

DEMOCRACY

Nowadays, when technology has taken over everything and everyone wants to be considered open-minded and open to any development, certain topics are almost never discussed any more because they are taken for granted. Until some time ago, democracy was a crucial topic. Many countries were still under Communism and people knew that such states had a very low standard of living and human rights were being broken continually.

Unfortunately, this problem was not found only in the past recent years, but Pericles knew already that something had to be done in Ancient Greece. The first system of democracy started at that time. The results of this system were clearly seen since at that time Athens was at the height of its glory.

One of the main differences between the early and the modern democracies is that the early democracy of Athens was a direct one, i.e., people had the right to pass laws themselves while a modern democracy (e.g. Malta) is a representative one, i.e., people choose, by means of elections, the person to represent them in parliament. Before, laws passed "from the hands of the many" while today the pass from the hands of the few. This is one of the few things that the modern democracy lost.

Today, anyone over 18 years of age, has the right to vote - including women. This, was a right won in second half of the twentieth century since democracy allowed women to protest and they were given what they were asking for.

In Pericles' funeral speech it was said that all citizens had equal rights in the law courts and this also applies to the modern democracy. It was also said that position within the administration did not depend on wealth or class, but on ability, achievements and character. It is widely known that in Malta does not always apply! Political beliefs are necessary to have a certain position and this is one thing which confirms my theory, that certain Maltese are still very close-minded.

Respect for the authority and obedience to the laws also apply today. It is necessary that people obey the law and it is very important that punishment is given to those who break the law. Although today we know that prison or capital punishment are not always a deterrent for wrong not to be done, it is important for justice to be practiced.

Like today, people in ancient Greece had time for recreation and to enjoy leisure. In a modern democracy, it is necessary that people work so that taxes are collected and social benefits are given but it is also necessary that people have free time to distract their minds from work which is considered to be an important value.

Before, citizens were not preoccupied of war and laborious training and fought

danger with skill and courage. Since today wars are fought by means of technology, fewer and fewer people are needed to give their lives for their own country. In my opinion, this led men to lose a lot of the courage they once had.

Another interesting thing in the ancient democracy is that a man who takes no interest in public affairs was considered to be a useless character. Maybe this statement is a little bit far fetched in the way it is written but it is also valid in a way. In Malta, people who do not take interest in politics are considered to be as persons without principles and living in the clouds. Often we are more interested in speaking nonsense about unimportant topics rather than talking and discussing serious current affairs like for example the referendum about the E.U. I wonder how many people know what it really involved. Many are too interested about what their political party leader says than to form their own ideas and opinions.

Over the past years, we saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fall of Communism in many countries, and this shows the power of democracy. Unfortunately, certain events, such as the deaths of Martin Luther King and Yitzak Rabin may give a bad image of the real picture. In my opinion, the young generations realized that peace and serenity give much better results than war, and this is only obtained when living in a democracy.
