

# What does real democracy look like?

Open  
Government  
Network

Northern Ireland



Workshop by Jenny Muir & Paul Braithwaite  
Action Changes Things Conference  
29<sup>th</sup> May 2019



# What does democracy mean to you?

- Grab your phone or tablet
- Go to [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com)
- Put in code
- Answer the questions as they appear

Democracy



Democracy means...



DEMOS = THE PEOPLE

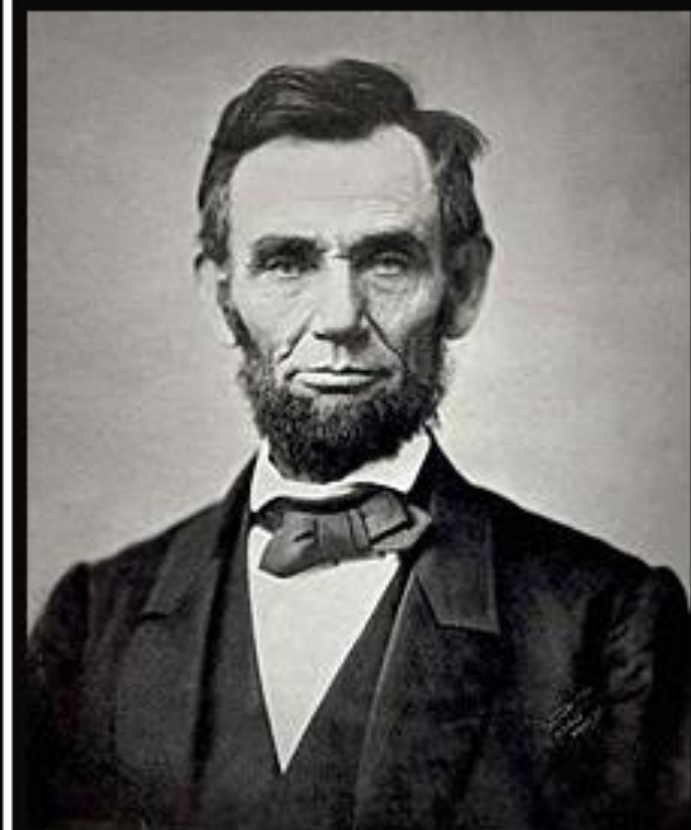
KRATOS = TO RULE

...rule by the people!



**“If liberty and equality are chiefly  
to be found in democracy,  
they will be best attained when  
all persons alike share in government”**

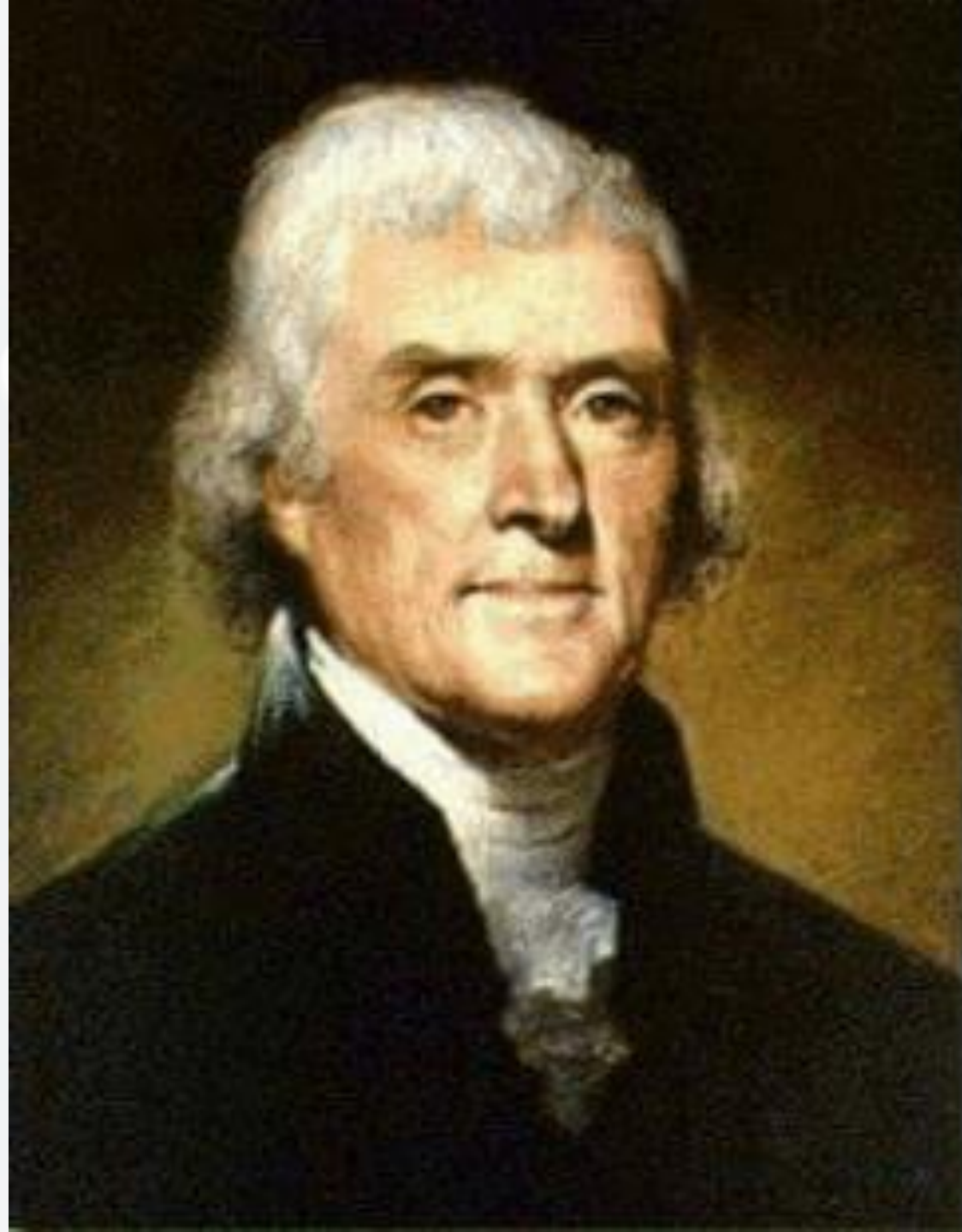
**- ARISTOTLE**



Democracy is the government of the people, by  
the people, for the people.

(Abraham Lincoln)



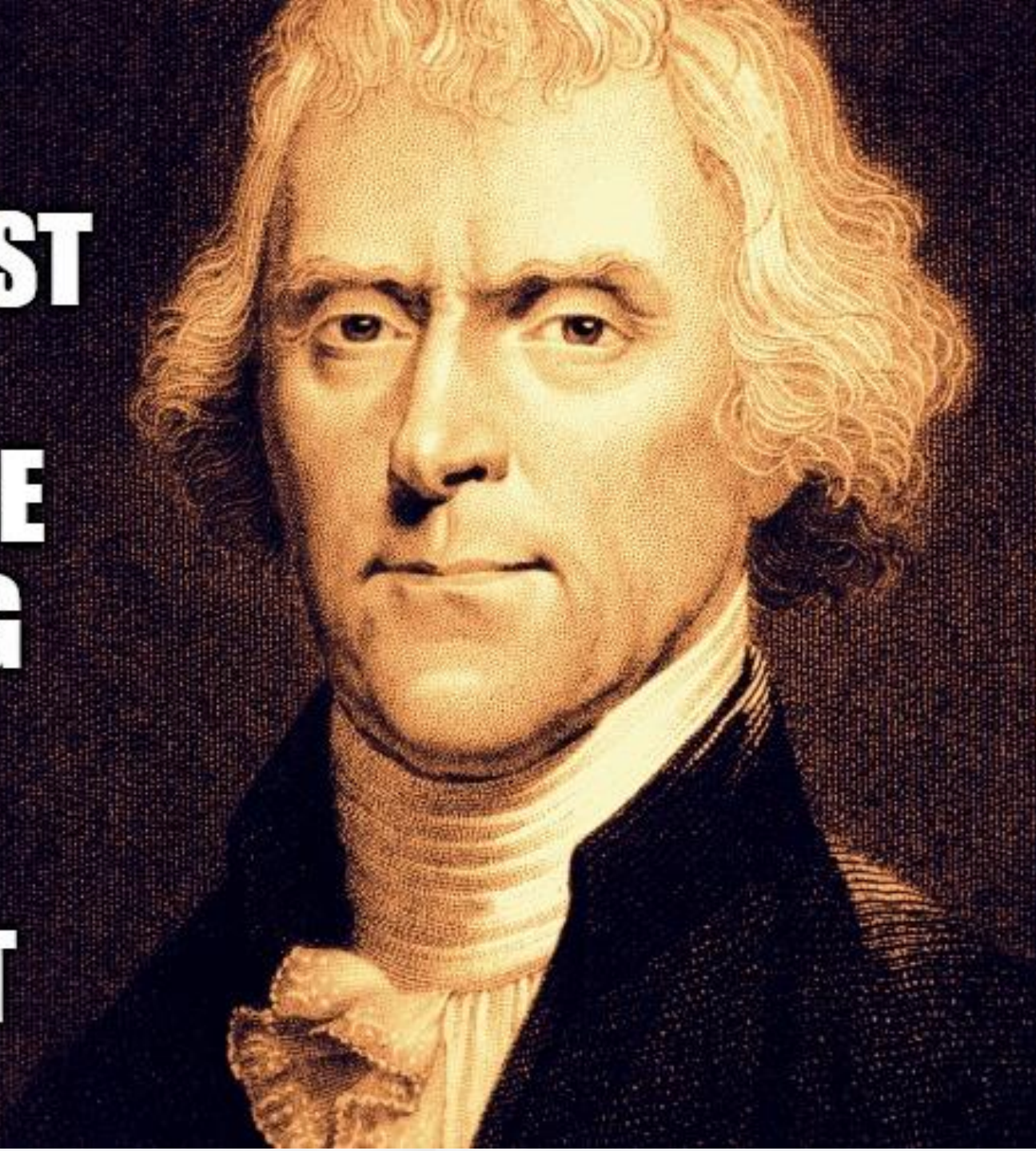


**“A democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where fifty-one percent of the people may take away the rights of the other forty-nine.”**

**-Thomas Jefferson**



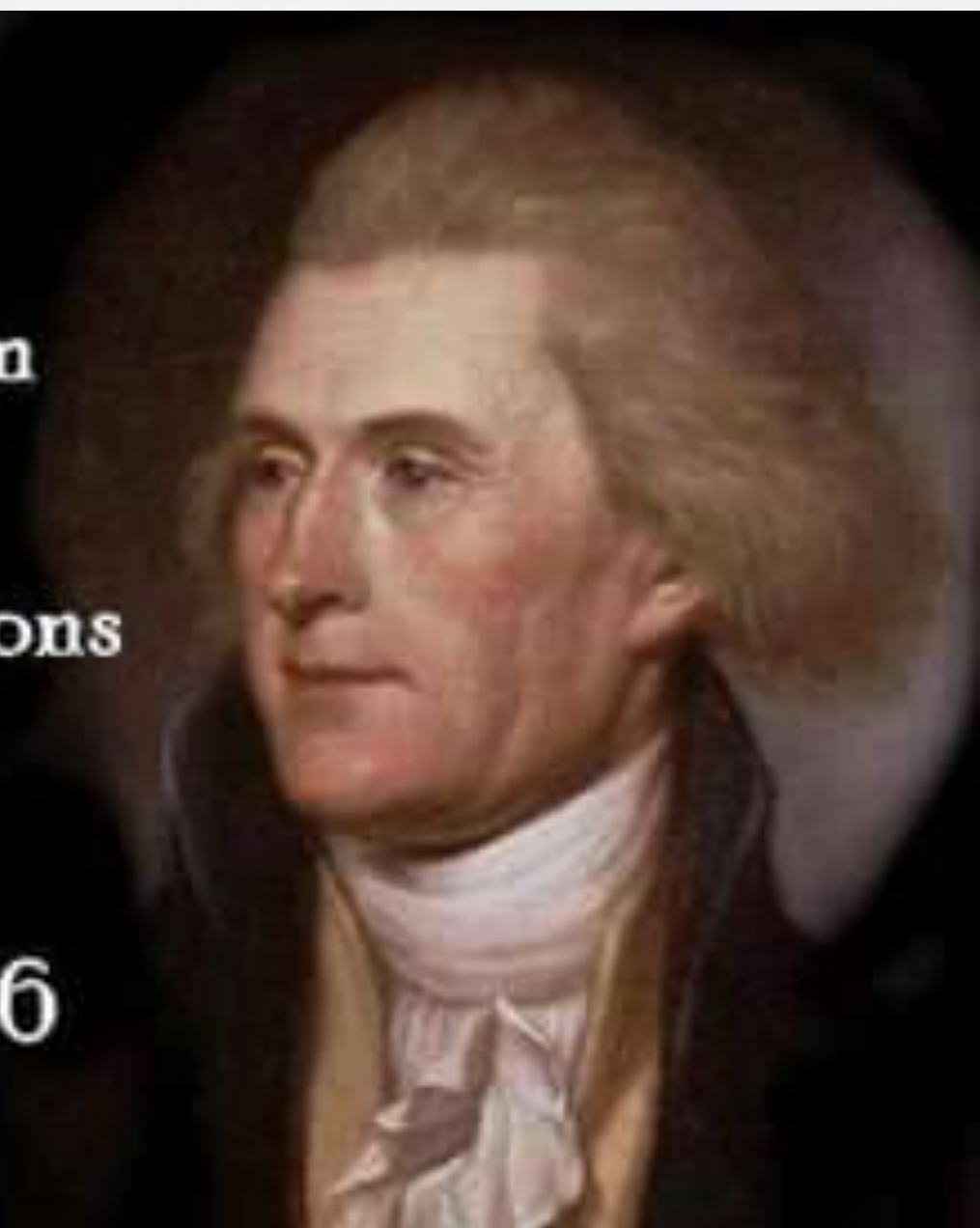
**THE DEMOCRACY  
WILL CEASE TO EXIST  
WHEN YOU TAKE  
AWAY FROM THOSE  
WHO ARE WILLING  
TO WORK AND  
GIVE TO THOSE  
WHO WOULD NOT**





"The end of democracy and the defeat of the American Revolution will occur when government falls into the hands of lending institutions and moneyed incorporations."

-- Thomas Jefferson, 1816





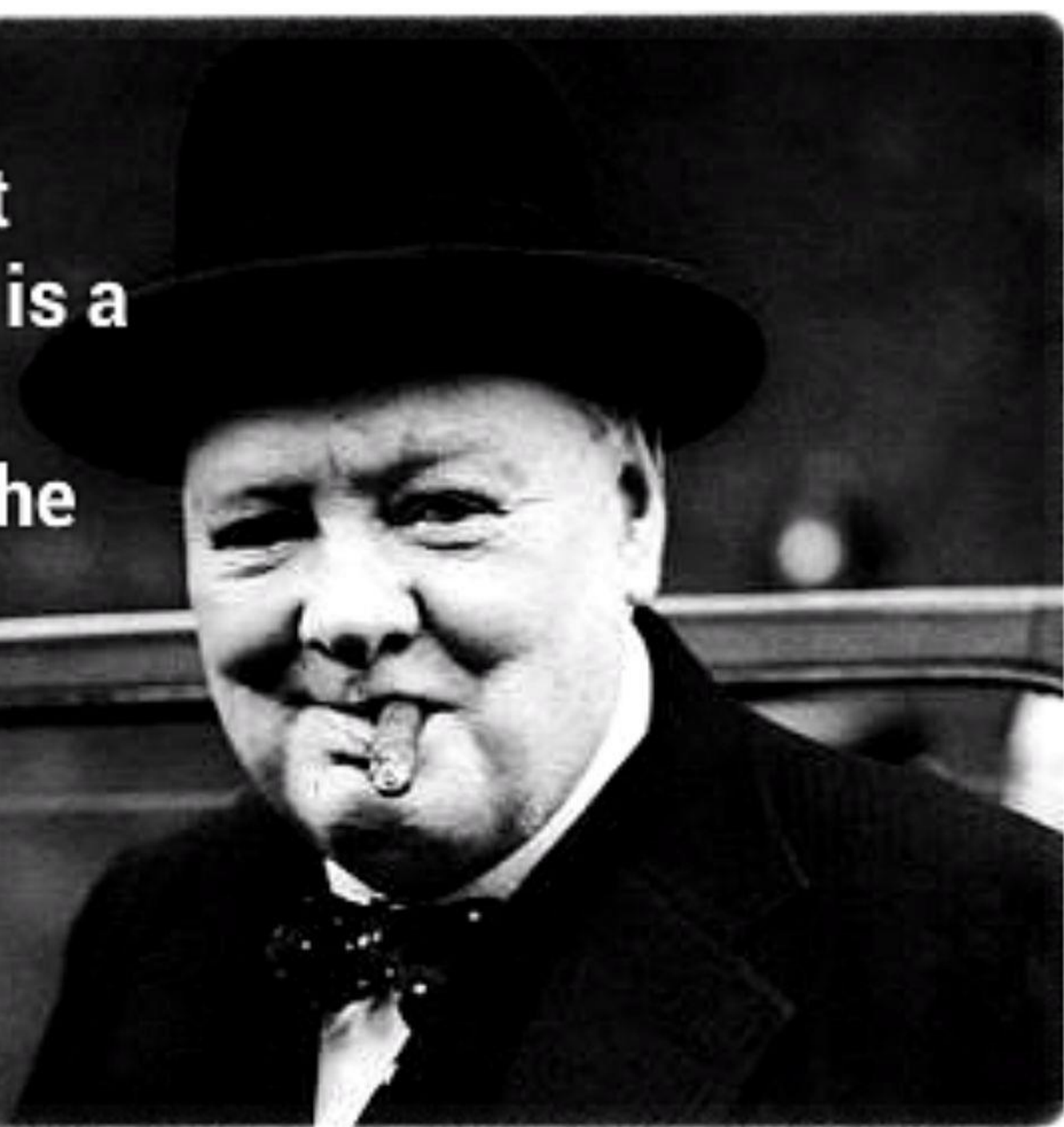


**Democracy is the worst  
form of government  
except for all  
the others**

~ Winston Churchill ~

**"The best argument  
against democracy is a  
five-minute  
conversation with the  
average voter."**

**(Winston Churchill)**







“The people of England deceive themselves when they fancy they are free; they are so, in fact, only during the election of members of parliament: for, as soon as a new one is elected, they are again in chains, and are nothing.”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, political philosopher

# What's the most democratic country in the world?



- The Economist's Democracy Index measures how democratic nations are based on five criteria:
  1. *electoral process and pluralism*
  2. *civil liberties*
  3. *the functioning of government*
  4. *political participation*
  5. *political culture*
- A score is calculated for each country and they are ranked and placed in one of four categories:
  1. Full democracy
  2. Flawed democracy
  3. Hybrid regime
  4. Authoritarian regime
- Go back to [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com)
- Answer the questions as they appear



# Open Government Network (NI)

Open  
Government  
Network

Northern Ireland



Our aims:

- To contribute to delivering more open, transparent and accountable government that empowers citizens to shape decisions that impact on their lives
- To actively engage a broad and diverse group of citizens and organisations in advocating more open government in Northern Ireland
- Set up as an informal network in 2014 as an alliance of individual citizens, activists and representatives of community and voluntary organisations, we are now a formally constituted Community Interest Company

# The Open Government Partnership

- UK one of eight founding countries when the OGP was launched in Sept 2011 at the UN General Assembly
- Brings together government reformers and civil society leaders to create action plans that make governments more inclusive, responsive and accountable

*'Open by default'*

*'Policy by the People'*

*'Accountability for Results'*

- The OGP now has over 70 participating countries
- In all of these countries, government and civil society are working together to develop and implement ambitious open government reforms
- 4<sup>th</sup> UK National Open Government action plan pending



<https://www.opengovpartnership.org/>



\_\_\_\_\_



# Open Government in NI



First formal commitments made by previous NI Executive in 2016:

- Commitment 1: Develop & trial effective open policy-making and public engagement methods
  - Commitment 2: Promote greater levels of public sector innovation
  - Commitment 3: To investigate implementation of the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) in Central Procurement operations
  - Commitment 4: open-up government for greater accountability, improve public services and building a more prosperous and equal society
- 
- New set of commitments ready for sign off!



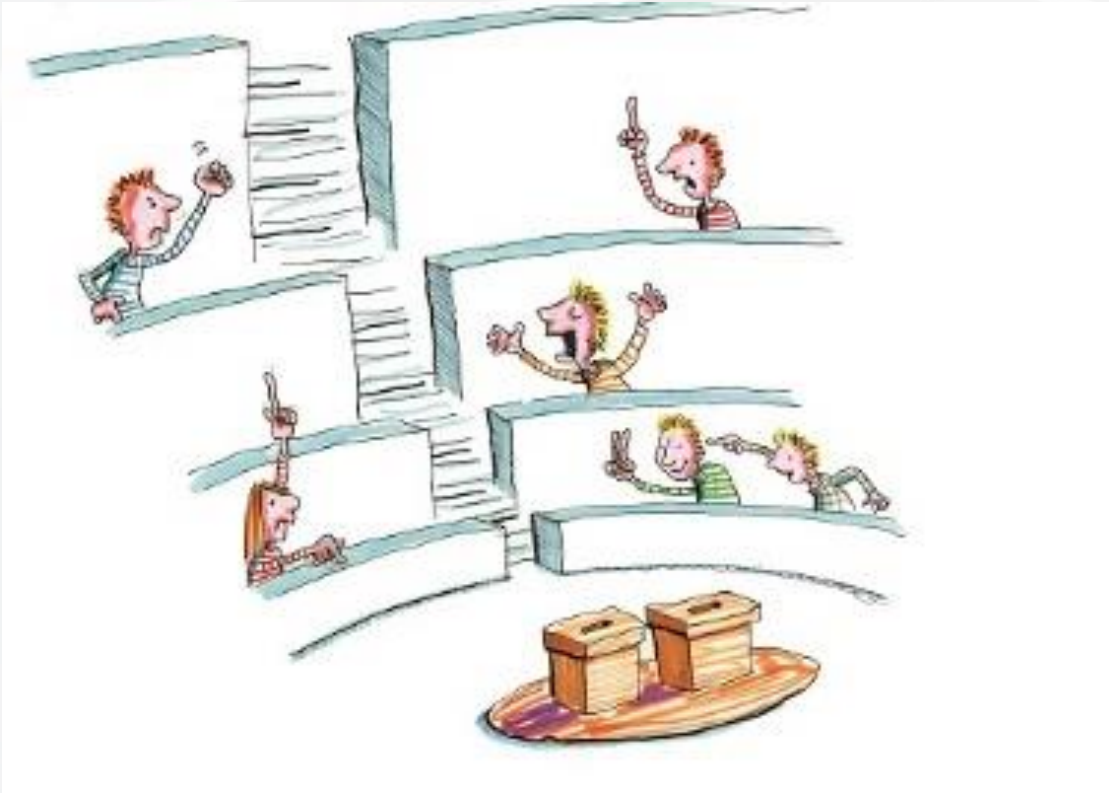




# Breakout discussion

- What issues are you passionate about changing in our society/world?
- How do they relate to open government and democracy? e.g what barriers are there to achieving change?

# Democratic Innovations: Time for some hope!



Citizens' Assemblies



Participatory Budgeting





# What is a Citizens' Assembly?

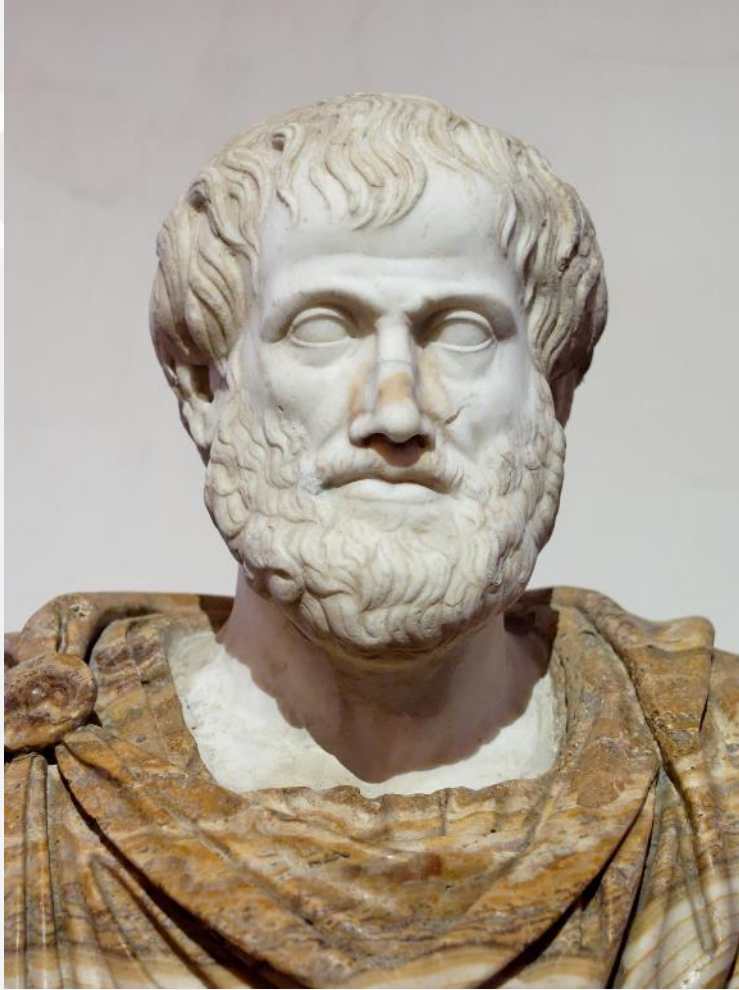
**Randomly selected**



**Deliberative**



# Recalling Ancient Athens



“It is accepted as democratic when public offices are allocated by lot; and as oligarchic when they are filled by election.”

Aristotle, Politics, Book IV





# Why use a Citizens' Assembly?

1. Tackling contest issues
2. Breaking deadlock
3. In-depth engagement
4. Building citizenship
5. Rebuilding trust

Democracy



# Where has it been tried?

- Canada (2004) – British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on electoral reform
- Belgium (2012) – G1000 – open agenda
- Ireland:
  - We The Citizens (2011)
  - Constitutional Convention (2012 – 2014)
  - Irish Citizens' Assembly (2017 – 2018)
- UK:
  - Democracy Matters (2015) – Assembly North (Sheffield), Assembly South (Southampton)
  - Brexit (2017)
  - Social Care (2018) – commissioned by Parliament



# Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland

- One topic (social care), 2 weekends, 80 citizens
- Delivered 27 recommendations for reform of the adult social care system for consideration by the Department of Health;
- Built the skills capacity and confidence of the 80 citizen members, with 99% saying they felt encouraged to participate in future similar initiatives and 97% agreeing that citizens' assemblies should be used more often to inform politicians in decision-making
- MLAs: 74% are aware of the project, 52% agree a future Executive should pay close attention to its findings, and 56% agreed citizens' assemblies could be used in future



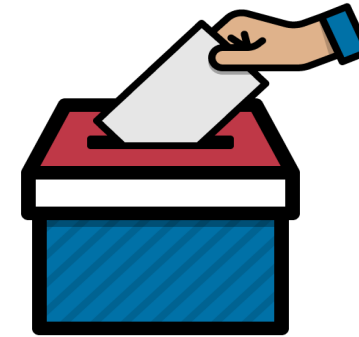
<https://citizensassemblyni.org/>



# Introduction to Participatory Budgeting (PB)

## What is PB?

- Citizens deciding how to allocate part of a public budget; a way to have a direct say in how public funds are used



## How does PB work?

- People bid by presenting their project and saying why it should be funded. *Everyone at the event then votes for their favourites* – usually several votes each

## Who funds PB?

- Government, charities, housing associations etc.
- There is increasing interest in PB all over the world



# Examples of PB

## **International: Brazil – Porto Alegre**

- Introduced by a new city government in late 1980s to increase transparency and fight corruption; resources were re-directed to the most deprived areas
- New capital projects were decided via PB e.g. schools, roads, sanitation, healthcare

## **GB: Scotland**

- Community Choices Fund £1.5m for PB; 1% of local council budgets to be allocated via PB by 2021

## **Northern Ireland: PB Works**

- Lottery funded, £50K and has brought in other funds
- PB education and networking; 7 PB events; evaluation





# PB in action: Rathlin Island



- Distribution of £1,000 community dividend from Manor House (hotel) social enterprise
- Hosted by Rathlin Development and Community Association
- Four projects got £250 each: community choir CD, trip for young people, football team, church
- RDCA is planning more PB events and a community wind turbine to provide an income stream

PB Works: [www.participatorybudgetingworks.org/](http://www.participatorybudgetingworks.org/) - lots of resources including videos

PB Network: <https://pbnetwork.org.uk/>

PB Scotland: <https://pbscotland.scot/>

PB information event and Imagine Belfast PB celebration:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/unlocking-the-potential-of-pb-and-imagine-democracy-you-decide-celebration-event-tickets-60251614200>



As Harvey Milk said in 1978.....

“You have to  
give people  
hope”

ocracy



# Discussion

- Any questions?
- What does this all mean for how you think about real democracy?

Democracy





# Join the NI Open Government Network!

- It's free and easy! Complete form on our website
- Help us identify and lobby for new open government reforms
- Access a support network for any open government issues you're taking action on (or would like to)
- Spread the word – we want to grow!

**Website:** <https://www.opengovernment.org.uk/networks/ni-ogn/>

**Twitter:** @opengovni

**E-mail:** [pbraithwaite@communityfoundationni.org](mailto:pbraithwaite@communityfoundationni.org)