, there must be a considerable marshalling of local opinion (see item 4, Diagram 9.1). In an article on the Welsh devolution issue of 1996, Woods (1998) makes some interesting points:

1. Groups were formed throughout the principality to promote (in this instance) the ‘Yes for Wales’ campaign.
2. The political parties however did not ‘drive the process’ largely through their infighting and narrow sectional interests which, says Woods, turned off voters.
3. Canvassing lagged far behind leafleting (pp. 219-224).

The collection of signatures by volunteers as in Switzerland certainly crystallizes support.

What then of Britain in relation to direct democracy? Gerry Stoker (1996) writes:

‘Challenging, although not practised in Britain, is the citizen initiated ballot. This form of direct democratic device is, however, widely employed in other western democracies especially at local level in the United States of America’ (p.198).

He goes on: ‘It is difficult to deny the freshness that direct democratic approaches could bring to local democracy’. It is interesting to note that the issues that Stoker names are those that exercise many UK citizens; such as road building, fluoridation, environmental measures and land planning.

In actual fact there is today, as I mentioned earlier in the thesis, legislation enacted by the present national government enabling referenda to take place in local areas whereby involved parents and others can vote to preserve or reject grammar schools in their locality. The example of Ripon grammar school was a case in point. Now if such an exercise can be successfully completed then it is not such a big step to bring in legislation allowing other issues to be decided directly by the people concerned and without any subsequent withdrawal by the central administration. In fact the above example chimes in readily with the two issues examined in this thesis in Geneva and Buckinghamshire.
Local councils constantly carry out polls of their constituents seeking their views on a wide range of problems. I therefore think that some form of direct participation by the electorate of Britain at least at local level, but possibly in the future at national level also, is feasible. It might help overcome the current apathy over voting. At any one time in a given county or urban area in Britain there are burning issues which crop up. They greatly affect the citizens of that place. They may take many different forms. Environment, Health, Crime, Traffic - the list is long but often limited to the particular vicinity. Popular Initiatives and referenda backed, as in Switzerland, by the force of a national law could well arouse a renewed interest in democratic politics in Britain. With Parliament increasingly in thrall to an ever more powerful central government and a consequent dearth of opportunities to promote causes, it is surely worth considering.

Of course all the foregoing comments are by nature speculative, nevertheless some reform along these lines are needed in order to enable the ‘Demos’ to channel its hopes and fears along productive lines so that an electoral watershed is reached and a clear conclusion decided either for or against the particular issue. Thus, one party to a dispute will rejoice and the other will at least be able to console themselves that a kind of justice has been delivered. Local income tax, incidentally, would become at last a viable concept given local democracy. Parry (1992) speaking of Britain believed that:

‘There would appear to exist a general sympathy amongst the population for reforms of local government which would allow citizens more say in decision making. This view is shared by a substantial portion of the elite’ (p.410).

Finally, and probably most difficult to implement, is the right of the electorate to veto bills of parliament, as exists in Switzerland. This, I think, would be contingent upon either a much greater status for UK provincial government than I have suggested, or a body within parliament itself exclusively devoted to local affairs. The Westminster Houses of Parliament would surely be reluctant to concede this particular reform.

In the conclusion to his book, Dunn (1992) poses a question about representative democracy. It seems especially applicable to my thesis. He believes that:

‘The history of twentieth century states suggests that however effusive the assertion of equality of status among modern citizens, the structure of the state
will always ensure a drastic alienation of power from virtually all of them’ (p.262).

I believe that this thesis has shown that any alienation that may arise does not have to be as drastic as Dunn believes.

**Concluding remarks**

This research has been directed towards two forms of democratic government in practice - participatory and representative. My aim was to consider first the impact on the affairs of a Swiss canton of the participatory structure obtaining there when confronted by a specific and widely contested issue, and secondly to repeat the exercise on a British county in examining the effect of representative democracy upon an analogous issue when it arose in that county.

People may say that the republican system of Switzerland cannot be compared with the centralised monarchy of Britain. But it is not essentially the federal element in the Swiss polity which I believe can be applied to Britain but rather the emphasis on subsidiarity. Here the smaller unit providing it can carry out the task assigned should do so.

The essence of my hypothesis is that Swiss participatory democracy fulfils the interests of its people better than the British representative variety. In order to demonstrate this I started by considering the different dimensions to the concept of democracy, and writers’ views, which are current today. These focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the different facets of democracy and on its application in the practical world.

In order to compare two different states it seemed logical to analyse the governmental and administrative structures and national institutions operating in each country – notably parliaments, budgets, and local government. Next I arrayed these institutions with the democratic machinery that each country possesses - voting systems, referenda, commissions and, in the case of Switzerland, Popular Initiatives.

Chapters 7 and 8 provided a detailed analysis of two instances of democracy in action. I focused on two similar issues, one in an English county and the other in a Swiss canton, both on education and both at about the same time. Each issue was subject to the
democratic system operating in that country - namely for Switzerland participation and for Britain representation. Both chapters were supported by answers to my questionnaires to the councillors in each country. These answers greatly helped to reveal the varying impact that democracy seems to have on people.

The views of councillors in both countries provided a complement to the academic arguments at the start of the thesis. Would they confirm or even relate in any way to articles on democracy by writers over the same period or would they rather reflect personal prejudices and narrow tunnel vision?

I found that opinions were indeed varied. Certainly Buckinghamshire councillors showed a strong reluctance to share more power with non-elected citizens. Voters were regarded with a less than complimentary eye. The weight of central government influence seemed significant. In fact in the case of the British councillors across the parties the questionnaires revealed that in general they regarded themselves as the chief medium for the expression of citizens’ demands. Rapport with their constituents was not evidently very high. However a minority felt strongly that the use of local referenda would be a way forward.

The Swiss, although very vocal in their criticisms of the slowness of delivery, duplication of the same issues, multiplicity of Initiatives and the technical nature of these latter, were nevertheless solidly espoused to their system of participatory democracy. Their whole mindset was tuned to participation at the very least through generations of usage. Unlike their British counterparts their own status and authority was never mentioned.

Additionally when asked what benefit they personally had reaped from a given Initiative the reply was often ‘none but the community did.’ It is true that these answers seemed to reflect the prevailing support for the national political scenes. However in both groups of representatives there were dissenting voices - in fact more UK councillors who wanted referenda and more participation than Swiss who disliked their own system.

There is a strong corporate sense running through the Swiss psyche. It seems to be a reflection of the sovereignty of the people concept embodying the General Will locally and at federal level. As Professor Yves Fricker and a number of others observed in
interview the Swiss need strong leadership but would never vote for it as they despise the
cult of personality.

The school issue - Geneva and Buckinghamshire

When essentially the same kind of issue was dealt with in the context of two very
different types of democratic procedures, the course and outcome emerged in contrast to
each other.

There was common ground in both groups of interested parties especially parents (both
Swiss and British) in a desire to see their aims realised. The issue common to both groups
was the problem of catering for able children. Resentment and frustration vied with a
desire of others to maintain the status quo. However in Geneva all points of view knew
that there was a well trodden and familiar path of participatory procedure available should
the citizen opt for it in the committees of Initiative, the collection of a statutory number of
signatures, a commission and a referendum. There was the knowledge that no matter what
the outcome yet voices would be respected. The commission in particular provided a
cross-section of opinion discussing under the authority of a constitutional right so to do.

However, in Britain where a similar issue had arisen there was no direct citizen outlet for
any grievances that would arise. Decisions affecting the future of many children were
taken almost wholly behind council doors. Furthermore the views of the specialist
education committee were overridden by the full council. The public were allowed a
locally organised private poll with no obligation that it should be necessarily taken into
account. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that while the rest of Buckinghamshire
had grammar schools, this was denied to a part of the same county. The situation became
more involved because the provision of a grammar school would not deprive others of
comprehensive education but would provide a numerically significant group of some
redress for their problem. In Birmingham, grammar and comprehensive schools live side
by side.

I realise that in both cases the outcome was similar but it is the difference between a
competitor being allowed to enter a race with a chance of winning or being denied that
opportunity. The Swiss case received the full participatory treatment whilst the British
got to the limits of the representative structure. The views of the two groups of
councillors revealed the deep divide over the concept of political participation as did the nationwide surveys taken between 1989 and 1999. The national attitudes revealed the gulf existing over what democracy means to elected representatives in two European countries.

**Participatory democracy in Britain**

In the first part of this chapter I have outlined a practical scheme of participatory democracy which, I believe, would suit the British people. The introduction of some such scheme would I feel:

(a) Revitalise British councillors’ *raison d’être* as local representatives; and
(b) Force Westminster to think hard about the role of local government and indeed its own.

There does not seem to be any insuperable obstacle to implementing such a democratic structure in Britain given the initial good will.

Perhaps the main effect of such a scheme would be to persuade citizens that their views matter in both small and large affairs within the community. There would be a chance for the electorate to bring to a head many smouldering issues which have run into trouble owing to a lack of any apparently useful outlet such as Popular Initiatives offer. The modern checks and balances ensure that wilfully stupid or impracticable motions are dropped by the wayside.

I believe it should be the next constitutional and political development in Britain. My aim at the outset of this thesis was to show that a much more direct democratic structure than at present exists in Britain could with advantage be introduced.

A disturbing poll was published after the British General Election in 2001. It showed that the total votes cast for all parties had dropped by 5.5 million votes to 26.3 million. The greatest shift in the past 22 years prior to this had been 1.7 million votes. Some observers put this change down to apathy and a disenchantment with all the parties, others to over centralist tendencies in government. There was no suggestion that democracy itself as a way of guiding a state was to blame. I therefore believe that the introduction in a sensible and organised way of greater popular participation by the electorate of Britain within the overall framework of a representative system would serve the cause of citizens. Through
examining the two examples of local issues - one in each country - I believe I have shown that Swiss style democracy provides a better deal for its citizens than our British representative structure. The nearer voters get to government the stronger the concept of nationhood becomes.

If I had written this thesis say fifty years ago there would have been far less participation available to British voters than exists today. So the possibility of political participation in the UK is now far less of a leap in the dark than it might have been.

A final look at the hypothesis will I hope justify the conclusion that participatory democracy as described is indeed more effective in representing the will of an electorate than our representative kind although, like all forms of democracy, it will never satisfy the needs of every citizen on some occasions.
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List of Political Components of Buckinghamshire and Geneva Councils

Buckinghamshire Council Parties (in 1990)

- Conservative 50
- Labour 12
- Liberal Democrat 8
- Independent 2

The number of parties in Buckinghamshire is typical of Britain as a whole leaving out of the reckoning the regional parties of Wales and Scotland.


- Ecology 13
- Socialist 21
- Parti du travail 8
- Christian Democrat 14
- Liberals 22
- Radicals 13
- Vigilance 9
- Movement Patriotique 2

In Switzerland Proportional Representation encourages smaller parties to stand. Broadly speaking the Radicals, Liberals and Christian Democrats are on the ‘centre right’ of politics and are ranged against a ‘left or very left’ group i.e. the Ecologists, Socialists and Parti du Travail. The Vigilance party embody a kind of loose canon effect to be courted in an emergency. Thus there is a permanently hung parliament.
Comparisons of Swiss and British national and local government structures

Structures of national Governments

There are two major facts to be considered in comparing the British and Swiss parliamentary systems.

(a) The Swiss Federal government (i.e. the cabinet) are chosen and elected by the Federal Assembly and not by the Prime Minister as in Britain.

(b) Both Houses of the Swiss parliament have identical legislative powers (Constitution Article 148 ‘dotés des mêmes compétences’). There are never therefore the clashes that regularly occur at Westminster.

Local Government Structure Comparisons

Although the variety of local government units in England is three times that of the Swiss yet in fact the disparity in practice is slight. Thus the city of Zurich itself constitutes a commune as does the city of Geneva.

All English District and Parish councils would be treated as large or small communes in Switzerland.

There are no large conurbations in the republic in the sense that occur in Britain so the UK Metropolitan areas do not need catering for.

The percentage ratios in Swiss education expenditure have not materially changed for years according to Gunter Hega (Regional and Federal Studies Vol. 10 No.1 p.8. Spring 2000) quoting an OECD ‘Education at a Glance’ publication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cantons</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communes</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Government</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE COMPOSITION OF THE CANTONAL COMMISSION TO CONSIDER
THE POPULAR INITIATIVE – L’ECOLE NOTRE AVENIR

1. The four movers of the Popular Initiative
2. The Director of Education
3. The Directors of Secondary Education and the Cycle d’Orientation
4. Association of Cycle d’Orientation teachers
5. Civil servants in Genevan education
6. Union of Secondary Teachers.
7. Movement populaire des familles
8. Société Pédagogique Genevoise
9. Movement for School Democracy
10. Institute of Research
11. Directors of Colleges of Education
12. Directors of Technical Schools
13. Parents Association of Colleges of Geneva
14. Parents of primary schools
15. Association of Grammar and Secondary Teachers
16. Association of Technical and Art Schools Teachers
17. Genevan Education Committee.

(The total of members of the Commission numbered 108 people)
Summary of Responses to the Questionnaires

The Questionnaires

The British respondents were reluctant to put their names on the forms whereas the Swiss were agreeable. I therefore list below the break-down of the Swiss respondents by party.

Answers to Questionnaire – Swiss respondents by party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Number of papers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecologists</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers Party</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian democrat</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberals</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radicals</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigilant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summaries of Questionnaires

(The figures denote the weight of opinion by councillors respectively in both countries on the particular issue.)

Buckinghamshire:

Question 1

Councillors feel electorate are ignorant of the facts of

1. Local government 20
2. Power of central government 4

Question 2 (a)

Attitude of local press

Biased 15
Supportive 5
Sometimes biased 4
**Question 2 (b)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church should intervene in politics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church should not intervene in politics</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church has much to answer for</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 3**

*Education should be handled*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locally</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nationally and locally</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not locally</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 4**

*Should there be more local democracy?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibly</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 5**

*Is the County the right size?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibly</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 6

Why become a councillor?

To serve 18
Ambition 1
Representative of interest-education, industry and church 3
Don’t know 2

Geneva:

Replies

Question 1

Support for Swiss democracy 37
Against direct democracy 1

(A majority of the supporters believed it was too slow, restricted by the ‘Double Yes’ and more signatures initially needed.)

Question 2 (a)

Personal participation in referenda/Initiatives

No 8
Yes 30

Question 2 (b)

Have you personally benefited?

No 16
Yes 14
Should be collective benefit 8

Question 3

Have the new parties modified democracy?

Yes 28
No 10

(‘Yes’ reasons interesting - keeps old parties on their toes, all were new once, makes consensus difficult.)
**Question 4**

*Why such a low ‘turn-out’?*

- Individualism/prosperity/complacency: 20
- Issues too complex: 8
- Too many votes: 4
- No immigrant votes: 4
- No opposition to ‘create waves’: 3

**Question 5**

*Is Swiss democracy exportable?*

- Yes: 28
- No: 8
- Don’t know: 2

(The reservations and suggestions under ‘Yes’ were very interesting - They ranged from ‘fine if a country is small, federalist, has language, race or religious divisions’ to ‘is communally and regionally inspired’.)
A Consideration of Democratic Participation in Switzerland and Britain with Reference to the Management of an Educational Issue at Local Level in both Countries

ROBERT KENRICK JONES

APPENDICES

Institute of Education
University of London

2006

VOL. II

267
APPENDICES:  

- Questionnaire Responses, Interviews, and Correspondence  
  Questionnaire responses: Swiss Councillors of the Grand Council of Geneva (Items 1-38)  
  Questionnaire responses: The Councillors of Buckinghamshire County Council (Items 39-63)  
  Interview transcripts and correspondence (Items 64-83)  

List of newspaper cuttings and minutes of meetings referenced  

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APPENDICES

Questionnaire Responses, Interviews and Correspondence

Questionnaire Responses


Items 39 – 63: Questionnaire responses: The Councillors of Buckinghamshire County Council

Interviews

These include numerous interviews over several years with two Swiss citizens:

(1) Yves Fricker, Lecturer in the Social Studies, Department of Geneva University
(2) Dr. E. Bollinger, Head of Information, Geneva canton

Interviews - written notes

64 Madame Calmy-Rey, President of the Genevan Socialist party
65 Maitre Hafner, Advocate and president of the Genevan Radical Party
66 M. Schare, President of the Christian Democratic Party (Architect)
67 Madame Braunschwig, President of Liberal Party (Federal Economist)
68 M. Chevrot, Director of Education – Geneva canton
69 Secretary General of Military Administration - Geneva
70 Kyburz Mayor of Carouge large commune and Lord Mayor of cantonal Assembly of Communes
71 Joye, Architect major in Swiss militia and immediate past President of Christian Democrats
72 M. Plojoux (Photographer) and Mayor of Russin (smallest commune in Geneva)
73 M. Bollinger, Chef de L’Information for the canton of Geneva and economist
74 Rev. M. Blyth, Secretary of European Division of World Council of Churches

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Chief Officer of Aylesbury Vale Community Council
Mrs Pearce, Vice Chairman Aylesbury Vale Housing Committee
Chairman of Wycombe District Council - Mrs Pam Priestley
Stephen Sharp, Chief Education Officer, Buckinghamshire County Council 1989
David M’Gahey, Director of Education, Buckinghamshire County Council
M. Mauroix, Chef de l’Information, Federal Government Berne
Dr Heinz Reugger - Secretary General Swiss Protestant Ecumenical Council and unwilling conscript into Swiss militia

Correspondence and discussions on thesis structure
(1) Professor H.P. Kriesi of Geneva University
(2) Dr. Johnathan Steinberg, Vice Principal, Trinity Hall University of Cambridge

Letter D. Lidington MP, Aylesbury Constituency
Letter Rev. Roy Freestone MA, Immediate past Superintendent of Central Area of Baptist Union of Great Britain
Questionnaire responses: Swiss Councillors of the Grand Council of Geneva
(Items 1 - 38)
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

- Il faut diffuser et encourager la démocratie directe pour la défense des vieux soins et des libertés publiques.

En réponse, elle joue un rôle de plus en plus grand dans l'économique, social et politique. (Des réponses scientifiques ?) Il faudrait encore...

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ? Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Oui, à maintes reprises.

La gauche, minoritaire dans toute la Suisse, utilise fréquemment la gauche, minoritaire dans toute la Suisse, utilise fréquemment la démocratie directe, non l'initiative, pour tenter de faire passer des lois sociales et politiques. En matière cantonale (Genève), l'initiative des concepts modernes. En matière cantonale (Genève), l'initiative a été et est très souvent avec succès. Due défense des intérêts.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Oui, mais ils ont l'intention de jouer sur la faiblesse même voisinage des partis traditionnels (avec des objectifs assez ostensibles, mais discrètement, mot factomobile ?)

* Le succès sont limités en plan cantonal. Au plan fédéral, l'initiative manquent de peau, jamais et même un rôle de propagandiste.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

☐ L'absence de grandes confrontations politiques ; l'absence d'une opposition politique (alternative) voire de la majorité gouvernementale

☐ Trop de votations et élusions dispersées, ils fontait les citoyens

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Se trouve que la démocratie directe (référendum et initiative est tout à fait "exportable".

En somme, le fédéralisme suisse (notamment l'existence du Conseil des États) est beaucoup moins exemplaire.

………

Date 4.7.1980

Facultatif :

Nom et parti

………

Merci de vos réponses

………

Chancellerie d'État

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 2722 03 06
(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?) Une réponse tranchée me semble difficile. Il y a très peu d'initiatives qui sont finalement acceptées par le peuple. Mais même en n'abondissant pas, une initiative ou un référendum peuvent faire bouger certaines choses. Si le peuple suisse continue à se désinterresser à la vie politique, la valeur du système est diminuée et il faudrait réfléchir si un changement est nécessaire.

Les moyens financiers sont inégalement repartis et souvent ce sont les intérêts économiques qui priment sur les valeurs éthiques.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?
   a) J'ai participé surtout en récoltant des signatures ou en informant les concitoyens.
   b) non

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?
Ils pourraient modifier la démocratie traditionnelle dans ce sens qu'ils remettent justement en question la tradition. Cela dépend beaucoup de leurs faculté de pouvoir mobiliser les citoyens.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?
C'est un phénomène de la société qui se replie sur elle-même. Le conflit personnel de la plupart des citoyens est tel qu'ils ne se sentent plus concernés par la chose publique.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?
Le système suisse ralentit énormément le processus politique. La démocratie directe n'est peut-être pas applicable dans un grand pays, dans des confédérations par contre on pourrait essayer.

* * * * *

Date 28 juin 90 ....
Facultatif : [Nom et parti]

Merci de vos réponses * * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27 22 03/06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Absolement, grâce aux initiatives et aux référendums, le peuple a de grandes possibilités de s'exprimer, même de changer le los.

Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ? Oui

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Oui, ils remuent les structures qui devenaient trop lourdes et réveillent les parlementaires. Ils apportent un ton nouveau et de nouvelles préoccupations. Ils répondent à une lassitude de l'électorat face aux partis traditionnels.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Les Suisses ont la vie facile les enjeux des votations ne sont pas toujours fondamentaux et peut-être aussi le manque d’attrait des campagnes de votations.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l’étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

La démocratie est exportable dans beaucoup de pays, mais il faudrait d’abord éliminer toute la dictature et ce ne sera malheureusement pas pour demain.

Date : ler juillet 1990

Facultatif :
Nom et parti :

Merci de vos réponses

Chancellerie d'État

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ? Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Chaque parti a commencé par être nouveau. S'il se réclame de "nouveaux", c'est aussi, la fonction créée l'organe.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

1) Manque de respect des décisions régulées par l'édicatif.
2) Égarement du sens des responsabilités ordonnées chez ceux qui affluent tous de l'État.
3) Parole aux citoyens se dextent: "Je pay, quand-même ce qu'ils veulent.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Oui, mais nous commençons un exemple que nous voulons pas de léguer à d'autres. D'abord parce que nous devions avoir l'utilité de notre exemple.

* * * * *

Date

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27 2203/06
(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Oui, mais il est caducant il pose la ...

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ? Oui
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Oui
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

- Désintérêt de la chose publique et manque de confiance en les institutions.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

- Non toujours.

---

Date .2?..06.9....

Facultatif : 
Nom et parti ................

Merci de vos réponses * * * * *

Chancellerie d'État

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

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2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
   Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Non, il ne semble pas être l'expression de la volonté populaire. Cependant, on peut déplorer que les partis ont utilisé les référendums et les initiatives pour défendre des intérêts particuliers au détriment de l'intérêt général. Je dirai même que la législation impose de faire la voix de l'egoïsme particulier contre le bien commun. (Voir toutes les oppositions en matière de construction.)
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

D'une part, le bien-être général. L'enrichissement de l'information qui contribue davantage à une désinformation, qui a une maîtrise de problème particulier. La lenteur des réalisations qui laisse à penser que qu'ignoré ou vote les choses se réalisent d'une façon ou d'autre au bout le manque de clarté dans les questions posées.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Non, loin ci-dessus. À l'heure de l'Europe, la complexité des problèmes ne permet plus ce simple citoyen de comprendre en connaissance de cause. L'application pourrait cepençdant être envisagée au niveau régional ou à l'échelon

* * * * *

Date

Facultatif :
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses

Chancellerie d'État

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27 22 03 06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

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Les règles de base du système politique suisse restent, certes, les meilleurs garants d'une démocratie moderne que nous pouvons encore considérer comme exemplaire. Certaines dispositions que nous pourrions assimiler aux "règlements d'application" devraient être revues telles l'augmentation du nombre de signatures nécessaire à la validation d'une initiative populaire ou d'un référendum populaire par exemple.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Je fus président du comité d'initiative pour "une ouverture nocturne hebdomadaire des commerces à Genève".

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Nous sommes dans une phase de changement qui correspond d'ailleurs aux importants changements intervenus dans notre société depuis le début du siècle.

Je suis convaincu que nous allons retrouver une situation beaucoup plus claire au début du XXIe siècle avec trois blocs principaux, soit :
- L'Entente nationale à prédominance libérale.
- La gauche à prédominance socialiste
- Un parti écologiste jouant l'arbitre entre les deux pôles évoqués ci-dessus.

./."
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Le repli sur soi-même et le réel bien-être des suisses m'apparaît comme la seule cause de la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations.

Contrairement à de nombreuses théories sur le sujet, la baisse du taux de participation ne relève pas des partis politiques, de la politique elle-même, mais bien de l'inconscience de nos citoyens.

Je suis sûre qu'en des temps plus difficiles, le taux de participation remontera de lui-même.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Oui, le système politique suisse est exportable.

** * * * *

Date : 2 juillet 1999

Facultatif :
Nom et parti :

Merci de vos réponses

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27220306
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

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2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
   Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?
   Certainement, souvent ! Mais que veux-tu dire "bénéficié" ?
   En fonction nous avons été tantôt battus, tantôt heureux.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?
   Certainement non. Ces sensibilités étaient réparties dans certains partis enfant de former un nouveau groupe ou parti politique. À Genève, par le garde, vous du qcem de 4 %, la multiplication excessive des groupes ou partis ne dure pas.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Le taux d'abstention est malheureusement une tradition genevoise. Depuis plus d'une trentaine d'années, le phénomène s'accentue. Tant que la nouvelle classe ouvrière, c'est-à-dire les travailleurs étrangers, n'auront pas le droit de vote ou, pour ceux qui le désirent, une procédure de naturalisation simplifiée et pas onéreuse à disposition, cela continuera.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Modèle "idéal" est peut-être exagéré. Mais ce modèle, modernisé, allégé (par la suppression du Conseil des États) me semble moins mauvais que tout autre, avec la relative autonomie cantonale et la relative autonomie communale.

* * * * *

Date

Facultatif :
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27 22 03/06

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Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

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   Gauc au système de démocratie directe, la possibilité est donnée aux citoyens de manifester leur opinion et ceci n'entache pas les communes. Parfois cela implique une certaine lenteur des décisions.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ? Non

   Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ? Non

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

   Oui, elle élargit la pensée politique

   le consensus est parfait plus difficile
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?
   - Stabilité politique
   - Bien être personnel
   - Manque de motivations

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?
   Oui

* * * * *

Date  ...23.6...30

Facultatif :
Nom et parti  ........................................

Merci de vos réponses  * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

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2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ? Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

2 OUI

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

OUI
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

plus grande incertitude des enjeux
plus large palette de pôles d'intérêt
plus grande complexité des projets et application de l'adduc dans l'échelle abstention

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

oui il serait même utilisable pour une confédération d'États Européens.

* * * * *

Date .................

Facultatif :
Nom et parti ..............................................

Merci de vos réponses * * * * *

Chancellerie d'État

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Oui, il garde sa valeur mais ne répond pas toujours aux exigences de la vie politique. L'initiative ne pouvant être que constitutionnelle, cette situation ne permet pas de débat politique amené par le peuple sans que la Constitution fédérale soit touchée.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Je participe régulièrement à des initiatives et référendums. J'ai même contribué au lancement de plusieurs.

Je n'ai jamais bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums si ce n'est comme tout citoyen après la votation.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Non si ce n'est que leurs représentants sont souvent incompétents dans les domaines autre que celui qui a présidé à leur création.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?
Le bien-être général
La masse des sujets à voter
leur complexité
le sentiment d'être inutile (non respect des décisions populaires par les autorités politiques - non respect des promesses faites)
mauvaise publicité

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?
Sans problème mais en l'adaptant quelque peu

* * * * *

Date 30 juin 1990 ........
Facultatif :
Nom et parti socialiste ..................

Merci de vos réponses * * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat
Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)
   
   **OUI**
   
   C'est long, compliqué mais c'est la seule façon de ne pas tomber dans le dictateur

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
   Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

   **NON**

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

   **NON**

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4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Le haut niveau de crè, le chacun
pour soi

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Certainement

* * * * *

Date \[24\text{ Juin} \ 1990\]

Facultatif :
Nom et parti ..........................

Merci de vos réponses  * * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Il garde tout sa valeur.

Nais la "démocratie cimmérie" devenait absolument la seule part de même je ne pas être les part à a partir du système des arcs-bantants à celui du sept précédant.

Il n' y a pas de démocratie sans justice ni solidarité.

Nais-l'autre-t-il prévoir un taux minimum de participation ?

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?

Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Oui : Initiative fédérale sur le contrôle démocratique du nucléaire (vote le 19 février 1999). J'étais co-président du comité d'initiative, responsable de la campagne en Suisse romande (avec Alain Berton et d'autres). Meme s'il y avait des initiatives ou des référendums progressistes (aéroport contre Albatros contre spéculations sauvages en Suisse et pollution nucléaire, etc.) ? ? A quel point de vue ? Si c'est pas l'émancipation de l'ennui, vraiment général, ou il en bénéficier, mes enfants !

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

 Ils obligeent les partis traditionnels à être plus clairs.

Nais leur trop grand dépouillement de substance, au contraire, faîtrait vers le dynamisme d'offrir un permettant à notre démocratie de s'adapter dans la continuité.

De l'importance des racines !

Remarque : les "mouvements sociaux" peuvent intervenir sur d'autres plans que le partis relayés nécessaire dans les modifications concrettes, le changement de mentalité. Il y a donc a vouloir sans les mouvements sociaux, les partis participent...
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Le système d'instruction "à niveau" a un mauvais cote : il ne favorise pas le sentiment d'appartenance à un groupe. La toute petite famille de 2 à 3 personnes favorise l'individualisme. Les enjeux sont souvent techniques ou quantitatifs qui quantifient les travailleurs immigrés sont exclus des processus de décision concernant eux.

L'information sur les enjeux politiques (souvent aussi peu enthousiasmants que la gestion d'un pro année) est noyée dans un flot d'informations sensations affûts parcellisées.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Il est exportable si le collectif local a déjà l'habitude des responsabilités dans le sens de l'intérêt général (mais aussi général et possible) si les compétences de chaque niveau sont aussi financières (budgets) si l'accès de l'as correspondant des partis à l'incarnation du bien ou du mal si l'on est capable de collaborer avec un adversaire politique, mais aussi de saluer le pouvoir.

Date : 9.4.6/90
Facultatif : 
Nom et parti : 

Merci de vos réponses

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27 22 09 06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)
   Oui, sauf que ce ne sont pas toujours les questions les plus intéressantes qui sont soumises au vote.
   Suivant le cas, il y a de grandes différences dans la qualité et la nature de l'objet soumis au vote. Genève n'est pas parmi ceux qui plus souvent sur ce plan.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
   Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?
   Oui, notamment à la récolte des signatures et aux campagnes précédant les votes sur ces objets. Par bénéfice direct, faut-il entendre avantage matériel ou autre ? Bien sûr, de nombreuses initiatives au référendum correspondent à mes idées personnelles.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?
   Oui, dans le sens que ne participent pas aux responsabilités gouvernementales et n'étant pas liés par elles, ils sont plus libres de leurs mouvements et plus critiques. Ils n'hésitent pas à remettre en question des décisions prises sans consultation des populations concernées.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Par le fait que beaucoup de personnes ont une vie naturelle plus que correcte et ne se préoccupent plus des ayants de société (dernière et époque) aussi par la déception et le dépôt face à certaines attitudes de milieux politiques. (à tort ou à raison)

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Pourquoi pas, mais c'est aux citoyens de ce pays de se prononcer compte leur lieu de résidence et de leurs habitudes politiques.

---

Date

Facultatif :
Nom et partit

Merki de vos réponses

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27 22 03 06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum
en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the
Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of
the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large
participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système
garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de
la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Oui

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives
ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de
référendums ?

Oui

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements
(nationaliste, écologiste, anti- nucléaire, automobiliste,
inépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie
traditionnelle ?

En tant qu'écologiste, je suis évidemment
littéralement attaché aux principes de la
démocratie de base (Basis-Demokratie)
et je pense à un renforcement des liens
avec les organisations de la fondation...
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Justement pas un manque de lieu avec la nouvelle carte et un fonctionnement de ten plus formel de la démocratie.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Le démocrate n'est pas inventé le sien !

* * * * *

Date 22.6.20

Facultatif :
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses

Chancellerie d'Etat
Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Le système garde sa valeur. Il était compliqué:

a) Le pouvoir de décision était donné aux plus petits communaux (quartiers, milieux intimes, etc.)

b) Les délibérations devaient permettre que les initiatives, soit lancées rapidement par le personnel.

Il est difficile de répondre.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ? — Plusieurs fois
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ? — ? Le mot "bénéficié" n'est pas clair. Il est arrivé à plusieurs reprises que des référendums que je soutenais s'imposent en votation populaire. Il est également arrivé en matière d'initiatives.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Pas de façon fondamentale. Il est possible que des partis traditionnels disparaissent ou que les droits populaires s'accentuent (cf. réponse ci-dessus sur l'importance du territoire).
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

- Une grande partie des conseillers ne peuvent pas voter (étrangers)
- Les questions ne sont pas toujours traitées par la plus petite collectivité intéressée
- Les centres des préfectures parlementaires sont que les questions sont traitées hâtivement, hors contexte
- La recherche de compromis veut que les questions posées ne sont pas suffisamment nettes

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Qui pense il implique
1) Oui, ce serait par un modèle unique (c'est-à-dire une fédération)
2) Oui, le modèle est exportable. Il implique cependant une interface

Chancellerie d'Etat

Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses
(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

* * * * *

Date

Facultatif : 
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27220306
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Oui. Voir feuillets annexes.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Oui

Oui

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Non, pas fondamentalement.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Ne votent principalement que les personnes qui se sentent concernées par l'objet soumis aux scrutin. Tous les citoyens qui s'intéressent par là sont, tant s'en faut.

Les élections municipales démontrent le plus grand nombre de penons favoris que la constitution de minorités représentant une large majorité groupée le plus fort.

La participation est la base fondamentale de la démocratie ne mesure pas définitivement.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Oui (Voir fin des annexes)

* * * * *

Date 26-6-90

Facultatif :
Nom et parti ...

Merci de vos réponses * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

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En gros oui. Mais la démocratie est en partie court-circuitée par la concentration des pouvoirs de décision, eux-mêmes souvent soumis aux intérêts financiers privés. La concentration et l'influence des pouvoirs économiques peut arriver, quoi que pas toujours encore, à influencer l'opinion publique contre ses propres intérêts à long terme. L'économie est donc un handicap à la démocratie quand elle est trop forte et concentrée (industrie armement, alimentaire, banques, nucléaire)...

Comment faire que les élus appliquent les lois, et mettent en pratique leurs promesses ? Il faudrait introduire des conditions de destitution !

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Oui, comme récolteur de signatures, comme payeur d'articles de journaux. Chaque fois que nous gagnons une votaion, je bénéficie, ou mes enfants bénéficieront, de voir entrer dans la politique des idées qui avant n'y avait pas droit de cité. C'est donc un bénéfice moral plus que financier ou personnel dans les domaines où je me bats (tiers monde, écologie, urbanisme, énergie...)

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Oui, en obligeant les partis traditionnels à prendre position plutôt qu'à se contenter de gérer les affaires courantes au gré des intérêts privés ou actuels. Ces mouvements montrent à l'opinion la liberté de par dont nous jouissions, font réfléchir ceux qui le veulent bien... Il faut remuer les gens de temps en temps, même maladroitement, pour leur rappeler que les choses ne peuvent aller indéfiniment seules dans le bon sens.

./.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?
Nous sommes trop bien, nous n'avons pas encore assez peur de la dictature économique, politique ou écologique qui nous pendent au nez si nous laissons tout faire et aller comme maintenant. Les médias puissants et soutenus influencent de façon peu motivante le public, car ils n'osent perdre leurs annonceurs en faisant des articles de fond, où la morale, l'idéal, l'avenir de la vie et non seulement économique sont en jeu. Le public est encore ignorant (veut le rester) des problèmes du monde qui s'aggravent et obligeront à des changements d’autant plus douloureux qu'ils seront plus tardifs.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ? En partie sûrement dans des pays où les décisions ne doivent pas être urgentes en raison de la gravité et acuité des problèmes à affronter. Ce modèle demande aussi une certaine culture civique où les gens devraient se sentir responsables de la cité, de l'avenir, ce qui est évidemment difficile là où l'on se préoccupe surtout de la survie du lendemain. Exportable oui, mais la propriété du sol déséquilibre toutes les relations car elle permet de tenir sous sa coupe le public et par les bénéfices qu'elle permet, cette propriété (comme ce serait le cas de l'énergie, air, eau) entraîne une distorsion du jeu politique en faveur des propriétaires qui n'ont pas toujours une vision d'avenir positive, humaniste, écologique.

Date 28 6 9p................

Facultatif :
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses Je vous en prie

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27220306
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

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2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

NON
Je vis actuellement une initiative commune à Genex pour la réalisation d'un centre de loisirs.
Cela me paraît positif.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

OUI,
ces nouveaux partis ne ressemblent pas globalement mais d'une façon sectorielle, ils apparaissent d'ores et déjà les partis gouvernements-tronc; tels en offrant de nombreux sympathisants lors des élections ou élections sensibilisés par une cause unique.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

La stabilité économique, le plein emploi et le consensus politique satisfont aux désirs de la population qui n'a pas de raison de se plaindre, mais s'arrondit au statu quo.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Ceci, évidemment.

* * * * *

Date 3.9.90

Facultatif :

Nom et parti 

Merci de vos réponses * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27220306
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

   - oui, pour autant que les minorités "agissantes" n'entravent pas systématiquement l'action gouvernementale ! Car dans la vie politique d'intégrer la majorité des minorités !

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
   Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?
   non !

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

   Oui dans la mesure où ils illustrent l'émergence de nouvelles sensibilités de la population, sensibilités que les partis traditionnels n'ont pas ou peu réunis à intégrer dans leurs programmes respectifs. Ces problèmes, pebb pour les "grands" partis, deviennent alors énormes et porteurs pour de petits partis !

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4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?
- Accroissement de la complexité des problèmes à régler
- ... de l'egoïsme et dénivation du sens du devoirement et la chose musqué
- bien-être matériel et confort social
- déclin devant les "mouettes" du milieu politique!

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?
- Ce système demande une très forte consécution politique et sociale. Il va à l'encontre du stasysteme que préfèrent les masses. Il est donc exportable dans un système culturel et social proche de notre!

* * * *

Date 28 juin 90

Facultatif :
Nom et parti ...

Merci de vos réponses * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27220308
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Réspond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Oui : en raison de
Oui : en raison d'effet raisonnable

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Oui.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Non

./.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

- Désintérêt des jeunes suisses concernant l'actualité politique
- Désintérêt de la politique non spectaculaire
- Contestation de la pertinence et de l'efficacité

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

facilement pourtant ?

* * * *

Date ...? 5. 6. 70...

Facultatif :
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses * * * *

Chancellerie d'État

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

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2.2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
2.2. Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

- absence de débat politique, d'œil de politique
- on vote mais on ne vote pas le résultat !

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Le système confédéral avec la répartition des compétences entre niveaux national, niveau cantonal (régional) et niveau communal est exportable (p. ex. pour la construction européenne)

Date  
25.6.1990

Facultatif :
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses  

Chancellerie d'État

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27220306

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QUESTIONNAIRE SUR L'INITIATIVE ET LE REFERENDUM EN SUISSE ET À GENEVE

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Oui, un système politique qui offre aux citoyens une participation directe à la prise de décision est ce qu'il y a de meilleur pour donner à un système politique sa légitimité populaire (où les individus peuvent en tous temps, soit sanctionner la politique gouvernementale par le biais du référendum, soit influer sur le système, en proposant des objets politiques par le biais de l'initiative populaire, à distinguer de l'initiative législative qui n'existe pas au niveau fédéral mais dans certains cantons comme Genève par exemple).

En raison de la longueur des différentes procédures propres au système suisse (chaque décision est prise après beaucoup de consultations et de nombreux travaux en commissions) ces deux outils supplémentaires - référendum et initiative ajoutent un poids certain dans le processus de prise de décision politique. Aujourd'hui, il faut pouvoir agir rapidement et prendre des risques.

Que penser de l'adhésion de la Suisse à la CE quand on sait que cette décision devra recevoir l'approbation du peuple et des cantons et que l'on se souvient des résultats du vote sur l'adhésion de la Suisse aux Nations Unies ?

Pour mieux contrôler le référendum et l'initiative, il faudrait instaurer deux conditions :
- augmenter le nombre de signatures requises au niveau de la conception et du lancement de l'initiative,
- instaurer un quorum minimum pour la votation (comme en Italie par exemple, où le minimum requis pour valider un référendum est de 50% de votants)

Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums?

Non
Oui, dans la mesure où elles me concernaient.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Oui
Tout d'abord, l'émergence de ces nouveaux partis et mouvements reflète un malaise parmi la population. Celui-ci se manifeste par une baisse de l'identité partisane, un manque de confiance en les Institutions, un abstentionnisme accru.
La valorisation de la sphère privée couplée à la volonté de prendre son destin en main amènent les individus à donner leur soutien à des partis ou groupements qui défendent des intérêts très sectoriels.

Ces nouvelles formes d'engagement politiques modifient la tradition politique, surtout en Suisse où chaque acteur a un rôle très précis à jouer et cela de manière quasi-institutionnelle. Pour exemple, le cas du référendum "Pour une Suisse sans armée" lancée par un Comité dont le style se rapporte aux nouveaux mouvements et qui a fait un tabac là où l'ensemble de la classe politique y voyait une sorte de canular.

4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Plusieurs explications peuvent être avancées. Tout d'abord, le manque d'identification au politique amène une grande proportion de la population à boteric les urnes et amène l'exclusion d'une partie des électeurs. Ensuite, la banalisation des droits politiques, cherement acquis au siècle dernier, engendre un désintérêt et même un désinvestissement pour le devoir civique. L'individualisme croissant des individus ne favorise pas l'expression politique traditionnelle, à savoir le vote. On pourrait aussi dire que le nombre élevé de consultations politiques décourage le citoyen à exercer ses droits civiques mais l'étude de ce qui se passe dans l'ensemble des pays européens pour ce qui a trait à la participation électorale nous montre que la Suisse ne détient pas le monopole en matière d'abstention.

Réduire le nombre d'occasions de votes et d'élections pourrait solutionner en partie ce problème de la non-participation.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Le système politique suisse ne peut être détaché de l'histoire, de la culture et des différentes particularités propres à ce pays. Si il est cité comme exemple, je pense que c'est, au vu des caractéristiques de la Suisse (multilinguisme, multi-religion, intérêts très dissemblables selon les régions), le meilleur système qu'elle puisse avoir. Quant à savoir si ce système est exportable, là encore cela va dépendre des caractéristiques du pays en question. Le Canada, par exemple, pourrait s'inspirer du système suisse pour donner satisfaction aux aspirations indépendantistes du Quebec sans pour autant mettre en péril l'Etat Fédéral. La Suisse pourrait mettre au point une Constitution modèle qui pourrait servir à tous les pays désirant, pour des raisons culturelles, religieuses ou ethniques, instaurer un système fédéraliste, respectueux des minorités.

30 juillet 1990

Texte élaboré avec l'aide de Myriam Boussina, licenciée en science politique, 207 rte de Malagnou, 1224 Chêne-Bougeries.
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Non, car il a des effets et des retards.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Non

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Oui
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Trop violent

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

oui

* * * * *

Date 

25 janvier 1980

Facultatif :

Nom et parti ...................................................

Merci de vos réponses * * * *

Chancellerie d'État

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27220306
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Oui, cependant, un trop large emploi de ces droits peut fatiguer l'électeur, ce qui est d'ailleurs prouvé par le peu de participation à certains scrutins.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Oui, j'ai participé au lancement de l'initiative "L'école notre avenir" lancée par le parti libéral il y a quelques années.

- Je n'ai jamais bénéficié d'initiatives ou de référendums.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Oui, un peu car partis petits ou grands peuvent influencer l'électeur, au grand partis (aussi bien à gauche qu'à droite) Est-ce un mal ? Je pense que ça peut être, petits partis peuvent dynamiser les grands.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Il y a trop de votations et en Suisse, on peut dire que tout va bien !

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Il n'est en tout cas pas exportable dans un grand pays. N'oublions pas que la Suisse a la particularité d'avoir 4 langues nationales (allemand, italien, romanche).
1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Le système semble avoir atteint ses limites dans la mesure où, en raison de la faible participation des électeurs aux votations, par définition pour un sujet particulier, des minorités effectives sont abouti leur point de vue.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ? Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

a) oui dans le cadre de mon parti
b) non

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Oui car ils combinent des groupes de pression mobilisant certains électeurs sur des thèmes particuliers alors que la majorité des électeurs reste passive.

Ils influent aussi sur le choix des élus au sein des partis (soutien de certains candidats au moment des élections.)
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Trop de votations sur des sujets que la majorité des gens ne comprend pas.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Oui mais avec les corrigés nécessaires (limitation des possibilités d'initiative et de référendum.)

Date 31 juin 1990

Merci de vos réponses

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)


3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?
   - Un grand besoin de consultations populaires
   - Pas de conséquences d'un véritable effet
   - Égoïsme : on se défait pour un quid qui est discuté en coulisse.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?
   - Non, le système fédéral est plus, c'est oblitéré à court terme et européen.

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Date       27.06.1990

Facultatif :
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses  * * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?) 

Non seulement ce système garde sa valeur mais il devrait être exemplaire. Quelques organisations politiques, essentiellement à gauche, s'ingénient à le discréditer en en faisant un usage abusif (rejetation fréquente d'initiatives réelles mais celles qui ont tenté d'influencer la matrice politique.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

La réponse est oui aux deux questions.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Tous les partis ont commencé par être nouveaux. Quand ils se sont saturés ils sont remplacés par les "nouveaux" pouvoirs à l'âge adulte, la démocratie leur survit car "C'est le prix des systèmes à part tous les autres !"
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

1° Manque de respect des décisions populaires au niveau des exécutifs.

2° Dégénération du sens des responsabilités personnelles chez ceux qui paradoxalement attendent tout de l'État.

3° Indifférence de ceux qui n'ont rien à se soucier.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Oui dans une certaine mesure mais nous n'avons pas de leçons à donner. La question devrait donc être : « Ce modèle est il exportable. »

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Date Gène le 22 juillet 1990

Facultatif :

Nom et parti :

Merci de vos précieuses suggestions.

Chancellerie d'État :

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27 22 03 06
(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?"

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
   Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?
   Oui
   Oui

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?
   Oui, oui, oui, la multiplicité des problèmes, des mares et des spécialistes... Bien, il suffit de l'idée d'entreprise, Simon, plutôt réfractaire.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?
   Certains manifestent de l'énervement dans la classe politique.
   Il est "devenu" naturel d'être un peu hésitant.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?
   Toujours par, à condition d'une base solide et de volontés communes.

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Date 8 juillet 1990

Facultatif :
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses * * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27 22 03 06

retard dû à une intervention chirurgicale
1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?) 

Notre système garde toute sa valeur. Cependant, il faudrait augmenter le nombre de signatures nécessaires pour déposer une initiative ou un référendum afin de limiter les votations à des sujets importants.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ? Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

J'ai déjà signé, mais je n'ai jamais participé activement (je suis trop jeune et politique !).

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Oui, dans le sens où ce sont plus des mouvements que des partis avec des approches globales.

Lorsqu'ils sont représentés au parlement ou au gouvernement, les limites de leurs pensées se font sentir (par rapport au principe d'unité de la société).
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Trop de votations, sujet trop technique. On vit trop licié ?! (pas de problème majeur et beaucoup de bousin).

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Sans doute.

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Date 23/11/2000
Facultatif: 
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27220306
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

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Oui plus que jamais ! La population demande à être informée sur tout et veut participer à toutes les décisions quand elle se sent concernée de près.
Chaque tentative de restreindre les droits des citoyens (augmentation du nombre de signatures pour les initiatives et les référendums) a provoqué une levée de boucliers et a été rejetée ou fortement limitée dans ses effets.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ? Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

oui XXX j'ai déjà participé à une initiative fédérale de façon active et j'ai également profité d'un référendum !

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Ils atomisent un peu les partis et compliquent la recherche de consensus. Mais ils ne sont pas appelés à durer plus de quelques législatures.

/..
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

On soumet trop d'objets de peu d'importance au vote des citoyens. Lorsque les électeurs se sentent concernés, la participation est nettement meilleure.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Certaintement et il constituerait un modèle de valeur, maintenant éprouvé de longue date et donnant satisfaction malgré ses imperfections et ses faiblesses.

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Date 5 juillet 1990

Facultatif :
Nom et parti .............................................

Merci de vos réponses * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 272203/06
(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliquer votre réponse ?)

   oui, grâce aux droits populaires (référendum et initiative) de la population pour intervenir directement dans la vie politique en avant et en arrière.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
   Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?
   
   a) oui,
   b) je ne sais pas ce que veut dire "bénéficié directement.
   (Le bénéfice est collectif et non individuel)

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

   Je ne peux m'empêcher pour le moment de voir
   que la modification de la démocratie traditionnelle,
   mais pas des moyens politiques pour faire
   valoir le principe d'élargir. En ce qui concerne,
   none commence très abordés aux droits populaires,
   même si le mouvement s'abreuve.
   même un idée.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

La faute technicité des thèmes, votation trop fréquente, l'objet souvent secondaire, mais quand l'objet devient important, les peu se déplacer. etc.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Non pas exportable, mais on peut prendre comme exemple pour l'appliquer le cas d'évolution dans les conditions locales.

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Date : 25 juin 1990

Facultatif : 
Nom et parti : 

Merci de vos réponses

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Chancellerie d'État

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27 22 03 06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

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Oui. Je pense essentiellement aux droits d'initiative et de référendum qui, s'ils peuvent créer des blocages, donnent l'occasion à une négociation sur les préoccupations nouvelles de la société civile.

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Oui.

Je ne comprends pas la notion de "bénéfice direct" si partiцип à des initiatives et de référendum qui ont stimulé des réformes.

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Oui. Ils expriment des préoccupations qui sortent du cadre du consensus et de décision par tête ou de consensus entre les quatre grands formations politiques nationales et gouvernementales.

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4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Satisfaction de la population avec sa situation actuelle, fatigue devant la multiplication des sujets de votation.

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Je ne sais pas s'il est idéal. L'exportation politique est une entreprise difficile, voire inhabile. Ces systèmes politiques doivent être forgés d'abord par ceux et celles qui les conçoivent.

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Date: 22/06/1990

Merci de vos réponses.

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tel. 272203/06
La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous expliciter votre réponse ?)

Le système qui accorde des droits politiques extensifs aux citoyens garde toute sa valeur en tant que système. Mais on sait que le pouvoir de décision qui repose sur l'argent, sur la propriété du capital, soumet ce système à de constantes et multiples distorsions. Avec la mondialisation du capital et des décisions économiques, le pouvoir politique et le système démocratique qui lui donne forme sont érodus, sinon complètement colonisés. La confiance du citoyen dans la valeur du système démocratique est ébranlée, d'où l'absentionnisme, la crise de confiance. Le pouvoir de son côté viole les principes démocratiques (voir fichiers procureur Gerber, affaire Kopp, etc.)

Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?


Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

Les partis actifs dans le fonctionnement de la démocratie traditionnelle se sont formés au cours des luttes du XIXe siècle et précisément au moment où se mettait en place le système démocratique actuel. L'évolution actuelle est par conséquent assez naturelle. Les partis nationalistes, pas vraiment nouveaux au XXe siècle, ils incarnent la peur de la mondialisation des échanges - sans mettre en cause les lois du capitalisme, l'enfermement, la xénophobie. Ils menacent la démocratie traditionnelle pour autant qu'ils recourent à la violence. Au XIXe siècle, le radicalisme avait su porter en avant le nationalisme dans la phase de constitution de l'Europe des nations moderne. Aujourd'hui, les partis nationalistes ne participent à aucune construction. Ecologistes et anti-nucléaires correspondent à des luttes nouvelles exigées par des menaces d'un nouveau type sur la vie des êtres et de la nature toute entière. Leur émergence a besoin du système démocratique, ils revendiquent le droit démocratique des individus contre l'économie, la science aveugle, les lobbies militaro-industriels, les pouvoirs établis de l'argent et de l'habitude. Les automobilistes sont une variante dangereuse de l'extrême-droite, égoïste, qui revendique le droit de tourner à 150 km/h, autrement dit peu démocratique dans l'âme. Les indépendantistes ne peuvent pas se passer de la démocratie dès lors que des rassembleurs pour l'instant assez peu nombreux qui ne présent pas encore très lourd, mais intéressent l'opinion.
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votations ?

Par le relatif bien-être matériel de la majorité, par la continuité du consensus établi autour de l'idée matérialiste selon laquelle la marche de l'économie prime sur tout et que les décisions politiques comme les décideurs politiques eux-mêmes sont interchangeables et de peu d'importance face aux impératifs du travail et du capital.

Par la perte de l'habitude de l'engagement dans des luttes et la conviction que les citoyens ne peuvent plus agir sur la marche de la grande histoire, de l'économie mondiale qui est la nôtre.

Ceux qui sont persuadés du contraire - les vieux qu'on avait habitués à vénérer la démocratie, les intellectuels engagés, les militants écologistes ou anti-nucléaires, les tiers-mondistes, etc. continuent d'aller voter, ainsi que tous ceux qui ont des intérêts politiques à défendre: nation, bagnole, secret bancaire, etc.

Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

Le système démocratique suisse - pour être exportable - devrait trouver un pays d'accueil favorable. Or, c'est cela qui manque. Et en Suisse même, le système s'essouffle et n'est plus très bien porté par la société. Le modèle idéal de ce système pourrait bien un jours inspirer les structures démocratiques d'une Europe des régions, mais ses bases économiques, celles du XIXe siècle, seront nécessairement différentes. Les partis qui ont imaginé le système au siècle passé étaient portés par l'idée révolutionnaire de la délégation du pouvoir du peuple à des représentants à tous les niveaux de l'organisation du pouvoir, et de l'immédiateté des rapports entre gouvernés et gouvernants par la voie du référendum, de la pétition, de l'initiative. Comment adapter le modèle idéal aux réalités d'un monde dont les dimensions ont radicalement changé?

Date

27 juin 1990

Facultatif :
Nom et parti

Merci de vos réponses

Chancellerie d'État
Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tél. 27 22 03 06
La démocratie répond-elle aux exigences de la vie politique ?

Le système reste parfaitement valable mais il est perfectible et doit éviter des mesures inadaptées des glissements graves. À l'évidence il doit s'adapter aux circonstances des époques qu'il traverse et adapter ses structures au développement de la société. C'est un système qui ne peut durer sans se reformer... Comme tout système ! Sinon il se fissure et fini par casser au risque d'entraîner dans sa destruction la communauté qu'il voulait servir.

La démocratie suisse est basée sur des entités telle que l'état fédéral, le canton, la commune. C'est à ces niveaux que se manifestent référendum et initiatives. Toutefois lorsque l'association d'intérêt local (quartier ou secteur), commissions de spécialistes, consultants des autorités, ou individus par la voie judiciaire s'arrogent les mêmes types d'intervention, alors la démocratie peut devenir anarchique et ingérable par le pouvoir bloquant de minorités ou d'individus.

La démocratie fonctionne lorsque prévaut l'intérêt général, considéré comme tel lorsqu'il se dégage une majorité populaire. Lorsque, comme c'est le cas souvent, les recommandations de l'individualisme exprimé sont acceptées par les médias ou par les gouvernants comme expressions démocratiques institutionnelles, alors le système se déséquilibre.

Participation ou bénéfices directs d'initiatives ou référendums

Je n'ai pas participé activement au lancement d'initiatives ou de référendums mais j'ai pu signer... quoique la récolte démocratique des signatures se faisait souvent dans des atmosphères où l'émission et la stimulation collectives, une certaine jubilation euphorique du pouvoir libéré, où l'instinct d'agréger est à son plus haut niveau. Je tiens moi-même de préférence à avoir réfléchi, écouté et soupesé et me prononcer au moment du vote.

Évidemment que j'ai bénéficié de ces instruments démocratiques puisque leur caractère même, quel que soit le résultat, vise à influencer la structure du pays ou du canton, à la modifier et à l'affiner. Beneficié ou pati, selon les résultats, peu importe ; ce sont là les moyens nécessaires à faire évoluer une structure et un système qui ne peuvent être rigides et qui se veulent en permanente reforme. (J'avoue ne pas saisir très bien la question).

Impact des nouveaux partis sur la démocratie traditionnelle

Le fait de ne pas représenter un plein programme politique mais souvent des morceaux d'opinion seulement rend ces groupes parfois difficilement
similables et dans une première phase pas toujours compréhensibles. Ils sont une part essentielle du système démocratique qui pour vivre doit fortement être questionné et aménagé à l'aune de la société.

Le risque existe, c'est lorsque ces groupements ne suivent plus les processus démocratiques prévus et tentent de les influencer par des procédures judiciaires. L'individu ou une minorité politiquement non représentative peut s'opposer à l'intérêt général.

Taux de participation

À vie va si vite, les choix au cours d'une journée sont si nombreux, le danger d'une glissade politique ou économique malheureuse si faible, que le citoyen ne se mobilise pas facilement. Il y a des temps de lassitude — un gouvernement inefficace, des problèmes irremèdiables, des situations inextricablement —, et les taux alors varient à la baisse. Mettez y de la réussite, touchez des problèmes vitaux, et les taux remontent.

Outrefois la tendance a été à la baisse. C'est que nous sommes dans un temps éditorial et d'information à outrance. Le politique se doit, s'il veut être couru d'utiliser les moyens d'information de la manière la plus développée et la plus attrayante. Ceci fait il ne saura être blessé de taux de participation faible car sa part au total de l'information diffusée a diminué et il est concurrencé par d'autres intérêts. Il n'y a pas privilège pour les manifestations politiques, elles ne sont qu'une parmi les choix — qui ont éliminé augmenté — du citoyen.

Quand ce dernier ne s'exprime pas, de nouvelles voies devraient être proposées. Le système démocratique est basé sur la représentation. En effet dans la gestion des affaires, on avait déjà constaté que tous les citoyens ne pouvaient être consultés sur tout. Au cas où un vote n'intéresserait pas le 15 ou moins des électeurs, par exemple, alors il devrait être annulé et la question rançhée par les représentants du peuple, à savoir conseil municipal, Grand Conseil ou Assemblée fédérale. Ces derniers sont dûment mandatés dans ce sens.

5. Système helvétique exportables ?

Non. Pas comme un bloc rigide. Quel peuple pourrait s'affubler d'un système tout fait pour des autres ?
Oui, comme modèle à adapter.
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

(Thèse de M. Kenrick JONES, B.A., M.A., "What impact does the Swiss direct and semidirect democracy have upon the people of the country?")

1. La Suisse est une des démocraties qui permet la plus large participation du peuple aux affaires politiques. Ce système garde-t-il sa valeur ? Répond-il toujours aux exigences de la vie politique ? (Pouvez-vous explicitement votre réponse ?)

2. Avez-vous déjà participé personnellement à des initiatives ou des référendums ?
Avez-vous déjà bénéficié directement d'initiatives ou de référendums ?

3. Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?

Pensez-vous que les nouveaux partis et mouvements (nationaliste, écologiste, anti-nucléaire, automobiliste, indépendantiste, etc.) modifient la démocratie traditionnelle ?
4. Comment expliquez-vous la baisse constante du taux de participation aux votes ?

- Excès de solicitudation civiques
- Accumulation de votations sur des sujets 
  politiques secondaires
- Contact et proximité qui provoquent faisaient 
  "du moment que ça ou pas dommage"

5. Le système politique suisse est généralement considéré comme un modèle idéal à l'étranger. Ce modèle serait-il exportable ?

oui. En particulier, dans nombre de pays de l'Est qui connaissent des crises immédiatives 
ethniques (plusieurs langues, plusieurs races) 
que la suisse.

* * * * *

Date 13.07.90

Facultatif :
Nom et part

Merci de vos réponses * * * *

Chancellerie d'Etat

Le chef de l'information

2, rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Tel. 272203/06
Questionnaire sur l'initiative et le référendum en Suisse et à Genève

1. L'usage abusif de la démocratie directe peut être source de confusion et de blocages. Confusion, parce que l'introduction du droit d'initiative au niveau municipal mêle parfois les compétences relevant de la commune ou du canton. Blocage, parce que certains groupes utilisent trop souvent le référendum comme stratégie politique.

Une meilleure information, claire, sans a priori, pourrait prévenir certains excès préjudiciables à notre démocratie.

Avec la création de l'EEE, les droits d'initiative et de référendum devront être passés au "scanner" et une réforme des institutions devra être entreprise. De toute façon, le Conseil d'État doit présenter un projet de loi concernant l'exercice du droit d'initiative qui a trop souvent posé problème à Genève.

2. En ma qualité de secrétaire générale du parti démocrate-chrétien, j'ai participé activement au lancement de l'initiative pour une véritable politique familiale. Son application a suscité d'innombrables problèmes et blocages politiques au Grand Conseil.

3. Les nouveaux partis et mouvements sont la plupart du temps les défenseurs d'une idée et ne se préoccupent guère de la politique dans son ensemble. Leur action rejoint souvent des préoccupations ponctuelles, individualistes. Les gens se rendent plus facilement aux urnes s'ils ont le sentiment d'avoir une prise directe sur l'événement, les enjeux étant clairement définis.

4. Les électeurs et électrices vont voter en fonction de leur motivations personnelles. Ce ne sont pas toujours les mêmes qui s'abstiennent.

Avec la complexité croissante des problèmes, avec le langage technique et juridique qui a souvent cours, les électeurs éprouvent des difficultés à se forger un jugement objectif.

Cet abstentionnisme doit faire l'objet d'une remise en question afin de mieux percevoir les attentes de la population.
5. Le modèle suisse pourrait être "exporté" pour autant qu'il fasse l'objet d'une révision qui préviendrait les blocages et les lenteurs. Dans une société qui change à un rythme accéléré, nos procédures démocratiques doivent impérativement s'adapter à cette évolution.

Il ne s'agit pas de museler l'expression populaire, mais de viser à plus d'efficacité et de dynamisme.
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?

Local authorities have to work within the guidelines set by Westminster and it is a change of government which has the greater impact on the electorate. I think this is the reason for poor turnouts both at local and by-elections.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?

Yes.

(b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?

Yes, especially in education where it was the first in the field. No individual should put forward his own ideas as if they were the view of the whole church.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?

Some national input is certainly necessary. I think the National Curriculum will be a good thing for example.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-optation of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?

There are already people co-opted on to various committees and nothing major is undertaken without public consultation. But referenda binding on the council is another matter: the problem would be interested parties voting something through.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

Obviously the parish councils are well integrated, the district councils somewhat less so and the county councils less still, I don't think that can be altered.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).

My reason for being a candidate was because I thought I would be able to represent the interests of the people of this division if elected. On the education committee one tries to secure the best system for the county.

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls? Every house should be canvassed, but many supporters will not canvass. It is not unusual for me to be told: "How far you have taken the trouble to call on me will take the trouble to go out and vote."

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government? It has been known for some years that the local press support the S.B.P. At election times that party receives more coverage than others. Often asked, the proprietors will say they run an independent newspaper.

(b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there? It is wrong for the church to become involved in politics. Left-wing hypocritical sermons to do not help to fill the churches. The output appears to be taking over from the soap box & delivers highly politically motivated sermons.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what? Some financial aid from the government is essential in this country. The cost of community charge payers would be an impossible burden. This does not mean that Whitehall should lose control - The cost of heating, lighting, water, etc., (to be shared) could be taken over by the Government.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referendums? All are involved with many public meetings, costing this country millions of pounds. It therefore does mean that Councillors must declare an interest in the smallest of organisations. If they have a voluntary interest - a finance is increased, how to declare interest and have retention. Small organisations, the deaf, blind, disabled and others are being by the dreadful ACT.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit? The County of Bucks has always acted within the law. Its Council has given the fair and correct allocation to opposition parties and accept many nominations from the community - which helps to keep democratic government in Bucks.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).

I always feel embarrassed when writing my election address. I dislike selling myself so I decline to answer this question.

(January 1990)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   Apart because of feeling that Councillors do what they think in the end (not nec. true!).

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   No. Very biased.

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?
   Church makes an seek resolution for election day with the elected.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   No. Agree with overall uniformity of input + inspection.
   Helps employers to know what to expect through A + P and parents who man frequently.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   Are you aware of the 1982 multi-annual which presented co-option of proper care + setting?

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   Not. Can't co-opt on behalf of the Board.
   Health Authorities.
   These notes are personal without commitment.

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?

   Little understanding of the responsibilities of various tiers of local government among a large proportion of electorate.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?

   No, not always. Local newspaper in Wycombe area tends to act as a form of unofficial opposition in many cases, and particularly sensationalises cases such as housing problems. Don't know about local radio, as I never listen to it.

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?

   No. Remember Christ's teaching "Render under Caesar that which is Caesar's".

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?

   Present balance about right, though it would be better if local authorities could have more say in how much money they can spend on education - less interference from central Govt.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?

   I think Bucks citizens have the opportunity of using their vote to elect representatives to look after their interests. I do not believe that unelected people should have voting rights on Council committees.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

   I think the size is about right, much better than any form of Regional Government, and large enough to oversee County as a whole. A particular example is the Structure Plan, which will suffer when this sort of planning is brought down to more local levels.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).

   Working to serve the local community, and preferring to be a part of the decision making process, rather than letting others do it for me. On the Education (1) because I was put on it, and (2) a continuing interest in education, with 4 children and grandchildren. (Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   I cannot compare my opinion in connection with other districts but in my area the turnout is certainly not meagre although I would agree they do vary.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   In general I do not agree with this comment. Illustrations are not usually printed but some facts left out resulting in wrong impressions. There is also not enough explanation in connection with the duties of County, District & Parish.
   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?
   Definitely no. The Church for religion + religious morals - the politicians for politics.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   The local (or as assumed District/stage level) authority has not the expertise
   (b) it would also be difficult financially on large sums of money (millions) & investment
   (c) it would also be difficult politically on large sums of money (millions) & investment
   especially (d) the County has a useful overall picture - the County has
direct contact with D.E.S.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   Bucks citizens have a great input now through their elected Member - that is their job. We also have the Advisory sub-committee (schools) involving professionals who can give a very useful input. We have many discussions with sections of the public of various

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   Democracy should work well at all levels - hence the importance of
   co-operation + co-ordination.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   1. Sharing the well & the topic + health + strength
   2. I wish to help the people, especially in my area (b) in Buckinghamshire
   3. I was very keen on professional in full time education
   4. I am not a fanatic but am of a religious frame of mind & hope I am doing as God wishes.
   (Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet.)

JANUARY 1990

R. KENRICK JONES

P. T. O.
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   - The size of the County
   - The low level of publicity for local elections
   - The voting system of 'first past the post' which produces safe seats and predictable outcomes.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   - Partly, for district or borough councils. Not at all for county council.
   - Irrespective.
   - The Christian Gospel cannot be equated with the manifesto of one party.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   - To complete to answer in a sentence.
   - I still favour the traditional slogan "A national service locally administered".

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   - It is better to make present structures work effectively than to create additional structures.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   - Not at all.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   - Public Service

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?

   Because people don't realise how important local elections can affect them.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?

   Yes at times but not always.

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?

   I have always thought the Church had a lot to offer so there are many more involved.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?

   Yes I think local level is right but the money should be provided nationally.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?

   Yes

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

   I don't think Bucks does because it is dominated by one political party.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee)?

   Because I represent people who elected you, therefore it is your duty.

   (Please extend any answers if you wish on a separate sheet)

   As far as the education com is concerned we have to think of the next generation.

JANUARY 1990

R. KENRICK JONES
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   
   lack of understanding of political process.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   
   YES.

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?
   
   NO.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?

   NO- need for National Guidelines - to make use of student + staff across county straightforward but personally feel that it is moving too much towards the national level at present.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?

   We already have -co-option of people onto committees.
   local referenda - costly + can be manipulated by press etc.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

   Democracy has a better chance of working when there is an effective opposition - Bucks - is a one party state with decisions taken by small groups outside the democratic process.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).

   I am not a County Councillor - instead I am a co-opted member of Education Committee - elected by the Teachers of Bucks.

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)

JANUARY 1990

R. KENRICK JONES
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   
   Apathy. Maybe one should have to vote.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   
   No

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?
   
   No
   Except with regard to Church Schools

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   
   Entirely at local level

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   
   Present representation is adequate. There should be no change.
   i.e. Teacher representatives should be co-opted onto the full education committee as at present.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   
   About right.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   
   I have an expertise to offer which could, perhaps, be helpful.

   (Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)

JANUARY 1990

R. KENRICK JONES
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?

The electorate is less aware of local issues. Separately in many cases the existence of an established political party majority leads the uncommitted to abstain.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?

There is a wide discrepancy in the quality of reporting. In my view major issues are over-dramatized and simplified, and personalized, not in general a "fair"

(b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are you there?

No. Co-option to main committees after the proper platform (and contribution to sub-committees)

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?

I find this very difficult to answer. In general, implementation/delivery should be local, but national curricular guidelines and examinations arguably allow mobility in a county (me) (England) far larger than Switzerland.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?

Yes, but you will be aware of a contra trend.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

It is fragmented. North Bucks (including Buckingham) is alienated from the rest at district and county level. Milton Keynes is a discrete entity with totally different socio-economic foundation. The county is more splintered integrated than at first appears to be the

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially case on the Education Committee).

Service to the local community, probably better known than many MPs for the relevant area— the "big fish in a little pond" role! Some political type use it to prepare

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)

JANUARY 1990

R. KENRICK JONES
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls? Partly that many people are generally fairly content, others tend to be fatalistic. People are also lazy, one's doorstep canvassing shows a much higher intent to vote than actually occurs.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   Local media in Bucks make very little attempt to report county events. In recent years, the radio and TV really play little or no part on a regular basis. County council meetings, attention, are few.
   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there? I believe the Church should express its views on society as it sees it. However, politics is about the allocation of resources and I don't think it is wise for the Church to use its fading influence in this area.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   I don't think Education should be entirely handled locally. Influence follows money, and as Government pays a good deal of the cost, I can see nothing wrong in setting standards.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   In general, I am against both these proposals. A councillor is elected to do these things, and if he doesn't change him, referenda produce demands for services but rarely resources, and committees of the kind described tend to become strident pressure groups.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   I don't know what is meant by 'small'. In my view, Bucks is large enough for some functions (e.g. schools) but too large for others (e.g. social services).

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   Never stand as a Councillor unless you enjoy trying to help people. A councillor enjoys a good deal more power than an MP whose power is much diluted.
   I suspect that Bucks Councillors would all give different answers. It is a very individual matter. Each is motivated by different things.

JANUARY 1990 R. KENRICK JONES
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?

This is not always the case. C.C. elections in 81 produced over 70% in Wimbledon and 67% in Seven Sisters. Prospects of a close fight and active party organisation are important factors.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?

Vary from area to area. Reasonably fair in balance, but editor's first priority is to sell newspapers.

(b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?

Not at all. Never, under any circumstances.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?

We have it about right in UK

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?

Co-option is antidemocratic, and referenda usually undesirable because (a) it is impossible to obtain a representative opinion in percentage terms and (b) difficult to ensure all fully informed.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

I do not accept the premise.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).

In my case, a wish to influence affairs for the benefit of the community.

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   People feel that they serve no purpose and councillors are undemocratic. Also people arrange holidays and work on polling
days and also people genuinely forget.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   No. Journalists and editors give a biased view of local politics which is counter to democracy in a pluralist society sense.

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?
   I personally believe that the Church is far too much involved in local politics. Their involvement should be curbed, if not taken away completely.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   A local emphasis should be pursued and child centered learning at school level should be developed. This would be the absolute minimum input form central government.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   County Councils should be abolished and town/city/district councils with direct representation should be developed with education being taken out of the democratic process.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   It's too big for many issues and too small for others. It just goes to back up the need for a wholesale local government review.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   At present, putting the views of myself and my party against those of the opposition. Putting forward suggestions that might influence education policies and giving teachers and parents a diverse representation.
   (Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls? Because the electorate feels that no real change will come about by attempting to change representation - particularly in Bucks.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   
   No. It is my experience that there is a marked reluctance to publish anything deemed controversial - i.e. not in accord with government policy.
   
   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there? It is probably better that it shouldn't because of the dangers of fundamentalism, no matter from which church it comes.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   
   National input is essential because government holds the purse. The danger of education becoming predominantly vocational is probably less when government has a say, although present trends do not necessarily indicate this.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   
   Yes but in fact the move is in the opposite direction. Bucks intends removing co-opted members from all main committees except in the case of the C of E and R C representatives.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   
   As there is little or no political opposition in Bucks democracy does not have the chance it deserves.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   
   In view of the intention not to have co-opted members on the Education Committee - avoiding having ones judgement clouded by the facts, and in view of the ploy of having pre-meetings to determine what will happen in main committees I can find no compelling reasons.

JANUARY 1990

R. KENRICK JONES

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
Comparative studies in Britain and Switzerland

1. Meagre turnouts in local elections.
Largely (I think) ignorance among the electorate and an over-emphasis in the media on national politics. It is a commonplace among people who have knocked on doors in local campaigns that many of the electorate do not understand the range of local government responsibilities, and do not appreciate the differences between, say, District and County Councils (or, in some cases, a local and a Parliamentary election).

Perhaps if people were clearly informed about how much of their (and their children's) lives are vitally affected by what local councils do, and how much money we spend, they might take more interest in elections. I hope this may be one effect of the Community Charge.

2. Local media.

In my part of Bucks, 'local media' means the newspapers. We have no local radio or TV.

I do not think the local newspapers provide a fair view of local government - not even Mrs Edwards' coverage of County affairs in the 'Bucks Free Press'. This is partly because of the nature of selling newspapers, which depends on maintaining the level of interest and excitement. Drama and scandal sell; a balanced report of a well-argued debate would turn most readers off (if it got past the news editor's desk) and 'good news is no news'. I also believe that there is a bias in local reporting against the Conservatives. This may be because it is always easier to snipe at the party in power, who are actually doing things, as opposed to saying what they might do if they won a majority; or because the reporters think they are likely to appeal to a greater number of the people whom their advertisers want to reach, if they take an anti-Conservative line; or it may be because of the sincerely held views of the reporters or management.

2b The Church.

Can we define our terms? Does 'Church' mean the whole body, clergy and laity; or only office holders speaking and acting for the Church; or individual clergy in their private lives? (Can the clergy have a private life in that sense?) Does 'local politics' mean the whole machinery of local affairs, or party politicking?

In the educational context, since we have church schools maintained by local authorities, the Churches clearly must be involved, so far as their schools are concerned. The Churches as institutions also have the right to express their views on local affairs which concern them or which affect the teachings of their religion. Like all lobbyists, they must expect sometimes to be heard but not to win the day. What they must not do is to become partisan - to support the policies of a particular party. This applies especially to individual clergy. If they are to minister effectively to all members of their congregations, they cannot be seen to support any one party, whatever their private views and votes may be. For the same reason I never tackle houses which I know are clergy houses when I am canvassing.

Above all, the Churches, however we define the term, should not seek to influence local elections by introducing matters of religious controversy over which local authorities have no power or responsibility. The 'Satanic Verses' issue, for instance, has no relevance to County or District elections.
3. Local level or national input?

Clearly the higher levels of education - universities, polytechnics and the HECs - must have a very large national input both because, in the British tradition, they serve a national clientele and because of the need to ensure the fulfilment of manpower policies for the highly trained people they produce. For schools and non-advanced further education, which are largely serving local demand, administration should be local, but within national frameworks, since there is a fairly high degree of mobility in the population of Britain.

There must be a national input into financing, if only to enable the areas with the smallest local resources to provide a service of a standard comparable with their richer neighbours.

There also needs to be some authority, other than the local authority which is running the service, to whom the aggrieved parent or student can appeal. Courts of law are not satisfactory for this purpose; traditionally, in England, appeal has been to Ministers, and this seems a reasonable function.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input?

Before exploring novel ways of bringing individuals into the decision-making process, we ought to try to increase the participation in the machinery by which the people can express their views - the local elections. The system of elected members who have to justify themselves to the electorate every four years, who are financially accountable and governed by rules of conduct, may not be perfect but it works reasonably well. The problem with co-options is that the co-optees are either selected by the committee members in their own image, or are elected by mini-electorates (e.g. teachers' unions) representing sectional interests rather than the people at large. As for referenda, if the electorate won't turn out for elections, how can we achieve a larger and more representative turnout for a referendum? See the recent experience of public consultation on changing the age of admission and transfer in Bucks; and the votes in the parents' ballots about Grant Maintained status for the Stantonbury schools.

5. Is Bucks an integrated unit?

The locals used to think so. "Oi be Bucks, Oi be" signified a sense of community. With the influx of a new and to some extent transient population it is not clear how far this is still true. The fact that new trunk roads tend to radiate out from London and cross the county does not help to increase the sense of unity (compare the railway system which Czechoslovakia inherited from Austria-Hungary). A local radio system, like Radio Oxford, Radio Bedford or Radio Berkshire, might help to preserve the unity of the county.

6. Why are you a County Councillor?

Very personal. I took early retirement from the Department of Education and Science after thirty years. I was young enough to want to carry on being active and I have some experience which should be useful. The Education Committee gives the best forum for using that experience, and, on the old principle of working from the known to the less well known, the chance to learn County Council ways in a familiar context.

* Note: In Scotland, some administrative appeals go to the Sheriff: but there is no officer with equivalent status and functions in England and Wales.
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls? **The turnouts are lower than I would like but the polls follow a 4 year cycle, I would not describe them as meagre. The public do not understand the 3 tier local govt system and the result of the environment of do s are a fluke mystery. **

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government? **Not really - they report selectively on what happens at county level or in district council but rarely stand back and make "access of opinions" comments.**

(b) Should the Church become involved in local politics? What limits are there? **I see no reason why not and I believe that they should.**

3. Do you think that education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential? If so what? **I wish it could be handled locally but I see little hope in the present bureaucratic ways which is worst of all in the 3 tier system and the only solution is to simplify and decentralise.**

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-optation to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda? **If they wish to become involved then they should stand for office or form pressure groups to influence their cases.**

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit? **No comment - as a newcomer I find it hard to judge.**

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? **Frustrated parent fed up with the bureaucratic nonsense which took place on the banding system in 1987-88.**

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE Bucks County Education Committee

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?

   My own belief is that general knowledge of constitutional matters is poor, and many people feel that quite usually local elections are of little relevance to them.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?

   On general matters - yes.

   On any matters of a controversial nature - no - they tend to look for sensationalism and conflict.

(b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?

   I personally have no particular regard for the views of the church, but both as individuals and as a group, they have as much right to express their views as anyone else. The limits should be the same as for any individual or group.

3. Do you think that education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?

   I believe there should be national input to ensure some degree of continuity across the country. I believe the National Curriculum is an ideal example which appears to have been generally well received in principle.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?

   I am totally supportive of any measures which give ordinary people greater participation in local democracy. Unfortunately, the present system of unprincipled, overworked, and overworked people with normal jobs for participating unfortunately it is very difficult to persuade people to give up any of their normal lives.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

   I have no experience of local democracy in other counties, but I suspect that Bucks is probably one of the better organised local authorities.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).

   I lived in Buckinghamshire when I had four children in the education system. I have some concerns over the quality of our education system. I believe the only way to have an effect is to take part.

   I am sure that there are better qualified people but I am sure my motivations are correct.

JANUARY 1990

R. KENRICK JONES
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?

(b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)

JANUARY 1990

R. KENRICK JONES
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   "We have not had to fight for our democracy recently."

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   "Yes (-ish)"

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?
   "In a general sense it must have Social Views. It should only be directly involved in committees where the Church is a specific provider. (e.g. Education)"

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   "National Guidelines, National Funding (say 2/3) Local detail & practice."

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   "Where does it stop? Non-binding perhaps."

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   "45%"

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   "Public Service, genuine interest in walking the corridors of power. Masochism."

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?

   Largely apathy. People do not consider politics affects them.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?

   In general no. Too often biased, ill-informed or both.

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?

   It frequently does, but is in my view unwise to do so.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?

   The latter, but we may perhaps be in danger of suffering a little too much at present.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-optation of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?

   On the whole, no. Consultation is always important, but decisions should be made by the elected councillors.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

   I do not necessarily accept the theory. Yes, Bucks seems to work quite well.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).

   An element of service, and a degree of ambition!

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)

JANUARY 1990

R. KENRICK JONES
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?

   Mainly due to the system - local government campaigns, the more effort put into them the better the result.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?

   Without doubt - especially the press who do campaign and highlight local issues of concern.

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?

   The Church have a duty on all moral issues not to stand idle and watch things going wrong.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?

   I am not convinced with the Swiss system.

   I believe that the funds of Education capital is raised locally, the local level should control.

   I think teacher salaries should be state funded.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?

   I consider that by voting in a representative for the local area the Bucks electorate should be well represented - local referenda on contentious issues might be

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?

   I am not very impressed with the general view on democracy - i.e. MAJORITY RIGHT - Minority rights being ignored. Bucks is not a good example of an integrated unit.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).

   The administrative county of Buckingham is a historic and essential part of the U.K. It's community, a countryside representation by concerned local people who would a concern for the best interests of the population.

(please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   - Many electors are unaware of the role and responsibilities of County and District Councils.
   - In many cases the political balance is so overwhelming that change seems impossible.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   - News coverage is generally poor and patchy, local govt is not discussed - when there's a scandal - a local editor told me at Bucks the effective channel is local radio TV and coporate press.

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics? What limits are there? Not unless it wants to! We have no history of religious parties in the UK, current church membership would develop unilaterally. This should not preclude the Church expressing views on current issues, however.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential? If so what?
   - A National input is needed to ensure some minimum standards - national qualification exams etc. but the present level of central govt intervention is excessive.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   - Bucks citizens (or some of them!) already elect local people as councillors. There is a need for more resident input at the very community level. It is not realistic to do this at a higher level.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   - Bucks has no cohesion as a community. The facts of the matter make this clear. Urban areas, large town and rural - and Ntl. Regional authority + District Councils with elected powers are required.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   - Education is by far the most important of all responsibilities and in more general terms the sheer weight of the work - practical motivation - service to the community etc.

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)

JANUARY 1990

R. KENRICK JONES
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   (i) The average Briton is bone idle anyway.
   (ii) The antiquated voting system produces, in people's minds, the notion that the result is foregone in any case.
   (iii) The generally low quality of many candidates does not inspire confidence.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   Up to a point, yes. However local government seems to take a back seat if there is a good rape, murder or scandal to report. Market forces I suppose.
   
   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   Teachers' salaries should be paid for nationally but, apart from that, the present system is far too remote. Would suggest a return to the pre 1974 system of local Divisional Executives. These could be run by District Councils [see 5 below].

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   Co-option is dangerous. Some governing bodies might try to co-opt all their pals.
   
   There is merit in referenda over important matters such as retention of grammar schools, co-education, etc.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   Bucks County is far too long and narrow (look at the map). Communications are poor. Suggest that education should come under the control of District Councils which are nearer to the people.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   (i) Having seen the complacency in the county because it is dominated by a single party with little effective opposition (50 out of 71 seats held by Tories) stood as an Independent.
   (ii) Having served as a teacher in Bucks for 37 years am only too aware of the County's shortcomings.
   (Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)

JANUARY 1990

Good luck in your survey!
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   People are reasonably satisfied and may not understand all the issues or even how to vote.

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   No. Inexperienced journalists. Not sufficient interest among readers.
   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?
   I don't think so. Individuals in the Church, perhaps.

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   Local level. National pay for teachers on rates agreed locally.

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   I think things are managed fairly well at present, but we should find better ways of informing the public.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   Bucks is a little small but I would prefer to keep the present 3 tiers of local authorities.

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   Wanting a “fair deal” for my constituents. Nothing is more important than a good education for the next generation.

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE BUCKS COUNTY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1. Why do you think that U.K. local elections produce such meagre turnouts on fairly infrequent polls?
   *Largely because electors are not significantly dissatisfied with the work done & services provided by local councils.*

2. (a) In general would you consider that the local media assist the process of democracy through providing a fair view of local government?
   *Assist to a limited extent inspite of a tendency to dramatise issues.*

   (b) Should the Church become involved in local politics. What limits are there?
   *Not specifically because they are the church. However any constituted body should accept a responsibility to contribute as a 'corporate' citizen.*

3. Do you think that Education should be handled entirely at local level (as in Switzerland) or is some national input essential. If so what?
   *Overall national direction has been the British pattern. Absolute local autonomy would seem understandable risky. National input is necessary.*

4. Should Bucks citizens have a greater input to our local democratic procedures than at present, e.g. co-option of people to representative committees on matters of interest or perhaps local referenda?
   *I am NOT in favour of referenda. Some co-options do occur on Council committee. eg Educational Input via the ballot box every 4 years is probably satisfactory*.

5. Democracy, it is claimed, only works well in small communities. To what extent does the County of Bucks form such an integrated unit?
   *I don't necessarily accept the premise! Nevertheless Bucks does form an integrated geographic entity.*

6. What reasons would you advance for being a County Councillor? (especially on the Education Committee).
   *A chance to represent local views and to contribute financial & business experience to the management of local affairs.*

(Please extend any answer if you wish, on a separate sheet)
Interview transcripts and correspondence
(Items 64 - 83)
Madame Calmy- Rey is the President of the Genevan Socialists. She is actually more left wing, she says, than practice allows. The balance of party, she explained, in the canton parliament is as follows. The Ecology Party, the Socialists and the Communists form a group of 42 seats. Against them are the Christian Democrats, the liberals and the Radicals who have 49 seats, plus the Vigilance Party, which is a far-right element, had nine seats, making 100 seats in all. This of course means that the left is always on the losing side and consequently the left has to accommodate. She also explained that the government in Geneva, which is a mirror image on a smaller scale to that in Berne, consists of two Socialists, one radical, two Christian Democrats and two Liberals.

Part of the trouble, she said, of the poor vote that takes place is the fact that MPs simply do not lay out their stall sufficiently to voters so folk are not interested and therefore do not vote. Curiously, there is a parallel here with Bucks. Swiss folk are very keen on local affairs, often to the exclusion of national events. She said that whereas 10% of Geneva citizens are homeowners, 90% live in flats. This inevitably affects the whole question of issues and so on and particularly the question of rents and landlords.

She also explained that the cycle of voting over a 4 year period in Geneva is something like this. In the first year there will be communal elections, the second year national elections. Plus, of course a host of initiatives and referendums which are scattered throughout the four year period and on average the voter votes four times a year.
Appendix 65

Maitre Hafner, Advocate and President of the Geneva Radicals, also a major
in the Swiss Army, answered a series of questions on participatory democracy in
Switzerland. He said it was very wide spread but for the most people very selective,
that is to say knowledge of the subject and interest had to couple up with voting
capacity. So many people simply don’t vote on everything. For example wine
protection. There are many local needs in Geneva and Ticino, but in the German
part of Switzerland people do not vote the same as the German cantoners look to
German wine for their consumption. The Swiss, he said, never concentrate on one
great topic to the exclusion of all others so things don’t get done that should be. We
are too individualistic, even selfish, as a people and certainly too parochial. We
simply never consider national issues. A factor which is one of the main planks of
our own Radical party.

The radicals often join with the Liberals as both are conservative. Nowadays it is
fairly easy to obtain 100,000 signatures for a Federal Initiative or 10,000 for a
cantonal one in the case of Geneva. In the direct democracy of Switzerland, the
strength of activists can wreck the system as the interests of all are just as important as
those of the few, and the interests of minorities can actually destroy democracy
because minorities opt out of major votes when they are defeated. They often do
their own thing, sometimes breaking off and forming new parties.
3. M. Schare, who is a City Architect, is President of the Christian Democratic Party, a party which in some ways is analogous to the old SDP in this country. When asked whether the popular initiative is a good idea he answered yes, very good but minorities can gain too much balancing power. In any case, it is the best that we have even if it's not perfect (quoting Winston Churchill).

The Swiss are both pragmatic and ethical but there is very real xenophobia in the country and like M. Hafner, M. Schare thinks issues are largely pragmatic and immediate and no forward planning as there are never any burning issues. It is a self-interested society and a self-perpetuating society. For example when the 700th anniversary came along of the Swiss Federation, the EEC was not a joining matter because the Swiss felt that they would lose some part of their direct democracy.

He answered the question "Are there wings of the Christian Democrat Party", no, not actually wings more different classes bound together into one union.
Appendix 67

4. Madame Elizabeth Braunschwig was the President of the Liberal Party of Geneva. She is a high-powered Economist and a member of the cantonal Parliament. Her answers to a whole series of concepts provided a wide-ranging set of views on Swiss democracy. Only 12% of Swiss she thinks never go to the polls. Most go on some issues, and in the case of elections, 28 – 40% go. On average in Geneva there are six votes a year. Also in Geneva, there is one ballot paper for all votes at all levels, whereas in Zurich and other cantons there is one paper for Federal matters and one paper for cantonal, so therefore it is easier to know how to vote and not to get confused. Undoubtedly, there is a boredom threshold. This may arise from a whole series of factors such as satisfaction, even boredom itself, the current wealthy economy and the fact that at times they feel the Government will do whatever it wants, irrespective of votes. But that’s a relatively small number.

Initiatives, however, often give rise to many votes on the same subject, for example on nuclear matters. A referenda and initiatives undoubtedly stultify progress, due to the long delays on the exercise of its machinery. Nevertheless, says Madame Braunschwig, these long and exasperating delays are offset by the sheer exercise of popular democratic rights.

Activists, that is to say the Greens, the Automobile Party, Nuclear Parties,
Gays, are really anti-democratic. Only 7% of votes are needed to form a party and this of course is both democratic and extraordinarily wasteful.

The Army vote in 1989 as to whether Switzerland would jettison its army or not undoubtedly was influenced by the youth of the country who were in favour of abolishing it. Also, in the case of Geneva, the massacre of 1932 when the local Militia had killed some people taking part in a protest, still rankles some people and therefore there was an anti-army vote and a considerable number of people voted tactically.

There is much consensus on the Govt. of Geneva. The main parties of the Socialists, the Radicals and the Liberals have to have pre-debate discussions to agree a common policy only because needs must, i.e. due to the hung parliament.
5. **Interview with M. Chevrot, Director of Education of Geneva.** Every year, in all secondary schools and in adult training colleges there is a mock parliament on a specific issues; either a canton or federal, which is being considered at that time by the adults such as, for example, the army issue. Speakers for and against the subject are arranged, votes are taken, proper ballot papers and ballot boxes are provided. After the elections, votes are published in the local press. Thus we feel is politics very much in the forefront of a rising generation.
6. In an interview with the Secretary General of the Military Administration in Geneva, I learnt that young men today do not like serving in the army. First of all, it stops them getting a job, secondly, they believe in this day and age there is less need for it, and thirdly there is some unemployment in Geneva but not in Zurich or Berne and this aggravates the situation.

The Swiss have a Militia Army. This is participation in a sense of a political nature, which permeates the nation and affects all men between the ages of 20 and 50 and some comment about this is necessary.

The Swiss Army is unique amongst the nations of Europe, although it is similar to Israel. In terms of participation it may not be strictly political, as many other things in Switzerland are, but it certainly forms a degree of participation in this nation which is widespread and which is deeply felt amongst all people.

It works like this:

20 – 33 Active Service
33 – 42 Landwehr
43 – 50 Landsturm

All men serve in the Swiss army from the age of 20 until the age of 50. They start off with a basic 15 weeks training and thereafter every two years they
have a three week refresher course, let's say until 42 years of age. So, over
this 20-year period there are about 10 three week bi-annual courses
necessary. During this period Swiss men in the army have their jobs secured
- which normally of course they carry on over the rest of the year.

Up until 1991, anyone who failed to serve in the army because they cited
conscientious objection, were imprisoned and since that date there has been
a Civil Service equivalent, alternative to the army. This consists of 450 days
of work and for those who can pass a Conscientious Objection test.
Switzerland spends a great deal of money, considering its size, out of its gdp,
on defence, something like 11%. This compares with the UK's 7% and
Holland's 3.9%.
Appendix 70

7. An interview with M. Kyburz, who is the Lord Mayor of all the 46 communes in Geneva as well as being mayor of his own commune of Carouge, gave a fascinating insight as to the way that direct democracy at the communal or lowest level works. He says there are many initiatives and referendums in the big commune, for example, Carouge, which are not of interest. Thus, for example, a new parking lot, demolishing an old building or building a new road. Voting by the way is always by proportional representation. A typical issue in Geneva is where three communes branded together to jointly build a sports complex which was going to cost 7 million francs. In one commune under pressure of leaflets and door-to-door canvassing for votes, an initiative was launched and a referendum was held. The complex, however, was regarded by the majority as too costly. So the communes pulled out and the project collapsed. This shows that direct democracy can be frustrating at times and also very costly. In communes initiatives require a certain number of signatures as they do at all other levels in Switzerland. The number of signatures in Geneva communes varies according to the size of the commune. So there would be a minimum of 1,000 signatures needed for a fair-sized commune in Carouge. Generally, 30% in the communes with 500 votes, 20% in between communes with 500 and 1,000 votes, 10% in 5,000 and 30,000.
Votes in communes are usually very close, either within communes or between communes. And so there is a very great deal of horse-trading goes on.
8. M. Philippe Joye, the immediate past president of the Christian Democrats in Geneva had some interesting sidelights on views that others had expressed. He didn't consider that there was much Xenophobia in Switzerland considering that 15% are immigrants. After all, we are better than most countries for immigrants and we have had such people since 1914. On the question of women, more women occupy top jobs, that is to say even presidents of companies and political parties, because in the case of political parties, men won't bother. Why is this? One, because they don't regard the job as important enough and two, because it is not well paid enough like his own job would be, and three, therefore it is not worth taking on.

In Swiss politics, at local level particularly, there is an enormous amount of horse trading, so you scratch the next man's back and he will scratch yours. There is no idealism. So far as today's participatory democracy is concerned, it seems to be grinding to a halt. Too many initiatives are clogging the system. It is a system that is excellent for affluent times but not really suited to the more perilous economic in which we are living. There are no decisive charismatic leaders, cantons on the whole despise the Council of States in Berne. A man must be really good in his own canton, if not, kick him upstairs. The Swiss, says M. Joye, are a conscientious people. We must hang together or we will hang separately. There are no elites in Switzerland in terms of class. No public school element. All pass through the democratic system of education and all respect each other. Also, this consensus
situation is reinforced by the great value that the Swiss people put upon their many parliamentary commissions. People ask what is the difference between the Radicals and the Christian Democrats, both major parties. Christian Democrats try to implement papal and Catholic doctrine re the worth of human beings into political action.
9. **Interview with M. Patrice Plojoux who is a photographer and is Mayor of Russin** which is the smallest commune in the canton in Geneva. It only has a population of 600. Nevertheless, there is a folk assembly, one every four years. This is for information purposes only, that is to say it has no voting power. There is an executive of 3 persons and a legislative of 9 people, both of which meet once a month. Both are elected every four years by popular vote. Party colours and propaganda at election time abound but because only 240 electors so personalities tend to dominate over politics. The last initiative and referendum was 5 years ago and the issue then was to increase the size of the hall for folk assemblies.

For a small commune like Russin, much power in the canton of Geneva is retained by the canton which pays very largely for education. It is not so in the canton of Vaud and many other cantons where the Napoleonic legacy does not apply, i.e. the commune find the lot. They meet in council in September here we have in a tiny commune in one canton in Geneva the concept of direct democracy and of a vibrant, if small, if microscopic even, democratic organisation and it is really quite impressive.
10. Interview with M. Bollinger, Chef de L'information, economist and writer.
In this whole wide ranging discussion of politics in Geneva, he highlighted one affair in particular, the Alambra affair. This was the case of an old music hall which had lost its viability because of the growth of television etc so there was a popular feeling in the canton that they wanted to knock it down and make a big car park. People in the car driven age are keen on having a car park, but the Socialists Deputy, M. Grobare, who was also a Minister in the Government, wanted to retain it because of green issues etc. People however feel extremely frustrated by the clout that the canton display versus their own frustrated feelings. M. Bollinger says people are politically very literate, even if the votes themselves are often very low.
Appendix 74

An influential figure in the world of the Christian church is Rev. Myra Blyth who is the secretary of the European part of the World Council of Churches, resident in Geneva. In an interview with her, she said, that in terms of democracy, the fact that the people of Geneva and elsewhere in Switzerland vote on issues make the democracy more real than as we do in this country voting for people and parties. The puritan ethic is still very strong amongst the Swiss particularly, of course, in Geneva where Calvin lived, even today.
Chief Executive of Aylesbury Vale Community Council, Mrs Jenny Hunt.

The proliferation of citizen councils in Swiss cantons and communes i.e. Les Associations d’Interets prompted me to investigate any similar UK organisations. One such, as above, seemed to fit the bill.

Mrs Hunt explained the role of her council. This is to represent the public interest in the National Health Services. They can inspect hospitals and have observer status at Health service meetings and primary care groups. The council is composed of representatives from the local authorities, voluntary groups and the Secretary of State. They can appeal to the Secretary of State where service changes in health are proposed. However, unlike Switzerland, there is no right to launch an official political move to challenge any ruling. Never the less the committees form a valuable means of citizen participation and monitoring of a great state enterprise that is to say a genuine ‘watch dog’.

Shortly afterwards in (1998) the Community Health Council was abolished by the government. Clearly it was felt that their role was becoming too effective

A rather sad footnote is to be seen in the final annual report.

“We remain concerned that we are not always consulted or advised of planned changes in services where there is no statutory responsibility to consult”
Mrs Pearce – Vice Chairman Aylesbury Vale Housing Authority. The vice chairman explained that the whole concept of 'council housing' has undergone a complete transformation in the past twenty years. No longer do councils hold vast estates in their possession. Housing trusts and tenants councils are now the order of the day. These housing associations financed by such philanthropic organisations as The Shaftesbury Society or the Masons etc. work closely with local authorities. Buying advice and assessment of needs is offered.

As the Council literature states “Will the homeless be offered council housing? Not necessarily! It may be council property, a nomination to a property owned by a registered landlord, or a tenancy with a private landlord”

Mrs Pearce added that a committee of tenants meets to discuss matters with housing managers

(This comparatively recent UK housing policy is somewhat similar to the Swiss cantonal policy in which the role of the local authority is minimal)
Appendix 77

Chairman of Wycombe District Council Mrs Pamela Priestley. After discussing the different roles of County and District local government, Mrs Priestley focussed on the great expansion in co-operation which has developed between people and councils in general and Wycombe in particular.

a) Wycombe now distributes regularly questionnaires to council taxpayers seeking their views on a large range of council services or responsibilities. Housing, Sports amenities, travel concessions, use of local transport, waste disposal etc. This list (27 items in total to be ticked) is graded good – satisfactory – poor – don’t know.

b) In company with other councils, Wycombe sends delegates to the plenary council of the Thames Valley Area where much cross fertilization arises thus, says the Chairman, putting new life into local administration.

c) Mrs Priestley stressed that unlike a Swiss canton Wycombe receives a National governmental subsidy
Appendix 78


1. The Director stressed his role as advisor to the council over the controversial topic of a new secondary (Grammar?) School in Milton Keynes. – His suggestion of a council funded poll of residents in the area the setting up of a special committee to consider the matter i.e. The Provisional Panel and the costing which would be similar for either a grammar or comprehensive building

2. Mr sharp discussed the need to monitor Heads of schools over the entry of pupils for the then 11+ examination and the ‘one-upmanship’ which sometimes arose, He pointed out the greater involvement of parents and governors in running schools and that this was a truly participatory departure.

3. Like his successor, David M’Gahey, he stressed the constraints put on local authorities by the central government and the reduction in status and scope of local education authorities. He also wished that finance would permit the publishing of a booklet on the structure of local government such as Geneva produces regularly i.e. the Memento Genevoise.
Appendix 79

David M’Gahey, Director of Education Buckinghamshire County Council
(1996 – 2000) David M’Gahey described two main developments in the last few years.

1. The revolution in school organisations through Local Management of Schools – the increased parental roles in manning trips for children and social events, the autonomy granted to schools by means of the increased role for governors, the need for self financing of school budgets and staffing but also the continuing need for local authority guidance. He also stressed the expanded choice for parents in choosing schools.

2. In 1998 a new and important element in participation was begun when the Buckinghamshire Targets Task Force was launched. This aimed to transform the county into a ‘learning county’ for all ages. Industry, local voluntary groups, Insurance firms, the churches, universities and, of course, the whole range of educational facilities meet regularly and their representatives hammer out policies which benefit all the citizens. It was felt that this initiative really involved people in their own destinies.

NB The greatly reduced role for the education department has resulted in the resignation of Mr M’Gahey (in December 2000) and the post of Director of Education becomes that of senior Manager.
Appendix 80


Each canton has its Chef de L’Information who basically acts as anchorman for news distribution and, in the case of the Geneva Chef – M. Bollinger, also organised results and ballots for the numerous elections and Initiatives.

The Confederation of Switzerland has its own overall Chef in the person of M. Mauroix.

He made a number of points in the course of the interview.

1. The important controversy arising from the Popular Initiative proposing the abolition of the Swiss Army in 1989 coincided with a series of reforms designed to improve military efficiency and approved by the Swiss government. Such is the power of participatory democracy that, said M. Mauroix, no further action could be taken until the results of the Popular Initiative were known.

2. Switzerland is divided into concentric rings of defence and Geneva is on the outermost of these.

The comments of M. Mauroix formed an interesting complement to the views of the Genevan Military spokesman (See interview 6)
Appendix 81

Interview with Dr Heinz Reugger – Secretary of Swiss Protestant Ecumenical Council and unwilling conscript into the Swiss militia. (November 1992).

This Interview was conducted prior to the relaxation of Conscientious Objection rules.

Even in 1989 one could (as Reugger did) opt for a non shooting role on religious grounds. He became a medical orderly. In the course of our conversation he made the following points:

1. “Middle Switzerland” Catholics strongly attached to the Christian Democrats. Catholics are more likely to be influenced by the church than Protestants.

2. Evangelicals vote for EVP (Evangelical Protestants Party).


4. Generally the Protestants tend to support Social/Ethical issues. Catholics major on peace and justice.

5. Not much political input by churches. The voters more interested in Green issues and social and Anti-zenophobic matters. Finally the myth
of the "Saviourhood" of the Swiss Army deeply held until the end of communism and the debut of the Gorbachev era.
Dear Kenrick,

I promised to give you some comments on your questionnaire. I shall take the subjects in the order in which you list them.

I think that the prime reason why local government elections produce low turnouts is that people rarely feel that local government is relevant to their lives. This is partly because the structure and organisation of local boundaries of councils have altered several times in the last thirty years. This is partly because the population is more mobile than in the past. To my mind, Aylesbury is a classic example of a place where many local residents lack any great sense of belonging to or affection for the town. But probably the most important single reason is the lack of accountability in local government. Local government is in theory responsible for important services but in practice is dependent on central government grant to fund those services and must comply with ever-increasing numbers of central government directives as to how such services should be administered. During the last few decades we have developed a schizophrenic approach to local government. We are not sure whether we really want it to be autonomous, with all that means in terms of variation in the quality of services from one part of the country to another, or whether we want it to be, in effect, an agency for the delivery of centrally organised services. It is too simplistic to say that national politicians are trying to grab control of decisions which should rightly be the province of local government. The history of England is that of a centralised state and London has for centuries exercised economic, cultural and political dominance which is not matched by most other European capital cities. The political history and ethos of, for example, Italy is completely different. Politicians and civil servants at Westminster believe that if they allow for local variety and local failure, they, the national politicians, will be held responsible by an aggrieved local electorate. They therefore feel politically held to try to impose national standards. I think that the answer is probably to reform local government finance so that what a council spends is much more closely related to what it raises in local taxation than is currently the norm. To do this would mean both returning the business rate to local government control and also removing from local government a number of key services, notably schools, in order to bring local revenue and local expenditure more closely into balance.
I believe that local newspapers probably present a fairer and more detailed picture of local government than national newspapers do of national government. However, only a minority of the electorate reads a local newspaper. There is a long term decline in Britain in the readership of paid for local newspapers and in the number of such titles. Local radio tends to be music centred although it does give reasonable coverage to local government. Regional television is pretty useless as a medium for local government issues to be explored in depth.

I think that we need a national curriculum, a rigorous national system for the inspection of schools and national public examinations. Beyond that, I would be inclined to devolve decisions down to the individual schools.

I am not keen on co-opting unelected people to serve on committees where they have equal voting rights to members who have actually received the endorsement of voters in a secret ballot. More interesting and more challenging is the idea of local referendums. Historically this is not a practice which has found favour in England. However, the advent of the Internet and email will make it possible for local (or for that matter national) administrations to consult their electorate quickly and cheaply about a particular issue. My views are probably a little bit heretical within the Party but I think that this new technology will change the nature of politics and that there is advantage to be gained in being first in the field to advocate greater use of referendums.

Buckinghamshire is not geographically well integrated. This problem of course dates back to Anglo Saxon times. However, Buckinghamshire like other historic counties has a sense of identity which derives from its continuous history. If you ask people where they live I think that they would be inclined to say first the name of the town or village where they reside and second the name of their county. If we were to seek to create a British version of the Swiss cantonal system then I think we would need to look at smaller units than the present district council areas. For example, Risborough looks party to Wycombe but party to Aylesbury. Wendover distrusts AVDC intensely. Stokenchurch feels that it is related to High Wycombe but neglected by it. Prestwood looks party to Amersham but party to Wycombe. A cantonal system here would probably look quite like the pre 1974 system of local government which Edward Heath made the great mistake of abolishing.

I think that county councillors still discharge an important function. They are responsible for spending very large sums of taxpayers money and for the administration of key public services. Effect county councillors will take clear decisions about policies and check that their officers are implementing their policies with vigour. They will also hold officers to account for inefficiency and lacks of administration. Even with the present plethora of central directions to LEAs and schools, county councillors can play an important role. When a head or a school is failing, it is the LEA which needs to go in and put together a rescue package.

I hope that all this is helpful.
10 July 2000

Dear Kenrick,

Thank you for your letter of 8th July received today. Congratulations on your progress thus far on your doctoral presentation - may I wish you a successful conclusion!

As in so many instances, the answer to your question about the influence of the rank and file members of churches in the Baptist Union on major policy will vary according to who replies. The theory, as you well know, is that decisions whether local, regional or national are made by the 'grass-roots' always as a result of full consultation and prayer. In practice, as in local and national politics, the potential 'electorate' is often less than enthusiastic about becoming involved and gladly leaves to others the decision making. There are always those who react to new ideas in a negative way and accuse 'Didcot' of both setting the agenda and controlling the outcome.

Of course at the end of the day it is never practicable to involve everyone at the same time. This requires delegation of responsibility to representatives. Thus the churches in a county Association elect a General Committee to discuss and agree policy on behalf of all, but it must be admitted that the reporting back and accountability to the local church by the representatives is often non-existent or at best minimal. Major policy normally requires the consent of the Assembly, again made up of representatives of the constituent churches. Prior consultation and local decision in a Church Meeting may determine the way in which delegates cast their vote.

In a similar way national policy is debated and decisions taken by the Baptist Union Council which is largely made up of representatives of the County Associations, duly elected to serve by the representatives of the local churches. Again, on matters of major policy (eg: participation by the Baptist Union in the Ecumenical partnership or the abolition of county Associations and Areas in favour of Regional Associations (!)) the final decision is taken at the annual Assembly in which all accredited ministers and church delegates, together with representatives of the existing Associations and the Colleges are entitled to participate.

When the Ecumenical issue was top of the agenda nationally, the Baptist Union were the only mainstream denomination to refer the matter directly to the constituent churches in an attempt to achieve 'people-power'.
You asked about influence of the rank and file in respect of the Area. Because the Area has no legal status, the only statutory body currently is the Area Pastoral Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Baptist Union. Each Area comprises one or more County Associations and it is there that policy making normally takes place. Although each Association is represented on the body called to appoint a Superintendent the members of the churches are not involved in the appointment. This is a matter for the Baptist Union Council.

These are observations off the top of my head and may well tell you no more than you already knew or suspected! If I can be of further help, please let me know.

Mary joins in sending greetings to Jean and yourself,
List of Newspaper cuttings and minutes of meetings referenced

'Daily Telegraph' article by Educational Correspondent 13/11/89
'The Citizen' ‘parents’ views sought on grammar schools’ 10/03/94
'The Herald’ Milton Keynes 10/03/94
Journal de Genève articles on the Popular vote December 1984
'The Independent’ headline article on 20/05/95

Two sets of Buckinghamshire Council Education minutes including the Chief Education Officer’s report and the debate as it unfolded amongst participants