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**Review of Chapter 8 of Salient Issues in Government and Nigeria’s Politics**

Sovereignty belongs to the people. This means that the source of the government’s authority is the people. It also means that the people have every right to actively take part in governance. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains these rights and various states have these rights embedded in their constitution. Often times, people say that democracy is a government “of the people, by the people, for the people”. Simply put, the government, governmental processes and elections belong to the people. Without the citizens’ engagement, democracy is non-existent. Apart from being a right, it is also the citizenry’s responsibility to ensure the smooth running and sustenance of democracy. Engagement takes different forms. It could be economical, political, social, cultural etc. For effective democracy, information is paramount. Citizens must be informed about the on goings in their society. Citizens including politicians should be free to assemble and express their opinions. Insurance of the government’s response to their views is also a citizen’s duty. It ensures accountability. For citizens to be informed, they need access to accurate information, particularly government-held information and to learn how the information will be employed by the government for the good of the citizenry. Different barriers to citizen participation exist in different country. To achieve full citizenship, these barriers be it age, ethnicity, religion, racial, gender-based should be uprooted. If these barriers are not removed, then equal suffrage is denied and government credibility compromised. Therefore, citizens must understand the concepts of government, politics and citizenship. The need to know how to make decisions about policy choices and proper use of authority, as well as skills to voice their concerns, act collectively and hold public officials accountable. “Citizen” has an inherent political meaning. A citizen has rights and responsibilities. In Rome, citizenship was a privilege. Certain classes of the Roman society were not given the status due to various reasons. Modern states confer citizenship on practically the whole population. Citizenship can be acquired by birth or naturalization. Citizenship by birth is acquired if the parents are citizens of the state or the person is born within the territory of that state. Citizenship by naturalization is voluntarily acquired if a person changes his citizenship of a state to another state. Conditions for acquisition of citizenship by naturalization vary from state to state. Nigeria’s conditions for acquisition of citizenship by naturalization are contained in section 26-32. Citizenship is also defined in section 25. Citizenship is divided into civil, political and social citizenship. Civil citizenship connotes rights that protect individual liberty. Political citizenship refers to political participation. Social citizenship deals with citizens’ access to resources for standard living. Citizenship has many definitions-simple and extensive. Brannan, a definer, holds that citizenship is not only passive but active in nature. Many others have their own ideas about citizenship. Citizens have rights. A right is a privilege or prerogative conferred on a person or group. If one’s rights are breached, one can seek redress in court. Democracy originated from Greece. It is gotten from Greek words “demos” and “kratos” meaning rule by the people. Ancient Greece practiced direct democracy where citizens gathered to discuss ways to make their society better. However, it was limited. Inclusion of all members of society regardless of class was first advocated in England after the Civil war in the 17th century. The Levelers, a radical party and John Locke advocated for government based on consent. American colonies revolted against England and developed democratic ideas as a way of life. These ideas spread from country to country. Presently, representative/indirect democracy is practiced in many countries and is associated with freedom to express political views and freedom to contradict said views. Differences are settled by counting of votes. It is also used to determine who rules the country. Democracy has certain features. In a democratic state there is: freedom of press, existence of rule of law, periodic free and fair election, independent judiciary, guaranteed fundamental human rights. A democracy also leaves citizens laden with duties and responsibilities. In return for the liberties provided by the state, the citizens perform duties for the state. They have to invest time, hard work into the forgery of a better society. In order to succeed, citizens have to actively participate in a democracy. Some of responsibilities of citizens in a democracy are: (i) Duty to vote-citizens have the duty to vote leaders in and out especially unpopular government. (ii) Duty to pay taxes-citizens are to pay taxes religiously in order to fund the government. Without taxes, there’s no democracy. (iii) Duty to obey the law-a social contract exists between the state and its citizens. Citizens must obey the law or disobedience of the law by the masses will eventually result in anarchy which is the opposite of democracy. Citizens must assist the government in maintaining a lawful society. (iv) Duty to offer constructive criticism-a good citizen should offer good criticism and alternatives to government policies and not stir societal division. (v) Duty of non-interference with the rights of others citizens-a good citizen should not interfere with the rights of other citizens. He/she should be hardworking and engage in honest dealings. Citizens should appear before the court when called as a witness and serve in the military if it is compulsory to do so. (vi) Duty to support public education-through tax payment, local volunteering, accordance of respect to the democratic system. Public education is the foundation of democracy, meant to educate children to be responsible participants of the democratic process. Education empowers citizens with information and a well-informed citizen can criticize government policies.

To conclude, democracy is a government by the people. It is said to be the best form of government. Participation occurs directly through voting. Democracy allows the citizens enjoyment of rights and freedoms and citizens contribute their quota by performing their duties leading to a progressive society. So in order for a society to progress, citizens should not be passive but active. They should challenge erring government officials and policies. Checks and investigations on governmental institutions and parastatals should be carried out regularly. A positive attitude should be maintained with public interest in mind for development of the state. All these work in hand in insurance of a better society for all.