CONSULTATIVE ARRANGEMENTS IN SOCIAL POLICY:

THE SECOND BAILEY REPORT

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As Welfare Statism progressed from infancy to maturity it
became increasingly apparent that the aspirations of those who stood
to gain were being achieved in only the most limited manner. Significant
steps were made in income security and opportunity security, but the
relationship between donor and recipient was very much a one-way affair.
Governments decided what steps should be taken to move more closely
towards a welfare society, and target groups accepted the ensuing
benefits with feelings of grudging gratitude and increasing powerless-
ness.

By the mid-1960's the American War on Poverty was in full
swing. Among its assumptions was the belief that traditional Welfare
State benefits of cash and services did a little, but not a great deal,
to alter the structure of inequality in society. It was forcefully
argued that unless power was also allocated by the Welfare State, attempts
at improvements could never be anything other than marginal, incremental
and haphazard.

As a consequence, "citizen participation" burst onto the scene
with a vengeance. The relevant American welfare legislation required
that community programmes be based on "maximum feasible participation",
but once the programmes were under way, Daniel Moynihan, for example
characterized the process as "maximum feasible misunderstanding"[1] and
Sherry Arnstein wrote of "maximum feasible manipulation".[2] Roland
Warren, the distinguished community sociologist saw citizen participation
heading off in the wrong direction. "Never again", he wrote,

"should we ask the slum residents of 150 American
cities to come to endless rounds of frustrating
meetings, to be lectured on what a splendid opportun-
ity they have to improve their neighbourhoods if only
they would participate responsibly in decision making;
never again should we expect them to jump the same
old participation hoops with the help of the same old
professional people at their elbow telling them why
this or that innovation is impractical ... it is an
insult to their own intelligence and integrity as
human beings, and to our own".3

Participatory programmes were developed in Australia in the
early 1970's, and like the American programmes the results were quite
mixed. Where community groups acquired organizational and political
skills a positive benefit accrued, but the cost involved was a slow,
painful learning experience that did not sit comfortably with develop-
ment of government policy that was constrained by political factors.
Among the many reasons that development of citizen participation was
such an inconclusive activity were the uncertainties of what was meant
by participation (was it about a transfer of power, was it an advisory
phenomenon, was it a socio-therapeutic, or perhaps a market research
activity?) and the suggestion that possibly Australia does not have a
participatory culture.

To move from paternalism to participation in a very short
period in the early 1970's was too difficult and threatening a step for
most of those involved, and a strong case can be made for a greater
dose of consultation, as both a workable arrangement, and as a step
towards greater citizen participation in the long run.

In an attempt to determine the Commonwealth's role in health
and welfare, Prime Minister Fraser established, in 1976, a Task Force
on Co-ordination in Welfare and Health. The Task Force has now completed

its investigations and has presented two substantial reports. The first

was tabled in the Parliament on February 17, 1977.[4] It was primarily

about the Liberal Government's Federalism Policy, and has been reviewed

in the literature.[5] The second was tabled in the House of Represent-

atives on June 1, 1978 and is entitled <u>Consultative Arrangements and</u>

<u>the Co-ordination of Social Policy Development</u>. It is in respect of

the consultative arrangements discussed in this second report (the

second Bailey Report, or Bailey II - so named after the Task Force

Chairman, Mr. Peter Bailey) that the following comments are made.

Bearing in mind that citizen participation activities are

seldom able to articulate clearly the objectives of the process, and

less able to operationalize any such objectives, Bailey II tried to

find a means of regularizing, with maximum impact, inputs from citizens

who may or may not be welfare consumers. This would ensure that decision

making would not be aloof and unresponsive to the needs and aspirations

of all of those involved, either as deliverers or recipients, in the

health and welfare industries. Bailey II is a much better report than

Bailey I in that it lays out quite clearly what it sees as feasible

in consultative arrangements, and how these might be achieved.

It makes the point that as well as greater consultation between

Commonwealth departments and the community, the need exists for consul-

tative arrangements of a more <u>structured</u> nature. Bailey II found some

189 consultative arrangements involving interaction between governmental

and non-governmental actors in Australia. Of these, 109 were regarded

as of a consultative/advisory, nature. Most of these are organized so

as to relate to specific programmes or specific client groups, and not

to policy directions <u>in toto</u>.

Bailey II makes a strong case (pages 5 & 6) for the desirability of improved consultative arrangements, and then proceeds to discuss the concept (consultation) as it relates to planning, administration, and service delivery(p. 11). After a number of disclaimers (consultation is not an activity directly linked to the decision making process; it is not designed to allocate resources; it is not designed to be advisory to any one person or officer; it is not designed to be a pressure group), the report claims "it is, in short, a process facilitating open discussion, careful deliberation, and effective conference. But ... it will need to have some influence on administrative and policy issues if it is to be meaningful. Consultation is concerned with influence but does not involve the exercise of power" (p. 12).

The bulk of the report is concerned with trying to develop a structure which can carry out these consultative functions. It recommends a 24 to 32 member National Consultative Council which would be modelled on the Victorian Consultative Council for Social Development (a body which serves as a forum for Federal, State and Local Government Departments and the non-statutory welfare sector), and which would be serviced either from a Commonwealth Government social policy unit, or the Australian Council of Social Service, and meet 3-4 times per year. The whole process would be reviewed after 2-3 years. The likelihood of success of such an arrangement will depend on the hopes and expectations of those in the process, together with the administrative and political support granted to the body.

In the late 1960's Sherry Arnstein wrote of what she called a "ladder of citizen participation"[6] containing eight rungs. She labelled these rungs manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control. As one moved up the ladder one went from non-participation, through various degrees of tokenism, to various degrees of citizen power. When participatory programmes were established in Australia in the early 1970's the lack of a participatory culture made attempts to move our activities or consciousness quickly up the ladder neither socially nor politically feasible. It simply wasn't on to jump several rungs up the ladder in one quick swoop. Given the enormous difficulties in moving up from non-participation on the ladder it might have been more feasible to have moved not towards total participation, but to a position, in the first instance, similar to that recommended in Bailey II - a degree of consultation. Even this requires careful consideration and planning.

In general a consultative body can hope to:

1. Act as a mechanism for consolidating diverse views into an opinion for the authorities;

2. Promote public input into decision making;

3. Provide an opinion (which can be evaluated) on issues of concern where conflict exists;

4. Provide a means of raising new issues which arise from local feeling and analysis.

There are several functional categories into which administrative/consultative arrangements might be classified. Bailey identified six functional categories - planning; evaluation; management/administration; technical/research; regulatory; information.

Clearly it is important to bear in mind that different objectives require different consultative arrangements.

Participants in any consultative process include those who plan the services, those who deliver them and those who receive or consume them. All people in our community consume services - though range and quantity varies. Fewer people deliver, and fewer still plan, with the delivery/planning/policy making structures in a hierarchial system. Furthermore social development and social services operate at a variety of structural levels - federal, state and local government, together with the non-statutory system. In the same way as the range of planners and deliverers varies - so does the range of consumers.

Different participants in the system have different object-ives, and different expectations of any consultative arrangement. Some want to deal with planning and future developments, some want to deal with immediate issues of funding, some want to make sure they are listened to, some want to make sure they can do the listening, some want to listen but not hear, some want to acquire information, some want to disseminate information and so on. In developing consultative arrange-ments it is necessary to be clearly aware of the objectives and interests of the whole range of participants.

It is important to recognise that any consultation that brings together consumers and the authorities operates within the Westminster system of government. The system has a number of inbuilt system constraints that must be recognised when planning consultative arrange-ments. The system which operates through a strong executive branch of government places a great deal of emphasis on the Ministerial department,

headed by a Minister who is responsible, both individually and collectively to Parliament.

The ramifications of the Westminster system are an executive branch of government which develops excessively secret procedures and an affinity, up the hierarchy (to higher authorities) rather than down (to consumers). The development of consultative arrangements in these circumstances requires a reassessment of our political culture and administrative practices.

There is a great danger that consultation could become a one-way affair, an exercise in window dressing and futility. This can happen if the authorities see their place in the Westminster system as sacrosanct, and become reluctant to share information, reluctant to respond promptly to questions and requests from participants, and reluctant to treat other participants in the consultative arrangement as credible actors.

In discussing the context then it can be argued that meaningful consultation involves a small retreat from aloofness and secrecy, and further that it involves some inconvenience to the bureaucratic staff. This inconvenience is a necessary and basic price that must be paid by the authorities if the consultative process is to be a genuine process. Procedures have to be identified for

a)   establishing any consultative body, and

b)   its operations after establishment.

In the establishment of consultative bodies it is necessary to integrate structures and levels with philosophy and objectives.

All too often we hear people debating whether organisation X ought to
have, say two or three, representatives, or whether representatives
ought to be appointed or elected. This sort of discussion can have
meaning only when the philosophy and objectives of consultation are
clearly specified.

With regard to operations it is important to bear in mind that
both public servants and the non-statutory welfare sector have roles
to play and obligations to their systems. Both sides must approach the
venture, not as a contest, but rather as a co-operative arrangement,
and in this light, consultation will require a slight retreat on both
sides. This slight retreat will clear a space for co-operative activity.
One example here, might be moves for greater information sharing, and
this combined with an approach which treats other participants as
participants, and not as contestants, might provide a worthwhile start.

In discussing these procedures Bailey II lists a number of
important issues to note and many to avoid. The extent to which these
are achieved will establish the viability of consultation as a practical
alternative to broad scale, but politically limited (under present
circumstances) citizen participation. Bailey II argues (pages 14-24)
for a clear determination of the scope of consultative activity; a
clear definition of goals; trust among the various participants;
continuity and flexibility of procedures; openness of discussion;
concentration on real issues; some political influence on policy; a
guarantee of suitably representative membership; the availability of
sufficient resources, together with the time needed for adequate dis-
cussion and action on consultative items.

The major pitfalls that Bailey II identifies are the need to avoid the generation of unrealistic expectations; the importance of avoiding tokenism; and the need to refrain from politicking, by which Bailey means "barrow pushing".

In this writer's experience as a member of a Ministerally appointed National Consultative Council, the issues are always highly political, and this causes acute awkwardness for the bureaucratic staff who form part of the consultative process. So much of the activity involved revolves around setting political boundaries, and consequently many so-called consultative meetings end up fitting into a narrow departmental agenda with a focus primarily on micro-administrative issues.

While Bailey II must be seen as a document that works entirely within existing political arrangements, and hence is not an invitation to search for policy alternatives outside the existing structure, it does help us understand many of the machinery issues involved in establishing a consultative process. It makes no advance on our thinking about citizen participation as mentioned in the first few paragraphs of this paper, but under current political and social circumstances it is of limited use to talk about citizen participation, but quite feasible to talk in terms of consultation, a process on the power ladder well up from tokenism and manipulation, but nowhere near citizen power.

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FOOTNOTES

1. D.P. Moynihan, <u>Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding:</u> <u>Community</u>
    <u>Action in the War on Poverty</u>, New York, 1969.

2. Sherry R. Arnstein, "Maximum Feasible Manipulation", <u>Public</u>
    <u>Administration Review</u>, 32, Special Issue, September, 1972,
    377-390.

3. R. Warren quoted in P. Marris and M. Rein, <u>Dilemmas of</u>
    <u>Social Reform</u>, Harmondsworth, 1972, 328-9.

4. Task Force on Co-ordination in Welfare and Health, <u>First Report.</u>
    <u>Proposals for Change in the Administration of Programs and</u>
    <u>Services</u>, Canberra, 1977.
    See also comments made by the Prime Minister and Leader of the
    Opposition in the <u>Parliamentary Debates</u> (H of R) 17 February,
    1977, 223-224.

5. See for example, A. Graycar, "Devolution of Federal Activities
    in Welfare: the Bailey Report" in D. Jaensch (ed.), <u>The Politics</u>
    <u>of "New Federalism"</u>, Adelaide, 1977, 161-166;
    S.J. Duckett, "The Co-ordination of Welfare and Health Services
    in Australia", <u>Australian Journal of Social Issues</u>, 12 (3),
    August, 1977, 188-200;
    Paul Gross, "Federalism Policy, Economic Policy, and the Imple-
    mentation of the Bailey Task Force Report", <u>Australian Journal</u>
    <u>of Social Issues</u>, 12 (3), August, 1977, 201-207;

5.   Erica Bates, "The Task Force on Co-ordination in Welfare and Health: the Bailey Report", <u>Australian Quarterly</u>, 49 (4), December, 1977, 103-111;

A. Peachment and G.S. Read, <u>New Federalism in Australia Rhetoric or Reality?</u>, Adelaide, 1977, 47-49;

Australian Council of Social Service (A.C.O.S.S.), <u>Real Reform or a Sideways Shuffle?</u>, Sydney, 1977.

6.   Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation", <u>Journal of the American Institute of Planners</u>, 35 (4), July, 1969, 216-224.

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