

Mary

The Body Politic – week 3 homework

The experience of not being listened to, and the problems inherent in listening to a community.

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I thought I could draw together the experience, or the feeling, of not being listened to, with the problems inherent in listening to a community – by which I mean, for the purposes of this discussion and serving as a good metaphor, a democratic electorate.

The individual within a democracy may experience acute sensations of not being listened to, precisely because he expects to be listened to. By the same token, a workplace or organisation, which embraces union representation, solidarity for staff welfare, or collective negotiation in change, is likely to demonstrate notable discontent in a way that certain business environments, where no such expectations exist, are not. I know this to be the case from my own experience. Not being listened to, and consequent reaction to this stimulus, is therefore dependent upon surrounding cultural factors.

Taking the argument from the side of a democratic administration, and whilst I am no political theorist, I would surmise that endeavouring to 'listen' and exhibit such listening in derived policy or consideration, is complicated. Historical and majority rule precedents dictate that elements of the community will, to varying degrees and with varying frequency, appear not to be 'listened to' at all or, in other words, become disenfranchised. Whilst other sectors – perhaps sometimes more by chance, than design? – get their needs met in being 'heard'.

The pertinent point in my analysis of the subject depends upon the nature of the administration/organisational body holding the power, and whether it has any obligation to listen to the community it controls. A factor of obligation determines the type of reaction it is likely to provoke in not 'listening', because reaction will be borne of a community expectation that being 'heard' should make a difference.

Thereby, although dictatorships, through a deliberately unhearing power base, do provoke revolt and revolution; such dire outcomes for an administration are not the actions of a community not 'listened to', in quite the same way as they would be within any democracy.