

## THE PRAGUE POST

The Prague Post, April 3, page A1

### 'Communism with a young face'

#### Before reading:

What do you know about the present day Communist party? How many seats do they hold in the parliament? Do you think there is a difference between the communist party 15 years ago and the communist party today?

Before reading the article, write down all your thoughts and ideas about the communist party. After reading, write down your thoughts again. Was anything different?

#### Questions after reading:

1. Who is Kateřina Konečná?
2. What party is she running for in the June election?
3. How much support does the communist party have in the Czech Republic?
4. What two age groups tend to vote for the communist party?
5. How have some of Kateřina Konečná's friends reacted to her candidacy?
6. What is the average age of the members of the Chamber of Deputies?
7. How does Kateřina Konečná compare the Communist Party of today with the communist party of the past?
8. How do the nations' other parties treat the KSČM?
9. How does Kateřina Konečná feel about the Czech Republic joining NATO?

#### Vocabulary:

to revamp – vylepšit, předělat  
to blush – začervenat se  
credentials – pověřovací listiny  
poll – průzkum  
to shun – vyhbat se, stranit se  
constituency – volební obvod  
to brush off – smést  
indifferent – lhostejn  
ripe pickings – správná okamžik  
disaffection – ztráta důvěry  
to embezzle – zpronevřit  
asset strippers – zloději vlastnictví  
to stem – pocházet, pramenit  
interim – prozatímní, dočasn  
pariah – vyvrhel, vyděděnec  
to pin one's hopes on sth – vkládat naděje, doufat v co  
kin – příbuzenstvo  
ambivalence – rozpolcenost

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### 'Bank's political donations debated'

#### Before reading:

How do you think political parties pay for their campaigns? Should the government limit how much money a person or company can donate? Should companies be allowed to donate money to political campaigns or should it only be individuals? What about people, companies or organizations from outside of the country? Should foreigners be allowed to give money to Czech political parties? Do you think that the amount of money a party has is related to how well they do in an election?

#### Questions after reading:

1. What has Česká spořitelna (ČS) done with regards to the upcoming elections?
2. What does ČS CEO (Chief Executive Officer) say about democracy?
3. How much has ČS donated, and to which parties?
4. What political parties are unhappy about this?
5. Did all the political parties that received the donation accept it? Under what circumstances?
6. Why did ČS not include the Communist Party (KSČM) in its donation? What reasons did they give?
7. Why are politicians and watch-dog groups worried about campaign finances?
8. According to the article, how are campaign donations made in other countries, like the United States?

#### Vocabulary:

to stir – vyburcovat  
blatant – očividn, nehorázn  
to curry favor – předcházet si (koho)  
misgiving – obava, pochybnost  
to withdraw from sth – odstoupit (od čeho)  
to surface – objevit se, vyplout na povrch  
to tighten – zpřísnit

## WORKSHOP

Prague Post Endowment Fund would like to invite you to the workshop "How to Effectively Teach Controversial Issues".

**When?** Saturday, May 4th, 2002

**What time?** from 12 to 3.45 p.m.

**Where?** ITC building, Kaprova 14, Praha 1

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### 'Meet the Press'

#### Before reading:

What newspapers do you read?

Do you think that newspapers should be politically objective?

Does the newspaper you read have a political bias? What kind of political bias does it have?

#### Questions after reading:

1. How has the newspaper business changed since 1991?
2. Which politician did most newspapers support in 1991?
3. What events "sparked" public upset in 2001 and in 1993?
4. What news agencies were involved?
5. Which newspaper did the article place on the left of the political spectrum?
6. Which newspaper did the article place on the right of the political spectrum?
7. Who owns the majority of Czech newspapers?
8. Do they have any input over the content of the papers they own?

#### Vocabulary:

run-up – začátek, počátek  
to bias – v. ovlivnit (nepřiznivě), n. vliv, náklonnost  
defunct – zanikl  
staunchly – neochvějně, vytrvale  
to buttress – podpořit, posílit  
affiliation – spojení  
to loom – blížít se  
to spark – podnítit, vyvolat  
to slant – b. t nakloněn (kam), tendenčně zkusit  
to tilt – naklonit se  
collusion – tajná dohoda  
hazy – nejasn, mlhav  
to tip off – předat informace  
seduction – lákání, vábení  
to dumb-down – zjednodušit  
to disdain – pohrdání, opovržení



The workshop will be held in English. It is free of charge. Teachers traveling to the workshop from outside Prague can have their travel costs reimbursed.

To register, please contact the Prague Post Endowment Fund, Štěpánská 20, Praha 1

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E-mail: foundation2@praguepost.cz

# LESSON PLAN: Government

## What is your opinion of government? What does government do?

In the simplest sense, government determines the way a country, state, county, township, city or village is run. Government also refers to a particular group in society that has the right to make and enforce laws. In many cases, the government runs the systems of education, health, trade, foreign affairs, environment, culture and welfare. Depending upon the type of government your country has, the government may be more or less involved with the lives of its people. In many cases, a preference towards or away from government involvement dictates what an individual's political preferences are.

Some feel that the government should exist to provide an equal quality of life or an equal opportunity for quality for all its citizens. This usually means a very involved state, where the government has a great deal of influence over the lives of its citizens.

On the other side, there are people who feel that the less government involvement there is, the better. In its barest sense, this would be a government that provides law and order and maybe international relations.

## What do you think government should do for you?

Should the state be involved in your life? If so, how much? These are important questions to ask yourself. The answers you come to will let you know what kind of government you want to have. What are your values? What do you believe is right or wrong?

If you believe that people should share everything then your political choices should reflect that. Conversely, if you think that people are best when they are free to compete, then you should vote according to that ideology. If your opinions are the same as the majority of other voters, then the government you choose, ideally, will reflect your values. Of course, we live in a world where there are billions of people and billions of opinions and values, and as a result, politics is never one extreme or the other.

## What kind of Government does the Czech Republic have?

The Czech Republic is a parliamentary democracy. This means that there is a group of people who were chosen as representatives of the general population, who make laws. Representatives meet in the parliament. Laws are the rules that all the people of the country must obey, otherwise they face punishment. If you refer to page 35 in the citizen's handbook supplied by the Center For Democracy and

Free Enterprise, you will see how the political power structure of the country works. Look at page 45 to see how a proposed law becomes a law. Remember that the people voting for this law were elected by the citizens of this country (you).

## Do you think that politicians really represent the interests of the people who elected them? Is there any way for you to ensure that they do?

One way is not to vote for politicians who haven't represented their constituents' interests in the past. Are there any other ways? Brainstorm ideas in groups.

## What does it mean for you, as a citizen of this country, that the Czech Republic is a parliamentary democracy?



The type of government that exists in this country means that you essentially live in a social democracy. (Refer to *Newspapers In Education 9.12, Civics Page for an explanation of social democracy as a political system*). This means that while this country has a market economy and its citizens have personal and religious freedom, you are taxed for things like state run health care, education and welfare programs, among other things. Take a look at pages 34 and 35 to further understand the relationship between the citizen (you) and the government.

**Can you name the four major parties in the Czech Republic? Can you name their leaders? What do they stand for? How involved do they want to be in the lives of the citizens of this country? Is it important that there be different political parties? What would happen if there were only one party to vote for? Can you name any of the minor parties in the Czech Republic? Why are they not as popular as the major parties? What do they believe in that makes them different?**

## What are the advantages of democracy?

People generally understand that social decisions are not made by society at large, but by individuals, and the social decisions often benefit some individuals

and penalize others. Democracy is the best method by which the government can be accountable for representing the interests of the individual. All the techniques that allow decision-making to be inclusive and egalitarian, rather than exclusive and hierarchical, we call democratic.

The advantages are that individual people, and their interests, are represented in the government. Society is made of a many different types of people. Rather than trying to make them all fit into one molded type of person, democracy tries to create a state where people are free to be who they are, so long as they don't hurt anyone else doing it. In essence it's the government representing the needs of the majority, while trying not to exclude or alienate the minority. The biggest disadvantage of democracy is that if your party doesn't win, your particular needs may not be represented exactly the way you'd like. The ideal behind it is that individuals have an equal chance for their ideology to be represented.

## How can you make a difference?

Do you think that only the government can change the way your community is? If you said yes, that's not necessarily true. In a democracy, people are free to, and encouraged to, take the initiative to try and change or improve things in your community. Just because you live in a society with a certain degree of government involvement, you still live in a free society where you are welcome to pursue your interests and beliefs. Look at page 31, the story of the lady who changed her community, by getting involved with her government and her community.

**Can you think of anything you'd like to change in your community? How would you go about doing it? Who would you contact first? Think of a community improvement plan with your class and work out the details of your project. Then talk to your local government and see the project through.**

## Definitions:

government - a group of people governing a country or state  
community - people living in one place considered as a whole

## Some words you might need:

státní správa - government (state administration)  
vláda - cabinet  
Poslanecká sněmovna - Chamber of Deputies  
Senát - Senate  
Ústava - Constitution  
návrh zákona - bill, draft  
přijmout zákon - to enact, to pass  
zákon - law, act

# Státní správa

## Jak je váš názor na státní správu? Co státní správa dělá?

Jednoduše řečeno, státní správa určuje, jak bude řízena a spravována země, stát, kraj, město, velkoměsto nebo vesnice. Státní správa je také určitou skupinou ve společnosti, která má právo vytvářet a prosazovat zákony. V mnoha případech státní správa řídí systémy vzdělávání, zdravotnictví, obchodu, zahraničních věcí, životního prostředí, kultury a sociálního zabezpečení. V závislosti na druhu státní správy, jakou daná země má, může být státní správa do života svých občanů zapojena více, nebo méně. V mnoha případech ovlivňuje upřednostňování většího zapojení státní správy, nebo naopak vzdalování se od tohoto zapojení, politické preference jednotlivých občanů.

Někteří cítí, že státní správa by měla poskytovat rovnoprávnou kvalitu života nebo stejné možnosti pro všechny občany. Toto obvykle znamená velké zapojení státu, kde má státní správa velký vliv na životy občanů.

Na druhé straně existují lidé, kteří si myslí, že čím méně je státní správa zapojena, tím lépe. Takováto státní správa by pouze připravovala zákony a nařízení a možná zabezpečovala mezinárodní vztahy.

## Co si myslíte, že by státní správa měla dělat pro vás?

Měl by být stát zapojen do vašeho života? Pokud ano, pak jak? Toto jsou důležité otázky, na které byste se měli ptát. Odpovědi, se kterými přijдете vám ukáží, jaký typ státní správy byste chtěli. Jaké jsou vaše hodnoty? Co si myslíte, že je správné a co špatné?

Jestli věříte tomu, že by se lidé měli o vše dělit, pak by to vaše politická volba měla odrážet. A opačně, když si myslíte, že lidem je nejlépe, když mohou mít volnost soutěžit, pak byste měli volit podle této ideologie. Pokud jsou vaše názory stejné jako názory většiny voličů, pak bude státní správa, kterou vyberete, v ideálním případě, odrážet také vaše hodnoty. Samozřejmě, že žijeme ve světě, ve kterém jsou miliardy lidí a miliardy názorů a hodnot, a výsledkem toho je, že politika nikdy není pouze jedním extrémem.

## Jak druh státní správy má Česká republika?

Česká republika je parlamentní demokracií. Toto znamená, že zde existuje skupina lidí, která byla vybrána, aby zastupovala celkovou populaci, a která přijímá zákony. Tito zástupci se setkávají v Parlamentu. Zákony jsou pravidla, která musí všichni lidé země poslouchat, jinak jim hrozí potrestání. Pokud se podíváte na stranu 35 Příručky občana,

připravenou Centrem pro demokracii a svobodné podnikání, uvidíte, jak struktura politická síly funguje. Podívejte se na stranu 45, kde je ukázáno, jak se z návrhu stane zákon. Pamatujte na to, že lidé, kteří hlasují pro ten či onen zákon byli zvoleni občany dané země (vámi).

## Myslíte si, že politici opravdu zastupují zájmy lidí, kteří je zvolili? Existuje nějaký způsob, kterým by se zajistilo, aby tak činili?

Jednou možností je nevolit politiky, kteří nezastupovali zájmy svých voličů v minulosti. Existují jiné možnosti? Ve skupinách sepište vaše nápady.

## Co pro vás, jako obyvatele této země, znamená, že je Česká republika parlamentní demokracií?

Typ státní správy, která existuje v České republice znamená, že v podstatě žijete v sociální demokracii. (*Pro vysvětlení sociální demokracie jako politického systému se podívejte do Newspapers in Education, ročník 9, číslo 12.*) Toto znamená, že zatímco má Česká republika tržní ekonomiku a její občané mají osobní a náboženskou svobodu, odvádí občané daně na např. státem spravovanou zdravotní péči, vzdělání a sociální programy. Pro větší pochopení vztahu mezi občanem (vámi) a vládou se podívejte na strany 34 a 35.



Vyjmenujte čtyři hlavní politické strany v České republice. Jmenujte jejich předsedy. Jak mají program? Jak moc se chtějí angažovat v životě občanů České republiky? Je důležité, kde jsou různé politické strany? Co by se stalo, kdyby zde byla pouze jedna strana, kterou byste mohli volit?

Jmenujte alespoň několik minoritních politických stran v České republice. Proč nejsou tak populární, jako hlavní strany? Co si myslíte, že je od hlavních stran odděluje?

## Jaké jsou v hody demokracie?

Lidé všeobecně chápou fakt, že rozhod-

nutí týkající se sociální oblasti nejsou připravována společností jako takovou, ale jednotlivci. Tato rozhodnutí často přinášejí prospěch některým jednotlivcům a trestají druhé. Demokracie je nejlepší metodou, jak může být státní správa zodpovědná za zastupování zájmů jednotlivce. Demokraticky mohou být nazvány všechny techniky, které jsou přístupné, stejné a rovné pro všechny, a které nejsou hierarchické a nezahrnují pouze některé občany.

V hody demokracie jsou takové, že jednotliví lidé a jejich zájmy jsou reprezentovány ve státní správě. Společnost je tvořena mnoha různými typy lidí. Demokracie nechce dávat všechny lidi "do škatulky". Demokracie se snaží vytvořit stát, ve kterém mají lidé svobodu být takovými, jakými jsou, za podmínky, že nikoho nepoškozují. V podstatě je to státní správa, která zastupuje potřeby většiny, a která nezapomíná na minoritu. Největší nevýhodou demokracie je, že pokud vaše strana nevyhraje, vaše konkrétní potřeby nemusí být předneseny přesně tak, jak byste si to přáli. Jednotlivci ale mají stejné šance na to, že jejich ideologie bude reprezentována.

## Jak můžete přispět ke změně?

Domníváte se, že záležitosti vaší komunity může změnit pouze státní správa? Pokud jste odpověděli ano, nemusí to být nutně pravda. V demokracii mají lidé volnost a jsou také povzbuzováni k tomu, aby se sami ujali iniciativy a snažili se změnit, nebo vylepšit, věci v komunitě. Přestože žijete ve společnosti s určitým stupněm zapojení státní správy, stále žijete ve společnosti svobodné, kde můžete svobodně prosazovat vaše zájmy a názory. Podívejte se na stranu 31, na příběh paní, která změnila komunitu tím, že se zapojila do státní správy a do své komunity.

Zamyslete se nad tím, co byste chtěli ve vaší komunitě změnit. Jak byste tuto změnu uskutečnili? Koho byste prvně kontaktovali? Spolu se třídou přemýšlejte o tom, jak by se vaše komunita mohla zlepšit a vypracujte detaily vašeho projektu. Poté promluvte s vaší místní státní správou a projděte s nimi váš návrh projektu.

## Poznámka:

V angličtině znamená slovo 'government' celou státní správu (která zahrnuje jak místní orgány, tak krajská zastupitelstva, ministerstva, Parlament atd.).

V češtině slovo 'vláda' označuje nejvyšší výkonný orgán státní moci.

## Slovníček:

komunita – sociologický souhrn lidí obvyklých určitý prostor, kde vykonávají činnosti, a tvořících zpravidla samostatnou jednotku

# Voting Technology

At present, most governments are representative democracies. This is mostly because there are far too many people in these countries to have individual representation. It was easy to allow every man to have his say and his vote in ancient Greece, since they were dealing with only hundreds of people, not millions as we are today. Because of this, we elect people to represent our opinions and needs to the government. As you already know, these representatives are voted in by a regular election process, which usually involves paper, pencils, maybe a machine or two, and a whole lot of counting.

While banks can move millions of units of currency with a series of electric commands and armies and commercial planes are operated by electronics, one of the most important things that people do in their lives is still



done the same way it was done hundreds of years ago. Voting. You can buy just about anything on the Internet by making a series of choices, you can vote in on-line opinion polls and you can access your bank account and work with your money from a secure link or even from your mobile phone. Still, when you vote, when you do your most important act as a citizen of a democratic country, you make marks on paper, which are counted by people. While the digital revolution is on fast-forward, voting technology is still emerging from the 19th century.

So why has voting become one of the last things to be consumed in the wave technological progress that has enabled humanity to become so computerized? The answer is the high cost of new voting systems, tradition and fear of change and the worry that the lack of a paper trail will compromise the voting process. People, in general, do not have a great deal of faith in electronic systems, yet they use them daily.

One of the biggest reasons for the increasing use of computers and microchip technology is that they are less fallible than humans in situations involving mathematics. Anything that works with a calculation or an algorithm can usually be done faster and with a higher probability of validity by a computer. This isn't to say the computers are by any means perfect. Their technology and security is constantly being improved and adapted. This imperfection is one of the biggest reasons why voting hasn't

become a computerized institution.

Most experts agree that the Internet isn't safe enough for something as serious as voting and elections. At present there is still vulnerability in servers, incompatible communications structures, viruses, and non-technical treats like vote selling that make Internet voting impossible. There is also a question of accessibility. To vote on the Internet, the government must assure its citizens that everyone will have access to a computer where they can cast their ballot and that they even understand how to use a computer. Imagine your grandparents trying to connect to the

Internet to vote. Even past that, how can the government be sure that the people voting are really who they appear to be. While the anonymity of the Internet is generally a great thing, in cases of elections, it's vital that you be

identified and counted. This is very important for people who are out of the country on the day of the election. If Internet voting was made possible, people wouldn't be limited by geography to take part in the election process.

Recall the recent American Presidential elections, where a punch card system and a lever system proved to be unreliable (In the United States, every individual state may decide what kind of apparatus or machinery they want to use to record and count votes). In the one state (California) where an ATM-like touch screen system was used, voters praised the area for making voting so fast and easy. Officials in the area were also happy, as they believe that the 14 million USD system will quickly pay for itself, as they will no longer require paper for ballots and will have their election results faster.

Many technologically inclined people imagine a future where computers make the important issues of democracy available to all people. Computers would tally millions of votes on many different issues, quickly and, hopefully, economically. This isn't to say that there would no longer be representatives, but there is hope that if voting became more accessible and less expensive, people would become more active in civics.

## Glossary:

*fallible* - chybyjící  
*institution* - instituce  
*vulnerability* - zranitelnost  
*anonymity* - anonymita  
*tally* - záznam

## Activities:

How do people vote in the Czech Republic? How do people become registered in the Czech Republic? Have you ever gone with your parents when they voted? Did it look like an easy thing to do?

If you're not eligible to vote in the upcoming election, hold a secret vote in your class and see which party would win. How did you insure that everyone's vote remained secret and confidential?

Do you think that voting should become electronic? What are the risks associated with electronic voting? Should the government have a backup for electronic voting?

What should they do if the power goes out, or someone hacks into the voting system?

## Quotes about politics

"Who's more foolish: the fool, or the fool who follows him?"

- Obi Wan Kenobi

"We ... do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate."

- Thomas Jefferson

"You can't escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."

- Abraham Lincoln

"I believe there's something out there watching over us. Unfortunately, it's the government."

- Woody Allen

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