

"TALKING GETS YOU NOWHERE"

CRITICAL AND TENANT CENTRED APPROACHES TO PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF COUNCIL HOUSING

**Dave Mckenna
MSc Dissertation 1995
Centre for Housing Management and Development
UWCC**

Summary

The current understanding of tenant participation is an 'orthodoxy' that is flawed because it is an area of study that is both uncritical and lacking a tenant centred perspective. An attempt is made to address these flaws in three stages:

Firstly by providing an outline of critical approaches to participation in public services in general. Secondly this critical understanding, which views the major benefits of participation as going to the state, is applied to an examination of the history of participation in public housing management and used to examine the links between participation and the tenants movement. It is found that these links are problematic not least because of the other more direct strategies that are available to the tenants' movement.

Thirdly a longitudinal case study of the tenants' groups of the Glyntaff Farm Estate in South Wales is provided. This in order to test previously developed hypotheses and to generate a discussion concerning the capacity of tenants organisations to achieve their aims. This discussion will focus on the relative significance of both direct action and participative strategies as well as the problems associated with the ability to achieve concessions both locally and nationally.

DECLARATION:

This work has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not being submitted concurrently for any degree.

signed

date

candidate

This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of MSc in Housing.

signed

date

candidate

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

signed

date

candidate

I hereby give consent for my dissertation, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and the summary to be made available to outside organisations.

signed

date

candidate

LIST OF CONTENTS:

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Tenant Participation as a Subject of Study**
- 1.2 Research Strategy**
- 1.3 Methodology: The Use of a Case Study**
- 1.4 Selecting the Case Study**
- 1.5 Defining Tenants' Participation**

2 PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SERVICES : CRITICAL APPROACHES

- 2.1 The Growth of the 'Idea'**
- 2.2 Critics of the 'Idea'**
- 2.3 Cynthia Cockburn in Lambeth**
- 2.4 Peter Hain in Covent Garden**
- 2.5 Peter Saunders in Croydon**
- 2.6 The New Ideologies of Participation : Consumer and Citizen**
- 2.7 In Summary**

3 THE TENANTS' MOVEMENT, PARTICIPATION AND HOUSING POLICY

- 3.1 Introduction**
- 3.2 Tenant Militancy to the 1970s**
- 3.3 The Tenants Movement into the Eighties**
- 3.4 The Growth of Participation in Policy and Practice Since 1979**
- 3.5 The Tenants' Movement and Participation: Cause and Effect?**
- 3.6 In Summary**
- 3.7 Objectives of the Case Study**

4 A CASE STUDY OF GLYNTAFF FARM TENANTS' GROUPS 1977-93

- 4.1 Introduction**
- 4.2 The Estate**
- 4.3 The Action Group**
- 4.4 The Rise of SWAT**
- 4.5 SWAT: Structure and Impact Upon Members**
- 4.6 Friction on the Farm**
- 4.7 The Decline of SWAT**
- 4.8 Glyntaff Farm and Taff Ely Borough Council: A New Partnership**
- 4.9 Priority Estate**
- 4.10 Tenants' Choice**

- 5 THE TENANTS' MOVEMENT: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES**
- 5.1 Introduction**
- 5.2 Direct Action**
- 5.3 Participation**
- 5.4 The Radical Potential of Participation**
- 5.5 Are Direct Action and Participative Strategies Mutually Exclusive?**
- 5.6 Areas for Future Research**
- 5.7 Conclusion**

With thanks to....

Ashley, Jean, Bob, Barbara, Karen, Sean and Auds of course.

Without whom....

Abbreviations

ALHE	-	Association of London Housing Estates
CCT	-	Compulsory Competitive Tendering
DOE	-	Department of the Environment
DLO	-	Direct Labour Organisation
GLC	-	Greater London Council
GTRA	-	Glyntaff Tenants and Residents Association
MCC	-	Metropolitan City Council
NATR	-	National Association of Tenants and Residents
NC	-	Neighbourhood Council
NCC	-	National Consumer Council
NHLC	-	National Housing Liaison Committee
NTO	-	National Tenants Organisation
PEP	-	Priority Estates Project
SWAPAC	-	South Wales Anti Poverty Action Centre
SWAT	-	South Wales Association of Tenants
SWEB	-	South Wales Electricity Board
TEBC	-	Taff Ely Borough Council
TPAS	-	Tenant Participation Advisory Service

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Tenant Participation as a Subject of Study

Tenant participation in housing management has grown to be a central plank of policy and practice over the course of the last 25 years. The Department of the Environment and the Chartered Institute of Housing have both been in the forefront of advocating the cause and recommending good practice [DOE, 1992, for example]. Federations of tenants have attracted funding both locally and nationally and Tenant Participation Advisory Services have gained national recognition and resources in England, Scotland and Wales. In addition the idea that tenants should participate in the management of their homes has drawn support from all of the main political parties.

There can be no doubt that the principle that everyone is entitled to some control over where they live is a good one. Nor can there be much doubt that where communities become active in shaping their environments the results can be beneficial both for individual activists and the community as a whole.

However, it is not the purpose of this dissertation to add to the ever growing industry that promotes good practice in tenant involvement and provides advice on issues such as how to gear housing departments to tenant participation or how to organise tenants. It seems evident to the author that the study of tenant participation to date has a number of weaknesses. The subject, it could be argued, has become an orthodoxy in the same way that Dearlove has argued that the study of local government had become an orthodoxy by the early 70s. For Dearlove an orthodoxy can be distinguished by a widely shared and long established tradition and a lack of serious questioning compounded by a lack of solid research [Dearlove, 1979 p.3]. There is no long tradition of study but the other orthodox traits can be identified. Most obvious is a relative lack of historical, political and social perspectives on a subject dominated by a 'managerial' (practice orientated) approach.

The dominance of this 'managerial' approach has two major ramifications. The first is that the study of tenant participation is little exposed to the rigours of more theoretical disciplines such as politics, history or sociology. This deficiency leaves the study of tenant participation essentially uncritical. Secondly this perspective places the housing management organisation centrally. The geographical area of a local authority is often the field of study and such studies will seek to link the actions and attitudes of the local authority with the success or failure of tenant participation [e.g. Cairncross, et al, 1992]. Tenant organisation and activity outside local authority structures are at best peripheral to this 'orthodox' approach. Presumably this is because this kind of organisation is rarer and less easy to find than those linked officially to housing authorities.

Despite this 'uncritical orthodoxy' there are nevertheless warning signals and voices of dissent. Why, for example, does a government that places such emphasis upon tenants involvement and 'choice' have to amend legislation in order to remove the tenants veto on Compulsory Competitive Tendering of Housing Management?

The question that should be asked is: What does participation mean for tenants, in particular those tenants who through choice or necessity actively seek concessions from local and national government? Whilst the practice of tenant participation may appear to some to work in favour of the politicians and professionals and less so in favour of the tenants so the theory of the subject appears even more biased. Participation is by no means the only means by which tenants may improve their housing conditions and yet, whilst literature on participation mushrooms, the rich history of the tenants movement remains obscure. Rent strikes and demonstrations as well as other forms of direct action and protest have been just as significant as negotiation and co-operation in this history, in some cases more so.

It is the authors' contention that the study of tenant participation is currently flawed because it lacks a critical understanding of the participative process and it lacks a full understanding of the tenants movement and tenant organisations. It is for this reason that this dissertation will have the following objective:

To develop a critical understanding of tenant participation using the tenant movement and tenant organisations as the frames of reference.

This objective can be broken down into a number of broad research questions:

Where does the impetus for tenant participation come from?

Who benefits?

What is the significance of tenant participation for organised tenants and what alternative strategies exist?

Does tenant participation serve tenant organisations in meeting their aims?

Are the alternatives any more or less effective in achieving these aims?

1.2 Research Strategy

In order to begin to answer the above questions the following research strategy will be adopted:

In the first instance a literature review will examine research into participation in the public services, not only housing, and outline critical perspectives. The key questions posed are: Where does the

impetus for participation come from? and; Who benefits? Three significant case studies will form the major part of this work which will constitute the first chapter.

The second chapter will consist of a historical review of the tenants movement drawing together what secondary material is available and attempting to draw some conclusions about the nature of the tenants movement and tenant organisations. Building on the conclusions of the first chapter in answering 'Where does the impetus for participation in public housing come from?' and 'Who benefits?' this chapter will also consider alternative strategies and their relative effectiveness.

Thirdly a case study of one tenants group will be employed to test conclusions derived from the earlier chapters. This chapter will provide an opportunity to test the validity of hypotheses developed in the previous chapters in seeking to answer the questions posed.

Finally the fourth chapter will be used to attempt to provide answers to the initial research questions and to explore any other issues that have arisen.

1.3 Methodology: The Use of a Case Study

A number of factors have influenced the decision to use a case study for the purposes of this research:

The lack of previous research from 'inside' tenant organisations rather than as part of a broader unit of analysis (for example a local authority) means that the research is in part exploratory for which purpose a case study is highly suitable. This is important in itself as: "Council house tenants' associations are common in Britain but are a relatively undocumented form of urban movement" [Lowe, 1986].

As well as to explore, the nature of the research questions mean that explanation is required and not an understanding of 'how many' or 'how much', in other words "...such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence" [Yin, 1994 p.6]. A survey, for example, would be highly inappropriate in view of the qualitative nature of the research questions. A case study would, however, be far more suitable. The methodological approach must be outside the hows of the practice literature and looks instead at the whys.

One important advantage of the case study is that: "It investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when...the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" [Yin, 1994 p.13]. This is what separates the case study from a simple scientific experiment where external variables are kept to a minimum. In studying tenant participation, however, it is not initially clear whether the determining factors are internal or external. Local economic conditions,

local management practice and national housing policy could all be significant contextual factors. A case study allows for an open approach to these and any other unforeseen factors in a way that other methods cannot. Clearly the case study also has the advantage over other methods that a wide range of qualitative sources can be drawn on.

One criticism of the case study has been that it is unreasonable to draw general conclusions from one single case. The purpose of the case study is not, however, to infer the whole from one part but to test an explanatory hypothesis and see if it 'works in the real world'. In other words: "...the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample,' and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalise theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)" [Yin 1994 p.10].

1.4 Selecting the Case Study

Whilst the merits of pursuing a case study of one tenants group have been outlined above the selection strategy, or 'which group?' is another question that deserves careful consideration. Although wishing to add information to a field that has been heavily under researched it is not enough for to choose a tenant organisation at random. Far less is the object to find a group that is in some sense representative of all tenant groups. This could only be the objective of a statistical study and the needs of this research can only be served by an analytical study.

Part of the proposed enquiry is to understand the significance of participation for tenants groups and to measure it against alternative strategies. For this purpose the group to be studied would have to have experienced both participative and other activities and this is not a typical experience. Indeed, the case that was selected; the tenant groups of the Glyntaff Farm estate in Mid Glamorgan, was certainly atypical according to current understanding. Highly politicised, long-lived, experiencing dramatic changes in direction and having a national outlook the chosen group may be as far as can be got from the average tenant organisation and yet ideal for the purposes of testing critical propositions about tenant participation.

Within the terms of reference of this study the timescale of the case selected itself. The group formed in 1977 and in 1993 the estate passed out of local authority ownership. The 16 year time span is unusually long for a case study and it may be better to understand this study as a hybrid between a case study and a history; whilst contemporary actors are still around to be interviewed some of the material is of an archival nature not normally associated with case studies.

1.5 Defining Tenants' Participation

The definition of tenant participation is well understood and relatively straightforward except in one respect. Often tenant participation and involvement are taken to be synonymous with the pursuit of dweller control or tenant self management. Whilst these definitions are valid in their own right it is important that the difference is realised between them and the definition used for the purposes of this study, i.e. that tenants seek partnership with the landlord not to replace them. Defining these two things apart is problematic; the many variations on the co-operative theme and initiatives such as Estate Management Boards mean that in practice the ideas can often overlap. For the purposes of this study, however, tenant participation and tenant involvement are terms used to mean that tenants are given a voice in the decision making process. Where tenants seek to take on ownership, or partial ownership, of the decision making process this will be clearly described tenant self management. This study is concerned primarily with the former.

Throughout the dissertation 'tenant' will be taken as synonymous with council house tenant. This reflects the overwhelming focus of the literature and the nature of the case study. This is not in any way meant to imply that the study of either private or housing association tenants is less important but merely to place a limit on this particular work. Where non-council tenants are discussed this will be clearly indicated.

CHAPTER TWO: PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SERVICES: CRITICAL APPROACHES

The purpose of this chapter is to review the existing literature on public participation in order to gain a critical view of its significance for public life. The key questions to be answered are where does the impetus for participation come from? and Who benefits? With the radical changes that have occurred in public service with regard to privatisation and marketisation in the last 15 years interest has grown in both consumerism and citizenship. The significance of these 'ideologies' as well as the changes in public services will be considered in relation to participation.

2.1 The growth of the 'idea'

Participation of the public in state provided services was an idea whose time had come in the 1960's. As Arnstein states in 1969; participation "...is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you." [Arnstein, 1969].

In one way or another this 'idea' has had an impact upon transport, health, education and social services as well as housing. It is in the field of planning, however, that the issue has been debated for the longest. It was in 1968, following on the heels of the Skeffington report [Skeffington 1968], that participation was first enshrined in legislation in the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act. At this time the major discussion was whether the democratic worthiness of participation could be balanced against the extra work and delays required for the planning system [Thornley, 1977 pp38-39].

The Skeffington report did not set out a particularly radical agenda seeking as it did to reinforce traditional local democracy and to provide a legitimising two way channel of information which could also win support for the planning system [Thornley, 1977 pp36-38, Cockburn, 1977 pp104-105]. Furthermore, it appeared that participators were 'male, middle aged, middle class and well educated' [Thornley, 1977 p41].

What causes can be found for this rising tide of participation that had such an impact upon central government policy makers in the late sixties? Some have pointed to a growing dissatisfaction with evermore paternalistic and bureaucratic mass services. Richardson argues that this led to a convergence of interest between the service users and service providers:

"Consumers had become more demanding, more able, more numerous and, not least, more organised. Concomitantly they began to press for a greater voice in the decision making process. At the same time, because of the changes in scale of service provision, policy-makers had become more divorced from the very people for whom their policies were framed,

and more frequently criticised for not taking their views into account, they too, began to seek some contact with their consumers."

[Richardson, 1983 p.114]

This is very much the orthodox view of what Richardson calls the 'Genesis of participation'. Furthermore, it has been argued, the 'idea' was able to flower in the heady anti-authoritarian atmosphere of the late sixties where bureaucratic paternalism was an anathema to the exponents of democracy and freedom; "...this pressure for greater public involvement in the planning and delivery of public services came overwhelmingly from the Left, whose dissatisfaction with bureaucratic modes of service delivery found expression in such contemporary developments as squatting campaigns" [Deakin and Wright, 1990 p.3].

If participation was the democratic cure for bureaucratic paternalism then it was also construed as a vital element in combating poverty. The Community Development Programme, for example, had the aim of a bottom-up approach to regenerating deprived communities [see Cockburn, 1977 for example]. This programme owed a great deal to the American citizen participation programme which also had the objective of re-integrating communities, especially black communities, that were perceived to be isolated politically as well as deprived economically.

It is clear that from the late sixties onwards the idea of participation has inspired a great deal of interest and debate as Barker's weighty bibliography [1979] pays testimony.

2.2 Critics of the 'idea'

Any critical approach to the idea of participation must begin with Arnstein's seminal A Ladder of Citizen Participation [1969] which was an attempt to outline the problems facing the American community action movement at that time. Arnstein illustrates how participation in this context can be empty ritual, tokenism, manipulation, therapy and many other things besides but rarely entail any genuine control by participants. This approach does not seek to undermine the idea of participation but seeks instead to illustrate problems of practical realisation within the context of social institutions. Thus for Arnstein participation is prevented by a number of 'roadblocks' such as paternalism and racism.

Andrew Thornley's Theoretical Perspectives on Planning Participation [1977] was an attempt to provide an analysis of participation that went further than an institutional approach. To do this he lines up a series of social theorists into three distinct approaches to social order. A conflictual approach as typified by the later work of Marx, a consensus approach as typified by Almond and

Verba and the 'middle ground' of these two approaches represented by Darendorf's management of conflict or containment schema.

Thornley's argument is that an understanding of participation can be gained beyond a belief in its 'political neutrality', and within alternative modes of social theory. He states: "The approach to participation as a technical exercise free of these ideological connotations is no more than conservative support for existing social relations." [Thornley, 1977 p49]. It is within the consensus model which seeks integration, socialisation and information exchange that he places planning's version of participation as represented by Skeffington. Whichever model is considered valid, he argues however, the existence of all three approaches must be recognised.

The value of Thornley's work is that it takes us beyond an institutional approach and establishes a broader theoretical framework. It is also an illustration of the point that participation can sit easily within distinct, and conflicting, approaches to social theory. His approach, however, is a philosophical one. It can only go some of the way to explaining the actions of central government and other actors who are driven by practical as well as ideological considerations. It is only by examining the reality of policy and practice that the 'idea' can be put to the test in the real world.

Three important case studies have dealt critically with the realisation of participation at a local level. Cockburn's study of Lambeth [Cockburn, 1977], Hain's examination of a neighbourhood council in Covent Garden [Hain, 1980] and Saunders' study of Croydon [Saunders, 1983]. All three pieces of research were conducted in the seventies and all three in the London area. Despite this there are valuable contrasts as three different approaches are employed; a Marxist analysis of the local state, a 'social democratic' approach and an urban sociological analysis. These studies are outlined below:

2.3 Cynthia Cockburn in Lambeth

Cockburn's critique of the idea of participation is contained within her study of community development in Lambeth in the early seventies; The Local State [1977]. For Cockburn community development, and its alter ego; corporate management, represent two sides of urban management, which represents central government's contemporary cure for the ills of local government.

Cockburn's approach is Marxist and based on the following three premises: That the state is specific to the mode of production, that the state is an instrument of class domination and that the state is characterised by repression [Cockburn, 1977 p.41-42]. Furthermore the relationship between local and central state is direct and relatively unproblematic: "When I refer to Lambeth Borough Council as 'local state' it is to say neither that it is something distinct from 'national state', nor that it alone represents the state locally. It is to indicate that it is part of a whole." [Cockburn, 1977 p.47]

The role of the state is clear; it is '...continually to reproduce the conditions within which capitalist accumulation can take place'. From Cockburn's point of view urban management is the local expression of this objective in the sphere of the reproduction of the labour force i.e. housing, health, education and so on.

This instrumentalist form of Marxism has drawn criticism [e.g. Hampton, 1991 p.241-2] and even been labelled as crude for its rigidity, for example Duncan and Godwin argue that Cockburn, by rejecting all notions of autonomy for Local Government, fails to allow for the conflicts and contradictions that exist between local and central state. Thus if the 'Local State' were a 'simple instrument' of capital then "...why bother with all the tension and uncertainty...in the latest attempts to reduce local autonomy." [Duncan and Godwin 1988 p.34]. This, however, can be considered a little unfair to Cockburn as the criticism implies that Cockburn would be able to see into the future and the central/local ructions of the 1980's. Despite this the value of Cockburn's work is acknowledged as a challenge and stimulus for further debate.

Within this conceptualisation of the state Cockburn suggests two more immediate reasons for the implementation of corporate management, community development, and hence participation, at a national level namely the growing need to squeeze costs and the 'undiminishing problem of poverty'. This national pressure for community development was complemented by a demand from local groups for more consultation and from a youthful local Labour Party seeking a 'grassroots revival'. The working class had remained to some extent immune from these domains of the more articulate middle class and the curing of this immunity was a central mission of community development. Cockburn's main conclusion, therefore, is that the state's sponsorship of local community projects arose far from any concern for accountability or increased political involvement:

"The central state's 'community package' was to make good its shortcomings - first by reviving, renewing, reproducing the relations of authority; second by concentrating on implementing policies; third by providing the sources of information about the working class needed by management."

[Cockburn, 1977 p.131]

Urban management in Lambeth was not, however, an altogether smooth process. One of the neighbourhood councils that were set up by Lambeth consistently refused to act 'respectably' and '...placed itself firmly outside the ambit of electoral representative democracy.' [Cockburn, 1977 p.144]. This was much to the disgust of councillors and officers alike. The platform for this group's 'political outbursts' was the specially created Neighbourhood Council Sub-Committee but after three years the controlling Labour Group had 'had enough' and, with the support of officers, disbanded the

Sub-Committee. Whilst the Neighbourhood Councils remained in place this action had the effect of removing their political centre of gravity and the most radical groups were effectively pacified. This is an example of a Local Authority wanting things all its own way when it comes to participation and certainly conforms to Cockburn's thesis that participation is principally about the 'management of people'.

2.4 Peter Hain in Covent Garden

Peter Hain's work, Neighbourhood Participation [1980] is another attempt to answer questions about participation that had been raised in the late sixties and early seventies by empirical research. Hain's study is situated in Covent Garden between 1974 and 1977 and unlike Cockburn, whose focus is a Local Authority, Hain takes as his subject a participatory 'body' namely a Neighbourhood Council (NC).

Hain's objectives are as follows; to contrast the aspirations of participation's advocates with their experience of participation, to suggest an alternative approach and to draw lessons for the future. Hain informs the reader that his original intention had been to contrast participative and representative democracy and, if possible, find a meeting point but that this approach was found to be unrealistic early in his research. This is an indication of what becomes clearer later; that whilst Hain has a lot in common with Cockburn's 'left wing' approach he is more pragmatic and also more social democratic in his outlook.

Whilst perhaps the least theoretical of the three case studies Hain is still keen to develop a critical approach in order to tackle the 'conventional wisdom' of participation; that it is "...primarily a process thrusting upwards from the citizen toward the decision making system" [Hain, 1982 p.36]. This critical approach is built, in part, upon Arnstein's ladder of participation. So armed Hain is able to draw up a list of nine elements that together describe the Government's sponsorship of participation. This list includes the convenience of local institutions, the regulation of conflicting interests, legitimacy for substantially unmodified policies, education of the public and a role that is complimentary with existing local government institutions [Hain, 1980 p.77-8].

The NC in Covent Garden was set up in order for the Greater London Council (GLC) to mediate with the local residents for the planned implementation of the major redevelopment of the area. Hain found that the NC was able to have a considerable influence on the 'paper' version of the redevelopment plan as far as "...the GLC opted for a plan of minimum disturbance rather than wholesale redevelopment..." [Hain, 1980 p.166] although he remained sceptical as to the effect this would have on the realisation of the plan due to 'market forces'. Despite aspirations, for Hain, the NC involved the local community no higher than the lower rungs of Arnstein's ladder.

From his study Hain is able to confirm his suspicion that the 'conventional wisdom'; that participation can democratically empower from the bottom of the system, does not stand up to empirical analysis. Hain also rejects what he calls the 'social control' thesis; that participation is simply about a 'mobilisation of consent' for government. Instead Hain opts for the view that participation is in fact a power struggle between the activists and the authorities and that the 'locus of power' is variable. The odds are, however, heavily stacked in favour of the authorities and this is not least because of the very nature of the representative system itself. Whilst "...participation is not necessarily in conflict with representation..." NC's in fact play the role of 'buffer institutions' and their influence is 'marginal'. This is particularly true in respect of the working class and their interests: "In fact, neighbourhood councils tend to act against those very interests and to favour the status quo to the extent of legitimising it" [Hain, 1980 p.191].

2.5 Peter Saunders in Croydon

The material that Saunders collected in Croydon from 1971-73 eventually surfaced in 1979 as Urban Politics: A Sociological Interpretation [NB. I am using 2nd Edition 1983]. This volume was an attempt to use the case study material in order to critically deal with a number of developments in British urban theory which had taken place in the intervening years. Although the actual research to some extent predates the work of Cockburn and Hain the theoretical approach is of a more recent variety and it is for this reason his work is considered as the last of the trio.

The developments in British urban theory that Saunders was keen to tackle were in large part a response to the work of European sociologists, in particular Castells, which led to a significant reassessment of the role of the urban environment. In his highly influential work The Urban Question [1977] Castells argues that the unique characteristic of the urban arena is the consumption process. Put another way the urban is characterised by the means of consumption which is the reproductive equivalent of the Marxist concept of the means of production; health, education, housing and so on are all required to bring the workers ably back to work each day. Castells further argues that the provision of these services becomes more and more collective and that state provision of them becomes more centralised.

The state's greater role in what Castells terms 'collective consumption' becomes problematic as expectations rise and as the whole sphere of mass social consumption becomes politicised. This politicisation leads to the growth of articulate 'urban social movements' which campaign around consumption issues. Castells tries to build empirically on this concept in his later work The City and the Grassroots [1983].

Following on from Castells, Saunders' aim is to examine the potential for urban political mobilisation and its ability to constitute a threat to the established political and social order. Furthermore he wishes to find out how far class struggles can be identified 'outside the factory gate' in the sphere of social consumption [Saunders, 1983 p103]. This is significant not least because "...Marxist theory is coming more and more to recognise and anticipate the growth of class struggles in the urban context in advanced capitalist societies..." [Saunders, 1983 p.104].

At this stage Saunders indicates the significance of participation within Castells' theoretical position. As the sphere of consumption becomes more politicized then the state has little choice but to intervene and may, however, be successful:

"The politicization thus established is not necessarily a source of conflict or change, for it may also be a mechanism of integration and participation: *everything depends on the articulation of the contradictions and practices* or, to put it another way, on the dialectic between the state apparatus and urban social movement."

[Castells, 1977 p.463 cited in Saunders, 1983 p.110, Saunders' italics]

For Saunders it is the 'mechanism for integration and participation' that is dominant in the British urban context. Two main factors are responsible for this conclusion. Firstly the defensive nature of urban protest. Where mobilisation takes place it is as a reaction to events such as rent rises rather than for things such as increased expenditure. Any conflict is therefore defined by the system: "Defensive strategies rarely give rise, even potentially, to revolutionary consequences." [Saunders, 1983 p.129]. This feature of urban protest is clearly in line with the notion of consumer trades union consciousness and limits consumption movements to seeing only as far as legitimate and participative strategies. A second factor to explain integration is the 'remarkable power of the British liberal state to accommodate protest'. This is a theme that has been developed by Marxists such as Miliband [see for example, Miliband, 1982].

What then does Saunders discover in Croydon to either support or disprove this view of participation as a means of containing urban conflict? Saunders identifies three possible channels of participation; through the Labour Party, through tenants' associations and through community groups. Saunders' research revealed that the Labour Party in Croydon had become distant from the working class, no longer 'their party', and more of a party of the middle class. This obviously presented a barrier to those with the greatest reason to express discontent through this medium.

Tenants' organisations in Croydon are found to be 'responsible' in the extreme. There exists a close working relationship with the Housing Department and a rejection of any issues considered political or controversial. Whilst successes such as a new community centre or a heavy lorry ban are achieved,

for Saunders, it is valid to argue that in the case of Croydon tenants' associations; "...organisations like this function as much to control their members as to provide them with a means by which they can organise themselves against the local authority" [Saunders, 1983 p.283].

There was one participative strategy, identified by Saunders, that was in part successful; a community group that was victorious in its campaign to have a local day nursery provided. This success must however be qualified; firstly, by virtue of being middle class, this group was able to inject and sustain time money and energy into their campaign, they were also able to both participate and imaginatively demonstrate whilst acting 'reasonably' at all times, thirdly what was achieved was of little consequence and may even have had the effect of depriving some other area of a day nursery.

Saunders' overall conclusion is clear; whilst participation may have some redeeming qualities such as disseminating information or combating fatalism and increasing collective consciousness amongst those with a grievance its benefits fall in far greater proportion towards the state. "While participation may carry within it the seeds of a more radical movement, it nevertheless seems to be the case that the social control function is paramount." [Saunders, 1983 p.290].

2.6 The Ideology of Participation: Consumers and Citizens

The election of the first Thatcher government and its radical political agenda marked a new era for public services. It was this agenda that inspired a number of new approaches relevant to participation. It was also in 1979 that Barker produced his hefty bibliography of public participation and this draws a neat line between two quite distinct periods. After 1979 two apparently conflicting approaches emerge in relation to public service; the ideologies of consumer and citizen. As with the notions of participation prevalent in the 60s and 70s these conflicting ideological approaches also conceal a sharper political reality. There can be little doubt that these trends have emerged as part of an unstoppable impetus to reform public service delivery in the 80s and 90s. The keynote of this impetus is the end of bureaucratic paternalism although political and economic factors have also been decisive.

In Decentralisation and Democracy [Hoggett, and Hambleton, 1987] these changes are placed within the context of two trends; the increasing politicisation of local government and the increasingly centralising effect of government policy. The response at the local level, it is argued, has been characterised by two, politically polar, forms: From the right a consumerist approach and from the left a collectivist approach. This is the battle between those who want participation for consumers and those who view it as a dimension of citizenship.

On the right the consumerist vision is central to conservative thinking. Underpinning this vision, which has its intellectual roots in the work of Hayek and Friedman, is a deep faith in the market. For

it is access to the market that can best safeguard the rights of the individual not political or legal mechanisms. Consumerism in this context should not be confused with consumer protection, a regulatory trend that developed in the 1960s spawning institutions such as the National Consumer Council, for economic liberalism rather than interventionism is paramount: "The best protection that consumers can have is fair competition in the free market." - Michael Howard [cited in Smith, 1993 p.152]. This is not to say that it has been possible to abandon consumer regulation; it could be argued that with the creation of watchdog bodies such as Oftel and Ofwat regulation is as significant as ever.

Responsiveness and accountability are prominent themes where the politics of consumerism have seen fit to privatise and marketise public services. In theory consumerism can mean anything from a 'charm school' approach to genuine power sharing. In practice, however: "The established power relationship between those providing and those receiving services is not challenged." [Hambleton, 1988 p.128]. Beyond the charge that the consumerist approach to public service is little more than cosmetic lies a more significant critique. The argument is that an approach based theoretically on individualism and practically developed within the private sector cannot be transferred to the public sector. Firstly this is because individual choice is an unworkable concept and secondly that collective services can only be addressed collectively [Hambleton, 1988].

Another commentator has recently voiced concerns about the changes occurring in the public sector inspired by the maxim 'private good, public bad'. Whilst the principle of change is welcomed Parston is concerned that a crisis of accountability is being engendered because of the essential difference between private and public management: "While private sector managers use social objectives as a means to economic results, managers in the public sector manage for social results with public resources as their means" [Parston, 1994]. Parston is not simply worried that reforms are tending to reduce the citizen-government relationship "...to that of a transaction between individual customers and publicly financed service providers..." but that politicians are being taken out of the public arena and managers are being left with responsibility for policy.

This 'crisis in accountability' points to a more significant criticism of the idea that a consumerist government is acting to bring public services closer to the people. Deakin is one of many to observe that in reality the last 15 years has been marked by the unchecked growth of unaccountable state power and the erosion of local democracy. The emergence of quangos, unelected 'agencies' and institutions such as Urban Development Corporations must be contrasted with the abolition of the GLC and the MCCs. At the same time the influence of the treasury becomes ever greater as government economic policy imposes itself evermore upon public services [Deakin and Wright, 1990 p.4-5].

Commitment to consumerism in this context can be seen as rhetorical rather than real. Accountability falls foul of economic liberalism and kerbs on public expenditure. Giving power to the consumer in reality often equates to taking it away from the local authority especially where the local authority happens to be Labour controlled as recently they have more and more tended to be. In housing, for example, increased tenant involvement can be seen as a step toward tenant 'ownership' of local authority stock following the trend set by the highly successful Right to Buy policy. Participation in housing also has the added bonus of "...a strengthening of local responsibility and democracy" [Earl of Ancram, 1986 quoted Hague, 1990 p.250]. That is to say it may provide a check on councils acting 'irresponsibly' in the face of government policy.

As a response to the ascendancy of the right and their attacks on labour controlled local government in the eighties the left developed the idea of Local Socialism. It was felt that the best way to defend services was to democratise and popularise them [see Boddy and Fudge, 1984]. Local Socialism can be seen principally as a response to a bellicose Conservative government and a Labour Party failure nationally. It can also be attributed in part to the liberal idea of community politics [Hain et al, 1976] and the philosophy of the Fabians; for Cole the essence of socialism was "...the extension of democratic principles into spheres of life which previously escaped their influence" [cited in George and Wilding, 1976 p.67]. For the left participation means good citizenship.

Again the apparent ideological spur towards participation should be balanced against more pragmatic motives. Cockburn, for example, offers the view that the Labour Party in Lambeth saw participation as "...an alternative source of contact with the population to supplement their weak membership base..." [Cockburn, 1977 p.133]. Where labour councils and their services came under attack in the 80s and 90s participation was a natural way to call up reinforcements although such schemes had produced little enthusiasm previously.

However rhetorical the language of consumer and citizen is there can be little doubt that a radical shake up in the way that public services were provided was required. This was not least from the perspective of the population entirely dissatisfied with the services that they were receiving. Recognising the need for change advocates of reform, speaking from the perspective of service provider, have taken the ideals of consumerism and citizenship to heart.

Central to these debates, in an era that supposedly marks the end of paternalism, is the work of John Stewart. He, with others, has argued for a new management approach in which the central idea is public service to the people not for them [Clarke and Stewart, 1986, 1987]. Much of this work has centred around defining a 'public service orientation' and further down this line 'community government' [Stewart and Stoker, 1988] has been suggested. Participation is a notion central to this approach of getting closer to the public and becoming more responsive.

This new management approach perceives the possibility of public services adapting to survive in the contemporary political climate. This can be done by combining concern both for the consumer and the citizen. In this scenario the service's responsiveness to the consumer is complemented by the authority's accountability to the citizen [Hambleton, 1988]. Quite how this would occur in practice is obviously a conundrum. That the two models can co-exist at all is based on the premise that they occupy two different spheres of public life i.e. economic and political. This theoretical solution to the public management problem, however, rests on a shaky proposition. This being that the policy makers wish to advance the cause of consumer and citizen alike and are not simply using these ideologies to further other causes.

Rhetorically the two main political parties are both keen to be the party of both consumer and citizen. The Citizen' Charter is a good example for despite the language it "...is less about citizens and citizenship...and more about consumers and consumerism and the introduction of market principles into the public sector" [Fyfe, 1993 p.227]. Fyfe is also clear that this is a deliberate use of a misleading term as it perpetuates a myth in British political life that people are active citizens rather than the political/legal reality that they are passive subjects.

So it seems that despite all the rhetoric and jargon of consumerism and citizenship the ideal of participation is little closer to realisation than in the 70s when the earlier studies of Cockburn, Hain and Saunders were considered. Indeed whenever a scheme is introduced to 'protect rights' or 'extend democracy' it does not seem to need much scratching beneath the surface in order to find another political or economic agenda.

2.7 In Summary

In answer to the question 'Where does the impetus for participation come from?' there seem to be four main theories: a) Participation is a product of the democratic ideal brought to life by the 'libertarianism' of the sixties. b) Participation is a means by which communities and other groups can collectively appropriate power from ruling elites. c) It is a practical consequence of the end of bureaucratic paternalism in local government. This new approach of bringing government closer to the people is more recently expressed by the political right as consumerism and by the left as citizenship. d) It is a cynical mechanism whereby the state seeks to understand and manipulate discontent and protest.

These hypotheses are by no means mutually exclusive and could all, to a certain degree, be correct. The evidence of this chapter is that whilst the first theory appears extremely flimsy the case for the last theory is the by far the strongest.

The answer to the question 'Who benefits?' follows from the answer to the previous question. If the cynical view is taken to answer the first question then it follows that the weight of benefits fall upon those that govern not those that are governed. This is indeed the conclusion of this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE : THE TENANTS' MOVEMENT, PARTICIPATION AND HOUSING POLICY

The previous chapter has illustrated critical approaches to understanding participation in public services. These approaches indicate that, on the whole, the impetus for participation comes from central government and that the benefits of participation also tend to go to central government. This chapter will seek to assess whether this is true in the field of public housing. In addition, by focusing on the tenants' movement, the chapter will seek to provide a historical answer to the question: Is participation what tenants want? Furthermore this chapter will provide an opportunity to outline forms of tenant activity other than participation.

3.1 Introduction

It might be considered that if participation were to 'work' anywhere it would be in public housing. In no other area of a local authority's function does the service concentrate on a group that tends to be so homogeneous not just socio-economically but geographically as well. Not only this but through the medium of rents council tenants have an economic 'direct link' to their service over and above considerations of local taxation.

Yet tenants seem to have been slow in picking up this opportunity. Now, in the first half of the nineties for many housing professionals, tenant participation is the greatest thing since sliced bread. Throughout the 1980's and 1990's local authorities have been jumping on the bandwagon at an ever increasing rate but the recent rapid growth, as illustrated by Cairncross et al [1990], testifies to the relatively infertile past.

Literature on the history of tenant participation is sparse. Although there is some reference in general studies of participation [Richardson, 1983; Boaden, et al 1982; and Deakin and Wright, 1990], only Hague's The Politics and Development of Tenant Participation in British Council Housing [1990] seeks to provide an overview.

Hague's central interest is the actions of the state and in order to attach a theoretical significance to these actions he employs the three perspectives developed by Thornley [1977] i.e. 'consensus', 'management of conflict' and 'conflict' models. Hague divides his historical subject into four periods each with its own particular dynamic: The prehistory of participation, 1919 to the late sixties, characterised by an expression of housing demands through the traditional political system and therefore no need for participation. Secondly, from the late sixties to early seventies, an unprecedented level of tenant activities as a response to rent rises leading to demands for participation. Thirdly, the seventies, characterised by three factors; a recognition of the problem of

'difficult estates', a need for a new response to fiscal crises and a need to win tenant activists over to the labour governments cause.

The final era is post 1979. This period is defined by the consumerism of the new right in power and attacks on local government by the centre. At this point Hague changes tack and moves from a broadly historical explanation to an ideological one. He proffers four distinct ideological approaches that have been eschewing tenant participation in this last era: There is the new right view that it is both an important stepping stone en route to privatisation and also a consumerist challenge to the old style local authority. Alternatively, from the perspective of the left, tenant participation can be viewed as a response to the problem of paternalist management and as a collectivist defence of local services. Ultimately the key for Hague in understanding the recent growth of tenant participation is the 'ideology of consumer expectations' which is a result of the 'hegemony of commodities'.

Although Hague's approach to participation is in some sense critical, borrowing as it does from Thornley and Marcuse, it follows the thesis that participation has developed from (and for) the bottom up. As we have seen this view has been rejected by three important empirical case studies. As Cockburn, Hain and Saunders have all shown both local and central branches of the state have found much of merit in the 'idea' of participation without much need for popular pressure from below.

Two other possible flaws in Hague's work can be offered. Firstly Hague's main subject is the state and this one sided analysis (lack of tenant literature) lacks the dimension of the activities and motives of tenants themselves. Most crucially alternative strategies, such as direct action, that lie outside legitimate channels remain unexplored. Secondly Hague is guilty of changing approach in mid stream. From the material realities of rent rises and fiscal crises with which he explains the events of the 60s and 70s he goes on to use 'ideology' as an explanation from the 80s onwards.

Hague's history of tenant participation is useful both because it is a trail blazer in this subject and because it provides an overview. There are, however, questions left unanswered, not least because of the lack of attention paid to the tenant side of the story. Why, for example, was tenant participation so luke warm in the late sixties and seventies and yet so dynamic a concept in the eighties. In order to understand this we need to understand both the relationship between the idea of participation and housing policy and the more tempestuous relationship between the council tenants themselves and housing policy makers. This is Goodlad's advice:

"The development of tenant participation in British council housing can be traced from two separate starting points: that of politicians and professionals on the one hand; and of tenants and tenants' organisations on the other"

[Goodlad, 1988 p243].

As will be seen there is little material on the tenant side of the story in a historical sense. It is worth mentioning, however, the sociological work that exists on the subject of tenant organisations.

Lowe's book; Urban Social Movements [1986], is the only major attempt to bring together the few strands that exist to form some kind of sociological approach to this area. Like Saunders, Lowe's theoretical point of departure is the work of Castells. Whereas Saunders' concern is the urban system as a whole, however, Lowe's focus is non-party urban movements. In particular Lowe wishes to test, both theoretically and empirically, Castells conception of 'urban social movements'. British tenants' associations were, for Lowe, an ideal subject for this purpose.

For Lowe the significance of tenants' associations as urban movements lies in the 'unified and identifiable social base' that they possess. This base is structured by three factors: A 'highly restrictive managerial process' that means that tenants are subject to 'complex managerial vetting' and tightly drawn tenancies in addition to a high spatial concentration. Secondly a 'negative and defensive self perception' is formed by cross cutting ideologies built around the ideas of a subsidised tenure and the relatively low status of state housing especially in relation to owner occupation. Thirdly this is reinforced by 'overwhelmingly working class social and cultural milieu' [Lowe, 1986 p.82-3].

The following is an attempt to review the events that Hague concerns himself with whilst critically assessing some of his conclusions. This will be done with the aid of the critical approach to participation developed in the previous chapter and a more in depth look at the corresponding history of the tenants movement.

3.2 Tenant Militancy 1968-1972

Before embarking on any historical analysis of the tenants movement a few issues concerning available sources must be brought out into the open. Firstly information in this area is a rare resource. Given the 'unacademic' nature of council tenants much of the history has been retained by the most volatile form of data collection of all; orally. Secondly, where scholars do involve themselves in investigating working class history, action in the arena of housing has often come an unglamorous second to those more high profile industrial struggles. As Moorhouse et al observe on the subject of rent strikes; 'behaviour that is highly significant for those involved' becomes 'virtually undocumented and undiscussed' in many senses this kind of action is 'not news' [Moorhouse, et al, 1972 p.133-4]. Finally where academics have intervened they have almost exclusively had a left wing bias and an interest in the connection between housing struggles and the 'broader movement' [Moorhouse, et al, 1972; Sklair, 1975; Corrigan and Ginsberg, 1975; Cowley, 1979].

Although public tenants have been organised in various forms since council housing was first developed activity has been little in evidence prior to the 1960's with one or two notable, and documented exceptions: The most famous incidents of this kind were the rent strikes in Glasgow in 1915, a popular outburst against rent rises during a time of national sacrifice because of the war (one famous slogan of this era; "Father is fighting in Flanders, We are fighting the landlords here.") and on the Clyde between 1920 and 1926 for which the Times reported 20,000 participants in Glasgow in 1922 [for example see Moorhouse, et al, 1972]. Other examples include Stepney in 1939 [see Corrigan and Ginsburg, 1975] and St Pancreas 1959-61 [see Moorhouse, et al, 1972]. Just how typical or representative of national activities these events were can only be guessed at. It will never be known how many local housing struggles have been lost to history.

Outside these examples housing demands were articulated through more traditional routes such as the labour party and councillors [Hague, p.245]. The issue that brought the tenants movement to life, however, was rents. The movement toward market rents had been growing throughout the sixties and in 1968 the government found itself bound by sterling devaluation to increase rents and introduce means tested rebates. Whilst the idea of participation was being nurtured by central government the tenants' movement was employing other strategies. The response of tenants throughout this period was direct action and rent strikes. In London, for example, as many as 11,000 GLC tenants partially withheld their rent in protest against rises [Lowe, p.90].

In 1972 government legislation brought the tenants out again. Sklair [1975] has documented resistance to the 1972 Housing Finance Act. The Act, through 'fair rents', meant significant rent rises for many and resistance was clearly widespread: "Literally thousands of marches, demonstrations, pickets and meetings were held in which hundreds of thousands of people took part" [Sklair, 1972 p.250]. The National Association of Tenants and Residents (NATR) was keen to oppose the Act and although this organisation was formed by the Communist Party in 1948 it did not endorse militant tactics and saw a Labour government as the best way to remove the Act. Without an effective national campaign militancy remained localised. The national press at this time focused its attention on the more high profile actions of councillors such as in Clay Cross and again local struggles remained local issues. Although the protest did not break onto the national stage this did not prevent tenants of at least 80 authorities going out on rent strike. However again, like the struggles in the late 60s, levels of activity were high but the movement was tactically disorganised and ultimately defeated [see, for example, Lowe, 1986 p.94-110].

Much of what was new from the policy makers in this period stemmed from 'community development' or the 'neighbourhood councils' but as Cockburn's work suggests the participative relationship at this time could be far from productive. For example; one group of council tenants

working within Lambeth's neighbourhood council scheme proved highly sceptical towards councillors and preferred direct action to resolve demands surrounding rents, repairs and transfers. This was a big disappointment to labour councillors especially as the scheme was working so well in the 'nicer' areas; one party worker even commented that they would 'shoot the lot' when asked about this troublesome neighbourhood council [Cockburn, 1977 p.144-146].

To recap Hague's thesis; 'bottom-up' demands for participation received a luke warm reception from government until a number of factors; fiscal crises, 'problem estates', consumer ideology etc, forced a change of heart. The evidence considered above, however, suggests a different pattern. It seems more likely that participation and organised tenants were incompatible at this time. This was firstly because the issue of rents was so emotive for the tenants and so economically critical for the government that it could not be the subject of negotiation. Secondly the militant strategies and radical stance of many tenants at this time would not fit within 'legitimate' participative structures. It would not be until the rents issue had been resolved and the atmosphere had become calmer that the idea of participation could properly begin to take root.

3.3 The Tenants Movement into the Eighties

During the mid 1970's tenant activity appears to have subsided after what was essentially defeat over the rents issue. Many associations 'settled down' and concentrated on less radical functions such as social activities or the management of a hall [Lowe, 1986 p.98-100]. At the level of central government interest was still developing in the idea of tenant participation and the concept of co-operative housing was also gaining ground [Hague, p.248]. There is dispute over the actual level of participation at this time with Hague arguing that economic problems led to an increase [Hague, 1990 p.248] but Deakin and Wright arguing there was a decrease for the same reason [Deakin and Wright, 1990 p.4].

By the late seventies there were attempts to revive the tenants movement. A conference of federations, sponsored by the National Consumer Council (NCC), was held in 1977 in order to found the National Tenants' Organisation (NTO). The NTO was essentially developed as a merger between the ALHE and the NATR although as a consequence a North East Tenants' Organisation was established and the federation in Sheffield revitalised. The South Wales Association of Tenants (SWAT) also had some involvement.

The tone of the NTO was, however, subdued in comparison with earlier militant activities and the issue of rents was firmly off the agenda. The tactics of the NTO are cited as; "Street theatre, lobbying behind the scenes, some low key demonstrations and publicity events..." [Lowe, 1986 p.93]. Another commentator has criticised the NTO for its obsession with constitutions and charters and its inability

to mobilise members once NCC travel grants had run out. This same commentator laments the lack of tenant resistance to changes in contemporary housing policy and sees little possibility of the 'cycle of apathy and powerlessness being broken. As for the NTO: "In no sense can it be said either to represent the views of tenants or to function effectively as a pressure group" [Wolmar, 1981 p.14].

This is not to say that radical attitudes had been forsaken completely by the tenants' movement or that these attitudes could not be articulated on the national stage. As well as the direct action campaigns waged by SWAT, rent strikes against rent increases occurred in Walsall and Kirklees at the onset of the 80s. At the national level the National Housing Liaison Committee (NHLC) was formed following a 1979 conference set up by Shelter and Housing Action. Although intending to 'develop the strongest possible campaign on housing aimed at the centres of political and economic power' [Wolmar, 1981 p.14] the NHLC seems to have been a fairly loosely constructed coalition of action and pressure groups without the support to make a major impact.

Throughout this period the tenants movement was bolstered by the support of some of the more radical community workers and this support was voiced and recorded through the pages of COMMUNITY ACTION. This magazine, which was published from 1972 to 1990, presented a radical perspective upon contemporary community struggles over issues such as housing and health as well as broader campaigns such as racism or nuclear power. Community Action provided information on current campaigns as well as advice and articles on subjects that ranged from welfare benefits to public enquiries. The tone was militant and much of the magazines focus was upon direct action rather than more 'legitimate' forms of campaign.

For the tenants' movement the 1980 Housing Act was the most significant event since the legislation of 1972. This Act granted to tenants a right that would have a radical and profound effect upon British council housing; the Right to Buy. This was the central plank of the government's housing policy being not only an effective means to demunicipalisation but in financial terms the most successful privatisation to date (43% of all privatisation income generated up to 1989 was from the Right to Buy).

Although the political and economic profit generated for the government by the Right to Buy is well known the legislation also provoked opposition. Fears grew that public housing was being undermined and that less affluent tenants were being left behind in an increasingly residualised housing stock. Coupled with dramatic rent rises this led to many campaigns being waged by tenants. These campaigns were given more stability and significance by the involvement of the more radical community workers and local government trade unions and yet, despite local exceptions, the tenants' movement remained notable for its powerlessness.

3.4 The Growth of Participation in Policy and Practice Since 1979

The support of the political right in power for tenants' participation can only be understood within the context of the broad objectives of conservative housing policy. Two main themes can be identified; one political and one economic.

The most striking aim of policy over the last 15 years has been the attacks upon the public provision of housing. Firstly as part of a drive towards owner occupation through the mechanism of the Right to Buy and later in the eighties by transferring responsibility for building new 'social housing' to housing associations as well as by encouraging the private rented sector. Where council houses had not been privatised 'individually' schemes for transferring council stock en masse to other landlords, such as Tenants Choice, were introduced in the late eighties. The impending Compulsory Competitive Tendering of Housing Management will further continue this trend of releasing local authorities of their responsibility as landlords.

In terms of reducing public expenditure Housing has been an area of success in sharp contrast with other budgets such as social security or health. This has been coupled with increasingly centralised control over local authority finance (presently only 15% of income is raised through local taxation), and housing policy. Participation in this context is the transfer of power from left wing councils to the service 'consumer'. These housing consumers can then be encouraged toward privatisation; they may themselves be the new owners.

As well as the Right to Buy the 1980 Housing Act also introduced what could be viewed as the first major step towards the introduction of participation in public housing. Section 43 of the Act provided for a Right to Consultation for council tenants. This could have been the catalyst for participation but in fact the Act was more significant as a focus for the proponents of more oppositional forms of politics. The reasons for this were twofold; firstly because these provisions were overshadowed by the controversial right to buy legislation and secondly because the implementation of the right to consultation itself was ineffective and half hearted.

The right for consultation in effect meant a right for tenants to be informed of major changes and to have their views sought. The Act did not include provisions for formal structures and considering that only 12% of authorities consulted authority wide at the time this would have been a radical move [Kay et al, 1982 p.181]. In addition to the ambiguity of terms such as 'major changes' as well as 'consultation' itself (loosely defined by the act) many authorities were found to be failing to implement S.43 even within the Government's generous timetable, this was not least because of the lack of enforcement [for example Kay et al, 1982 p.209]. However lightweight in both theory and

practice these measures were it should also be remembered that they were not even about genuine participation but about consultation.

The right to consultation cannot be taken seriously as an attempt to introduce participation as a major component of housing policy. Instead we must look to its relevance in the implementation of individual strands of policy.

On the sharp end of housing policy the Priority Estates Project (PEP) was set up in an attempt to find solutions to the problems of many of Britain's most deprived housing estates through a mixture of targeted funding and intensive management. Within this context participation was the obvious method to both help target limited resources and counter social breakdown. For a government bent upon demunicipalisation participation leads naturally to tenant self management, for example Estate Management Boards and Tenant Management Organisations, which have the advantages of schemes such as PEP whilst also reducing the influence of the town hall.

Other policy initiatives have also evoked the power of tenants to achieve change such as Tenants Choice and the Right to Manage but the outcomes of these initiatives correspond to the Government's own policy agenda. As Johnston Birchall states:

"A modest package of rights was granted in 1980 and some choice over the landlord in 1988, but whenever the government has found such rights and choices threatening to interfere with the over-riding aim of breaking up the council stock, it has ridden roughshod over them" [Birchall, 1992 p.186].

Apart from these major initiatives in policy trends in practice have also contributed to the development of participation in council housing management. Decentralisation has been the most significant of these trends. Supported principally, although not exclusively, by the Labour and Liberal parties decentralisation has been inspired by a whole range of principles such as 'community politics', 'customer orientation' and 'active citizenship' although the common aim of the many variations on this theme has been the desire for a closer and more responsive public service.

For the left this has also been part of the response to the war of demunicipalisation waged by the right. The idea of 'local socialism' has the chief aim of defending local services by democratising them and emphasising their use rather than commercial value [for example; Boddy, et al 1984]. Decentralised community approaches to housing, such as those tried in Sheffield and Walsall, are examples of local socialism in practice attempting to empower the citizen rather than the consumer.

Although the neighbourhood office has embodied much that is noble from the perspective of the political centre and left, pragmatism may also have some influence: A cynical view is that this approach to tenant participation also involves incorporating sections of the tenants movement directly into local labour party organisations in order to strengthen the party's base. Hague mentions the desire of Liverpool's radical left in power in the 1980s to channel 'participation' directly into the local labour party [Hague, 1990 p.252] and this is one extreme example of a more general trend. This pragmatic approach can be traced back to the Labour government of the 1970s and its attempts to come to terms with the tenants movement. This occurred nationally as the party sought to hang on to a tiny majority and win tenants over with advocacy of participation [Hague p.249]. At a local level Lowe illustrates how the Sheffield party were keen to integrate less militant tenants and so protect their power base [Lowe p.107-108]. Sklair also notes how the Labour Party in Dudley had managed to undermine the rent strikes in protest at the 1972 Housing Finance Act by this tactic of 'incorporation' [Sklair, 1972 p.271-2].

3.5 The Tenants' Movement and Participation : Cause and Effect?

At first glance the relationship between the tenants' movement and the growth of participation seems obvious; the later was the product of pressure from the former. Hague, for example, is happy to state the 'obvious': "The pressure for tenants' participation was being led by the tenants and their political allies" [Hague, p.247]. Similarly Cairncross, et al [1994] argue that the tenants' campaigns over rents in the early 60s and late 70s "...did result in the introduction of tenant participation arrangements..." and also had the effect of 'legitimising tenant activity' [Cairncross, et al, 1994 p.196].

The assumptions that these 'orthodox' views rest upon include two that are highly questionable. Firstly that participation was a central demand of the tenants at this time and secondly that participation was any kind of real concession.

There is little evidence to suggest that a principle aim of the tenants movement at this time was participation. In fact Hague's article the section covering this period is titled 'Tenant calls for participation - the late 1960s and early 1970s' and yet he curiously fails to provide any real evidence that this type of demand sprang from tenants militant or otherwise. The advocates that are mentioned are a labour MP, supporters of co-operative housing and the Association of London Housing Estates (ALHE) [Hague, p246-248].

Hague's use of the ALHE as 'an important advocate for tenant participation' is problematic. Mayo, writing in 1972, found that although there was some interest in participation from the grass roots the main pillars of the organisation were less than enthusiastic. This can be attributed to the fact that the ALHE was founded in 1957 around the twin functions of 'maintenance and socials. Out of 18 ALHE

officials interviewed in Southwark 17 agreed with the statement that "...if maintenance were more efficient they would leave the running of estates entirely to the council and concentrate on social activities" [Mayo, 1972 p.56]. It was this accent on socials and a perceived short-termism that gave Mayo considerable reservations about the ALHE's potential for effective campaigning. The ALHE is therefore a weak example of the advocacy of tenants' participation.

There is some evidence, however, that participation schemes were a growing phenomena during this period. Craddock [1975] notes that in London the figure of 16 out of 32 authorities employing some form of formal consultation to tenants in 1971 had risen to 26 out 32 in 1975 although nationally the figure was nearer one in ten. Craddock also provides a potted history of tenant participation. Again this is a history of politicians and professionals and does not feature the demands of tenants. After studying participation in 4 London boroughs Craddock concludes that although the stated aim of councillors was some form of power sharing the result was in fact a small and uncertain degree of 'influence' and the outcome depended upon the willingness of councillors to be influenced! At the same time tenants were found to be 'unaware and unorganised' in regard to participation. This once again suggests that pressure for tenant participation came from the top not the bottom and that critical views of participation are supported.

Even Ann Richardson, an often uncritical fan of participation, begrudgingly admits: "Although tenant associations were proliferating in the 1970s, and some pressed their local authorities for opportunities to participate, most of the schemes set up at that time were instigated by councillors or housing officers" [Richardson, 1983 p.36]. Indeed Hague's statement that; "The invention of participation by the tenants' movement in the struggles against rent rises was part of more general challenges to the reproduction of capitalist social relationships through state-administered services" [Hague, 1990 p.253] now seems more than a little bizarre.

Whether in response to the libertarian politics of the 60s or in more pragmatic recognition of its stabilising influence, central government was well aware of participation and did not need tenants to invent it. It may well have been true, as Hague argues, that it took the fiscal crises of the 70s to kick-start the government into action over participation but it was the state that had put the idea on the agenda. The direct conflict engendered by rent struggles were always more likely to lead to bitterness and antagonism rather than negotiation and participation. In the most general sense the beginnings of participation can be said to have happened despite, rather than because of, the tenants movement. It could also be argued that the same is true in the eighties and nineties.

In the previous chapter the view that the growth of participation was mainly the result of 'demands from consumers' was rejected after examining the work of Cockburn, Hain and Saunders and replaced with the view that 'the social control function' was paramount. Likewise in the housing field factors

such as fiscal crises and the management problems of run down estates are commonly excepted determinants of early participation measures. For the current period, however, commentators return to the view that 'consumerism' is the hidden hand driving the process on. Hague, for example, states:

"As we have seen tenant participation in the 1980s has been perceived and practised in various ways - as a way to privatisation, as a consumerist challenge to state administration and Labour local authorities, as a pragmatic means of improving management of estates, and as a collectivist exercise to strengthen political consciousness. Such elasticity portends a new hegemony, the all pervasive perception of the powers and freedoms of those who consume commodities"
[Hague, 1990 p.253].

This is almost identical to Richardson's description of the birth of participation (see chapter Two) and suffers from the same affliction; confusing political rhetoric with cause. Another counter argument to this view is touched upon by Cairncross et al [1994]. They rightly point out that the consumerism and commodity worship so vaunted by successive conservative governments has its roots firmly in an individualistic ideology that deeply mistrusts collective activity. The 1980 Housing Act neatly illustrates this; compare the relative impacts of the Right to Buy and the Right to Consultation.

It may be that Hague is too close to the period under study and too easily prey to its powerful political ideologies. If accepting consumerism as an explanation Marx's nineteenth century attack on the bourgeois historians should be borne in mind:

"Whilst in ordinary life every shopkeeper is very well able to distinguish between what somebody professes to be and what he really is, our historians have not yet won this trivial insight. They take each epoch at its word and believe that everything it says and imagines about itself is true"
[Marx - The German Ideology].

3.6 Summary/Conclusions

Whilst the evidence presented above can be considered as far from comprehensive a number of tentative conclusion can be drawn:

The tenants' movement has been characterised by a reactive agenda in its responses to housing policy, in particular major legislative changes, and has failed to be organised and effective at a national level. However local struggles and a radical 'core' have also been highly significant. The evidence of this chapter challenges the view that 'participation is what tenants want'. Firstly because the link between

the tenants movement and the rise of participation is at the least problematic and secondly because of the variety of alternative strategies that exist.

Parallel to the conclusion of chapter one the impetus for the promotion of tenant participation seems to rest largely but not solely, with central government. However, attempts to introduce tenants' participation at a national policy level as a general matter of principle have been half-hearted and ineffective. Its introduction has been both secondary to other policy initiatives such as the PEP programme, transfers or CCT and a response to local management 'problems'. The exception to this trend has been the sponsorship of national federations and organisations such as TPAS. It could be argued, however that this policy enables policy makers to incorporate and pacify the more radical elements of the tenants' movement.

3.7 Objectives of the Case Study

Having addressed the uncritical nature of the orthodox understanding of tenants participation the following case study will be used to redress the management bias of current understanding. Firstly by providing a case study that has as its focus a tenant organisation and not a local authority and secondly by providing an opportunity to compare participation with other, more confrontational, strategies. The specific strategy for selecting the case has been outlined in the introduction above.

The case study is an opportunity to test the assumption derived from the first two chapters; that participation is organised by, and for, central government and also to consider some issues of strategy from a tenant perspective, specifically the relative merits of, and the relationship between, the strategies of participation and direct action for tenants' groups. From the first chapter the potential pitfalls of participation have been chronicled whereas the history of the tenants' movement in the second chapter has underlined the ineffectiveness of many direct action campaigns.

The Glyntaff group has pursued both strategies at different times and under different circumstances and it is for this reason that the history of this group, whilst it can in no way be claimed as representative, is particularly suitable for developing discussions on the issues outlined above.

CHAPTER FOUR: A CASE STUDY OF GLYNTAFF FARM TENANTS' GROUPS 1977-1993

4.1 Introduction

Several sources have been utilised in the writing of this case study. Given the intended tenant perspective the most valuable resource by far has been the information provided by two key witnesses who have been with the various Glyntaff tenants' groups, in one guise or another, since the beginning. Primary source information generated by the tenants themselves is scarce. This is especially the case in the early period of the action group where informality was held as a virtue against all forms of bureaucracy. This underlines the importance of these key witnesses.

The material provided by the witnesses is supplemented and tied down by a number of other sources. These include newspaper articles in the Pontypridd Observer, South Wales Echo and Western Mail (many of the cuttings used are part of a collection made by the key witnesses although many of these cuttings are not dated), the detailed minutes of Taff Ely Borough Council (TEBC) and reports in the pages of Community Action (CA) which acted as both diarist and advocate for action groups right across Britain. Each of these sources has its own bias but taken together they provide the best part of a reliable account.

Two secondary sources have also been important. Firstly a case study contained within Lees and Mayo's Community Action For Change [1984] which examines the South Wales Association of Tenants at its most active at the start of the eighties. This study takes as its starting point the relationship between community activists, both professional and non-professional, and grass roots community campaigns. With its emphasis upon presenting the tenants in their own words and its particular interest in the development of a more political consciousness (women primarily), the case study provides many valuable firsthand accounts.

Secondly Bob Dumbleton's unpublished The First Link : Housing Action and Class Solidarity, South Wales 1977-93. This volume is a highly personalised account of the people involved in the tenant campaigns written by a 'community activist' who was himself deeply involved. This material is 'anecdotal', specific dates have not been used within the narrative, reference to national events (eg Falklands war, miners' strike) as well as the sources noted above have been used to place Dumbleton's account within a chronological framework. The real value of this book for the case study is twofold. Firstly it provides a witness account from a key actor from within the organisation. Secondly Dumbleton provides a great many contemporary quotes from others involved providing a

rich source of information untarnished by subsequent experience and the often unreliable faculty of memory.

Another source of contemporary evidence has been a number of videos covering both SWAT and the Tenants Choice transfer on the Glyntaff Farm estate.

4.2 The Estate

The estate was constructed between 1967 and 1970 at Rhydfelin about 2 miles outside Pontypridd in the South Wales valleys of Mid Glamorgan. The 536 houses, maisonettes and flats have been built within a close proximity and this, along with the unpopularity communal areas, has led to many accusations of poor design. Structural problems have resulted in ever increasing concern throughout the relatively short life of the estate. These problems include land movement and a sewage system on the brink of collapse.

4.3 The Action Group

The reason that the group formed was the inadequate heating systems provided to many of the homes on the estate. Out of 536 dwellings 252 were provided with electric powered heating, either night storage heaters or 'heatrite' warm air units, the remaining homes were fitted with gas central heating. In the poorly insulated houses on the estate these electric systems were not only failing to provide adequate warmth but the exceptionally high costs were causing worry and severe hardship to many of the tenants, in some cases quarterly bills were reaching the level of £250.

It was whilst organising the celebrations for the Queen's silver jubilee in 1977 that many of the tenants, women in particular, began to realise that the problem of the electric heating systems was shared by many people on the estate. It was at this point that the tenants decided to take some action and a group was formed. At first traditional pressure tactics such as petitions and letters were pursued.

Whilst this pressure did result in the issue being considered by the Borough Council it did not result in any real remedies being sought. One tenant felt that the council considered that the tenants "...were educationally sub normal and didn't know how to use our heating properly" [CA 50]. The initial attitude of the council, having sought the advice of the South Wales Electricity Board, was indeed that many tenants needed educating on the use of the heating systems. It was agreed to ensure that each tenant had a copy of the operating instructions [TEBC 77/1041].

After another winter had passed and no action had been taken by the council the group turned to more direct tactics. This new campaign began in May 1978 when four women from the group chained themselves to the railings of the town hall. This action, inspired by a television documentary on the Suffragettes, was a bold move for these protesters:

"We were terrified and imagined the police breaking the chains and carting us off to jail. But instead they agreed with our complaints, left us to spend 24 hours there, bringing us blankets in the night to keep us warm. Railway workers nearby brought us tea at 3am and public and media support was tremendous. Suddenly councillors were listening, agreeing that we had a problem, but of course they didn't have money to help us" [CA 50].

Although this action did not bring about the desired results immediately it did inspire in the tenants the confidence to continue with direct action tactics. This first action was followed by other demonstrations; marches to the council offices and a sit-in at the offices of the South Wales Electricity Board (SWEB). The media interest in the campaign was growing and Brynmor John, their MP, had become involved.

Approaches to local unions were, however, unsuccessful. The National Union of Mineworkers, for example, felt that the issue was one for the council to resolve and that no practical support could be given. A newsletter, established by the local branch of the Socialist Workers Party, lamented the lack of support that the tenants had received from the local councillors and MP.

By September 1978 the borough council were taking the issue more seriously and Housing Committee of that month, with the help of three SWEB representatives, debated the issue for 90 minutes. To the dismay of the tenants in the public gallery committee opted to follow a SWEB suggestion; that two houses on the estate be fitted with new heating systems, provided free by them, on an experimental basis and that the results be monitored. This decision meant another winter of hardship for the tenants and, after being ushered from the chamber, the angry tenants returned and disrupted the meeting which had to be adjourned [Western Mail 12/9/78. TEBC 78/972-4].

Whilst still sticking to the plan suggested by SWEB the council were aware that some kind of action was needed immediately with winter temperatures reaching sub-zero. The response to this 'emergency' on the estate was 20,000 pounds worth of Calor gas fires. This temporary measure was however no solution to the heating problems on Glyntaff and some families were sending their children to friends with gas central heating [Rebecca, Spring 1980]. The chair of the action group, whilst welcoming the interim measure, vowed to continue the campaign [Western Mail 11/10/78]. At the same time SWEB announced that they were willing to install prepayment meters in cases of

genuine hardship; previously they had refused to do this. By beginning of November the tenants had also met with Brynmor John who agreed that conversion to gas was the answer and hoped a final solution was imminent [Pontypridd Observer 3/11/78].

By December the mood of the tenants had grown more militant. The Calor Gas heaters were bringing difficulties of their own, problems of supply along with added condensation meant that these heaters were having little effect in easing the circumstances, or quelling the anger, of the tenants as the weather got colder.

The issue was finally forced when on Friday January 6th at 10am six families and their friends took themselves down to the council offices 'to live'. The adults brought with them folding chairs, blankets, flasks of tea and food, the children brought their toys and used the corridor as a playground. This action prompted the intervention of the mayor who, along with the clerk, the chief officer and the chair of the housing committee, subsequently arranged for a 'special sub-committee' to meet the action group the following Monday. At this meeting the tenants again pressed their grievances but this time, however, the councillors were more sympathetic to the view that the electric heaters were unnecessarily expensive. Whilst the councillors were unable to take any action at that meeting it was clear that some sort of decision was imminent at the next meeting of the housing committee. It was at this meeting that the results of the first months monitoring of the two experimental houses would be available.

The fifty or so tenants that had made the trip to January's vital Housing meeting were not disappointed. Taff Ely agreed, following a report from the Mayor, to convert all the electric heated homes to gas at an estimated £126,000 as well as £13,757 for roof insulation [TEBC 79/2616-7]. Although the tenants had planned 'to do the conga around the council chamber' if successful in the event 'it was tears of relief that greeted the decision' [Pontypridd Observer 2/2/79].

4.4 The Rise of SWAT.

After their victory in the heating campaign the action group did not rest on their laurels but instead turned their attention to other campaigns being fought by tenants in South Wales. There were a number of interrelated reasons for this including a desire to share their experiences with others and the difficulty in simply 'standing still' after such intense activity.

One vital factor was the involvement of three 'community activists' who, acting under the umbrella of the South Wales Anti Poverty Centre (SWAPAC), had been important to the group throughout the heating campaign as both a valuable resource and as an exposure to radical ideas. Before continuing a few words must be said about the background of SWAPAC:

SWAPAC was one of six resource centres that had been advocated by the Boyle [1979] report and funded under the European Anti Poverty initiative of that time. These resource centres were designed to support and to resource community groups whilst; "...facilitating and making more effective 'citizen participation'..." as well as; "...giving life to local democracy..." [Lees and Mayo, 1984 p.25].

SWAPAC had first made an impact in South Wales early in 1976 when the Welsh Office endorsed the project in order to provide a team of experts that could provide training to community groups. The support for this project extended to equalling the funding provided by the EEC. The initial objectives of SWAPAC were geared towards empowering self help, such as housing and employment co-ops, and to act as a 'policy feedback' agency to bring the plight of South Wales to the attention of the politicians [Lees and Mayo, 1984 p.75]. There was, however, a great deal of scepticism and suspicion directed at SWAPAC from local authorities. Councillors in Taff Ely, for example, were concerned at the lack of consultation and the possible impinging upon their own role. They were wary of SWAPAC's role and worried lest "...it's only function was to agitate merely for the sake of agitation" [TEBC 27/5/76].

By the time SWAPAC had contacted the Glyntaff group their orientation had changed. Within the organisation the view was being advanced that the co-op approach was not bringing new resources in and in fact competing with the public sector; hence it was felt that the consequence of this strategy was; 'the kind of self help that results in people merely administering their own poverty in the illusion that they are taking active measures in arriving at its elimination' [SWAPAC Progress Report 78-79 cited Lees and Mayo, 1984 p.77]. Instead the emphasis was to be upon supporting local initiatives with the twin aims of realising 'immediate and achievable goals' and 'developing a longer term process of broadening perspectives' [Lees and Mayo, 1984 p.77].

Contact with the Glyntaff Group began shortly after the four women had chained themselves to the railings. Initially the role was one of consultants and advisors although this began to develop into more practical help as the campaign unfolded. By the end of campaign the SWAPAC involvement included, for example, the financing of a bus to transport fifty or so tenants to a council meeting. This involvement provided much of the direction and momentum to carry the tenants into developing SWAT. With the birth of SWAT the involvement of SWAPAC was crucial. A SWAPAC staff member was seconded to be a full time worker with SWAT. Financial support was provided, in particular for transport, and this allowed the tenants to be nationally mobile which had previously been made impossible by low incomes. Legal advice, administration, and 'moral support' were also provided.

What SWAPAC did not provide was the tactics and motivation for the tenants' campaigns. As one of the workers from SWAPAC has commented on the early days of SWAT and the direct action that characterised their activity:

"Having won their campaign on the strength of these tactics, it was the tenants' own experience which led them to advocate this approach to other groups which they subsequently helped to form. SWAPAC did not seek to influence groups in shaping their approach to campaigning, either when it was providing support to the Glyntaff Farm group or subsequently when this group started to build the organisation that became the South Wales Association of Tenants"

[Cited in Lees and Mayo, 1984 p.171].

Undoubtedly it was SWAPAC's interest and ability to make contact with other groups that fuelled SWAT's rapid development following the heating campaign. The momentum of the campaign itself, however, had already led the Glyntaff group to look to other similar campaigns such as one in Sheffield. In October 1978 representatives of the group went to a women's conference in Birmingham 'spurred on by the success of the tenants in Sheffield' [Pontypridd Observer 3/11/78].

Early in 1979 Glyntaff Farm tenants supported a demonstration of Swansea tenants and soon after spoke at a meeting of tenants in Penarth in order to get a group started. In February 1979 tenant representatives from Mid, South and West Glamorgan met at a conference in Cardiff and, inspired by the success of the Glyntaff Farm tenants decided to form SWAT. The success of this organisation in getting campaigns up and running was almost immediate. By December 1979 eight groups were actively involved and another three groups developing [SWAT newsletter Dec 1979]. As Rebecca reported in the Spring of 1980:

"Since (the conference in Cardiff) tenants from Penarth, Hengoed, the Graig in West Glamorgan's Afan Valley, Rhydyfelin and Glyntaff in Pontypridd, Ely in Cardiff and Cwmrhydycaeriw in Swansea have gone on the offensive. Council meetings at Cardiff, Swansea and Taff Ely have been interrupted while Afan Borough Council's executive offices have been occupied twice. Tenants' representatives have also attended meetings in Newcastle, Coventry and London"

[Rebecca, Spring 1980].

By the summer of 1980 sixteen groups had been involved in SWAT although some had quickly won campaigns and then disbanded. A hardcore of eight groups remained, however, and their significance was that their interest had developed beyond individual campaigns and turned to the campaigns of other tenants in South Wales. This interest was extending further than South Wales and contact was

being made with tenants across Britain; for example Glyntaff tenants met with tenants from the Tyne and Wear area for a meeting and to join in with a demonstration against storage heating systems in June 1979 [Community Action 28 July-August 1979]. This kind of event allowed for an exchange of information, especially about tactics, whereby the message about direct action could be spread.

4.5 SWAT: Structure and Impact Upon Members

The organisation itself thrived on the contact between different groups and the mutual support they were able to give each other. The style of SWAT at this time matched the direct action tactics with the emphasis upon informality with a rejection of minutes, constitutions and other more orthodox paraphernalia.

This apparently loose confederation was given direction, however, by a close knit core of activists. This group of eight or nine was made up of the three community activists and tenants from the Glyntaff and Penarth groups. Acting as a steering group this 'inner circle' set itself to act as an information exchange point for the organisation. To reflect its role of providing a contact for all the SWAT groups it chose 'Link-Up' as its title. The various ongoing campaigns as well as policy issues were discussed at monthly delegate meetings although it appears that these served as much to reinforce solidarity with the bulk of the decision making resting with Link-Up.

As well as monthly meetings the organisation was cemented by regular social evenings. These evenings, which involved up to 150 tenants a time, were better attended than many of the demonstrations and played a consciously important role in bringing the different groups together and developing solidarity.

For the individuals involved in SWAT, especially the 'hard core' of regular activists, the organisation meant much more than a means to achieving a better quality of life through their housing. The coming together of tenants from all over South Wales, the often nerve wracking involvement in direct action tactics, and the close contact with the community activists and their radical ideas created a powerful atmosphere within SWAT. This had a profound effect on many individuals which revealed itself in three main ways; self confidence, educational development and a raised political consciousness.

Involvement with SWAT meant a quantum leap in confidence for many who had previously felt themselves to be at a disadvantage in dealing with those in 'authority'. This was particularly true of women, who had been the driving force behind most of the direct action, who often had to assert themselves in the home as well as on council agendas. One woman stated, for example:

"I always considered I was useless, I wasn't much good at anything at all and I've always said that I never had any talent. Everyone's supposed to have a talent but I never found one. So I've amazed myself with some of the things I can do. It's made an awful difference. I suppose it's that I don't feel useless anymore."

[Anonymous tenant cited Dumbleton, 1994 p.54]

It was no coincidence that assertiveness was always voted top training priority whenever the issue was raised. Education in a broader sense was also an increasingly important aspect of SWAT with the organisation acting as a catalyst for many to develop educational careers that had been all but denied them in the past. This process affected people at different stages and resulted in the achievement of basic literacy for some to the attainment of degrees for others. This form of self improvement was part and parcel of the increase in self confidence and vice versa:

"I certainly know much more about my rights than I ever knew before. The big thing is this education. I left school at 15 and didn't try any exams. My handwriting was terrible. I used to be ashamed to show it. I never wrote much you see. I do now though, and it's improving. There's been a slow process of change with all of us. We're all more confident now about a lot of things."

[Anonymous tenant cited Dumbleton, 1994 p.53]

For a relatively small number of tenants this 'quantum leap' extended to a completely new view of the world and their own place within it. This reaching of a more political consciousness was called 'waking-up' by the tenants in SWAT. Although this is something that is clearly difficult to define it was based upon a critical view of the 'system' beyond housing issues and local authorities, involved supporting other campaigns, for example marches against public sector spending cuts, and a deep suspicion of the mass media. As an illustration:

"For example, one of the things that Glyntaff people said that they used to believe was that, as long as you voted, that was it. Oh, yes, we used to think that. As long as we had our vote that was all we wanted. No, we hadn't a clue about how councils worked. We were afraid to go down there in case we got evicted from our houses.

Well we are getting involved in a lot of issues now. It's seemed to open our eyes to a lot of things. As I said, we've gone on marches about housing cuts, and so on...and broader issues.

I've learned that if you've got to fight, then you've got to fight all the way. I used to see just the council as being the problem at one time. Now I see that it is the whole system in which we live. This is something that's come to me gradually."

[Anonymous tenant cited Lees and Mayo, 1984 p.181-2]

Whilst the political views held in the organisation could be described as broadly socialist and oppositional there was no one approach or philosophy that dominated. The involvement of the community workers and some contact with the Socialist Workers Party and the International Marxist Faction (IMF) meant exposure to many Marxist and Feminist ideas. These ideas, however, met resistance from ingrained suspicion of 'reds' and 'commies' and also a desire to tackle the more immediate and material rather than the 'pie in the sky'. Dumbleton notes, for example, that whilst some women in SWAT had life changing encounters with feminist philosophy others had sympathy but felt that only money could really make a difference, not ideas [Dumbleton 1994, p.171].

By 1982 SWAT had been dramatically successful in winning an estimated one million pounds worth of improvements for various tenant action groups. Not only this but the organisation had become a hot bed of radical ideas and also enabled self development for many individuals. With the success, the energy and ever widening network of supporters and friends it was no wonder that many in Link-Up believed that they were 'starting the revolution'.

4.6 Friction on the Farm

After the heating campaign, and whilst SWAT was developing so successfully, contact between the tenants' group and Taff Ely Borough Council was limited; the group were more interested in the possibility of rent strikes than they were in consultation. A meeting of over 70 tenants held near the Glyntaff Farm estate in March 1982 heard a representative of the rent striking Walsall tenants urge similar action against Taff Ely's rent increases. An action group spokesperson stated that: "There is nothing to stop us from victory on council rents except ourselves", clearly continuing the strategy of conflict with the borough's councillors [Pontypridd Observer 5/3/82].

In the week before this meeting the Glyntaff group, with other members of SWAT had been outside Taff Ely's offices with medicine bottles, mildewed clothing and photographs in a protest against damp council homes. It was the state of some of the houses on the estate that made the prospect of rent rises particularly offensive to the demonstrators [South Wales Echo 7/3/82].

Conflict with councillors was brought to its natural conclusions when tenants candidates fought labour councillors in the May 1983 local elections. The campaign was fought by the group on housing

issues, in particular the run down state of the estate, but the election literature indicates that feelings ran deeper than simply rents and repairs:

"WE HAVE TO FIGHT A TORY GOVERNMENT THAT HAS A DOWN ON TENANTS.

WE HAVE TO FIGHT A LABOUR COUNCIL THAT HAS COMPLETELY LOST TOUCH WITH THE PEOPLE.

IT'S TIME FOR TENANTS TO WORK TOGETHER AND FIGHT FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL OF US.

IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP.

IT'S TIME TO SUPPORT YOUR TENANTS AND RESIDENTS CANDIDATES ON THURSDAY, MAY 5th.."

[Tenants and Residents election leaflet April/May 1983]

Clearly this was the move that would provoke the most bitterness from the local labour politicians and, although the tenants were unsuccessful in their election attempt, it brought tenant-council relations to an all time low. In some ways, however, this marked the beginning of a new approach for standing in a local election is a 'legitimate' means to achieve demands. The tenants were, in one sense, playing by the rules.

It was clear that the tenants approach to politics was far from ideological for only one month later, in an open letter, SWAT's approach to the Labour Party was tactically different:

"We are a non-party organisation. We campaign for tenants rights against any party in power. But for this election we believe the choice is absolutely clear for us. We are asking you to vote for your labour candidate on June 9th."

[SWAT open letter during 1983 general election campaign]

When it came to party politics the by word was pragmatism; whoever would get the best deal for tenants was supported.

4.7 The Decline of SWAT

If SWAT's rise had been rapid then its fall was equally swift. Finding specific reasons for this decline is problematic, this is not least because those that were present find explanations hard to grasp. The mechanics of the organisation's disintegration consisted of a number of highly charged personal arguments and conflicts that went far beyond political or tactical issues. The individual recollections of these fights and quarrels would be insufficient to make a complete explanation but a number of factors, that may have contributed to the 'poisoned' atmosphere, can be speculated.

The event that most significantly marks the beginning of the end was the withdrawal of the EEC funding through SWAPAC in Easter 1981. Crucially this meant the loss of a full time worker and the community activists were all now volunteers. Support for SWAT now had to compete with jobs in the 'real world' and this put a degree of personal strain on the community activists. In financial terms new problems were now inevitable. Only one £1,000 grant from Shelter and their own fund-raising efforts were now supporting SWAT.

The momentum of the organisation was slowing down in so far as the victories over local authorities were becoming few and far between. This may have been because councils were 'becoming wise' to the campaigns or becoming 'too sympathetic'. It may have been because SWAT had now seen that central government were the 'real enemy' and that the campaigns were not generating any 'new money' but just shifting resources away from one estate and towards another. Whatever the reason this lack of 'winning' left the organisation 'becalmed in educationals' and with plenty of time to look inwards rather than outwards.

A student on placement with one of the community workers also felt late in 1981 that the organisation had become becalmed. Although definitely still in existence most of the SWAT's big campaigns had been a year before. The economic climate, i.e. the cuts in public expenditure was felt by this student, as by many in SWAT, to be the primary reason for this downturn.

The almost unplanned structure of SWAT, that had served well during the direct action campaigns, was becoming difficult to maintain. With the loss of a full time worker the high degree of support required for SWAT's organisation became apparent. The tenants themselves were either unable or unwilling to take on responsibility themselves for the support work that the community activists had done. Without transport and resources the task of maintaining an almost national organisation became almost impossible. In addition to these problems the structure of SWAT was no longer regarded as fair by many. Accusations of favouritism and undue influence became rife and a number of personal arguments and rifts occurred.

It was becoming clear that the organisation would have to adapt to survive. In January 1982 it was agreed at a special conference to hold monthly delegates meetings and quarterly day conferences in an attempt to 'tighten up' the organisational structure. Significantly agendas, minutes and the other trappings of 'doing things properly' were beginning to become a part of the organisation. More ominously the brunt of this administrative work was still falling upon the community activists and placement students. At a minuted meeting in January 1983 the issue was still a live one. Tenants were still not sharing the administration and the issue, it appears, was never really resolved.

The new class consciousness of some of the more active tenants led to an increasing unease about the involvement of the community activists. It was felt to be wrong that whilst the community activists had so much influence in SWAT they did not ultimately share the tenant's experiences. Whilst the tenants lived the experience of poor housing and low income the activists could go home every night to their comfortable homes. Ironically some of the very ideas about class with which the community activists had stimulated the group in part served to turn the group against them.

Against this background a debate over the use of the direct action tactics emerged. Some tenants argued that SWAT was now articulate and self-confident enough to win their demands through a process of negotiation. Many were unhappy, however, and stayed with the view that 'talking got you nowhere'. The direct action approach was, however, beginning to lose ground. A number of factors can be identified which explain its demise:

Certainly many in SWAT were experiencing 'burn out'. The personal stress associated with the direct action tactics became more and more difficult to bear especially when action was not as successful as it had been; in the spring of 1981 and 1982 SWAT had mounted unsuccessful and demoralising rent strikes. Furthermore contact with other groups served to water down the direct approach. Internally it was difficult to tell new groups, set on minuting meetings and 'doing things properly', that they should start 'doing things wrong'. Externally, through such groups as the NHLC, it was easy to become envious of many tenant organisations in England who had paid workers and their own offices because they 'had their foot in the town hall door'.

4.8 Glyntaff Farm and Participation: A New Partnership

When the Tenants' group returned to tackle the council over the needs of the estate it was on their own terms although they were now prepared to adopt a negotiational rather than confrontational approach. After the experience of the heating campaign the council was much more respectful and agreed to a special sub committee meeting held in a community centre near to the estate in September of 1985. The subject of the meeting was a petition presented by the group which contained an eight point plan for improving the quality of life on the estate including the need for a community centre and play

areas, the poor state of the repairs system and the need to tackle the estate's refuse problem. In contrast to the single issue intensity of the heating campaign these demands were both constructive and well researched. On the issue of subsidence, for example, an independent surveyor had been employed to back up the deep concerns of the tenants [TEBC 85/1481-2 1985].

It was clear that the approach of the group at this time was becoming more sophisticated and more geared to using the system rather than kicking against it. At the same time there was a growing willingness to work with the council in order to extract any resources that they could from central government. Hence by the time the special sub committee met again in December 1985 the tenants were prepared to 'threaten' the council with the forthcoming Right to Repair legislation (1985 Housing Act) with regard to getting the current system up to scratch. Also the tenants were intent on pressing the council to get Glyntaff Farm included in the Priority Estates Project [TEBC 85/2267-8]. Not only was the 'behaviour' of the group becoming more responsible but their approach to housing policy was becoming more pragmatic.

The Borough council themselves were also considering the possibilities of PEP having already met representatives of Rhondda Borough Council to discuss their PEP scheme on the Penrhys estate. The Rhondda representatives were keen to stress the value of tenant participation especially as the tenant association on the estate had played a key role in reducing vandalism [TEBC 85/2266].

4.9 Priority Estate

The PEP project had enough promise to attract both tenants and local authority and by the summer of 1986 there seemed little to stop the Glyntaff Farm estate being included in the scheme. Co-operation between the two groups was by this time reaching an all time high with the special sub committee constituted to deal with the preparation for PEP co-opting tenants' representatives. The more 'responsible' attitude of the tenants is reflected in the tenants' group now being described as an association instead of an action group.

October 1986 saw the sub committee meeting PEP organisers and establishing a four month start up period commencing in December with the project taking effect on site on April 1st 1987. The first tangible outcomes of PEP on the estate were a survey of the estates tenants covering all relevant issues and the establishment of a neighbourhood office on the estate [TEBC 86/1392].

If the groups tactics for improving conditions on the estate had become more pragmatic and 'responsible' this was not to say that the political approach was any less fiery. In a letter to the editor of the Western Mail, in response to a letter describing council tenants as 'feckless beer swilling (their)

giros away', a spokesperson for the group provides a hard hitting response based on a Marxist analysis:

"He describes us as disadvantaged people. I would prefer the word disinherited. Which is what working class people have always been in this class system which is designed in no way to enhance or improve our lives...many of us try hard to overcome the overwhelming tide of this Government's economic policy and we the disinherited are just waiting. Our time will come."

[Western Mail 5/9/86]

As early as September 1987 the Glyntaff Tenants and Residents Association (GTRA) (as it had now become) were alive to the possible implications of what was to be the 1988 Housing Act. A formal request to Housing Committee led to the tenants meeting the councillors at a special sub-committee and having a general discussion about the implications of the proposed transfers of the authority's stock and ring fencing of the authority's housing revenue account [TEBC 87/331]. It is clear that by this time the relationship between tenants group and council was in the form of a close partnership with the tenants' desire to closely monitor developments in housing policy and, if possible, exploit it, being accommodated by the political processes of the council.

November 1987 saw the arrival of the Chair of TPAS (Wales) into the council chamber in order to outline the objectives of this organisation which was at the steering group stage. Housing Committee agreed in principle to membership of this organisation with a minimum of fuss illustrating once again that Taff Ely was well aware of the benefits of its tenants participating [TEBC 87/1668].

Whilst the commitment to participation was being underlined by the meetings with tenants representatives about policy, the PEP project and the support for TPAS (Wales) it was becoming clear that Glyntaff Farm's problems could not be solved by this alone. The PEP report covering the second six months of the project on the estate highlighted the acute repairs problem. Even with the increased budget and improved productivity of the DLO only half of the estate's projected repairs would be met [TEBC 87/1669]. However cordial the relationship between council and tenants this alone could not meet the increasing needs of the estate in terms of its poor material condition.

There were a great deal of positive outcomes from the PEP project on the estate. Parallel with the initiatives on housing ran community oriented schemes such as the Tenants and Residents Urban Aid Participation Project which used government 'urban aid' money to encourage educational opportunities for people on the estate. One of the women who were chained to Taff Ely Council's railings ten years before was appointed as co-ordinator. This project, which had links with Pontypridd Technical College and a local comprehensive school was very much within the philosophy that had

been part of SWAT. Education was seen as one important means by which local tenants could empower and free themselves [South Wales Echo 4/2/88].

In July 1988 the tenants were again meeting with the councillors at Housing Committee. This time the subject was the possibility of establishing a Tenant Management Co-operative on Glyntaff Farm and the Co-op Development Officer of the Welsh Housing Associations Council was present to put the case in favour. After this presentation it was agreed to pursue a three month feasibility study. From the discussions it is evident that the main motivation of both the tenants and the council in exploring this avenue was the prospect of retaining public ownership of the estate and barring the way to predator landlords be they housing associations or private [TEBC 88/472]. Tenants on the estate voted in favour of this option but the Tenant Management Co-operative for Glyntaff was shelved once it was realised that the necessarily funding to remedy the estates problems was not going to be forthcoming [Evans, 1993].

4.10 Tenants' Choice

From 1989 to 1993 the tenants of Glyntaff Farm successfully effected a change of landlord under the 'Tenants' Choice' legislation which was part of the 1988 Housing Act. To date Glyntaff is the only estate in Wales to have achieved this.

The process was developed in partnership with the prospective landlord Newydd Housing Association who had initially approached the Glyntaff Tenants and Residents Association in 1989 over the development of land adjacent to the estate. This proposal was rejected but the contact led to agreement that the Tenants' Choice option could be explored jointly. The protracted nature of the costly and often frustrating Tenants Choice process has been documented elsewhere [Evans, 1993], the most important outcome (apart from the change of landlord itself), however, is a 19.6 million pound dowry with which Newydd will be able to address the estate's structural problems. This dowry, along with a package that included a 5 year rent guarantee, a local office, a tenant place on Newydd's management committee and an option for a tenant led community association to take over the estate after 5 years, persuaded 87% of Glyntaff's tenants to accept Tenants' Choice in a ballot in September 1993.

It is evident that the embracing of the PEP project, the rejection of a management co-operative and the acceptance of a housing association landlord reflect not the desire for greater involvement, for a more responsive service nor for a democratisation of local politics. It was the appeal of financial resources that determined the attractiveness or otherwise of these options. Indeed the Chair of the GTRA at the time of the transfer was convinced that the transfer would not have gone ahead if the funds for improvements and repairs had been directly available to the local authority [Evans, 1993].

Furthermore it seems highly likely that there would have been no action group, no GTRA and no Tenants' Choice at Glyntaff if the estate itself had not presented its residents with such a dire set of housing circumstances.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE TENANTS' MOVEMENT: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

5.1 Introduction

In chapter two critical approaches to participation in public services were reviewed. Chapter three sought to examine the history of the tenants movement and to challenge an over simplistic view of the place of tenant participation within this history. This chapter will use the case study in order to address the broad research questions outlined in the introduction, in particular participation will be considered in relation to other strategies. Owing to the tenant centred perspective of this thesis as well as to the exploratory nature of the case study it is inevitable that other areas worthy of future study will be encountered. These areas will be considered at the end of this chapter.

5.2 Direct Action

From the heating issue on Glyntaff Farm to the successes of SWAT that followed a strategy of direct action was the key factor in winning campaign after campaign. These tactics brought not only substantial material improvements in the housing conditions of the protesters but self development and a new political consciousness for many involved, something that legitimate protest was unlikely to achieve. This kind of experience because of its independent nature proved to be liberating and a creative influence for those involved. It was in fact women who were at the forefront of this action and although beyond the scope of this study the impact and implications for gender politics are nevertheless of the upmost importance.

A negative side to this form of direct protest has been argued. Saunders, for example, commenting on a group in Croydon using similar tactics to oppose cuts in the housing budget argues that: "While avoiding the problems of incorporation experienced by tenants' associations, they therefore lay themselves open to strategies of exclusion on the part of the local authority, for their actions are all too easily defined as illegitimate and hence as undeserving of serious attention" [Saunders, 1983 p.292]. Whilst the group in Croydon were treated as a lunatic fringe, 'defined out' and ultimately ignored, the evidence from the case study indicates that this is not a fatal weakness in the 'illegitimate protest' approach as Saunders suggests. Whilst a generalisation would be foolhardy the experience of SWAT seems to indicate that succumbing to 'strategies of exclusion' was a symptom rather than a cause of the Croydon group's failure.

Whilst direct action proved dramatically successful for a period of time the South Wales tenants were, however, unable to sustain their campaign indefinitely. Whilst the reasons for the demise of SWAT

are unclear and complex there was certainly a significant turning away from the direct action approach. From this a number of issues can be drawn out:

This kind of campaigning certainly takes its toll on the individuals involved. Tenants at greater or lesser degrees of confidence require a great deal of courage to tackle the relationships with authority that have been reinforced throughout their lives. The experience of tenants in the case study testified that the fear and nervousness brought on by these tactics never diminished. This continual stress undoubtedly leads to a certain amount of war weariness. This weariness is amplified by the relatively small numbers that this kind of action attracts. Whilst many may support the campaign, actually taking part can be a difficult step for many for the reasons outlined above. Where ways cannot be found of spreading the workload one small group of activists can take all the pressure, and the pain, upon themselves.

To a certain extent SWAT seems to have been a victim of its their own success. Whilst there was a commitment to always changing tactics and finding a new stunt there was a sense of the novelty wearing off. As the shock value of continued direct action began to fade so local authorities began to get wise and sought to diffuse campaigns instead of confront them. As the campaigns were 'better managed' by the local authorities so the victories became more infrequent, hence the crucial momentum of the direct action approach was lost.

This strategy seems also to be confined to the local arena. Certainly the tactics of direct action are much more likely to be effective against local rather than central government both in terms of the probability of gaining concessions and in terms of the practical difficulty in inconveniencing national government. There also comes an awareness with a number of connected local campaigns that old resources are being redistributed rather than new ones created. When this becomes apparent the desire is created to influence national policy which is difficult to do at a highly local level.

Rent strikes, however, are one form of direct action that could have an impact nationally as well as locally. That this was not a tactic successfully pursued by SWAT possibly reflects the relatively small numbers of the activists and the relative apathy of other tenants. There is no doubt that this has been a powerful weapon in the past although the government's decision in the mid eighties to allow housing benefit to be paid direct to local authority landlords has to some extent undermined its present potential.

5.3 Participation

If a strategy of direct action has its limitations what substantial concessions can tenants expect to win through participation? (The issue of tenant self management is clearly important but is not within the

scope of this study) Chapters two and three have clearly illustrated the view that participation is as much a tool of management and policy as it is a means to empowering tenants.

Whilst much of the material covered above takes the view that participation is a tactic or strategy that the state adopts to achieve its aims this is not always assumed to be the case for the tenants movement. Hague's [1990] analysis, for example, is that more direct methods of protest have been used as a means to gaining participation for its own sake.

The case study provides clear evidence contrary to Hague's view. Firstly participation was not a declared aim or strategy of either the action group or of SWAT through its successful development and expansion. What was sought was either the betterment of local housing conditions or the development of a movement, not the implementation of formal structures for participation. Secondly, although participation was seen latterly as a means to achieve the aims of tenants, as SWAT as a radical organisation began to fade, this was a tactical decision. That this decision was self conscious there can be little doubt; ever since the action group had turned to direct action after the failure of legitimate protest in 1977 the futility of talking had been a recurrent theme in the philosophy of the tenants. Thirdly, as Hague's object is to understand the development of tenant participation it is unsurprising that 'illegitimate' tenant protest is an idea that fits uneasily into the analysis. Without a view of the tenants movement as a historical force, however fragile, the story of participation will lack much of its meaning.

Crucially, for Hague, the distinction between participation as a means to an end and as an end in itself is blurred. The bottom line for the active tenants of Glyntaff was always the improvement of material conditions whether that meant the physical structure of the estate or the level of rents. Even any idea of a radical movement naturally came second to the here and now politics of resolving housing conditions that were at times reaching crisis point. When the Glyntaff tenants did decide to participate, through the Tenants and Residents' Association, through the PEP scheme and through the Tenants' Choice transfer it was not to 'gain a seat at the table', nor to act as citizens or consumers but in order to pragmatically pursue a course of action that would prevent their estate from falling down. Hence on Glyntaff the biggest impetus for participation was not ideological but material. Nearly 20 million pounds worth of repairs is a very big impetus.

From the case study a view of the origins of tenant participation emerges that is contrary to that of Hague. The desire to participate, when that desire comes from the tenants themselves, is not so much the result of an ideal of democratic local government or a product of the ideology of consumer expectation but a reaction to a deepening crisis of disrepair in Britain's public housing stock.

Given that participation is seen as a tool to achieve the aims of tenants how much power can they expect to gain? A recent study has sought to answer this question. In Tenant Participation and Tenant Power in British Council Housing, Cairncross et al [1994] seek to evaluate the extent of tenant power within the context of participation. This is done by applying a model of power borrowed from Clegg to research already done by this team in 1986-7. This model takes a Machiavellian concept of what power does and places it within an organisational context. This is the arena in which, what Clegg calls, the 'rules of the game' are couched. By analysing the 'objectives of action' within given local authorities the study identifies three familiar 'clusters of processes and structures' namely traditional, consumer and citizen.

Cairncross et al, however, may be guilty of accepting what housing departments say they do as what they actually do. As the authors found from the study; "...tenants appear to have been relatively unsuccessful in putting their grievances onto the local political agenda", furthermore; "Most tenant participation has been confined to local management matters, rather than wider policy issues" [Cairncross, et al, 1994 p.193]. These conclusions contrast sharply with the rhetoric of the local authorities which announce a genuine commitment to the 'consumer' or 'citizen'. Can these clusters really be accepted as much more than models of public relations in these circumstances?

By taking an approach that focuses upon the ever changing nature of organisational processes and the variety of influences, both internal and external, and upon the 'rules of the game' it is no wonder that the authors find 'no easy answer' to their question. They find that: "Tenants' power is a shifting and fragmented phenomenon that exists only in relationship to other parties.". As a result their response to the problem 'does participation empower tenants?' is: "The answer is it all depends". If a broader conclusion can be taken from this research it is that there is no evidence for a general empowerment of tenants through participation at a local level.

5.4 The Radical Potential of Participation

Whilst recognising the limitations of participation in affecting change at a local level some authors have sought to attribute to participation the potential to change national housing policy, or even society itself. For both a radical and reformist perspective on this potential the views of the authors of the case studies reviewed in chapter one will be utilised.

All three studies examined in chapter one have confirmed the view that participation in practice conforms to the lower rungs of Arnstein's ladder i.e. manipulation and therapy rather than the dizzy heights of citizen control and delegated power. Furthermore this has not been regarded as a failure of implementation but as a deliberate strategy on behalf of the state in order to control protest and conflict whether it be in the realm of class, community or consumption group.

Where Cockburn, Hain and Saunders do differ, however, is in their view of what those seeking gains from the state can hope to achieve by taking part in the mechanisms of participation. This is clearly an area in which political affiliation may count for as much as detached and impartial reasoning. Whilst Cockburn can be placed within a Marxist revolutionary tradition, Hain's concerns represent a social democratic and reformist orientation. In contrast Saunders' approach is far more critical and conservative.

Outlined in Chapter Two was Cockburn's view that participation is essentially about the 'management of people', yet within Cockburn's analysis, there is the hope of a contradiction; that within the constraints of participative structures the seeds of a more radical alternative may be found. Cockburn is keen to establish the 'point of collective production' as the 'new terrain of class struggle'. This struggle is closely linked to the more traditional struggle: "Now we see the inseparable nature of production and reproduction in capitalism we can also see the inseparability of industrial struggle and action over reproductive services such as housing" [Cockburn, 1977 p.163]. Whilst recognising difficulties, Cockburn ultimately recognises the idea of participation as a double edged sword; "...capital needs our participation, yet we use these openings in a way that can threaten capital" [Cockburn, 1977 p184].

From the case study it is evident that the 'inseparability of industrial struggle and action over reproductive services such as housing' is a link that is not necessarily going to emerge. Whilst the National Union of Mineworkers failed to provide any concrete support during the Glyntaff campaign tenants became further embittered that their support for the miners' strike (1984-5) was not reciprocated. There was also a failure to develop links with local Marxist groupings. Whilst two of the community activists were for a time members of the Socialist Workers Party they found themselves unable to remain so owing to that party's failure to fit SWAT's activities into their 'formula' for struggle. Hence whilst there was a willingness to forge the kind of links, both industrial and political, that Cockburn describes as being almost inevitable, little success was forthcoming. It could either be concluded that Cockburn's view is simply naive or that conditions were not ripe for the kind of revolutionary developments she describes.

Like Cockburn, Hain does see some profit in participation. For community groups, with a clear political awareness participation can be used as a 'Trojan horse' strategy and to 'unmask the present system' [Hain, 1980 p.193]. This view is based upon a distinction that Hain makes between liberal advocates of participation, who seek to 'modify representative democracy', and radicals who wish to 'confront and replace that system' [Hain, 1980 p.20]. The Trojan horse theory seems a little unlikely. For example; once the state provides the resources to pay for the 'Trojan horse' the horse's very existence becomes dependent on the good behaviour of the inmates.

A more robust proposition is that if followers of the radical approach wish to gain any meaningful power, then these groups must also form not only industrial links but develop a political dimension of the kind that can only be provided by a mass political movement. For Hain this movement could only be the Labour Party but only if it can leave behind its fascination with electoral politics and a form of socialism that (like Leninism) has become 'synonymous with statism':

"The alternative of a genuinely liberating form of socialism has been revived by the community politics and direct action of the 1960's and 1970's, emphasising self-organisation, decentralised decision making , community control and workers' control under public ownership. And *that* could enable the promise of radical participation to be fulfilled."

[Hain, 1980 p.203]

It would be unwise to be optimistic that this vision of the Labour Party could come to pass in the near future especially in respect of public ownership. It has been argued above that far from seeking to build a mass political movement the Labour Party has been cynical in its manoeuvres to pacify and manipulate the tenants movement.

Lowe has also considered the relationship between organised tenants and the labour movement. From his Sheffield study Lowe assesses the tenants' movement in the 80s as it took its part within the alliance for 'local socialism' in the city: "Given the defeats of the past and the tactical problems of organising a militant tenants', movement this may be the most fruitful way forward." However: "It may be that far from representing one wing of a new municipal socialism, we have, in fact, witnessed a process of subtle incorporation and de-politicisation of the spontaneous mass movement of the 1960s and early 1970s." This is a tentative call for the political autonomy of the tenants' movement so that if it is to 'come again' "...it will not be from the committee rooms of the broad Left but from within the neighbourhood networks of the estates themselves" [Lowe, 1986 p.117].

Whether in conflict with Labour controlled local authorities or in conflict with Labour councillors at the ballot box the tenants in the case study have been more likely to be at war with the Labour Party than building a political movement with it. Certainly within South Wales at this time the Labour Party is too far ingrained in the system to provide a challenge to it.

Whereas the vision that Cockburn and Hain have for the tenants movement is grounded within left wing political ideology, albeit revolutionary or reformist, Saunders, described above, seeks to evaluate the radical potential of participation within a broader model of the urban system. Participation is viewed as one mechanism that exists between two conflicting parties i.e. the state and urban social movements (see Chapter Two).

The conclusion reached by Saunders is that whilst the urban protest movements are for the most part impotent the British state is resilient and 'absorbent' enough to deal with anything unexpected:

"At best, urban struggles have been a source of inconvenience to some dominant groups; at worst, they have actually aided the management of the urban system by channelling opposition into manageable forms while providing a necessary feedback into the policy-making process."

[Saunders, 1983 p.131]

In Britain this problem is even more compounded by the fragmented nature of the working class and, unlike on the continent, the lack of any revolutionary political leadership.

An overview of the case study certainly reflects Saunders', rather than either Cockburn's or Hain's view. Whether this is always likely to be the case or indeed if this would have been the conclusion if the study had ended in 1982 is another question.

5.5 Are Direct Action and Participatory Strategies Mutually Exclusive?

Whilst Saunders is far more sceptical than either Cockburn or Hain as to the radical potential of participative system he is able to introduce an important discussion concerning the relationship between the 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' strategies that are available to urban groups. To this end Saunders takes the view that groups face not a 'stark choice' but must choose between a course that is 'more or less' coercive or 'more or less' accommodative: "In other words, conciliation and coercion represent polar types on a continuum, and any specific course of action is likely to fall at some point between them" [Saunders, 1983 p.278]. The 'polar ends' of this continuum, however, embody a dilemma; to work with and within the state involves all the dangers of incorporation and co-option described above whereas to adopt a conflictual approach, outside the 'legitimate channels', risks isolation, exclusion and being 'defined out' [p.292-3].

One thing that emerges clearly from the case study, however, is that direct action and participation are approaches that cover much more than simply tactics. Direct action requires spontaneity, informality and a complete refusal to accept authority. In this context action and organisation were built on a collective approach, however small the collective may have been. Participation, on the other hand requires planning, formal structures, formal meetings and an acceptance of authority, be it local or central government, on its own terms. Activity no longer requires the collective but becomes representative and places the emphasis on individuals and hierarchies develop.

Whether this conflict can be said to represent the conflict that caused so much bitterness in SWAT is debatable. It is clear, however, that the change from one to the other was painful. Dumbleton at the time felt that SWAT could have it both ways [Dumbleton p.175] but from his work it is clear that the tenants split, and split bitterly, between those who felt that they were now strong enough to negotiate and those who argued that talking had never, and would never, achieve anything.

It follows from the case study evidence that the difference between direct action and participation goes far deeper than a choice of strategy or tactic. For the organisation involved each approach means a different 'way of life'. It would be difficult to imagine a spontaneous consultative structure any more than an effective 'sit-in' conducted by an elected delegation following a postal referendum.

This conclusion parallels a widely held sociological theory on tenant organisations. This view maintains that tenant associations fall under two main types; the sporadic, transient but nevertheless politically potent and the stable, structured and more conservative social kind [Lowe, 1986 p.85-6; Cowley, 1979 p.134-5].

Lowe is concerned that limited evidence has led to the assumption that tenants' associations are specific to one issue and essentially transient. Evidence does however point to the existence of more complex and deep rooted organisations. Lowe suggests that a link exists between the political potency of a tenants organisation and its life span, hence the most potent; "...operate on the periphery of the formal party political system in local government, are instrumental to a relatively small range of issues, and tend to make only sporadic appearances" [Lowe, 1986 p.85]. However, as Lowe admits, no studies specific to this kind of organisation exist.

Lowe identifies a second type of tenants' association that is both more permanent and less radical. This type, that has come to light in several sociological studies of housing estates, is more concerned with social activities and may have as a focus the running of a community hall. This is identifiable with the ethos of the ALHE mentioned above. Lowe argues that whilst consumption interests are also represented these groups act "...more partially, and potentially to screen out urban protest. At the very least it may be more difficult to recreate militant protest from within existing and semi-institutionalised organisations" [Lowe, 1986 p.86]. Here again is the search for the right cocktail of permanence and potency that was such a clear theme of the case study.

A further theme, identified by some studies of the 40s and 50s, is that protest groups may in fact evolve into these more passive social organisations. Lowe further speculates that local authorities may, if only half consciously, recognise the link between the social function and passivity and provide support and community halls to militant groups for that very reason. Conversely it may be the case

that where groups have disappeared entirely the potential for radical action on an estate is that much greater.

Whilst identifying these polar types of organisation Lowe warns against a simplistic view. It is important not to overlook the advocacy, negotiational and social welfare functions of many of the more social style organisations. In fact, for associations embracing both 'social passivity' and social advocacy on behalf of their members; "...there may be a tension surrounding their very existence, held between their potential to absorb latent and actual conflict in the urban system and the partial expression of 'housing class' interest" [Lowe, 1986 p.101].

Lowe's support for the idea that tenants associations may follow a common life cycle, that develops from agitation to passivity, has drawn criticism. In an article by Cairncross, Clapham and Goodlad [1992] it is argued that this view has been formed in the wake of evidence that is not only far too sparse but is characterised by a Marxist framework that has overemphasised confrontational activity. A postal survey of 142 tenants' groups in 6 contrasting areas leads the authors to the conclusion that groups are formed for a number of diverse and varying reasons and that associations are likely subsequently to pursue agitational and social activities side by side. The authors recommend research that concentrates upon the 'variety of experience that exists', the 'influence of the local authority' and the 'attitudes and perceptions of tenants' [Cairncross, et al, 1992]. Thus the campaigns and struggles of tenants are condemned forever to be mildly interesting, but strictly local, phenomena.

5.6 Areas for Future Research

"There has never been effective national organisation of tenants in this country" proclaimed an article in *Roof* in 1981 [Wolmar, 1981] reflecting on both the past failure of tenants to develop a successful organisation and the apparent lack of opposition to the contemporary governments attacks on public housing. National organisations that have existed have been frail and passive (for example the NATR, see Cowley, 1979 p131-2) and the more recently developed national federations, for example the Welsh Tenants' Federation, are effectively constrained by the government funding that supports them.

Sustaining an independent mass organisation of tenants that transcends the local arenas is a riddle in many ways similar to the direct action and participation conundrum. Saunders' suggestion that what is required is widespread support and mobilisation alongside political organisation. The tenants and community workers involved in SWAT failed to find an effective answer to either of these problems.

If the SWAT story does not provide the answer to the question 'what should a national tenants organisation look like?' it does provide a few clues as to what should be avoided; the organisation

cannot be too loosely structured and spontaneous in order to avoid spontaneous disintegration and yet an excess of formality could preclude effective action, independence would be compromised by government funding and there are also risks attached to an overdependence on more sympathetic resources and workers such as those provided by SWAPAC; these are the issues of structure and resources that must be overcome if a truly effective national movement can be developed. That this organisation must be robust, flexible, self resourced and self managed is evident, how that works in practice is not.

The issue of class is central to the organisation of tenants as it is for the question of the consumption of housing in general. Whether social relations are more significantly influenced by class position in a traditional Marxist sense or by consumption sector location as has been more recently argued by sociologists of the 'new right' is open to debate.

Whilst many of those involved with SWAT gained a heightened sense of a working class consciousness the aspirations of broader working class alliances never materialised. Indeed for many there was a sense of isolation; high rates of unemployment on many of the estates meant that the direct link between housing and workplace was broken. The experience of unemployment comes with very low incomes, low confidence and defeatism with many feeling that cut off from 'main stream' economic life as well as from traditional labour organisations they were forgotten, an 'underclass'. Cowley, for example argues:

"The fragile and transient character of tenants' organisations and the sporadic nature of housing struggles is rooted in the social relations of residential life that spontaneously divide and isolate people. Organising tenants is a matter of working against division amongst people. This explains its weakness historically and its secondary importance in class politics."

[Cowley, 1979 p.136]

Hence the whole problem of the tenants movement for Cowley is not one of strategy or organisation but is in fact a social issue. Fifteen years on from Cowley's analysis, however, different social patterns have begun to emerge. Isolated, run down housing estates with high levels of unemployment have brought about a situation where 'traditional' social class relationships have been replaced. Far from having a fragmented residential experience many council tenants, such as those in the case study, have a common experience of consuming collective services such as the benefits system, the education system and, of course, housing. Whilst people are indeed isolated in their experience of their individual dwellings on an estate such as Glyntaff the experience of these homes, with an equality of defects, becomes more and more common. Placing the tenants movement within the class verses consumption sector debate is, however, a task far beyond the scope of this project.

5.7 Conclusion

Government led tenant participation works best when resources are available for material improvements as well as the will to 'empower'. Without this, the benefits to tenants are not clear cut. On the side of politicians and professionals the benefits in terms of policy, pragmatism and management are much more obvious. Outside this effective tenant campaigning has been rare and fragmented. The success of the tenants' movement is at the same time a strategic, organisational and social question and it will take more than one case study to resolve it, if it is resolvable at all. The one thing that is clear, however, is that such a movement would be less interested in ideas and ideologies and more interested in the basic housing conditions of council tenants.

The findings of the literature review and the case study have confirmed the author's initial view that the study of tenant participation is deficient because it is both uncritical and lacks a tenant centred perspective. By providing a more critical approach it is evident that participation may not be the good thing for tenants that the orthodox belief says that it is. In addition the assumption that participation is 'what tenants want' has been challenged. Taking a tenant centred perspective has allowed participation to be assessed alongside alternative, more direct, strategies. Important issues for the tenants' movement such as gender, class and developing nationally can also be addressed. Although it is not clear which is the best way for tenants to achieve their aims at least this debate can be opened up; something that is not possible under the current orthodox understanding.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arnstein, S. (1969) A Ladder of Citizen Participation. Journal of the American Institute of Planners; Vol 35, No 4.

Barker, A. (1979) Public Participation in Britain: A Classified Bibliography. Bedford Square Press, London.

Birchall, J. (1991) Council Tenants: Sovereign Consumers or Pawns in a Game. Department of Government Working Papers, No 16: Brunel University.

Boaden, N., Goldsmith, M., Hampton, W. and Stringer, P. (1982) Public Participation in Local Services. Longman, London.

Boddy, M. and Fudge, C. (1984) Local Socialism? London: Macmillan.

Cairncross, L. Clapham, D. Goodlad, R. (1990) The Pattern of Tenant Participation in Council Housing Management University of Glasgow: Centre for Housing Research, Discussion Paper 31.

Cairncross, L. Clapham, D. Goodlad, R. (1992) The Origins and Activities of Tenants' Associations in Britain. Urban Studies, Vol 29, No 5, P.709-725.

Cairncross, L. Clapham, D. Goodlad, R. (1994) Tenant Participation and Tenant Power in British Council Housing. Public Administration Vol.72.

Castells, M. (1977) The Urban Question. London: Edward Arnold.

Castells, M. (1983) The City and the Grassroots. London: Edward Arnold.

Clarke, M. and Stewart, J. (1986) The public Service Orientation - Developing the Approach. LGTB, Luton.

Clarke, M. and Stewart, J. (1987) The Public Service Orientation: Issues and Dilemmas. Public Administration Vol 65 No 2.

Cockburn, C. (1977) The Local State., Pluto, London.

Corrigan, P. Ginsberg, N. (1975) Tenants' Struggle and Class Struggle. in Political Economy and the Housing Question. Workshop of the Conference of Socialist Economists: Octopress.

Cowley, J. (1979) Housing For People or for Profit? London; Stage One.

Craddock, J (1975) Council Tenants' Participation in Housing Management. London: ALHE

Deakin, N. and Wright, A. (Eds) (1990) Consuming Public Services. Routledge, London.

Dearlove, J (1979) The Reorganisation of British Local Government. Cambridge University Press.

Department of the Environment (1992). Tenants Together. HMSO, London.

Dumbleton, B. (1994) The First Link : Housing Action and Class Solidarity, South Wales 1977-93. Unpublished.

Evans, A. (1993) Glyntaff Farm - Story of a Transfer. Welsh Housing Quarterly, No12.

Fyfe, N.R. (1993) Making Space for the Citizen: The (in)Significance of the Citizens Charter. Urban Geography, Vol 14, No 3.

George, V. and Wilding, P. (1976) Ideology and Social Welfare. Routledge Keagan Paul.

Hague, C. (1990) The Development and Politics of Tenant Participation in British Council Housing. Housing Studies, Vol 5 No 4.

Hain, P. et al (1976) Community Politics. London: John Calder.

Hain, P. (1980) Neighbourhood Participation.

Hampton, W. (1987) Local Government and Urban Politics. London: Longman

Hambleton, R. (1988) Consumerism, Decentralisation and Local Democracy. Public Administration vol 66.

Hoggett, P and Hambleton, R. (1987). Decentralisation and Democracy. SAUS.

Institute of Housing and Tenant Participation Advisory Service (1990), Tenant Participation in Housing Management. IOH, London.

Kay, A, Legg, C, Foote J. (1982) The 1980 Tenants Rights in Practice. London City University.

Lees, R. Mayo, M. (1984) Community Action For Change.

Lowe, S. (1986) Urban Social Movements., St Martins Press, New York.

Mayo, L. (1972) Some Fundamental Problems of Community Work on Housing Estates in Britain. Community Development Journal.

Milliband, R. (1982) Capitalist Democracy in Britain. Oxford University Press.

Moorhouse, B. Wilson, M. Chamberlain, L. (1972) *Rent Strikes - Direct Action and the Working Class*. in Milliband, R. Saville, J. (eds) The Socialist Register. London: Merlin Press.

Parston, G. (1994) Dangers in Dogma. The Guardian, 10/8/1994.

Richardson, A. (1983) Participation. London; Boston: RKP.

Saunders, P. (1984) Beyond Housing Classes. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Vol 8.

Saunders, P. (1986), Social Theory and the Urban Question., 2nd edn., Unwin, London.

Skeffington, A, M. (1968) People and Planning. HMSO, London.

Sklair, L. (1975) The Struggle Against the Housing Finance Act in Milliband, R. Saville J. (eds) The Socialist Register. London: Merlin.

Smith, M.J. (1993) *Consumer Policy and the New Right*. in Jordan, G and Ashford, N. (eds) Public Policy and the New Right. Pinter, London.

Stewart, J. and Stoker, G. (1988) From Local Administration to Community Government. Fabian Research Series 351, The Fabian Society, London.

Thornley, A. (1977) Theoretical Perspectives on Planning Participation. *Progress in Planning*, Vol 7 part 1, Pergamon, London.

Wolmar, C. (1981) Tenants' Movement. ROOF, Nov/Dec.

Yin, R. (1994) Case Study Research: Design and Methods. (2nd Ed) Sage, London.

Periodicals

Community Action

The Guardian

Pontypridd Observer

Rebecca

South Wales Echo

Western Mail