CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL SERVICES I The Grounds for citizen participation and involvement in decision-making have usually included the following: decisions that affect his life.

- The citizen has a right to play a part in the making of those
- Participation of the citizen in social decision-making will increase the likelihood that the decisions made are more socially correct and relevant than if left in the hands of administrators, bureaucrats and professionals. That is, the citizen brings to the situation a perspective and personal experience not available to the others mentioned.
- 3. Participation in decision-making is "good" for the citizen; and conversely, inability or lack of opportunity to participate in decision-making is bad for both the individual affected and for the society as a whole.
- 4. Participation does not mean simply reacting to or playing a part in deciding upon matters raised by administrative or power groups in society, but includes the essential role of the citizen in problem identification and in initiating new solutions. In this view, a citizen is often better able to identify problems and to propose appropriate or innovative solutions.

In democratic societies, these ideas are not particularly new.

In Western democracies the form this has taken is that of representative democracy. That is, it is seen as the citizen's right and obligation to elect representatives to a decision-making group, and to do so from time to time. This basic form of government has been refined and elaborated in various ways and in various constitutional forms to produce the types of republican or parliamentary democratic governments that now exist. Over time, and particularly in recent years, strong doubts have been expressed considering the adequacy of this method alone in ensuring the type and level of citizen participation. More particularly, while it is felt that representative democracy is essential, it is also felt that occasions, opportunities, and arrangements for citizen participation between elections must also be worked out and provided for.

It is also true to say that <u>voluntary associations of citizens</u> who have come together over some matter of mutual concern have existed for many years. To a very considerable extent, these voluntary associations were from the beginning concerned with social services. In their earliest form they were frequently philanthropic organizations with an elitist outlook. Subsequently - and in the English-speaking world this occurred towards the eighteenth century - the Friendly Societies appears, associated with various cooperative movements, and run democratically by and for their own members, gradually evolving into the Orders of Oddfellows, Foresters, and so on. There was amongst

these groups a strong emphasis upon "an individualist gospel of self-help and for 'voluntaryism' as against the extension of state aid." With the advent of trade unionism and of the social democratic movement, considerable conflict developed between these older somewhat individualistic voluntary organizations and the adherents of social democracy or trade unionism who emphasized the importance of state planning and of the role of government in providing for social services.

While these older forms of voluntary association have continued until the present and still have their strong adherents, a new and different movement for citizen participation has evolved with a strong emphasis upon the lack of participation by the socially disadvantaged or minority groups in decision-making in society. To a considerable extent these at first took the form of community action programs which have been concerned largely with the problems of poverty and socio-economic deprivation. However, as time has gone on, middle-class groups have also come to realize that despite their possibly more affluent circumstances they are in no better position to participate in decision-making in the face of proliferating bureaucracy, the increasing intrusion of governments into everyday life, centralization of social capital, and increased social complexity.

The movement for citizen participation has thus become much more widespread, involving all groups of society and even governments with the slogan of "participatory democracy."

The forms or modes of citizen participation should also be mentioned:

- 1. Participation involves problem identification as much as a consideration of solutions to problems defined by others.
- 2. Opportunities must be provided for citizen initiative in problem solving as well as in problem identification, including the opportunity to engage in innovative solutions.
- 3. Regionalization of services does not constitute citizen participation unless there is an accompanying administrative decentralization.
- 4. In regard to legislation, the citizen should participate as much in the framing of the legislation as in its implementation.
 - 5. Citizen participation should be "collaborative," not just "reactive."

IV

One of the forms in which citizen participation is expressed is that of "client control." This is the idea that the direction and management of particular services and programs should be in the hands of that portion of the public directly served by them.