

Human Rights or Civil Rights?

Civil Rights are premised on citizens being subject to the laws of a State with the responsibility of being a good citizen by upholding the social values, order and laws of that State and Society.

- Societies need to establish and maintain social cohesion. One component is by extending civil rights to all the citizens while expecting the citizens to take responsibility for their behaviour and actions.
- Both the state and the individual enter into a *de facto* Social Contract.
- The Social Contract offers protection:
 - To individuals from each other and society
 - To society from individuals while promoting a supportive approach to social issues to deliver and maintain social cohesion.
- The Civil Rights conferred to individuals within a state with a common heritage could presume:
 - Common values amongst its citizens and expect citizens to take personal responsibilities to observe other individual's rights and to conforming to that society norms, customs and laws.

The drivers for Human Rights originated in a desire to prevent conflict between nations a concern shared by the then newly formed United Nations and summarized by the phrase "*the United Nations are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war*".

- Unlike the Civil Rights that were premised on common values and confined to geographical boundaries.
- Human Rights were established:
 - With an international focus
 - To be operated within diverse national territories.
 - Citizens would be more likely to have a diverse heritage with different values and loyalties.
 - Many invoke what they see as their Human Rights without accepting the duties expected with Civil Rights.

It is over 70 years since the United Nations established the Human Rights but the progress has been slow. In many countries (particularly in the US):

- Pressure groups still agitate for Civil Rights.
- Governments talk about granting Civil Rights.

Establishing of Civil Rights in UK

Civil Rights were not always granted peaceably they were granted as a result of conflict between the Establishment and the Citizens. Disgruntled Citizens had to agitate/protest before many of the Civil Rights were granted.

Some of the conflict situations leading to granting of Civil Rights include:

The Magna Carta = Great Charter (The first recorded granting of Civil Rights in UK)

- In 1215 Magna Carta was a peace treaty between King John and the rebel barons. The treaty could be deemed a failure as the King reneged on the treaty, but it provided a new framework for the relationship between the King and his subjects.
- The 1225 version of Magna Carta, freely issued by Henry III in return for a tax granted to him by the whole kingdom, took this idea further and became the definitive version of the text.

The protest in St Peter's Square, Manchester

- On the 16th of August 1819 the huge open area around what is now St Peter's Square, Manchester, played host to an outrage against over 60,000 peaceful pro-democracy and anti-poverty protesters; an event, which became known as The Peterloo Massacre.

Peterloo Legacy:

- Historians acknowledge that Peterloo was hugely influential in ordinary people winning the right to vote, led to the rise of the Chartist Movement from which grew the Trade Unions, and also resulted in the establishment of the Manchester Guardian newspaper.
- According to Nick Mansfield, director of the People's History Museum in Manchester, "Peterloo is a critical event not only because of the number of people killed and injured, but because ultimately it changed public opinion to influence the extension of the right to vote with the 1867 Representation of the People Act (the second Reform Act) extends vote to urban working men meeting property qualification and give us the democracy we enjoy today. It was critical to our freedoms."

Tolpuddle Martyrs

- On the night of 28th August 1830, in East Kent, a threshing machine was destroyed by angry labourers. This was the start of a revolt that spread across the south involving machine breaking, arson and assaults on overseers and justices.
- Threatening letters in the name of Captain Swing, a fictitious character, often heralded the action.
- The first recorded Swing disturbance in the South West was at Maddington in Wiltshire on 8th November 1830. The rebellion swept though Wiltshire and Dorset in particular. Incidents in Puddletown and other Dorset villages probably involved farm workers who were later to join the Tolpuddle union. There is no evidence that any of the six Tolpuddle Martyrs were directly involved.
- Special courts dealt with hundreds of labourers arrested during the disturbances. Many were sentenced to hang but most avoided execution, being transported to Australia instead.

Women Suffragette

- Women were excluded from voting in ancient Greece and republican Rome, as well as in the few democracies that had emerged in Europe by the end of the 18th century.
- When the franchise was widened, as it was in the United Kingdom in 1832, women continued to be denied all voting rights.
- The question of women's voting rights finally became an issue in the 19th century, and the struggle was particularly intense in Great Britain and the United States
- But - those countries were not the first to grant women the right to vote, at least not on a national basis.
- By the early years of the 20th century, women had won the right to vote in national elections in:
 - New Zealand (1893)
 - Australia (1902)

- Finland (1906)
- Norway (1913)
- In Sweden and the United States they had voting rights in some local elections.
- In UK
 - 1918 Representation of the People Act extends vote to all men over 21 and most women over 30
 - 1928 Representation of the People Act extends vote to all women over 21

The Jarrow March –

- Jarrow Borough Council, on 20th July 1936 decided to present a petition to Parliament.
- They called this their 'crusade'
 - Partly to emphasise the seriousness of their plight
 - Partly to distinguish their march from those of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement - whose connection with the Communist party raised the spectre of revolution.
- In October 1936, a group 200 men from the north-eastern town of Jarrow marched 300 miles to London.
 - They wanted Parliament, and the people in the south, to understand
 - That they were orderly, responsible citizens,
 - But were living in a region where there were many difficulties, and where there was 70 per cent unemployment.

Demands - As Palmer's shipyard in Jarrow had been closed down in the previous year.

- The men were demanding that a steel works be built to bring back jobs to their town.
- The yard had been Jarrow's major source of employment, and the closure compounded the problems of poverty, overcrowding, poor housing and high mortality rates that already beset the town.

Impact

- Initially
 - Despite considerable public sympathy the crusade made little real impact.
- Subsequently
 - In Jarrow, a ship-breaking yard and engineering works were established in 1938 and the Consett Iron Company started a steelworks in 1939.
- However, in areas such as Jarrow the depression continued until World War Two, when industry prospered as a result of the country's need for rearmament.

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