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Mit demokratycznej większości

Myth of Democratic Majority

Summary

Democracy creates conditions of policy making using one of the two methods: in direct democracy there is no separate ruling group – common people rule through a majority principle; in indirect democracy, i.e., the representational one – the ruling group is controlled by people by means of periodical elections. A well-prepared electoral law, free elections, participation of the whole society, and political consciousness of the possibly widest social circles are the factors that enable the making of a strong democratic state. Therefore, a reflection on elections as a tool of democracy should occupy an important position in the whole Catholic social teaching. “Principle of a number” present in democracy has been questioned since antiquity. A discussion about democracy in Aristotle is connected with questioning a conviction that the wisdom of many people is more dependable than the wisdom of a few and a discussion about a question whether politics is an art, like sailing and medicine, whose trade secrets one must know to pursue, or whether all people know enough about it. Democracy is most certainly more than just a function of a simple rule of the majority. At the beginning of the 20th century Pareto asked: “Who is this new deity called “general election?” It is proposed in democracy that in order to preserve the best possible election results substantial principles (such as prohibiting racial discrimination in voting to safeguard the equality principle) should appear and be observed besides procedural principles (e.g. searching for the majority.) John Paul II stressed that democracy is not solely a matter of legal and political procedures, but a substantial moral experiment, which “constantly verifies man’s capability of self-governing. This “capability” can be “measured” in a political community by vitality of some moral convictions, such as choosing persuasion and not violence as a political method.” A democratic form of a political system should not consist in subordinating to the will of the majority just because it is the voice of the majority, but subordinating to a reasonable opinion of the majority, the right current opinion of the society on a given subject. It is very important to also state that there are such values and principles which even the majority cannot administer. Constitutions are here to confirm and promote these principles, laying foundations for the state law, which defines the boundaries of the “majority right”. When the well-being of people is at stake, the majority principle must prevail. But it cannot be binding when it is the matter of the truth.