

FORUM PAPERS

for

Radical Declaration

Forum Leader - John Papworth

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Resurgence - Statement of Intent 1966 by John Papworth

THE FOURTH WORLD began with the launching of RESURGENCE by John Papworth. The first editorial was published on 1st May 1966 and reprinted 20 years later on 1st May 1986 in Fourth World Review Number 15 under the title 'Statement of Intent' with a commentary by John Papworth. Here is that first editorial.

For many reasons we know today that the 'rash, fierce, blaze of riot' which exemplifies so much of contemporary civilization, 'cannot last'. Man must achieve a steadier tempo of social progress, together with a more organic and more dispersed structure of power. Either that or his present top-heavy power structures will defeat him.

Mainly as a result of a prolonged failure to analyse the full consequences of the modern revolution in what Ellul calls 'technique' mankind is moving into a state of endemic emergency in relation to the problem of war, human numbers, food and energy supplies, and human identity.

The answers the Marxists have sought to provide here are unacceptable if only on the grounds that a class analysis of these problems fails to provide any clues to their solution. The main threat of war stems not from capitalism but from power, and there is today sufficient evidence to indicate that even nations from which capitalism has been formally abolished do not hesitate to raise huge armies, engage in the arms race, and embark on war when they feel it suits their purposes.

Neither do they differ from capitalist governments in creating, or failing to solve, the other major problems looming upon us. The deliberate squandering of natural resources (posterity's heritage temporarily in our keeping) is not less marked in China than it is in the USA, and the cruel tragedies of alienation not less evident in Moscow than they are in London.

The assumptions of the labour and social democratic parties that now encumber the scene are equally unacceptable. Today they have become petty empires of power in a social structure rapidly going rotten. They do not understand the causes of this decay and they hold out no prospect at all that they can either arrest or reverse it.

This is the key to the disarray in which the old progressive forces now find themselves; their failure is fundamentally one of the mind; they have no answer at all to our major problems or to the institutionalised powerlessness to which the forces of contemporary life have reduced the inarticulate masses of the world, on whose behalf they presume to speak.

Devoid as they are of any real sense of direction they betray them at every turn, for it is this powerlessness of people which is the key to the war situation, a powerlessness which springs directly from the acceptance of a machine-scale of organisation in defiance of human considerations. We now have ample cause to know that on such a scale *all* power becomes oligarchic, with a strong tendency towards totalitarianism, militarism and sheer irrationality. (We mean by this, for example, that the preparation alone of a hydrogen bomb is an insane act compounded by its manufacture, storing and testing.)

It becomes oligarchic, whether nominal control is in the hands of communists, capitalists or social democrats, or leaders of any other political belief. With the best will in the world none of the main political leaders in any of the major countries, given their lust for power, can help what they are doing, however irrational it is. They are not masters of their fate; they are victims of the complex pressures implicit in a scale of organisation, which is too large for *anyone* to control.

How can these reactionaries do anything to promote peace when everywhere they are part and parcel of the very nation-state power structures that are promoting war?

How can they do anything to prevent a tidal wave in human numbers when they themselves embody the size and scale organisation, which has done so much to destroy human-scale communities and community morality, a morality alone by which any serious voluntary check on numbers can be achieved?

How can they act to conserve food and energy resources when they seek through their quest for power to embody social forces that can only exist by squandering both? And what can they do to rescue for the common man his sense of identity and purpose when, again, it is their own lust for power that impels them to destroy it in multitudinous ways?

Not surprisingly, their failure has been matched by the failure of those who have sought to act against the war danger and to establish an effective political alternative.

Against the background of a world-wide war crisis that is basically a crisis of political power, the methods of war protest so far evolved, the marches, meetings, manifestoes, and other forms of mass activity, are clearly inadequate and can now hope to achieve little of practical effect.

Today there are welcome signs that a growing number of people are beginning to realise that this is so. . . the growing spirit of distrust of the established political processes shown by the young, especially in the Universities; . . . these signs, and many more, are indications of an awareness that an entirely new political approach needs to be made.

Such an approach will only achieve force when it has attained a measure of clarity about its objectives, and this involves a sustained debate about the whole nature and scope of power in modern life, a debate which will surely pose an enormous question mark over every form of social and political organisation that now prevails. There are no wholesale solutions to these problems and we know from experience that when such 'solutions' are tried, as in Russia in 1917, their main effect is simply to create another problem and to deepen our dilemma. The reason for this is simple, such approaches, being totalitarian in themselves, tend to produce totalitarian results.

A civilisation that genuinely reflects all that human beings long for and aspire to cannot be prefabricated either by Fabians, Commissars or capitalists; it can only be created on the basis of each person's freely acknowledged power to decide on each of the many questions that affect his life. He who would gloss over these rights, for whatever ostensible reason, is on the high road to totalitarianism and war.

For these reasons we need to assert that democracy is not a formula to determine how people can vote, it is a process which expresses how they live. Men will not come to reject our war societies until they have some coherent alternative to which they can turn. We think this alternative, based on love, non-violence, personal dedication and the power of the individual to make his own decisions, is today the only alternative to the monstrous biological anticlimax towards which human society is clearly moving. It is evident that such an alternative will embrace a multi-cellular, power-dispersed world civilisation, rather than the totalitarian, state-power giants that dominate it today, and we propose to concern ourselves no less with the enormous task of making explicit the new theoretical approach to politics it requires.

JOHN PAPWORTH
Editor of Resurgence

FOURTH WORLD REVIEW - Statement of Intent 1986 by John Papworth

THE FOURTH WORLD began with the launching of RESURGENCE by John Papworth. The first editorial was published on 1st May 1966 and reprinted 20 years later on 1st May 1986 in Fourth World Review Number 15 under the title 'Statement of Intent' with a commentary by John Papworth. Here is that commentary.

Not much of that needs to be changed after twenty years surely, even if the dangers to which it refers are as acute as ever. There is now a fully fledged 'Green' party on the scene in this and about a dozen other countries but almost without exception they are hooked on the mesmerising mystique of mass power politics and the possible fruits of office in Westminster-style parliaments in blissful disregard of the fact that it is these structures which have gestated the global crisis out of their own vitals as it were. The rhetoric argues otherwise but the policy implications have their own conformist thrust. The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

The crying need of the hour is for consensual voice of crystalline clarity asserting the inalienable rights of localised communities to their own decision-making powers as but a prelude to determining how those powers shall be recovered before the giant centralised forces which have created the global crisis destroy us.

The failure to grasp this point is the main reason for the failure of the Green Movement to mount a resonating alternative vision of a genuinely ecological society. Such a vision is needed ~f multitudes of people are to be impelled to act to assert the kind of community and neighbourhood power without which no Green objectives can possibly be realised.

We are paying very dearly for the failure to follow up the pointers of this twenty year old 'Statement of Intent' for by now, with consistency, clarity and the kind of energetic spirit of commitment both can yield we might, instead of being stuck in the prevailing morass of confusion, which yields its own sense of futility, inertia and apathy, be on the high road of a magnificent change of global consciousness; we might indeed be more than ready to affirm our insights of ecological consciousness and bioregional vision against the bleak prevailing powers of giantism and darkness in sharply political terms.

We hold the present in trust for the future; the supreme form of betrayal today is to duck this challenge and to swan along in disregard of our most unnatural pattern of disempowered living which, with the continuance of its acceptance, ensures the likelihood there will be no future worth discussing for anyone.

The alternative before us admits of no evasion; we either go forward to a human scale, power-dispersed, community-based, organically structured form of powersharing such as has characterised the more stable and durable societies in the human record, or we go down to a global collapse of the main artefacts of our civilisation to a level which may well involve our biological survival as a species.

We are not talking about what we think we like, or what we are accustomed to, or what we would prefer if we were free to choose, or whether we should really feel altogether comfortable if we lived in properly sustainable communities, or whether we prefer the anonymity of the mass city life, or whether we want to continue to selfishly drive our own little cars, to shop in supermarkets and to read one-hundred page or more newspapers, we are talking about the survival of civilization and the continuation of human race.

JOHN PAPWORTH

Editor of Fourth World Review

A CALL FOR A NEW FABIAN SOCIETY from John Papworth

Memorandum on the subject of political education to Edward Goldsmith, Sir James Goldsmith, John Coleman, Sir Richard Body & His Fellow Rebels, The Ecologist, The Anti-Maastricht Alliance, The New European and sundry other persons and organisations having contingent concerns.

I refer you to the very important letter in *'The Times'* of 3rd December 1994 from Sharon Bierer and Henrik Overgaard of the *'European Anti-Maastricht Alliance'*, and especially to their final paragraph on the subject of a referendum. They say, 'Ignorance of the real issues and alternatives for Britain is the enemy. Unless a massive national grassroots and educational programme is organised, a referendum will be a gift to the 'Yes' campaign.'

I think we need to acknowledge that the opposition in Britain to 'Europe' is in any case in a state of endemic confusion and disarray and that partly as a consequence the Euro-federalists are continuing to make enormous strides towards their objective of a giant European new order.

The lesson here is surely that without some unified theoretical basis on which we can act we are unable to mount an effective programme of political education and that in the absence of such a programme political campaigning tends to be defeated before it starts, besides involving a prodigious outlay of resources for transient and generally limited results.

It raises the question as to what extent available resources should be devoted to political education, as distinct from direct political campaigning? It is a question which can perhaps only be answered by considering at whom such education should be targeted.

Direct mass education is clearly beyond our means; rather, it seems to me, there is a need to reach people in the educated sections of the population, those in the media (assuming they meet that description), university people - especially the students, readers of the posh dailies and Sundays and those of the intellectual weeklies.

Beyond these people what about the constituency officers of the mass political parties? When the whip was withdrawn from a number of Tory MPs their role proved crucial. One of them, Tessa Gorman MP, was reported as saying that over fifty constituency chairmen had sent her messages of support whilst another MP declared that he might well have been deselected if he had voted with the government. What concise, factual background material is reaching these officers? Stuff which would help them to gain support for an anti-Maastricht stance among their members?

There is an important historical lesson to be drawn here; in the Labour landslide election victory of 1945 there was one body which played, as to some extent in terms of the party's fortunes it still does, a quite crucial role in ensuring victory and that was The Fabian Society. Well, where is our Fabian type society? A body which recruits and cultivates an educated membership and which feeds it with a stream of books, specialist pamphlets and well documented articles in the daily and weekly press? A body which promotes a constant series of seminars, study sessions, summer schools, conferences and public debates and meetings?

We just don't have one or anything like it, and such efforts as we are making tend to be targeted to ourselves so that we end up doing little more than talking to each other. I think we should look hard at the Fabian experience and focus on how we can establish a similar body to assist in securing our own objectives. Not least we need to meet and discuss the precise aims of such a body, its working policies, how it can be made largely self-financing and how its work could be intruded into the media.

I think an initiative of this order is one of our most urgent needs. I invite all to whom this memorandum is addressed, and to any concerned persons who may read it, to respond by return. On the basis of replies received I propose to establish a date and a venue for what I hope will be a useful and productive working session.

Looking forward to your response

John Papworth

**THE GENERAL DECLARATION
OF
THE FOURTH WORLD
2001**

*DEFINING THE BASIC CAUSES
OF THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY GLOBAL CRISIS
AS A STEP TO ITS RESOLUTION*

THE FOURTH WORLD, 26 HIGH STREET, SWINDON, WILTS., SN5 4AE, U.K.

THE GENERAL DECLARATION OF THE FOURTH WORLD

Being an attempt to define the basic causes of the global crisis of the twenty first century, and with some positive proposals indicating what may be done to resolve it.

FOREWORD

It is nearly two decades since this document was first published¹, yet as a statement of intent it might have been written today: but if it were, the emphasis would shift. First, the environmental crisis would be given much greater priority, as, in this revision it has, for the opening decade of the new millennium indicates that the dangers arising from the continued abuse of the environment are so great that they should surely dominate all discussion on public affairs. Not least of these dangers is that they continue to be either ignored or given only subordinate attention, even though they now threaten the very existence of civilisation.

Another shift would relate to the development of 'globalisation'. Since this document first appeared the concentration of boardroom power has rampaged through human affairs at an ever-accelerating speed and the prospect now emerging is that before long all the major sectors of economic activity will each be controlled by a handful of powerful boardroom buccaneers on a global scale. The forces promoting this are concerned only with private gain; they are not elected by the people, neither are they answerable to them; they are elected by shareholders, which effectively means in most cases by themselves, and they are answerable only to the annual shareholders' meetings, again, effectively themselves.

Economic activity devoid of moral purpose is merely brigandage, and it is the colossal power wielded by brigands on a global scale, which is now destroying the ecological basis of human existence. They are operating primarily today through attempts to impose a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) on governments and through the promotion the europlot. Both are attempts to destroy the effective power of people to determine the objectives and the conditions of economic activity of their countries through their own elected representatives so that their rapacity may have a free hand to wreck ecological mayhem in any ways, which sustain or enlarge their profits. The discussion of just how this global buccaneering can be brought to heel, made responsive to the dire perils it is creating and responsive to real human needs has scarcely begun.

And this is the cause of the crisis of the new millennium we have entered. There is simply no clarity of mind or purpose on where we are or why we are at the brink of the most awesome disasters that have ever surfaced in the human record, nor indeed the direction in which we should move. Simply to spell this out would only be to repeat what follows, to which the reader's attention is accordingly directed.

Here it must suffice to add that without such clarity and a broad unity of purpose relating to it, without a forthright rejection of the mass party politics, as well as the consumerist lifestyle into which boardroom propaganda has so sedulously ensnared so many of us, we shall continue to flounder helplessly as these giant forces proceed to bestride the world like a colossus and wreck what they will. But with that clarity we can counter their evil and yet save the world.²

¹ This declaration is based on one first drafted in 1980 and which was revised several times before being presented to the **FIRST ASSEMBLY OF THE FOURTH WORLD**, which was held at the City University, London, in August 1981. One minor amendment was made at the first session of the Assembly, but attempts at the final session to make further amendments were abandoned owing to some procedural confusion. What follows is a fresh draft, which, besides seeking to accommodate the gist of some of the proposed amendments, has been substantially recast.

² It should be noted that where the term 'village' is used it refers to any settled human community, whether rural or urban, unless the contrary is implied.

PREAMBLE**Section A. THE GLOBAL CRISIS****1. POWER**

Human life today is embroiled in a vast crisis of power, and the dangers stemming from it carry all the signs of a civilisation in an advanced state of disintegration and under the shadow of eclipse.

2. WAR

The most obvious of these dangers is that of war. Not only do modern war weapons represent in themselves ultimate forms of destruction, which threaten the survival of numerous species, including man, their very existence is creating fears and phobias about 'security', which are generating a dangerous momentum towards precisely the kind of global conflict their possession is presumed to prevent.

3. POPULATION

Human numbers are clearly out of control, a consequent and dangerous deterioration in the quality of life, even as experienced in rich countries, is already manifest, and there is every indication it will worsen. Population control measures which have been imposed on people regardless of their community identity, and with no respect for community significance, have always failed and doubtless always will, for such an approach is seeking to cure the disease with at least some of the elements of its cause.

4. ECOLOGY

No less urgent is the disruption of the ecological balance and of the interlocking life-support systems of the planet by modern, giant-scale methods of industrial and agricultural production. The wickedness, the waste, and the despoilativeness of these systems is beyond any compute and it is probable that the ill-effects they have engendered in terms of the poisoning of the elements of the biosphere, the obliteration of many species of flora and fauna, the destruction of vast forest areas and the ensuing rapid and continuous increase in the desertification of huge areas of the earth's land surface, will quite inevitably blight human life for generations to come.

The same may be said for the medical dead-end of many types of supposedly disease resistant drugs now in common use, especially antibiotics, which are promoting a barrage of biological resistances, as well as the incidence of complementary declining disease immunities, which can only expose those now living and their immediate posterity to world-wide uncontrollable epidemics and other biological hazards – in which entire populations will be either decimated or destroyed as a matter of course.

5. RESOURCES

There is no prospect at all that ownership of most of the mechanical appurtenances common to the households of 'rich' nations, and on the mass production of which the economic fortunes of such nations depend, can ever be part of the life-style of the swarming millions of the world's poor and undernourished. The production of these and other items, especially of automobiles, is already at a level of consumption of finite resources, which cannot possibly be sustained.

Any attempt to make them generally available on a global scale will result in many forms of resource exhaustion and beggar our global posterity. It needs also to be noted that any attempt not to do so will, by breaking the momentum of mass production for global markets, result in a major dislocation of economic activity. At present there is literally no power on earth, with the possible and inadvertent exception of serious mismanagement that can slow down the rush to resource bankruptcy, which is now in train.

6. ALIENATION

The general (and increasing) burden of sickness of body, mind and spirit now apparent in all developed countries is at once cause and effect of a profoundly sick social order, and suggests a wholesale disruption of the inner world of human kind in its perennial quest for personal and social fulfilment. Despite, and frequently because of, many rapid and extensive changes in the material conditions of life, the generality of people today have become strangers to the kinds of personal fulfilment in the spheres of religion, culture, work and family life their forbears were wont to accept as natural.

Our hospitals and prisons, like our barracks, our police forces and our centralised economic and political bureaucracies, get larger and fuller, whilst the quality of life for millions diminishes and becomes increasingly empty of meaning or direction.

Urban vandalism, an addictive resort to many kinds of sedative, stimulant or hallucinogenic forms of drug, combined with a passive acceptance of a doom-laden destiny, are now only the most obvious indications of the internalised and externalised destructive drives which modern alienation is promoting in the human psyche.

Thoughtless transformations of the conditions of work, man's chief relation to reality, by the rampant impact of ill-considered forms of mechanisation, have robbed millions of any creative role in providing for the means for life as much as for the life abundant in terms of spiritual fulfilment, have had their own effects of creating a way of life devoid of meaning and purpose and of dangerously subjective despair.

Section B. THE ORIGINS OF THE CRISIS

7. FAILURE

None of these factors – armaments and war, population excess, ecological abuse, resource despoliation and social alienation – is peculiar to any part of the planet governed by any particular political creed; they appear to prevail regardless of any political climate. Yet each element bespeaks a common factor, that the political social, or economic mechanisms, which are presumed to govern them are in fact failing to operate. Human societies are out of control. That is the basic cause of the global crisis; that is the reason why, despite all our advances in the field of learning, we are confronted with developments which are leading us away from those adventures and triumphs of the spirit they once promised, towards a destiny of damnation nobody of sound mind could possibly want.

8. EXCESS

There appear to be three principal causes of a loss of control and all of them are in terms of particular forms of excess – excess of speed, of temperature, or of size. In the realm of politics we are concerned primarily with physical magnitudes and hence with the factor of size; our societies are out of control because they are too big. Never have our societies and their infrastructural institutions been so enormous, never have they been so unmanageable, and it is only the factor of excessive size, which is of sufficient novelty and pervasiveness to account for the scale of the multifaceted disaster which now confronts humanity. Giantism has become public enemy number one of the human race.

9. ERROR

The war danger does not stem from communism or capitalism, there was a world war between the great powers before any communist government existed, and two communist great powers were formerly locked in heavily armed global rivalry.

10. BIG POWERS

It is the great powers who make great wars mainly, because the greatness of their power dwarfs the moral and physical significance of their citizens, and because in such vast units power is always bespoken by those who are most adept at pursuing the goal of power, regardless of moral objectives as an end in itself. (If they failed to do so they would be displaced by those who do.)

11. BIG WARS

In smaller units the more human qualities (such as moral judgement) have greater play and are thus able to more effectively influence the course of events. In global terms all giant powers are dangerous warmongers unable to control their own actions, whereas the only nations, which are really pacific, stable, prosperous, liberal and tolerant are all, without exception, small.

It does not follow of course that all small nations are peaceful, free, progressive or prosperous. There are no straight lines in nature and none in human nature. It remains true none-the-less that on the evidence that small nations *can* achieve desirable social objectives; it is also true that giant federations can eliminate wars internally, but this has to be balanced in the reckoning by their innate propensity for war externally.

A Pax Americanus has to be seen in the context of a global *militarianism Americanus*. The bigger the political entity the bigger the wars into which it inevitably becomes embroiled. This is the basic flaw in the reasoning that a united federal Europe will achieve peace.

Section C. A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

12. HUMAN CONTROL

In the light of this conclusion we are confronted with a challenge to effect the most thoroughgoing revolution in human affairs ever undertaken, for *human survival now depends on the swiftness with which our political, social and economic institutions can be made small enough for them to be made manageable and more adequately responsive to human control.*

13. HUMAN SCALE

However contrary to the conventional wisdom such a conclusion may be, the human race can have no future if it does not proceed to adapt its pattern of life to a scale commensurate with its own humanity and its capacity to implement its consensual moral judgements. Our societies are not in a state of crisis because they are implementing any particular economic or political creed; on a monster scale all such creeds become unmanageable, just as on a human scale almost any creed people want to adopt can be made to serve its purpose.

14. REVERSAL

There is a need today for a major scrutiny of every form of power, not with the object of making it communist or socialist or capitalist, but with the object of making it human in scale. We have unthinkingly allowed giantism to destroy the political, economic and cultural identity of our villages and urban wards. This process needs now to be reversed. Villages are the blood cells of civilisation and it is a condition of normal social health that they should enjoy untrammelled decision-making power over their own affairs. A situation where villages are only allowed to undertake those functions permitted by the central government needs now to be transformed into one where the central government is only allowed to perform those functions permitted by its villages.

15. SUBSIDIARITY

The need for certain powers to prevail which are wider than those exercised by the village is not for a moment disputed; what is asserted is that it is the village community which shall decide the nature and the extent of its participation in such arrangements, and that if it is suggested that the practical common sense of village people cannot be trusted to make sound judgements, we need to recall it is only the inhabitants of other, and possible defunct, villages who are saying so.

16. FREEDOM

In view of the many threats to freedom now being posed by giant, over-centralised government machines, it is of especial importance that such localised forms of power should be restored in the fields of police and schooling.

17. THE SIZE OF NATIONS

This has been largely a result of geographical circumstance and historical accident. No conscious reasoning process appears ever to have been applied to the question and clearly it is a matter of urgency now to do so.

From a pragmatic survey of existing nations it would seem that effective and pacific government is best achieved in nations of around the ten million figure or less. In some cases very much less; the principality of Liechtenstein has a population of less than thirty thousand. It has its own parliament (complete with opposition) and has one of the highest *per capita* standards of consumption in the world.

Those concerned about the largely imaginary problems of 'Balkanisation' should be reminded of the imposing advantages of Scandinavianisation, and the extent to which the real problems, which made the term 'Balkanisation' a synonym for war and strife were the products of 'great' power interference.

18. DECLINE OF EMPIRES

The call to break up the 'great' powers into sensible, controllable, human-scale units may well appear daunting to an extreme, yet few of them have been in existence for more than a century and all of them are showing marked signs of top-heaviness, fissiparousness and decline. A century ago the world was dominated by half a dozen or so giant colonial empires. Where are those empires today?

19. WORLD GOVERNMENT

It follows from the above that any proposals for a world government, which, if realised, could not fail to result in a global orgy of totalitarianism, should be dismissed out of hand. A world of many small states would need to co-operate at numerous levels and for a variety of purposes, for postal services, epidemic control, lighthouse maintenance, air safety standards, and so on. There is no reason at all to suppose that they would not do so as common sense indicates and that they would fail to participate in the separate authorities they would need to establish.

20. UNITED EUROPE

To unite Europe is to create, foolishly and needlessly, yet another giant power beyond the control of its citizens, and to help set the stage for another global war. We do not need a Europe under one flag, we need a Europe of a thousand flags of free communities from the Atlantic to the Urals, that is the way forward to peace, economic stability and cultural progress.

21. DISPERSAL

To defeat the danger of war and social collapse humankind's most urgent need today is to create a micro cellular, non-centralised, power-dispersed global order in which the humanity of people everywhere is respected and reflected in the power they wield to govern the affairs of their immediate locale in terms of their moral judgement.

Section D. THE DECLARATION

We therefore declare as follows:

I. UNITY

We are the people of the Fourth World, we represent a broad global spectrum ranging from ethnic, cultural and linguistic, to religious, economic ecological and community concerns, many of which have been submerged to one degree or another by the disastrous onrush of giantism of the last two centuries or more. We are united in our determination to defuse the prevailing anarchic crisis of power by seeking to create our own social, cultural and economic patterns as we see fit in our own localised communities.

II. LOCALITY

We declare that it is only through small social units, which are capable of being subject to the control of their members that the peoples of the world will ever defeat the dangers of global war. We call for the breakdown of all giant nations into entities of no more than ten million or so, and for all nations to practice and respect the principle of non-centralised, human-scale, democratic decision-making at the village level. We insist that the political and economic power within each nation shall be so localised that no central government shall ever again encompass the capacity for any large-scale act of military or economic aggression against its neighbours.

III. NUMBERS

In the same way it is only by such means that they can resolve the problem of excess human numbers, make effective a proper respect for their material environment so as to defeat the ecological peril, and end the curse of alienation from life and fellowship which now afflicts millions upon millions of people in many parts of the world. We and our neighbours seldom desired this development of giantism, very often it was fiercely resisted, it was rarely accepted and now we proclaim of it our total repudiation.

IV. GOVERNANCE

We assert in its place our inalienable right to live as free, independent, autonomous and self-governing peoples and we reject the validity of any arrangements, however long-imposed, especially by giant political units, which seek the continued denial of this right.

V. AUTONOMY

We further assert our right in our own villages or urban parishes to operate and control our own schools, hospitals, police force, banks, industries, commercial trading and transport arrangements, forms of taxation and other matters of community concern as seems best to us, without external interference or coercion.

VI. CO-OPERATION

We accept the need for many forms of association and co-operation across local and national frontiers, if only to realise the potential enrichment of human life such co-operation can achieve; we are happy to acknowledge this need and whilst repudiating the bleak, unthinking nonsense of 'world government', which could only be a global dictatorship based on a monstrous bureaucratic nightmare, we look to a far greater degree of transnational co-operation in specific political, economic and social spheres than prevails today. We affirm our readiness to participate in such co-operation wherever the mutual or general interests of the people are thus best served, but in so doing we reserve to ourselves the inalienable right to decide in what ways we shall participate, and the full freedom to withdraw from any such arrangements at any time.

VII. DANGER

In general terms we assert that any state which exceeds modest, human-scale dimensions is at serious risk of being unable fully to control its own affairs and is thus a danger to its own and other people in terms of war, ecological excess and economic dislocation: the bigger the state, the bigger the danger.

VIII. SHARING

The grim lesson of political life of the 20th century, which has already inflicted more murder, suffering and infamy on the common people than has been perpetrated in any previous period, is that the only safe form of power is shared power. We therefore further affirm that even within such human-scale nations, in order to overcome the dangers of war and the overgrowth of human numbers, to check the spread of the spiritual void of mass alienation, and to widen the boundaries of freedom, there is an urgent need for a new respect for the rights and powers of decision-making and control of both political and economic institutions by the members of localised communities in their villages, wards and parishes as the case may be, in every part of the world. Such a programme of non-centralised political and economic power as is here envisaged is an essential safeguard to prevent the power of the state being seized by any group for the purpose of war, aggrandisement or oppression.

IX. DECENTRALISING

For the same reason we hereby affirm our unreserved opposition to any attempts to increase the size or the scale of political units or any moves towards further governmental centralisation. We denounce such trends as likely to lead to yet a further loss of human control, to result in further assaults on freedom and a further increase in the prevailing global dangers.

X. WAR

We call on people everywhere to end the curse of global war by repudiating the uncontrollable giantism which is the chief cause of it; we urge the dismemberment of all giant entities of power into sensible, human-scale, controllable nations of no more than ten million people which shall be governed on the basis of the maximum degree of non-centralised power by vesting all powers of government in the hands of village communities.

XI. ECOLOGY

Unless we transform our life-styles and make a more realistic appraisal of the resilience of the mutual support systems of the biosphere, large parts of our planet could, in a few more generations, become uninhabitable. We urge every village and village-sized community in the world, especially in the advanced world, to examine the impact of its mode of life on the ecology of the planet and order those changes which will ensure that what is now ecologically malignant is made stable and benign.

XII. RESOURCES

The life-style of rich nations is making demands on the finite resources of the planet, which can only widen the gulf between rich and poor peoples and beggar the posterity of both by degrading the habitat. We call for an immediate reappraisal of this life-style, especially by communities in rich countries, in all particulars where finite resources are being consumed, in order to establish a way of life, which is beneficially sustainable for all peoples.

XIII. LIMITS

We call for an end to waste and an end to policies, which presume a subservience of the resources of the habitat to a quest for unlimited economic expansion. We call instead for a profound sense of reverence for all the elements of the natural order and a deliberate policy of thrift and careful husbanding of all planetary resources, in place of the present policies of exploitation and abuse, with their dangerous disregard of the consequential effects on the interlocking equilibriums of the biosphere, on which the well-being of all life depends.

XIV. WASTE

We condemn the rapacious manner in which the finite resources of the globe are being squandered, as evidenced particularly by mass air travel and mass motoring as being ignorant, foolish, wasteful and immoral. We urge the adoption of standards of consumption which make a minimum demand on such resources, and which are served by a maximum reliance on self-renewable resources. We urge people everywhere to reject products, which make needless demands on finite resources, which constitute the heritage of all our posterity temporarily in our keeping.

XV. POPULATION

The largely unconscious biological mechanisms, which control numbers in the animal world were also operative in human societies until quite recent times. They operated on the basis of decisions made consensually (and frequently instinctively) in small groupings. Today there is a need for those responses to be reinforced by a conscious process of reasoning; instead we have largely destroyed the small communities, which were their basis. This is the real cause of the population crisis.

No small self-governing community threatened to be swamped by its own numbers would fail to do something to prevent it if it had the power to do so. We declare that the need for base power in our village societies is imperative if the crisis in human numbers is to be resolved. No government of a mass society can solve this problem except by means, which are totalitarian and an assault on human dignity. Community responsibility for community affairs is a precondition for the control of community numbers. It follows that community power is a precondition for community survival.

XVI ALIENATION

Human fulfilment is a product of religion, work, culture and relationships; the blind pursuit of economic growth as an end in itself, and the giant forms of organisation it promotes, puts a discount on moral principle, degrades human labour to being a mere appendage to organisations or machines, devitalises culture by destroying the power to create and to decide, and undermines the basis of family life by substituting money measurements for the bonds of mutuality and reverence for relationships which are the core of any worthwhile civilisation. We denounce this process as being inevitably destructive of human happiness and well-being.

XVII CONCLUSION

We call on people everywhere to repudiate the march to giantism and loss of social control, to affirm their membership of the human family and their duty to advance its well-being in terms of peace, freedom and ecological sensibility by joining with us to establish THE FOURTH WORLD, a world where power is fully shared by people in modest-sized communities which enable the social process to do full justice to the inherent majesty of the human spirit and to serve the noblest potentialities of its creative genius.

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PEACE THROUGH SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

JOHN PAPWORTH

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An Address

to

THE WORLD FUTURE STUDIES' FEDERATION XVII WORLD CONFERENCE BRASOV - ROMANIA

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PART I. INTRODUCTION

A great deal of anti-war propaganda tends to rest on the premise that since war is evil it can best be resisted by seeking to persuade people to renounce war, and indeed to renounce violence in general, as a means of settling disputes and of persuading them of the advantages that such a renunciation would yield in terms of social progress and a general increase in human happiness.

That war is indeed evil and that a world freed from war might well be an altogether better place few would doubt. For that matter, since few indeed would doubt it, why then is the global scene dominated by acts of war and threats of war? And why, to press the point, do these acts and threats emanate from countries that often make proud claims to being democratically governed as much as from those governed by totalitarian dictatorships?

It seems possible that a rather different approach to the problem is called for here, and not least because the argument for peace and against war has clearly already been won. The vast majority of people in every country are against war. It is the people who fight wars, it is the people who are killed or maimed, it is the peoples homes which are destroyed, it is the peoples lives which are scarred with bereavement and tragedy and ultimately it is the people who pay for wars in terms of misdirected productive capacity into armaments and war machines, resources which might instead be used to build social palaces for hospitals, schools, colleges, theatres and a general elevation of the quality of social furniture.

There is one glaring fact about the mass unpopularity of war which stares us in the face, a fact which ought perhaps to lead us to question one of the basic assumptions of much pacifist propaganda, that people *need* to be persuaded not to fight: It is that all modern wars at least are fought by conscripts, they are also paid for in part by the lives of conscripts. The actual fighting is done mostly by young men in uniform who, if they refused to fight, would either be shot or made to suffer long years of imprisonment. In the same way people who persisted in refusing to pay the taxes used to finance a war would find themselves facing all the oppressive power a war-prone state machine could muster and of which a long period of imprisonment would not be the least of its manifestations.

It would seem then that the real problem is not so much persuading people not to fight as to persuade governments not to compel people to fight. But governments guilty of this form of compulsion are frequently democratically elected are they not? And if this is the case where is the mismatch – popularly elected government compelling people to participate in unpopular and disastrous courses?

Simply to state the problem is to stumble upon a rather startling fact of political life, one buried under many reams of empty political rhetoric about democracy and freedom. Such qualities, we need urgently to remind ourselves, are moral attributes, but what then is morality? And how does it function? It clearly does not flourish in centres of power, be they political or commercial; morality, we must never forget, is a function of human *relationships* and can only be operative where such relationships are a dominant feature of the political landscape. The fact that our relationships have ceased to have this dominance is at the heart of our problem and is important to see why and how they have so ceased.

As any political (or other) unit grows in size, the significance of the individual proportionately declines. If you are a member of a 500 strong community, in the governance of its affairs your membership and your morality matter simply because your membership is both morally and statistically significant. They will matter even more if you are deeply concerned, since a large number of people in any community are generally, because of age or disposition, unable or unwilling to care.

But if your political unit numbers 500 million your significance is reduced from 1/500th to 1/500 millionth! Yet despite this shrinking of your significance to proportions so minute as to be infinitesimal, the power of the unit itself has increased to quite staggering proportions: Where then is that power located? It is of course at the centre. The price of your diminished power is the tribute you pay to the swollen octopus of power at the centre.

In terms of democracy, never forgetting for a moment that it is a moral attribute, this development means that democracy is also proportionately diminished. Why? Because since morality is a function of human relationships the nature of those relationships has been transformed, so that instead of the citizen being in a moral relationship with others he is now in another type of relationship with the central controlling mechanism, for in such giant societies the moral and statistical significance of the individual inevitably plummets; what was a moral relationship with his fellows has become a power relationship with a political or administrative machine.

It is obvious that any considerable increase in the size of a political unit results in the elected representatives becoming more remote from those who elect them. But this isolation from the electorate does not mean they thereby enjoy unfettered freedom to legislate as they may wish; it simply means that the power of the electorate to influence proceedings is replaced by other forms of power, forms which operate in the same remote, highly centralised manner and which, since they invariably control industrial, commercial, financial and, not least, media operations, often on a global scale, are able to wield decisive degrees of clout in regard to the political process. Inevitably there arises here a clash of interests.

Market forces are concerned with stock market values, with current share prices and short-term budget projections and expectations, whereas the citizen and the general polity is concerned with the long-term, generational effects of current decision-making; on the effects on the health of the land, on the climate, on the broad drift of affairs as they may be affected by stripping the world of its forest cover, of over-fishing, of the excessive use of anti-biotics (the word itself means 'against life'!), of global warming, of genetic engineering and so on, to name but a few of the major problems now pressing on human destiny and calling for wisdom rather than just expertise, knowledge or information.

This is not to say that morality, (involving of course such questions as war and peace), ceases to matter; it is rather that whereas in a small community questions relating to the use of its power are subordinate to the moral values and judgements of the citizenry through the strength of their relationships, in the mass form of society it is morality which becomes subordinated to the play of power politics. As Lenin put it, the key question in a mass structure is not how? Or why? But 'who, whom?' Meaning of course, who decides? Who is the boss? And to whom is everyone inevitably subject? On such a scale the centre is not a focus of moral concerns but of power imperatives.

In short the very term 'mass democracy' is an oxymoron; you cannot have democracy on a mass basis and the supposition that you can is one of the most persistent myths of modern political life. We may note in passing that it was the popular adherence to this myth, which enabled the monstrous perfidy of Stalin's terror to flourish, and even to find acceptance among foreign communist sympathisers, who were convinced the mass purges were simply capitalist propaganda; was he not the democratic leader of the workers state? In the same way Prime Minister Blair is able to hand over to private profiteering interests valuable items of social furniture such as the railways and public utilities, including it would seem now, the post office. Has not Mr. Blair been democratically elected? What you do have on a mass basis is endless manipulation of a gullible and ill informed mass electorate by those in command of the central controlling mechanisms, who are using their power first and foremost to maintain that power and wherever possible to increase it.

This in itself does not explain why wars happen, but it does help to show how people are compelled to fight them and why ordinarily people feel unable to follow their private moral judgement by refusing to do so; the factor of size has pre-empted the ground on which moral decisions might otherwise prevail. It is a situation epitomised with untarnishable radiance by the action of ordinary British and German soldiers on Christmas day in 1914; both sides were celebrating the birthday of the Prince of Peace, so what more natural that instead of fighting each other they should decide to play a game of football! They played until they were stopped by the high commands on both sides, whose members presumably felt it might spoil their war. In this case the real war was between morality and power and, as is usually the case on mass terms, power won!³

³ *These observations are more fully developed in "SMALL IS POWERFUL – THE FUTURE AS IF PEOPLR REALLY MATTERED" by JOHN PAPWORTH. Published by Praeger, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT06881, USA, as part of Praeger Studies of The 21st Century. ISBN 0-275-95425-0*

PART 11. HOW SHALL WE ACT?

These remarks may be viewed as a preamble to the question of exactly what policies any serious minded opponent of war should pursue today, given the manifest impracticality of achieving beneficial results through mass political structures. Indeed the question really confronting us is how we can ensure that moral primacy takes precedence over power considerations.

It is a question posed against a background where power is now running amok, our giant states and their economic institutions are out of control of any moral constraints or objectives, for the simple reason that they have become so enormous as to be the creatures not of moral decisions but of the power considerations attendant on the centralised anarchistic market forces the political power seekers have themselves created and, symbiotically, by which they are sustained. In this light an answer to our question may be more easily discerned if we seek to establish more clearly the nature of the problems these forces have engendered as they now confront humanity everywhere.

WAR

A global nuclear or biological war (or both) is an event now waiting to happen, the spread of the requisite weaponry in recent decades has been so pervasive that the likelihood it will not sooner or later be used is becoming increasingly remote. *"A nation armed and prepared for war can no more keep going to war than a chicken can help laying an egg. (Shaw).*

ENVIRONMENT

The ozone layer, which helps to regulate climate and temperature, as well as to protect life from the ultraviolet rays of the sun, is being increasingly and irreversibly depleted as a result of excessive industrialisation and the wholesale destruction of forest cover, and the consequent massive doses of carbon dioxide now afflicting it.

One result is global warming, which has gradually increased over recent decades and now seems set for a more rapid increase in the immediate future. This has already seen the beginning of the gradual melting of the polar ice caps and already areas covering many square miles are breaking off. The relative consequent desalination of the oceans cannot fail to have adverse effects on marine life; already traditional fishing socks, cod and whiting for example, are disappearing from the North Sea as tropical fish take their place.

The consequent misbalance of land to water on the earth's surface is also already resulting in massive floods, droughts, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes and windstorms in various parts of the globe. These look likely to increase. The rise in ocean levels alone, as further meltdown ensues, will inevitably submerge many low-lying land areas.

FOOD

The 20th century has seen a massive increase of the application of chemicals and of power-driven machines to food-growing, plus an increase in the size of farms, which has resulted in the elimination in many areas of the small family farm and the peasant cultivator. One result has been an immediate increase in the amount of food produced, both in terms of 'per acre' and 'per man', but at a quite prodigious long-term price.

The crops themselves are generally nutritionally inferior and they are increasingly disease prone, (which has prompted a much-vaunted return, by a minority at least, to 'organic' farming). As a result there is an increasing resort to chemical means of destroying pests and disease-bearing organisms. Again, in the short term, the results have been impressive in terms of higher crop yields.

But the evidence is unambiguous that man has launched a war on nature. In the nature of things it is a war man cannot win. Diseases once thought to have been eradicated with anti-biotics are now re-emerging in much more powerful forms. The current outbreak of foot and mouth disease is one such result. It is the result of several decades of intensive abuse of animals.

The growth in the size of 'farms' and the development of agribusiness – has driven many people off the land altogether; their numbers simply help to swell the numbers of a dispossessed urban proletariat dependent no longer on its own labours on the land but on the vagaries of market and stock exchange activity in remote urban centres.

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey, where wealth accumulates and men decay."

So wrote Oliver Goldsmith 200 years ago.

POPULATION

This colossal increase in human numbers ⁴ might be thought to set alarm bells ringing in every centre of government across the world, instead it is met with almost complete indifference and even with measures which might increase it! In 1930 the population of the world was smaller than the population of China today. This sort of increase needs to be seen against the background of the policies being pursued by dominant economic forces. These policies can be summed up in one word, 'growth', by which of course is meant growth of industrialised forms of production.

The assumption would appear to be that we live on a planet of infinite resources and that with 'growth' the presently impoverished billions of the world are going to enjoy the same excessive consumption standards that prevail in the over-developed countries; that they will have the same access to cars, aeroplane journeys, washing machines, TV sets, computers, cameras, golf courses, swimming pools, yachts, foreign holidays, 'luxury' hotels, 200 page newspapers and the rest of it. As Ghandi observed, *'There is enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed'*.

The blunt fact is we have already destroyed essential aspects of the natural environment with our present levels of production and consumption; to press further along this road is to advance along a road of global tidal waves of starvation and disease, and ultimately of biological suicide.

RESOURCES

We live in a finite world, yet again economic policies appear to be based on a presumption of infinitude.

It is a world of finite resources and not least of oil, on which currently nearly all transport and industrial production depends. Estimates of the extent of oil reserves vary; some authorities reckon that by 2050, at current levels of multiplying consumption, there will be none left, or that what is left will be too deep below land or ocean surfaces to be economically recoverable. Others say there are vast reserves, which will see us through the 21st century, by which time 'science' will have found us suitable alternatives to sustain the momentum of industrialised production and consumption.

One may admire the confidence of these latter predictions without necessarily sharing it; the fact is we just do not know in exact terms beyond the obvious fact that it is a finite resource in a finite world, and this factor of uncertainty is to be added to other essentially negative factors in a situation dependent on a high degree of market confidence, any one of which may suffice to prick its bubble.

We have to pose, in any case, a question on the morality of a proceeding, which squanders whilst it ignores, that the finite resources of the world are part of the heritage of posterity and of which we are but the temporary guardians.

ALIENATION

Civilisation has always been accompanied by, and in some respects based upon, an increase of artistic sensibility in the sphere of plastic, pictorial, literary and musical arts. The later phases have been characterised by a widening of the franchise of artistic excellence extending far beyond the land-owning, aristocratic and priestly classes, who often took a lead in promoting it, to embrace the generality of people everywhere.

⁴ WORLD POPULATION

| | |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| AD.1..... | 300 million |
| 1750..... | 800 million |
| 1850..... | 1,300 million |
| 1900..... | 1,700 million (est.). |
| 1950..... | 2,500 million |
| 2000..... | 6,000 million |

Source: Scientific American Vol.23
1, No 3. Sept 1974.

See also p 81 et seq of Ronald Higgins' THE SEVENTH ENEMY. Hodder & Stoughton for an extended discussion of the import of these figures.

The achievements of Renaissance Europe, for example, would have been impossible without the existence of vast numbers of highly skilled artisans, craftsmen and tradesmen. If these people helped to build palaces, cathedrals and city centres of resplendent beauty it was a degree of creativity practised as a matter of course by hand craftsmen across the entire spectrum of human needs.

The making of a loaf of bread or the building of a harvest-time haystack, for example, are seen today as starkly functional exercises, the one mass produced by factory operatives, the other a matter of rolls of hay shaped by machines and wrapped in plastic sheeting. But until quite recent times such mundane attendance on human need were works of art, the result of ordinary people applying their creative skills to their callings and achieving results in which their artificers would feel a justifiable pride. This was the seedbed from which all great art sprang.

To assert as much is not to seek to recall a lost legendary golden age, but to observe that the history of civilisation would be unintelligible if we failed to acknowledge the evidence it provides with almost wanton abundance that the *need* to create is a characteristic as deeply embedded in the human psyche as the need for sex, for food, or simply the need to learn and to understand.

Modern war-prone industrial civilisation has robbed man of the capacity to express this need, one perhaps unique in the way it distinguishes him from the beast, in two ways. First it has robbed man of reality, and machines, which man might have used to lighten his labours, now enslave him. He does not use them, he dances attendance on them in ways marked by monotony, repetition, uniformity and standardisation, all of which repudiate his humanity and combine to destroy the expression of any vestige of his creativity. If man is born free and yet is everywhere in chains, those chains are the bureaucratic bonds which tie him to attendance on machines and on machine processes at the price of losing an essential component of his humanity.

Man is a social animal and everywhere, to indicate the second form in which he has been robbed, he has lost control of his social machinery. In an age, which likes to assume it has ushered in the birth of democracy by giving everyone the vote, this may seem a strange claim. But the idea that democracy can be achieved by regular electoral exercises *on a mass basis* is not merely, a widely prevalent myth, it is the reverse of reality, and that reality lies in the capacity of the ordinary citizen to play a significantly creative role in the forces which shape his society.

This was a fact of life in all tribal and former human-scale societies, for however dominant or oppressive a tribal chief might be he was ultimately the creature of the well being and the goodwill of his people. In the absence of both, his days were generally numbered.

It was also a fact of life of medieval society in Europe. If men controlled their work through their guilds, the guilds played a significant role in determining the nature of the society of which they were a part. It should be noted with major emphasis that one reason why this control *could* be exercised by the citizen stemmed from the localised, non-centralised, small-scale character of the social unit.

Well, where is that citizen control today? On every hand the citizen is confronted with giant administrative machines, the edicts of which he must obey or suffer various onerous penalties. He does not control these machines, they control him, and the factor of sheer size ensures that his capacity to influence their workings is generally infinitesimal.

In many countries significant forms of local government have been largely abolished. In urban areas a 'local' government may be responsible for a population larger than some countries with a seat in the United Nations, whilst in rural areas, where a village or parish council may still exist, it has been shorn of all but a shadow of its executive and fiscal powers.

Modern man in mass societies is *per force* isolated, manipulated and alienated, and the loss of his community structure, the oldest and the most vital of all forms of social organisations, and its replacement with centralised mass structures, has been the means by which this social catastrophe has been engineered.

We live today in consequence in societies which are increasingly stressful, sick and degenerate; for all their technological marvels they are not marked by beauty, creativity and human fulfilment, but by ugliness, anti-social behaviour, family breakdown, urban squalor, poverty, drug dependency and an unbridled increase in human frustration and unhappiness.

PART III. WHAT THEN MUST WE DO?

To state that humankind is at a crossroads which will determine whether in the immediate future civilisation will survive at all, is but a statement of the obvious: The imminent global threats of nuclear and biological war, the sustained barrage of environmental hooliganism now characteristic of industrialised societies, food prospects and population pressures, which can only herald an era of mass starvation or numbers decimated by disease, and the murder of man's creative role in work and in social and political structures, should, if there were any common awareness or concern, be prompting a whole series of emergency conferences across the globe to meet the challenges they present.

Instead, for the most part, there is ignorance, passivity, and unconcern at every level of society, whilst avarice in the name of economic management, and power-seeking in the name of government, bestrides the world like a colossus.

Yet it must be said, and it is surely imperative to note, everywhere there are signs of life-affirmation against a prospect of what The Duke of Edinburgh has called '*a winter of death*' to which he claims mankind is moving.

Everywhere there is resistance, and the number of grass-roots organisations across the world which have been formed in recent decades to give voice to peoples' concerns about the general drift of affairs now runs into many thousands.

A great many of these organisations are focussed on the effects rather than the causes of the global crisis, so that we have organisations opposed to war, opposed to chemical farming, opposed to corporation-style capitalism, opposed to the europlot and to the '*Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI)*', opposed to the destruction of the rain forests, opposed to oceanic over-fishing, opposed to big government oppression of small nations (Tibet, Chechnya, Kashmir, Kurdistan, etc, etc), opposed to gender discrimination, opposed to the animal cruelty implicit in factory farming, opposed to genetic engineering, opposed to large dams, opposed to armaments and so on and so on.

The full list is as extensive as it is remarkable and commendable; indeed one cannot but be profoundly grateful that these numerous bodies exist at all.

Yet it has to be said that overall they are having only a marginal effect on the general drift to disaster and the reason for this may well be because they are largely concerned with the effects of the abuses of power, abuses that have created the crisis, rather than its causes.

All too often these multitudinous campaigns stem from a quite unfounded assumption that the problem does not lie in the general scale and structure of society, or in the general body of values on which it operates, but in the failure to adopt the particular reform the campaigners may have in view.

This is the principle reason why all this diverse and altruistic activity, often promoted with tremendous idealism and devotion, is yielding so little of decisive effect. In consequence the global crisis does not abate, rather does it increase at an accelerating rate.

Why? The Russian Revolution of 1917 was, after all, largely the work of a mere handful of dedicated zealots and is by no means an isolated example of how a tiny minority has succeeded in imposing itself on a huge majority.

There is no call here for anyone to impose anything on anybody, but if the Bolsheviks initially lacked numbers they lacked neither clarity of aim, however mistaken, nor unity, however rigidly imposed, whereas today the movement for radical reform suffers both confusion of aim and a general lack of adherence to a common purpose.

Is it possible that a firm affirmation of the imperative need for localised, non-centralised decision-making in village-sized communities across the globe, as being the indispensable basis for democratic government and democratic control of events, might repair these two lacks?

PART IV. PRIMARY CAUSATIVE FACTORS

In posing the question we are of course pointing to the need to grasp the real nature of the causes of the global crisis. What then are those causes? We are concerned to locate here but one.

Every former age can show how power has been abused to one degree or another, what is singular about the modern era is the sheer scale of that abuse; it is a scale which, armed with a vast panoply of chemical and mechanical invention, is able to dominate citizen life right down to the minutest particulars as never before.

The power implied here, as indicated above, is on so enormous a scale as to be out of control, it is running amok and creating crisis situations in almost every sphere of human experience and endeavour.

One of the major defects of so many organisations seeking to arrest the ensuing effects of the abuses of power is just that. So often they are seeking to restore a *status quo ante*, a status that produced the problem in the first place.

We need to see that the massive abuses of power now dominating human affairs have their origins in the destruction of genuine peoples' power, power at the smallest level of society, in the village, the neighbourhood, the community or whatever name we choose to give it; power which was frequently expressed in work, in localised trading, in relationships and in a wide range of social usages, common understandings and adherence to a common code of moral principle.

Our prospects of countering the evil forces promoting the global crisis and of making any significant progress are bleak indeed if we do not grasp that if people have no real power to enable their moral judgements to be reflected in the general life processes of their own communities, if they do not themselves control their social structures, their schools, post office, bank, police, hospital, transport and their welfare services; if they have no local power to determine these matters, if they do not have their own locally elected representatives to sit, with others similarly elected, on boards which govern matters of wider import, including public utilities such as water, gas, electricity and not least, governing the content of radio and television, they have no effective power at all.

The very structures *disempower* them and it is a mere abuse of language to describe any such process as democratic. Democracy, we should never cease to hold, does not mean government *of* the people, nor government *for* the people, both are essentially totalitarian concepts, it means government *by* the people. All else is claptrap and delusion.

Once the power of people to make decisions at community level is nullified by shunting that power to ever larger centres of administration and control, then what becomes determinative is not the will of the people but factors attendant on the pursuit of power, whether in terms of place, profit or prestige, as an end in itself.

Supposing then our reform movements changed tack? Supposing they tackled the problem of giantism and of excessive size in order to restore control of affairs back in citizen hands? And suppose all these reform and protest organisations joined hands to do so? What then would be involved?

They would be agents of the most thoroughgoing and peaceful revolution the world has ever seen. A revolution not to capture power but to dissolve it. To dissolve it into people's hands where it rightly belongs in the manifold neighbourhoods, villages, parishes and human scale political structures throughout the world.

They would be putting paid to the absurd notion that the citizen can have a meaningful voice or influence in political parties or in governments so enormous as to make it inevitable that power will be in the hands of those who are controlling things at the centre, a control which ensures that they control the party conferences, agendas, policies, candidate lists and so on.

So persuasive is the power of established practice, and the powerful propaganda that accompanies it in asserting the natural and inevitable validity of our current institutions, that it requires a real effort of mind to recognise that far from being natural or inevitable they are neither. They are based in fact on quite unsustainable assumptions and not least of these assumptions relates to current scheming and plotting (it really is nothing less) to unite Europe under one Brussels-dominated Government.

Foremost, with the horrific tragedy of two world wars uppermost in mind, there is the assumption that a united 'Europe' will achieve peace. Will it? Can it? The mere supposition that it can and will ignores the lessons of all the other giant federations already in existence. Have any one of them achieved peace?

The USA, the most powerful of them all, has been involved in every major war of the 20th century. Is it likely that it will prove any more peaceful in the 21st?

India, to take another example, despite its crippling poverty, since the transfer of colonial power from Westminster to Delhi, has had a military confrontation with every one of its neighbours.

China, to take another, despite numerically being the largest state on earth yet sees fit to invade and subjugate the ancient peoples of Tibet.

Russia, like all other monster states, is armed to the eyebrows with nuclear weapons and is even now waging a genocidal war against the people of the independent state of Chechnya.

Brazil, to take yet another monster, is busy destroying the priceless human heritage of its rain forests, its government operates in a morass of drug-related and other forms of corruption and if it has yet to be a threat to peace beyond its borders it is only because it currently lacks the means to mount one.

Is there anyone sanguine enough to suppose a united 'Europe' will behave differently? Its government is already a byword for corruption on a scale even the USA finds difficult to rival, and already its leading voices are urging the need for an 'European' army. None of this should surprise any intelligent observer; the birth of 'Europe' has been accomplished, insofar as it has yet succeeded, by a team of midwives difficult to distinguish from a bunch of crooks.

But, we are assured, 'Europe' is the path to prosperity. It will be noted that the assurance is based on the supposition that a continuance of current policies of economic growth have any vestige of moral validity, or that to achieve globally the material consumption standards of an average U.S household would not require the resources of several more planets. But if uniting Europe will achieve prosperity where is the evidence? Are there any lessons to be learned here from the world's existing giant federations?

The USA is undoubtedly, in terms of *per capita* gross national product, the wealthiest nation the world has ever seen, but is it a form of riches, given the environmental holocaust it has engendered to achieve it, one which others ought to pursue? We may also ignore that two million of its citizens are in prison, but can we ignore its millions who live below the poverty line and that their numbers are growing?

For that matter, are the other giants shining examples of economic prosperity, even assuming the forms of prosperity on offer are worthy moral objectives? Against the fact that both China and India, in *per capita* GDP terms, are both at the bottom of the global league table, we have to ask, why it is that of the top forty of the richest states on earth thirty have populations of less than ten million?

Small may not always be beautiful, sometimes indeed it can be quite horrible, but the evidence suggests it is far more likely to be prosperous, whilst big is showing itself to be increasingly mad.

This does not mean that in a world of small nations, themselves devolving power to village or urban ward level, all problems will be solved and that we shall have ushered in an era of perpetual peace, progress and happiness. Human beings are not perfect and any system of government however well contrived, will always reflect some of those imperfections.

What it does mean is that if power to decide is restored to the citizen then the citizen's moral and aesthetic judgements will then become influential, and even perhaps determinative, in the shaping of events. Not least, small-scale government will ensure that any abuses will tend to be of limited impact.

There is often a disposition to swallow wholesale the notion that the ordinary citizen does not have the knowledge or the capacity to make decisions on complex issues and that such matters are best left to experts, and that anyway administration on a large scale is cheaper and more efficient.

Against this the citizen needs to ask what empowered and largely self-governing human scale community would allow nuclear bombs or nuclear energy to be produced on its territory? Or allow genetic engineering to proceed? Or car production and motorways to have precedence over public transport? Or allow its local shops to be driven out of business by giant 'super' markets (it is the profits which are 'super')? Or permit the closure of its local hospital or post office? Or allow its schools to be run by people who are not members of the community? Or permit chemical farming and factory type rearing of animals under cruelly intensive conditions?

Our society abounds with abuses of power in every direction, so that the list of these questions could be extended indefinitely; the people who take up the cudgels to oppose these and other evil developments are to be applauded, but what the wide range of the questions they themselves have raised suggests is a conclusion which may often be beyond their horizons.

It is simply this; that our primary problem is not war, or the environment, or population pressures, nor the squandering of the planet's finite resources, nor the alienation from life of many millions of people; the primary problem is that of size, size developed on such a scale as to disempower people and which makes their moral judgements irrelevant to the passage of events.

If we ignore that and simply focus our energies on particular abuses then, however commendable our objectives and our efforts, we are dealing with the effects of the abuses of power and ignoring their causes.

It was Einstein who remarked '*You cannot solve a problem with the mindframe that has created it*'. In saying as much he was pointing to the core of our problem; a 19th century mindframe which accepts, without question or challenge, giant centralised states and economic entrepreneurship global in its scope, which together have created a doomsday scenario for the human race.

No body can be healthier than the cells of which it is comprised. If the cells of small-scale community life are debilitated or non-existent in the body politic then what we are confronted with is a form of social and political leukaemia, a destroyed immune system which cannot prevent multitudinous forms of life-threatening malignancy, such as monster global wars, from flourishing.

We are not going to solve the problems of the 21st century with the mind-frame of the 19th. Social empowerment, involving the deliberate creation of an organic, multi-cellular structure and process of our political and economic institutions, is today the only realistic path to enduring peace and to any genuine social progress.

PART V. SIGNPOSTS

It can be no part of this exercise to detail a blueprint of what we ought to do and where we ought to be going; all that can be essayed is a few signposts by way of suggestion.

We exist within a web of needs, obligations, institutional pressures, traditions, propensities, and civic and moral imperatives; at present the forces dominating these matters have developed to an extent to which they are now out of control, running amok and creating dangers of such magnitude as to put a question over the continuance of the civilisation that has produced them.

There is thus a need to establish, or to re-establish, such controls as will enable civilisation to survive; since the primary cause of this lack of control is the excess of the factor of size itself, it is to the small, the local, the human-scale and non-centralised kinds of organisation that we naturally need to look, and it is on this that there is a need for a quite dramatic recasting of some basic assumptions we need to make about political and economic structures, not least because, unwittingly perhaps, we have allowed the scene to become dominated by structures which are able in no way, whatever their professions, to correspond to democratic reality.

The twentieth century has seen a virtual explosion of power of many kinds, in transport, communication, industry, finance, medicine, retailing, wholesaling, insurance, entertainment, the media and other kinds; in every case the result has not been an increase in citizen power at the grassroots, this has been assumed to be assured by the extension of the franchise for voting in political elections, but by an increase in the power-to-control-or-decide at the centre, a focus generally remote from citizen cognisance or awareness. What alternative structure do we then envisage which will in fact correspond to democratic reality, one which enables the citizen to exercise real influence and control over the ongoing social process in which he is enmeshed?

It would be absurd even to seek to answer this question in full; but for practical purposes it may be answered by referring to just two ways in which democracy may be made vibrant and alive and in doing so give some indication of the kind of principles that might be applied over a much greater field.. Education, to take the first, is a key area of democratic concern.

In Britain, over the last century and a half, what originated as a piecemeal operation, generally in private hands and differing widely in terms of content, standards and achievements, has been largely replaced by centralised control by a single government ministry.

This has been a quite incredible process of removing from local citizen control one of the chief determinative factors shaping their lives, their morals, their attitudes, their underlying assumptions about the nature and organisation of society itself and, in large part, their beliefs.

That control is now in the hands of people whose chief concern is to win power to rule others; they are leaders of mass political parties who by one stratagem or another have managed to gain the top of the greasy pole and to enjoy the fruits of office. It is assumed that they are fit persons to tell countless people in their local communities how they should, indeed must, educate their children. To that end they engage a graded hierarchy of salaried officials to draw up schemes and plans; these officials then 'advise' the minister how these should be operated and administered, by themselves of course, how much they will cost and how they will be funded.

What is remarkable about this process is the general failure to recognise the extent to which the untenability of the assumptions on which it is based is exceeded only by the implicit and actual dangers to liberty involved. It is assumed, for example, that a salaried career official in an office in London is far better placed to decide how the children of communities hundreds of miles from his desk should be educated than the parents and neighbours of the children themselves; it is further assumed that local people can be deprived of their responsibility in this crucial area of their concerns without in any way subverting the basic principles of democracy and that there will be no ripple effects in, for example, prompting people to have less concern for their civic concerns and responsibilities.

The safe disposal of political and economic power is one of the most intractable problems of human history and the mere existence of the global crisis, the most momentous crisis in all human history, is all the evidence we need that far from solving it with, absurd concepts of *mass* forms of democracy it is these forms which have enabled it to arrive. It is a problem we have scarcely yet begun to confront.

The reason for the modern radical failure lies in the absence of adequate intellectual and theoretical equipment with which to do battle. It is because Leopold Kohr, (*Breakdown of Nations*), and to a lesser extent Fritz Schumacher, (*Small is Beautiful*), have given us invaluable tools in this area of radical concern that they need to be listened to.

Both were professional economists and both were, in important respects, echoing the thoughts of earlier writers such as Gandhi, Tolstoy, William Morris and others. Not least both were seeking to establish the practical aspects of the moral insights of these earlier teachers who included of course Jesus, The Buddha and the even earlier tradition of Isaiah, in terms of prevailing political and economic realities.

In practical terms we need to see that if we repeat the old radical mistake of trying to capture power with mass types of organisation we shall simply betray our purposes and ourselves. Any mass political organization is compelled to pursue power as its primary objective and to subordinate ideological considerations to that end; if it fails to do so, if it puts ideological considerations foremost, it soon ceases to be a mass organization for it is soon replaced by a rival mass body with a sharper sense of the realities of the play of power on a mass scale.

The modern problem then is not communism or socialism or capitalism; it is not even war or environmental dangers, as Leopold Kohr has so clearly demonstrated, it is *size*. Instead of trying to capture centralised power our challenge is to dissolve it into units, which are small enough to enable us to control their functioning and to put the stamp of our moral judgement on them.

Without that control all else is idealism, slogans and words in the wind. It means that we must aim to transform power onto an organic basis, one reflecting the structure of the natural world and comprised not of a mass, but of a multitude of small, human-scale, non-centralised cells, each cell fully empowered over all local affairs and conceding to central powers only those roles, such as defence and foreign relations, necessary for the nation to function.

And the nation itself must be modest in size. In this the Swiss with their modest sized cantons have a lesson for the world. So too do the small nations of Scandinavia. It is no accident that these small countries are the most stable, democratic, peaceful and prosperous in the world. They enjoy these advantages because they are small and so enable their citizens more able to control their workings.

We have to recognise that giants like the USA, China, Russia, and India are threats to the rest of the world because they are giants. They are not countries at all, they are imperial empires, and the day of such empires is over if humanity is to survive the dangers they are creating.

The radical future is the future of the small, of a human-scale size, which enables ordinary citizens to control what is happening. So when we leave this gathering by all means keep up the pressure for reform on different abuses of power such as ecological vandalism and 3rd world indebtedness, but realise too that these are only some of the effects of the global crisis and that real radicalism today is concerned with its causes, chief of which is a scale which transfers power from the citizen to giant centres which will always abuse that power. Hence our need to make it safe in localized citizen hands.

Some organizations, such as those related to transport, to communications, to environmental needs or health for example, are necessarily large because of the nature of their functions; where such a need exists I think we must always insist on the adoption of two principles:

- The organization concerned should be confined to its own function and to have no power of control over matters beyond it; and,
- The management and control of the organization shall be in the hands of persons elected from local organizations below and not of nominees appointed from the central government above.

The radical challenge today means we go back to our village or to our local urban community and give our lives to making it a centre of power, the power to control our own schools, hospitals, shops, farms, industries, utilities (such as electricity and water), trains, transport, police, TV and radio and much else besides.

These are not changes which can be accomplished overnight; there is a need as never before for a major educational drive and an immediate practical drive for peoples power; it means a need for each community to have its own independent magazine with which *inter alia* to challenge the falsities of the mass media

It means creating and promoting local economic activity and wherever possible boycotting large-scale enterprises, not least supermarkets and chain stores; promoting local independence and local sustainability in food-growing and marketing, in establishing local workshops for local clothing, household linen, footwear, household furniture and equipment, local house building, local transport facilities, perhaps on a co-operative basis, for buses and taxis instead of the curse of private car ownership.

We need to couple this drive with a refusal to have dealings with national economic organizations such as banks and shops, for example and at the same time reject the commercial propaganda which seeks non-stop to lure us into an ever more complex, wasteful and destructive lifestyle.

Today we need to learn to live simply, simply in order to live. All this and much else besides, all to end the tyranny of giantism running amok and creating more world wars, more global economic upheavals, more suicidal abuse of the environment, more social disintegration and more cultural decadence. In this context we should be aware that if, as seems likely, we enter a phase of global economic collapse, the restoration of many kinds of localized citizen power may become an essential means of survival.

PART VI. CONCLUSION

This work of building and creating grass roots power is not some sentimental, easy-option call to return to a golden age that never was; it is a challenge to respond in practical down-to-earth terms to events, which permit no other approach if we are to survive.

It may not be as spectacular or as romantic as giant national campaigns run by imposingly charismatic leaders, but each small empowered community can be a building block to construct a new democratic global polity which can yet make the world safe for future generations.

Such an approach will not only give our protest actions the teeth they need, it will give coherence and inspiration to millions around the world who at present are bewildered and frustrated and who feel in consequence powerless to act.

At last they will see clearly that in addition to protesting against intolerable policies they are struggling *for* something which can bring light to a world in darkness.

It seems to me, only in this way can we do justice to all the suffering, which power-out-of-control is unceasingly inflicting on the world; only in this way can we affirm the dignity and the nobility of human life and its potentiality for greatness.

I am not seeking here to give a blueprint, rather am I urging you to create your own blueprint for your own empowered community with your neighbours whilst there is yet time.

My business here is to erect a signpost, and if you want a direction for it I would say:

PARISH POWER!

KEEP IT SMALL!

KEEP IT LOCAL!

KEEP IT!

THE GLOBAL CRISIS

a consultation sponsored by The Ecologist & The Fourth World

Despite everything we are letting the grass grow under our feet. Many organizations are springing up to protest or reform some or other of the effects of the global crisis; they are often doing useful work, but we are concerned with its causes. On this there is still no unity, no clarity and consequently no activity. Environmental degradation continues non-stop.

There is a need now as never before to define those factors which are preventing human societies from flourishing on a sustainable basis, a basis which enables us to work with natural forces rather than seeking to dominate them and which expresses an innate respect for the environment rather than automatically and unthinkingly abusing it.

The 19th century isms which have dominated the radical scene for so long, such as communism, socialism, liberalism and so on, are played out and give no indication today of how they might tackle an environmental crisis so monumental as to threaten to wipe civilization off the pages of history altogether.

We have allowed our societies to become dominated by values which are destructive, demeaning, and ultimately suicidal. The moral imperatives by which any society needs to live are being marginalized by market and political forces too powerful to be controlled by citizen moral judgment. They are too powerful because they are too big.

How do we achieve a non-centralized, power-dispersed, multi-cellular, organically structured society within which citizen moral judgments can be effective in terms of controlling policy decisions? The fact that today they don't and that *on a mass basis* democracy proves to be an oxymoron because power accrues to centralized structures, which in turn control rather than serve the citizen interest, is why we are in a state of crisis at all.

What next?

We give notice of a consultation exercise to discuss ways and means by which we CAN unite to counter the lowering shadow of the global crisis whilst there yet seems time to do so.

John Papworth

15th January 2001