

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 9 August 2001 9:12 PM
To: ecita.sen@aph.gov.au
[REDACTED]
Subject: Contribution Senate Inquiry ABC Board Members

The Secretary,
Senate Environment, Communications, Info Tech & the Arts References
Committee,
S157, Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Management board and policy

Dear sir, madam,

As a contribution to the Senate Inquiry into the methods of appointment of ABC Board members, I would like to bring the Sociocratic Method of decision making under your attention as a possible way of organising this public entity in the future. I am writing because I am impressed with the quality and choice of the ABC's programs and would like to see it continue as an organisation that is not under any political or commercial pressure.

Sociocracy's first and foremost characteristic is the "production" of equivalence in decision making. That is, in decisions of policy. Decisions of an executive nature are delegated to the members of the (same) organisation who have their own well defined domain, within which autonomous decisions can be made. For decisions of policy, the parallel sociocratic circle organisation is organised through regular "circle meetings". In these meetings tasks and functions are allocated to the (same) members of the executive organisation, who keep their logbooks in such a way, that it builds its own contribution to the "memory of the organisation", an important factor in the learning capacity of the organisation.

To ensure that equivalence in decision making becomes fact and does not remain a far away vision, the following ground rules have proven their value:

1. The principle of consent governs the decision-making. Decisions of policy must be made by consent, which has to be given in an explicit statement of "no argued objection".
2. The organisation is built up of circles that are linked with a circle of the next higher level in such a way that (at least) one representative and the leader of that circle take part in the decision making on the next higher level.
3. The circles maintain their own memory system and integral schooling activities (pertaining to work as well as the sociocratic method) through a circle logbook.
4. Tasks and functions are allocated through sociocratic elections, which means with consent of all the members of the circle in which the task or function occurs.

The last rule was only added as an aid in maintaining the consent-principle, as people tend to stick to ingrained habits of majority voting. This rule also tends to send jitters through managerial ranks, because at first sight it would seem that subordinates could vote their leader out. But because the leader of a sociocratic circle is chosen from the next higher level, elections for this function do not appear on the agenda of the circle involved. However, the representative of that circle has an equal say in matters on the next higher level, so any arguments against a certain person can be weighed along with

the pros. Sociocracy is all about arguments. Arguments used in the positive sense of the word, which means that they provide a yardstick for sizing up proposals and decisions. It is about finding the best possible solution to a problem and the best possible person for a certain position.

Sociocracy is a science that has been officially recognised as such only recently (1998) through its addition to the curriculum of the faculty of Management Sciences of Maastricht University in the Netherlands. In fact the in-built evaluation method ensures its scientific validity (another factor in the learning ability of an organisation).

Sociocracy produces organisations without shackles. It is a tool for team building, increased efficiency and creative problem solving.

In the attachment you will find more detailed information about sociocracy (subject to copyrights Sociocratic Centre).

A global web site is under construction, but limited information is available on the SCN web site: www.sociocratie.nl

Yours, sincerely,

Marielle Jansen
P.O.Box 411
Samford, Qld. 4520
[REDACTED]

Ps: As I am travelling at the moment, I prefer communication by email.