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QUESTION

Do a two page review of Chapter 8, ‘Citizens role in a Democracy’, In Salient issues in Government and Nigerian Politics.

ANSWER

There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens. Engagement is a right and a responsibility of citizens. In a democracy, the citizens choose their government and the authority of the government is derived from the will of the people. For an effective democracy, citizens have to be well informed about issues and information especially government-held information.

“Citizen” has a political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between people and government. They have duties and responsibilities and rights to participate in decisions affecting public welfare. In ancient Rome, not everybody was awarded the liberty of citizenship but unlike modern times who confer citizens on practically their whole residence or population. Citizenship can be gotten through birth or naturalization. A person becomes a citizen if their parents are citizens of that state or if they were born there. A person who voluntarily changes their citizenship to another state is known as naturalization. Citizenship is divided into civil citizenship, political citizenship and social citizenship.

Civil citizenship refers to rights necessary to protect individual liberty. Political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power either as a member of the political community or by an individual elected by the members of such community. Social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have to access to those resources that allow them to live in a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.

It has been argued by Glover that there are three types of active citizenship. Ethical citizenship understands active participation in collective strive towards the public good as an essential feature. Integrative citizenship involves the belief that every individual plays an assortment of roles and it enables individuals to integrate into their roles and to immerse themselves into the community, hence allowing them to have a greater appreciation of the collective. Educational citizenship refers to the process that develops a moral, practical and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship. According to Kenny, there is a difference between active and passive citizenship.

A right can be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group and so in order for the citizens to have a fair share of the running of the state, then the rights are essential. When the rights are expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state, it is called a civil right and if they are being infringed upon, they have the rights to seek redress in court.

**Democracy first originated in Ancient Greece, but was excluded from slaves, laborers and aliens. The idea that all citizens, high or low, should participate was from England after the civil war of the 17th century. Now, democracy is associated with the free discussion of political matters, the right to differ concerning them and the settlement of differences by counting of votes. There are 5 features of democracy: the fundamental rights of the citizens is guaranteed, independent and impartial judiciary, existence of the rule of law, freedom of press and periodic election that is free and fair.**

**There are various duties of citizens to democracy: the duty to vote, willingness to pay taxes, obedience to the law, must be ready to give constructive alternatives instead of destructive criticism, must not interfere with the rights of other members of the community.**

**There can be no democracy without the contributions of citizens and they should participate with full enthusiasm to ensure the survival of the democracy. They should ensure that they should be critical on what the government done and they should ensure that their rights are preserved by challenging the government.**