

General Certificate of Education
January 2003
Advanced Level Examination



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
Unit 5 The Politics of the USA

GOV5

Tuesday 28 January 2003 Afternoon Session

In addition to this paper you will require:
a 12-page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

Instructions

- Use blue or black ink or ball-point pen. Pencil should only be used for drawing.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is GOV5.
- Answer **Question 1** and **one** other question.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 80.
- Mark allocations are shown in brackets.
- You will be assessed on your ability to use an appropriate form and style of writing, to organise relevant information clearly and coherently, and to use specialist vocabulary, where appropriate. The degree of legibility of your handwriting and the level of accuracy of your spelling, punctuation and grammar will also be taken into account.

Advice

- You are advised to spend approximately 10 minutes reading the examination paper before you attempt the questions.
- You are advised to spend the same amount of time on each question.

Answer **Question 1** and **one** other question.

- 1 Study the extract below and answer parts (a), (b) and (c) which follow.

Total for this question: 40 marks

INITIATIVES AND REFERENDUMS

In many established democracies, direct appeals to voters such as *referendums* and *initiatives* are now part of the machinery for constitutional change. They are increasingly used to resolve the most intractable or divisive public issues. In several American states, referendums are a central feature of the political system, rivalling legislatures in significance, although the United States has never held a nationwide referendum.

Both advisory and mandatory referendums can usually only be called by those in office, most often by the government of the day. But in the United States, petitions by voters themselves can put a referendum on the ballot. These are known as 'initiatives', and can be used to propose and pass new legislation. In this form they can be powerful and unpredictable political tools, and their use has grown in recent years. However, most referendums, even those initiated by voters, fail.

The debate about referendums goes to the heart of what is meant by democracy. Those who favour referendums maintain that consulting citizens directly is the only truly democratic way to determine policy. If popular sovereignty is to mean anything, voters must have the right to set the agenda, discuss the issues, and then themselves make the final decisions. Delegating these tasks to elected politicians inevitably distorts the wishes of voters.

Those sceptical of referendums believe that representative democracy achieves these goals much better than referendums. Genuine direct democracy can only work for political groups so small that citizens can meet face to face, and in modern society the full participation of every citizen is impossible. Elected representatives can weigh conflicting priorities, negotiate compromises and make well-informed decisions. Citizens voting in single-issue referendums have difficulty doing any of these things. American experience suggests there is unlikely to be a move away from representative to direct democracy, but at the same time the use of referendums and initiatives is likely to grow with technological advances. In an age of mass communication, confining the powers of citizens to voting in elections every few years seems a crude approach and it will become difficult to justify failing to consult the voters directly on a range of issues.

Source: adapted from an article in The Economist, 14 August 1999

- (a) Using the extract, explain the difference between *referendums* and *initiatives*. (8 marks)
- (b) Using the extract and your own knowledge, suggest reasons why the use of direct democracy has grown in the USA in recent years. (12 marks)
- (c) Evaluate the case for the use of both referendums **and** initiatives in making public policy decisions for US citizens. (20 marks)

Answer **either** Question 2 or Question 3 or Question 4.

- 2 “Although there are innumerable small parties within the USA, none has come close to making an electoral breakthrough.”

Discuss the factors that lead to two-party dominance in the highly diverse USA. (40 marks)

- 3 Assess the factors which determine the level of success of pressure groups within the US political system. (40 marks)

- 4 “The USA has one of the lowest levels of electoral participation in any democracy.”

Why do so few participate in the electoral process? (40 marks)

END OF QUESTIONS

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