

LECTURE.18/91.

Note from ME. These are only rough notes for a lecture but they are worth reading because:

- 1. they return to an historical perspective on democratization at the governance or societal level which became a major concern after the major challenges of how to do democratization at the organizational level were conquered, and
- 2. they mention some dimensions of the Norwegian Industrial Democracy program that do not seem to appear in this form anywhere else, separate from the data that is to be found in **Form and Content in Industrial Democracy** (Emery & Thorsrud, 1969). These are critical insights into the social context of the time in Norway, a small country in which at the time, scientists spoke to each other across the disciplines sharing knowledge.

1. There are two basic design principles which could improve the viability of communities. The first is based on the redundancy of the constituent parts; the second on the multi-functionality of the constituent parts. The critical distinction of western civilization has been that it, and it alone amongst the civilizations of which we have knowledge, has tended to favour the second design principle.

2. The second design principle favours self-government. Many forms of self government existed in the tribal groupings that settled in Europe. In the centuries after Roman domination democratic forms of government kept recurring in the urban centres that emerged in the middle ages. There appeared to be no cultural difficulty in perceiving that there might be democratic alternatives to autocracy. Many of those alternatives were only oligarchies, as with the Magna Charter, but not all.

3. With the emergence of nation-states in Europe during and after the 17th century the demand for democratic forms of government was again in force. The French Revolution put the issue of democracy very firmly on the agenda for western civilization, although with very little benefit to the French themselves. The Americans were the first beneficiaries of the tidal change that led to the French Revolution. Seeking a unity between slave-owning states, mercantile states and farming states they rejected any notions of participatory democracy and settled for representative forms. This was to be the common form. As Britain and the European countries found their growing industrial working classes increasingly unruly they extended the franchise for representative democracy. These moves were strictly in defence of the status quo. There was no nonsense in those days about increasing participation so as to make better use of human resources. The ruling elites not only had all the brains they needed but they also had the only brains that existed in the human race. Allowing that some brains might occasionally turn up from below in a representative they were confident that they could coopt these to a reasonable view of life.

4. Democracy as we know it in the modern nation state has some very peculiar characteristics:

- a) the form of democracy was dictated by those who had autocratic or oligarchical authority.
- b) those elites were schooled in the classics and well enough knew Aristotle's judgement

that elections served the oligarchs and selection by lot served the lower orders.

[What do I want to say ? - democrats were sold a pup. -when conditions emerged when we could have a real democracy we bought the pup.]

The points to be made:

In general: apathy ,cynicism, distrust -despite education etc

Specifically the lessons from democratization of work eg form vs content, interest and responsibility, leadership and the emergence of the concept of sortition.

Why did political science fail?

Why did the counter-culture fail?

The answers from Athens and democratization of work.

Transition.

Directions.

DIRECTIONS.

Where can the concept of democratic dialogue be introduced? Where can the system of sortition be introduced?

(Burnheim would only introduce it for volunteers.)

APPLICATIONS OF SORTITION.

WORK - r&d, design teams, departmental management.

new forms of Works Councils.

ECONOMY - Industry Councils.

CIVIL - regional councils as with the AAP

voluntary organizations of all kinds particularly for trustee or policy formation (this includes unions).

DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE.

the main development is remote conferencing.

GENERAL CONCERN with the lack of participation of citizens in the democratic processes and the prevalence of apathy and withdrawal; cynicism about the processes and distrust of politicians. This concern is more profound today than ever before. These symptoms were expected in the early days of extending the franchise to the poorer, non- propertied masses. However, the exponents of the democratic creeds expected that the level of participation would increase with the spread of near- universal secondary education, the growth in effective leisure time (not just time recovering from arduous physical labour) and a growth in real income which allowed individuals to take personal advantage of the revolution in information technology. Things have, if anything, gone from bad to worse.

Adult educators share this general concern because of the important role they played in educating the early generations of the newly enfranchised working classes. Their old role of providing a supplementary educational diet for those who had missed out on full schooling had helped to create a new generation of politicians from a working class background. They were becoming increasingly peripheral in the emerging situation. In the field of 'recurrent education' they were providing supplementary education for well- paid professionals who were usually well enough organized to provide this for themselves. It was clear that television was not providing the hoped for complement of a good early education - a complement that would enable an educated person to orient themselves to aspects of a world very different to that for which they were schooled. Adult educators found a label for this problem, 'continuing education' but have done little to identify the relevant content.

Twenty and more years of work on worker participation in industry has radically changed both the perspective for democracy and for the role of adult education. The change in the first perspective is immensely more important but it is a change that suggests that the democratic process of "government by the people" might become a true "university of life".

The modern history of worker participation cannot be accessed through the reference section of a university library. That history emerged from a grimly serious, tight-lipped and barely trusting relation between industrialists, trade unionist and a handful of maverick social scientists (I write as one of the early mavericks). There are a great many roots in the early history of this development. A focal point emerged in 1961-2. In that year the industrial and the union leaders of Norway approached social scientists for advice on how to raise the level of worker participation. Norway seemed to be on the verge of entering the European Common Market (this did not actually come to pass) and those leaders were aware that their cosseted industries would go under if there were not a marked improvement in productivity and innovation. Two features were fortunately present at this point in time. On the one hand the social scientist that they approached, Einar Thorsrud, was closely connected with the Tavistock which was pioneering action research on worker participation. On the other hand, Norway, in the post-war years, had been a social laboratory for

experiments in the formal democratization of employer- employee relations. In all medium and large sized firms worker representatives were elected to Joint Productivity Committees at the departmental level and Works Councils at the plant level. In companies where the government had a majority share-holding there were elected worker- representatives on the boards of directors.

Thorsrud brought the Tavistock and myself into this picture in December, 1961. It was clear that neither the industrialists nor the unionists expected that much could be gained by pushing for further legislation imposing more stringent forms of representative democracy on employer-employee relations. The unionists were, however, under political pressure to attempt this. I do not think that this had any impact on the design and conduct of the subsequent research. Thorsrud came under personal pressure from internationally eminent Norwegian political scientists who thought that it was immoral to suggest that an extension of representative democracy in industry would increase worker participation- all the evidence they had indicated that it would increase apathy. Thorsrud was sensitive enough of the industrial and political scene in Norway to know that all possibilities in that direction had to be explored. For my part I was reasonably knowledgeable of the Works Council that the Tavistock had designed and put in place for the Glacier Metals Company, perhaps as sophisticated a design as could be found anywhere (Jaques, 1952). I was also aware that it had not solved the problems raised by the Norwegian leaders. Under the circumstances every effort was made to examine all of the evidence that might suggest a more fruitful application of the principles of representative democracy.

In "Form and Content in Industrial Democracy", Thorsrud and I reported the results of this review of existing evidence. The evidence came from many sources; those sources were concerned with the effects of consultative and representative procedures on worker participation. They give no indication of being concerned with wider implications and I do not think that their findings were biased by any such considerations.

There is some indication that in the special conditions of wartime the joint productivity committees sometimes created higher levels of worker participation. In the postwar conditions none of the systems of representative democracy produced, under any circumstances, any evidence of increased worker participation. As Thorsrud was warned by the political scientists representative systems tend to create apathy and alienation, not participation.

The story does not stop there. Over the following five years, years evidence was accumulated from a series of field experiments, conducted under the condition that they remained economically viable, that participative forms of democracy produced dramatically different results.