

Liberalism vs. democracy assignment



Liberalism vs. Democracy Liberalism, formed in the latter part of the 18th Century from opposition to existing political monarchies in Europe, was based on rights of individuals and the responsibility of government to protect those rights. Liberalism has an ambivalent relationship with democracy, as liberals are against collective power, but support political equality.

In the nineteenth century liberals were often opposed to democracy as they saw it as a threat to individual rights - the people are not a single entity but rather a collection of individuals with different opinions and interests, and so it is impossible for every view and opinion to be respected. Since the twentieth century most liberals have come round to the idea of democracy, and support it, but they still have reservations. Liberals defend democracy for a variety of reasons. First of all it ensures public accountability. This gives the people a degree of protection against governments becoming too strong.

Liberals believe in limited government, and democracy provides this system, as the government is accountable to the people. Democracy comes from two Greek words: a noun *demos* which means, " people" and a verb, *kratein*, which means " to rule". Democracy first appeared in Athens towards the beginning of the fifth century B. C. The biggest difference between Athenian democracy and almost all other democracies is that the Athenian version was a direct democracy rather than being representative. Democracy came about in Athens as a result of the growing naval power and the reforms made by leaders such as Cleisthenes and Pericles.

The city-state of Athens, 5th century Athens to be precise, is the inventor and first practitioner of democracy. So for 4, 000 years men and women

lived under forms of government other than democratic. For some 2, 500 years now democracy has existed, with varying degrees of consistency of theory and practice. But it all began in the 5th century before Christ in Athens. A democracy is a government for the people. It is an establishment to which the people of that nation are the people who run that nation. There is no line of fate that puts a person or persons in power but yet a poll of citizens that determine who shall lead them.

There is a set of checks and balances to ensure that no one person may have total control of that government. Aristotle once wrote, “ Of forms of democracy first comes that which is said to be based strictly on equality. In such a democracy the law says that it is just for the poor to have no more advantage than the rich; and that neither should be masters, but both equal. ” (Aristotle) By this statement some might believe that Aristotle is trying to note that in a democracy there is no rule of lineage to promote the beliefs of those of nobility. Also there is no punishment or enslaving of those born with less fortune.

This makes for an equal government by giving the same power to all persons and letting material things have no say in the outcome. In other forms of government a person or group of people can express their views or run their state due to the fact that they are viewed as important or have the wealth to do so. In a democratic society there are leaders elected by the people who are overall leaded by a prime minister. Citizens in a democracy enjoy the right to join organizations of their choosing that are independent of government and to participate freely in the public life of their society.

This government's term of office will run for four or five years. This form of democracy is called a direct democracy. They add their comments to the public debate, electing representatives who are held accountable for their actions. Modern society, with its size and complexity, offers few opportunities for direct democracy. While the state protects the rights of its citizens, in return, the citizens give the country their loyalty; unless the prime minister loses a majority in parliament.