



The WorldVoter

the newsletter of

Vote World Parliament

— democratic world parliament through a global referendum —

www.VoteWorldParliament.org

Vote World Parliament Co-Presidents are Ted Stalets and Bob French

www.RescuePlanForPlanetEarth.com

This site, above, is for the VWP companion book, *Rescue Plan for Planet Earth*

Issue #31, September, 2010

(This issue and all previous issues are posted at <http://voteworldparliament.org/about/newsletter/>)

THE SCORE

As of September 16, 2010, 21,411 people have voted. So far, the votes are 95.5% in favor of creating a democratic world parliament.

Quotes of the month

At best, the UN is part of the bureaucratic system that has brought us the IMF and the World Trade Organization but has failed to do much about preventing mass murder or the violation of human rights even in Rwanda or Somalia, let alone in more organized and powerful states. I think we are as likely to grow a lily from an acorn as we are to grow a democratic world parliament from the UN. Caspar Davis, World Federalist Movement—Canada, Victoria Branch (In an article called “Two Views of a Democratic Global Parliament,” presented below, Davis compares VWP’s global referendum initiative with the idea of a UN Parliamentary Assembly, and concludes that: “Stark’s idea sounds more radical and perhaps quixotic, but I think it may actually be more practical.”)

National governments can’t solve all our problems. The unprecedented environmental and economic crisis our planet faces will require an avalanche of global decisions ... [that] must be taken by directly-elected representatives of the people in a legitimate world parliament. Torbjörn Tännsjö, *Global Democracy: The Case for a World Government*

Two Views of a Democratic Global Parliament

By Caspar Davis

The idea of a global parliament is far from new, but it seems recently to have gotten a second wind and it has caught the attention of both our national organization and the Victoria Branch.

Professor Angel's Case for a UN Parliamentary Assembly

At our March members' meeting, we watched a video lecture prepared for us by Professor Leonard Angel, president of the Vancouver Branch. Professor Angel was advocating a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA)

He said that the idea of a global Parliament has been in the air at least since the ancient Greeks - Socrates and Diogenes both considered themselves citizens of the world. Many others have tried to give it substance, including Canadian World Federalist Dieter Heinrich, who has been working on the idea for 20 years.

The idea has recently had a renaissance and been fleshed out by the Committee for a Democratic UN (KDUN), based in Germany. Their website <http://www.kdun.org/> is a good source of information about the idea, including informative Frequently Asked Questions.

Professor Angel said that there will be two phases to the implementation of the Parliamentary Assembly:

Phase 1 - Initially, the UNPA will be a consultative body with only normative authority; i.e., it will declare how it thinks things ought to be without having any power to make them so. It will probably be made up of members of national parliaments who will be elected to the UNPA by their peers in each nation. It is hoped that in time it will evolve into...

Phase 2 - A directly elected body with legislative authority. It is not clear how the transformation will take place, but this kind of evolution of authority is not new. In 1215 the Magna Carta planted the idea that the king could be bound by law, a seed that centuries later grew into the English Parliament. More recently, the European Parliament evolved in just that way within the European Union.

The UNPA could be created by amendment of the UN Charter, but since amendments can be vetoed by any of the permanent members of the Security Council, that will not happen. It will most likely be established as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly by a supermajority vote in the General Assembly. Many member nations of the General Assembly may agree by a multi-nation treaty to be bound by the legislation of the UNPA.

As World Federalists, we are interested in creating a world federal system. A world federal system has two components: World, and Federal. In Canada we are familiar with a federal system in which the federal government in Ottawa has some powers while others are reserved to the provinces.

In today's world there are many issues that need to be dealt with at the global level, including especially war and the environment:

War - The UN was established in the attempt to prevent wars. Article 2 of the UN Charter declared that "... All Members shall refrain in their international relations from

the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations....” Article 39 gave the Security Council the power to “determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken....” It has so far prevented wars directly between major powers, but the war-prevention clauses of the Charter are being eroded. Many people consider that the US invasion of Iraq was illegal, but the UN made no declaration to that effect, and the International Criminal Court has no jurisdiction because neither the US nor Iraq have signed the ICC treaty. A UNPA could make war illegal. It could regulate the international trade in small arms and in major weapons, and eventually transform militaries into police units.

Environment – Global warming, receding glaciers (the source of most major rivers), ozone depletion, dead zones and plastic continents in the oceans, the decline of fisheries, ocean acidification and dying coral reefs, topsoil loss and aquifer depletion are some of the environmental problems that can be dealt with only at the global level. The ecological footprint was invented by William Rees of UBC in 1992, and developed by his student Mathias Wackernagel as a shorthand way to describe the amount of the world’s resources used by a person, a city, or a nation.

Professor Angel referred to our growing ecological footprint, and introduced the concept of “Global hectares” (gha). This concept was new to me, but it is a measurement of the biocapacity of the entire Earth. It includes cropland, timberland, pastureland, city infrastructure, water resources, and CO2 absorptive capacity. I have found an elaboration on the Web: (see <http://www.wwflearning.org/ecological-budget/about/faq/global-hectare.503.AR.html>)

In 2002 the biosphere had 11.4 billion hectares of biologically productive space corresponding to roughly one quarter of the planet’s surface. This includes 2.0 billion hectares of ocean and 9.4 billion hectares of land. One global hectare is a hectare representing the average capacity of one of these 11.4 billion hectares. Global hectares allow the meaningful comparison of the ecological footprints of different countries, which use different qualities and mixes of cropland, grazing land, and forest. For comparative purposes an ecological footprint is usually expressed in gha per person. Once all global hectares of bioproductive land and sea are divided by the total global population, we end up with our fair earth share - 1.8 gha.

By 1980 we were using 100% of the planet’s renewable resources. Since then we have been using more than 100% by taking resources like fish and timber faster than they can be replenished. Wackernagel has computed that by 1999 we were using 120% of the planetary global hectares.

In Professor Angel’s lifetime the human population has grown from 2.5 billion to 6.5 billion. Per capita consumption has also risen steeply in that time. The ecological crisis is global, and it needs global institutions to deal with it. A UNPA could regulate the annual consumption of global hectares, and allocate the impact fairly among the nations of the planet.

Professor Angel says that in order to achieve a UNPA we need everyone’s support, and that if you support it you will be able to tell your grandchildren that you were a supporter from the start.

We all need a way to express ourselves at the global level. We elect our city council, our provincial government, and the government in Ottawa, but we also feel that we are global citizens, and there is no institution through which we can express ourselves at the global level, as members of the human family.

The UNPA will cause a change in the global psyche. We all view ourselves as members of some group, and there is always some other group, some Other, against which we are competing. Through the UNPA we could all come to see ourselves as members of one global family, just as we regard ourselves as members of a nation. We might still compete as Vancouver competes against Toronto in sports, for business, and in other ways. But we do not think of killing each other.

People like to be autonomous. They are suspicious of top down authority, and they regard a world government as very risky. However, the UNPA would not be risky in the same way a unitary global government would be. As part of a federal system, the UNPA would only have jurisdiction in limited areas. Global objectives would still be met largely by the actions of national, provincial and municipal governments, which are the only means of meeting them at present.

**Jim Stark's *Rescue Plan for Planet Earth*
The Key Publishing House, 2008**

Jim Stark, founder of Operation Dismantle and a long time peace activist, has written a new book, *Rescue Plan for Planet Earth*, advocating a different approach to creating a democratic world government.

He says we are in grave danger of “omnicide” by war, environmental destruction, and global warming. [I]f humanity is committing omnicide,” he says, “it behooves everyone with a brain, a heart, or a soul to scream: ‘Stop, you fools – you’ll kill us all’ ... The only conceivable way to [change the direction that civilization is travelling in] is to construct a new center of political gravity, a new trustee of political power that is truly global in scope, but unlike the UN, is directly elected and democratic – an institution that is accountable to the people of planet Earth, and not to national governments.”

But he rejects the idea that such a body can come from the United Nations. “One way or another, we have to abandon the hope that the UN is going to evolve into the kind of democratic world government we need – at least not in time to prevent World War III and not in time to deal effectively with climate change.”

His idea is to create massive pressure for the creation of a world parliament by means of an on-line petition, which he hopes will attract billions of signatures and force national governments to put the issue to their citizens in referenda, in conjunction with national elections. He points out that bottom-up pressure on national governments was used successfully in the Ottawa process leading to the (Land) Mine Ban Treaty in 1997. Jim Stark already has a website where you can vote for “the creation of a directly-elected, representative and democratic world government” at <http://voteworldgovernment.org/>. [Note: The organization has recently changed its name from “Vote World Government” to “Vote World Parliament,” and the website is now <http://voteworldparliament.org/>.]

Stark has put a lot of thought into the structure and activities of the democratic world government (DWG). It must have a limited mandate – its architects must clearly understand the necessity of its staying out of political matters that are best left to lower

levels of government, including national governments. In his view, the priorities of the DWG will be:

1. Outlaw war and address its root causes.
2. Create and execute a rescue plan for the Earth's environment;
3. Establish a judicial system to enforce laws and resolve disputes within the DWG's jurisdiction.
4. Develop laws to protect the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and
5. Establish and maintain a "modest" military police force to apply the minimum force necessary to enforce world law.

Stark sets out in elaborate detail the composition of a 700 member global parliament, and offers the interesting suggestion that there might be appointed "voices" who would speak for the oceans, endangered species, or threatened ecosystems.

The book makes a variety of legal as well as rational and moral arguments for a DWG, and points out that we already have a kind of extremely undemocratic world government in the shape of the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. It also makes the important point that the establishment of a world government should not be viewed as a ceding of power or sovereignty by nation states, but rather as individual citizens delegating certain aspects of our innate sovereignty to the DWG, just as we now delegate to local and national governments.

The DWG must have the power to tax directly rather than relying on handouts from national governments, but the nature of the tax is one of Stark's weakest points. He suggests several variations on income tax, but a tax on global resources would be both fairer and much easier to administer.

Stark has assembled hundreds of quotations by authors from Albert Camus to Ronald Reagan, describing various deficiencies in the present system and advocating some form of world government. Alfred Einstein and President Eisenhower are the most prolific sources, but no one has made the case for a world government more clearly and succinctly than Harry Truman did when he received an honorary degree from the University of Kansas in 1945:

It will be just as easy for the nations to get along in a republic of the world as it is for you to get along in the republic of the United States. Now when Kansas and Colorado have a quarrel over the water in the Arkansas River, they don't call out the National Guard in each state and go to war over it. They bring suit in the Supreme Court of the United States and abide by their decision. There isn't any reason in the world why we can't do that internationally.

Another pithy quotation comes from a book with one of the best titles I have ever seen, *Tilting at Windbags: the Autobiography of a World Federalist*, by Harold S. Bidmead:

The cure for terrorism lies at its source. Systems like the UN (that second League of Nations) are merely efforts to constitutionalize and legalize world anarchy, attempts to keep the peace by warlike means, which inflict misery on the weak and the innocent while the guilty go untouched. Thus all systems based on national sovereignty are pretending to cure the disease of war without harming the germ that causes it.

Conclusion

Leonard Angel believes that it is possible to democratize the UN, while Jim Stark believes that it is not possible to do so, at least not in time to address the terrible problems that confront us today. Stark's idea sounds more radical and perhaps quixotic, but I think it may actually be more practical. At best, the UN is part of the bureaucratic system that has brought us the IMF and the World Trade Organization but has failed to do much about preventing mass murder and the violation of human rights even in Rwanda or Somalia, let alone in more organized and powerful states. I think we are as likely to grow a lily from an acorn as we are to grow a democratic world parliament from the UN. Indeed I am greatly disillusioned by representative democracy in general after seeing the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq started and prosecuted in defiance of the great majority of public opinion. I think there may be better ways of providing a real voice for ordinary people, in particular by empowering randomly selected bodies for various functions.

Nevertheless, it is good to see people thinking and talking about these issues. The need for global regulation is certainly great, and it may even be essential for the survival of our civilization. I encourage everyone to learn about the options being discussed and to support those they deem most likely to succeed.

* * *

Jim Stark's 10 books in Amazon's Kindle Store

VWP founder and past president Jim Stark recently posted ten books, his entire body of work to date, for sale as e-books in Amazon's Kindle Store. To see the whole array, go to Amazon.com, open the Kindle Store, and search for "Jim Stark" ... or just click on this URL: http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Ddigital-text&field-keywords=jim+stark&x=0&y=0

* * *

"Radio" show on global democracy

The 5th interview-style "radio" (audio only) podcast (show) on global democracy issues is now available at: <http://twigg.squarespace.com/twigg-episode-archive/> The following "article" is from the main TWIGG site, www.twigg.co, and was written by Brian Coughlan

TWIGG is a weekly podcast dealing with the fraught and divisive subject of Global Governance. Hence the odd spellinGGs on the site's menu items. The GG stands for global governance, or perhaps the singular and glaring lack of same that is the bane of humanitarians, humanists and just plain humans across our planet.

The world faces a number of very serious issues in the coming decades such as - to name but a few hot topics - climate change, peak oil and widespread environmental degradation. All of these issues are sources of potential conflict and any one of them, or a combination, could result in global catastrophe. In the worst case scenarios leading to the extinction of human life on Earth.

If this seems like reckless hyperbole consider the civilisations that have collapsed due to similar resource crises in the past; Easter Island, The Maya and the Greenland Norse. This has happened. It can happen again.

With global population fast approaching 7 billion the entire planet has now become our Easter Island. A lonely outpost of life in a very, very large and generally inhospitable universe. Like the Easter Islanders we lack the technology to migrate elsewhere; we don't even know if there is an elsewhere and if there was, only a tiny fraction of us could leave anyway. Like the Easter Islanders, and countless human societies before, we face a choice: co-operate and survive, or splinter into factions and perish. The great departure from these examples of the past is that the society in question is now the entire human race; the resources to be fought over those of the entire planet. For the moment the Earth, and its dwindling pool of water, metals and oil, is all we have to share.

To weather the coming storms, both metaphorical and literal, we need new political structures, new global institutions and new thinking. We must grasp the opportunity currently afforded by a relatively peaceful world to forge the social and political tools that will help to midwife our nascent planetary civilisation through the birth canal of resource shortages already visible on the horizon. Although we at TWIGG don't claim to have all the answers, we do think it's time to broaden the discussion to include as many members of the human family as possible.

On the podcast we will discuss climate change, global referenda, war crimes, the international criminal court, the UN, regional and global parliaments, local injustice, the absurdity of nationalism, the evolution of human collective decision making from the family to the tribe, the city state, the region, the nation, the supranational region and finally the World.

We'll occasionally go off topic and talk about the psychology of nationalism, division and tyranny; conspiracy theories about global governance and the myths that swirl endlessly around the topic. We'll talk about the absurd, the comic and the tragic; there's a lot to cover.

We hope you'll join us on the journey to a democratic world free of war.