

McLibel Newsletter

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Where We Stand

"Give me a place to stand and I'll move the world."
Archimedes

The longest trial in English history is going to be longer. Dave and Helen are making appeals, both within the UK and in the European Union courts to get these libel laws struck from the books once and for all. Our fight has stunned and surprised McDonald's, and brought them a lot of unwelcome attention, but it is still a giant, bullying corporation. As we go to press we await word of a story of an affluent suburb near Detroit which has refused to let McDonald's open a store, but the company is suing the town to force its way in anyway. McD continues to quash unions, as detailed in the story of the Quebec store. Interestingly, they responded quite fast to the Ohio workers who were fed up with working conditions, perhaps afraid that a wave of unionization was to follow.

During this long trial, we have all had time to wonder how we can put an end to giant corporations and other concentrations of wealth and power that are destroying our free society and life on earth.

Where do we begin? Simply eliminating certain corporations or politicians would not work. If all of Washington DC was wiped out by an asteroid, the existing political system would recreate an exact copy of it in a short time. The politicians would have all the same personal qualities. They would vote for the same bad laws that increase the concentration of power and wealth in society. If the most harmful corporations were wiped out, they would also be replaced in short order.

We regenerate these entities because we share in our culture a particular mythology about what human nature is, how human society works, and how it must work. We believe that to have a good government we must choose champions to do our governing for us. We are indoctrinated from the cradle to the grave, told that this is our only choice. The "king-of-the-mountain" scramble is reproduced in almost all of our political institutions, churches, clubs, businesses, movies, advertising, in the schools, school honors programs and school sports.

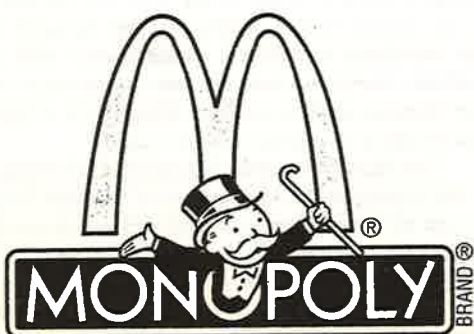
In this mailing are a few good articles to add to the mental tool box. There are many others that we do not have space or money to send. If you have access to the internet and are interested in these issues, they appear as often as possible on our "mclibel" electronic mailing list. The archive of past postings is located at: <www.world.std.com/~dbriars/mcliblist.htm> and <http://www.envirolink.org/arrs/mailLists/mclibel/>

It has been very inspiring to read letters from people from all over North America who are trying to make a sane and habitable world, including a lot of younger people still in school. Many express feelings of isolation. I hope that the work of this campaign can help us all to realize that people who think and love are never alone.

Best regards,
David Briars

This mailing has been made possible by the generous support of donors to the McLibel Support Campaign. To subscribe to the "mclibel" electronic mailing list, send Email as follows:

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Subject: <not needed>
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McLibel Anniversary Days Of Action -

19th/20th June 1998

- One Year After The Verdict, and the Two Worlds Continue To Collide... - Days for local leafletting and protests, and public showings (and burials!) of the 'McLibel' documentary

UK LIBEL LAWS TO BE CHALLENGED AT McLIBEL PRE-APPEAL HEARING IN JULY - In July the McLibel Defendants will be in court once again to challenge the use of libel laws as a form of censorship, and to overturn the parts of the verdict which went against them. They will present their Appeal application in a pre-Appeal hearing at the High Court, which will be followed up by a full hearing beginning on January 12th 1999. They also intend to take the British Government to the European Court of Human Rights to overturn the UK's unfair and oppressive libel laws - challenging the denial of Legal Aid and the right to a jury trial, and laws stacked in favour of Plaintiffs. They will argue that multinational corporations should no longer be allowed to sue for libel.

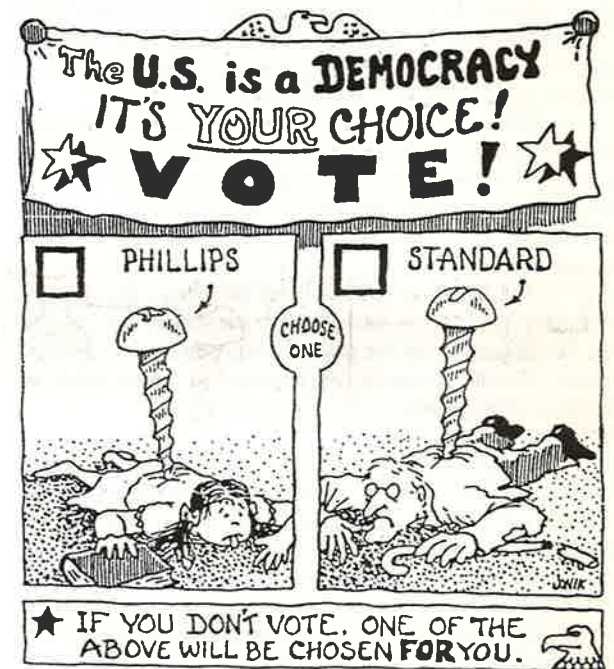
THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUES - McDonald's continue to expand, and they continue to exploit children and low-paid staff, promote junk food, cause animal suffering and environmental damage. The global campaign against them carries on growing. And the 'McLibel' Trial, the longest and one of the most controversial in English history, still shines as an example of how the business practices of a huge multinational can be exposed to public view, despite oppressive and unfair censorship laws. The hour-long documentary "McLibel: Two Worlds Collide" tells the inside story of the case. Filmed over three years, with courtroom reconstructions directed by Ken Loach and exclusive access to the defendants' lives, it would clearly make a very popular peak-time documentary. But two proposed UK transmissions were blocked by lawyers at the BBC and Channel 4 and the film is currently available only on video and on the internet (www.spanner.org/mclibel) - so media censorship still thrives. It has already been shown on regional TV in the US, and broadcasts in other countries are currently being negotiated.

KEEPING UP THE PRESSURE - As the Appeal is being prepared, the McLibel Support Campaign calls for international leafletting protests, and local showings of the documentary around Friday June 19th 1998 (one year since the trial verdict was delivered and our Victory Day of Action was celebrated by the distribution of half a million leaflets in about 20 countries). There have already been many showings in the UK, Ireland, the US, Holland, Hong Kong, and New Zealand. To protest at UK media censorship and burial of the documentary, we call on activists to organise local burials (at appropriate key sites) of the tape in time capsules to ensure that generations to come will have a chance to know some of what happened during this historic battle. Please organise something around this date, try to get publicity and also please let us know how you get on! (We encourage those organising local showings of the documentary to order 5 to 10 copies of the video for people attending. Available from One Off Productions [0171 247 8881]. #13 each waged, #10 unwaged to Oops, BCM Oops, London WC1N3XX.

ORDERING LEAFLETS: "What's Wrong With McDonald's?" leaflets, and special leaflets for children and McDonald's workers, can be ordered from MSC for those living in Greater London (cheques to 'McLibel Support Campaign'). If you live outside Greater London, please order leaflets from: Veggies, 180 Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3HW Tel 0115 958 5666 (Cheques to "Veggies Ltd"). The cost of leaflets is £8 per 600, £12 per 1,000, £16 per 1,500 [or what you can afford]. Please feel free to copy our leaflets or produce your own. Artwork can be obtained from MSC, Veggies, or from the McSpotlight website: <http://www.mcspotlight.org/campaigns/current/leaflets.html>.

OCTOBER PROTESTS - don't forget to leaflet local McDonald's stores also on October 12th (International Day of Solidarity With McDonald's Workers) and October 16th (the World Day of Action Against McDonald's).

Note: A fully referenced version of the current "What's Wrong With McDonald's?" leaflet is also available from MSC. It backs up every sentence in the leaflet with a reference to authoritative sources or documentary or oral evidence from the trial. Much of this evidence is in the form of admissions from McDonald's own witnesses, including top executives, or from company documents.



(from The Anderson Valley Advertiser)

Democracy without Elections

By Brian Martin

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For many a jaded radical, the greens are the most exciting political development for ages. The green movements claim to bring together members of the most dynamic social movements, including the peace, environmental and feminist movements, combining their insights and numbers. This is something that many activists have long sought.

Beyond this, the rapidly achieved electoral success of green parties has really captured the imagination. The German Greens have been the centre of attention for a decade precisely because of their election to parliament. A number of other green parties have been electorally successful too.

But wait a moment. Before getting too carried away, isn't it worth asking whether elections are an appropriate way forward? After all, electoral politics is the standard, traditional approach, which has led to those traditional parties which have so frustrated many a radical. Isn't there a danger that participation in the electoral process remains a trap, a bottomless pit for political energy which will pacify activists and masses alike?

My aim here is to take a critical look at elections and their alternatives. I start in Part One with a summary of the case against elections. Much of this will be familiar to anarchists, but it may be useful in bringing together the arguments and perhaps raising one or two unfamiliar ones.

If elections have limitations, then what are the alternatives? This is a harder question. In Part Two I look at some of the methods favoured by those supporting 'participatory democracy,' namely actual rule by the people rather than through elected representatives. These participatory methods, naturally enough, have both strengths and weaknesses. One of their key weaknesses is that it is hard for them to deal with decision making involving large numbers of people without succumbing to some of the same problems as representative systems.

Finally, in Part Three I present the idea of demarchy, a participatory system based on random selection. This is, I

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(Days Of Action...)

McLIBEL LISTSERVER - This is an internet service which distributes the latest McLibel information by e-mail. To subscribe, send the e-mail message "subscribe mclibel" to: <majordomo@world.std.com>.

RESOURCES FOR CAMPAIGNERS - as well as info on the McLibel Trial and general campaigning materials, we have more specialised information (for example, resource packs for local residents wishing to oppose a McDonald's planning application). We now have available a CD-Rom of the McSpotlight website, and there is also 'McLibel: Burger Culture On Trial' (from Pan books, #5.99)

.....please organise a local event!.....

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believe, a most promising alternative. It is little known, but in recent years there have been important theoretical developments and practical experiences.

One: The case against elections

The idea of elections as the ultimate democratic device is a deep-seated one in the West. It is hard to escape it. Children are taught all about elections in school, and may vote for student councils or club officers. Then all around us, especially through the mass media, attention is given to politicians and, periodically, to the elections which put them in power. Indeed, the main connection which most people have with their rulers is the ballot box. It is no wonder that electoral politics is sanctified. If a country has no elections, or only sham elections, this is taken as a sign of failure [1].

Elections in practice have served well to maintain dominant power structures such as private property, the military, male domination and economic inequality. None of these has been seriously threatened through voting. It is from the point of view of radical critics that elections are most limiting.

The theory of representative democracy and popular sovereignty is based on some hidden, convenient fictions [2]. Here I'll concentrate on the practical shortcomings of electoral systems, though it would be possible to relate these to theoretical assumptions.

Voting doesn't work

At the simplest level, voting simply doesn't work very well to promote serious challenges to prevailing power systems. The basic problem is quite simple. An elected representative is not tied in any substantial way to particular policies, whatever the preferences of the electorate. Influence on the politician is greatest at the time of election. Once elected, the representative is released from popular control (recall is virtually impossible before the next election) but continues to be exposed to powerful pressure groups, especially corporations, state bureaucracies and political party power brokers.

We all know examples of politicians who have 'sold out,' relinquishing their claimed ideals and breaking their solemn promises. Ironically, this is just as true for right-wingers as for left-wingers. The radical right was very disillusioned by Ronald Reagan.

Usually the sell-outs are attributed to failures of personalities, but this is both unfair and misleading. Politicians are morally little different from anyone else. The expectations and pressures on them are much greater. Positions of great power both attract the most ambitious and ruthless people and bring out the worst features of those who obtain them [3]. It is not the individuals who should be blamed, but the system in which they operate.

In principle, elections should work all right for moderately small electorates and political systems, where accountability can be maintained through regular contact. Elections can be much better justified in New England town meetings than in national parliaments making decisions affecting millions of people. In these large systems, a whole new set of reinforcing mechanisms has developed: political party machines, mass advertising, government manipulation of the news, pork barrelling (government projects in local areas), and bipartisan politics. The party machines choose the candidates, canvass voters and impose platforms. Mass advertising treats candidates like soap powders, emphasising personality over policies [4]. Government manipulation of the news includes a variety of techniques by which the mass media become dependent on government suppliers and shapers of information. Government largess in selected regions is a standard technique to attract (or threaten) voters. Finally, bipartisan politics, namely the adoption of identical or near-identical policies by allegedly competing parties, reduces the range of issues which are subject to political debate. In essence, voters are given the choice between tweedledee and tweedledum, and then bombarded with a variety of techniques to sway them towards one or the other.

This is a depressing picture, but hope springs eternal from the voter's pen. Some maintain the faith that a mainstream party may be reformed or radicalised. Others look towards new parties. When a new party such as the greens shows principles and growth, it is hard to be completely cynical.

Nevertheless, all the historical evidence suggests that parties are more a drag than an impetus to radical change. One obvious problem is that parties can be voted out. All the policy changes they brought in can simply be reversed later.

More important, though, is the pacifying influence of the radical party itself. On a number of occasions, radical parties have been elected to power as a result of popular upsurges. Time after time, the 'radical' parties have become chains to hold back the process of radical change. **Ralph Miliband** gives several examples where labour or socialist parties, elected in periods of social turbulence, acted to reassure the dominant capitalist class and subdue popular action [5]. The Popular Front, elected in France in 1936, made its first task the ending of strikes and occupations and generally dampening popular militancy, which was the Front's strongest ally in bringing about change. The Labour government elected in Britain in 1945 made as few reforms as possible, leaving basic social structures untouched. By contrast, the US New Deal Democratic administration which took office in 1933 did undertake structural changes -- in order to restore and strengthen capitalism. Miliband in these examples writes from the Marxist perspective in which the state is the servant of capitalism. His insights about the reluctance of 'reforming' political leadership of the state to challenge the economic foundation of society applies even more strongly to the unwillingness of this leadership to challenge state power itself.

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The experiences of Eurosocialist parties elected to power in France, Greece and Spain in the 1980s have followed the same pattern. In all major areas -- the economy, the structure of state power, and foreign policy -- the Eurosocialist governments have retreated from their initial goals and become much more like traditional ruling parties [6].

Voting disempowers the grassroots

If voting simply didn't work to bring about changes at the top, that would not be a conclusive argument. After all, change in society doesn't just come about through laws and policies. As feminists and others say, 'the personal is political,' and that means just about everything. There are plenty of opportunities for action outside the electoral system.

It is here that voting makes a more serious inroad into radical social action: it is a diversion from grassroots action. The aim of electoral politics is to elect someone who then can take action. This means that instead of taking direct action against injustice, the action becomes indirect: get the politicians to do something.

On more than one occasion, I've seen a solid grassroots campaign undermined by an election. One example is the 1977 Australian federal election in the midst of a powerful campaign against uranium mining. Another is the 1983 Australian federal election at a crucial point in the campaign against the flooding of the Franklin River in Tasmania [7].

At the simplest level, energy put into electioneering is energy not put into direct action. Some activists feel resentful that their campaign is hijacked by election priorities. This can be compensated, to some extent, by the heightened interest in the issues during an election campaign. The more serious problem is the loss of energy that usually occurs after the election.

In the December 1977 election, the pro-uranium Liberal Party was re-elected. This was very demoralising for the anti-uranium movement which had looked with hope for a victory by the Australian Labor Party with its new anti-uranium platform. Yet in retrospect the movement was having considerable success even under the Liberals. A stepped-up campaign should have been called for. But this was hard to achieve. Many anti-uranium activists, notably those who were Labor Party members, had participated in 1977 because of the upcoming election. After Labor's defeat, many of them dropped out of the movement, leaving those remaining feeling less than encouraged. The election campaign was a diversion from long-term strategy against uranium. It raised activity temporarily, to be followed by a more persistent decline.

Another problem is the centralisation of power in social movements which is encouraged by the desire to influence politicians [8]. The campaign against the flooding of the Franklin River in Tasmania illustrates this. A long and well-orchestrated campaign by a variety of means culminated in December 1982 in a 'blockade' against construction work on the dam, using classic nonviolent action techniques. During the blockade, a national election was called for March 1983. The leaders of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation negotiated with the leaders of the Australian Labor Party, and made a deal. The conservationists would support Labor for the House of Representatives; Labor, if elected, would act to stop the dam.

My main point here is the undemocratic fashion in which deals are made in the political system. It is also interesting to note the aftermath of these negotiations. The blockade was downgraded; Labor, with support of the mainstream environmental organisations, won a close election. The new Labor government did not use its financial power directly against the dam, but rather just supported a legal action in the High Court to use federal power (in relation to a World Heritage listing) to stop a state project. This case won by one vote in the High Court. During all this time, the environmentalists were disempowered, waiting for powerful politicians and judges to decide the fate of the river. The aftermath was a powerful backlash in Tasmania, using the rhetoric of state's rights, against environmentalists.

Incidentally, the 1983 Labor government decided to renege on several remaining planks of its anti-uranium platform. The anti-uranium movement re-emerged on Labor's election, and sank again after this 'betrayal.'

It should be a truism that elections empower the politicians and not the voters. Yet many social movements continually are drawn into electoral politics. There are several reasons for this. One is the involvement of party members in social movements. Another is the aspirations for power and influence by leaders in movements. Having the ear of a government minister is a heady sensation for many; getting elected to parliament oneself is even more of an ego boost. What is forgotten in all this 'politics of influence' is the effect on ordinary activists.

The disempowering effect of elections works not only on activists but also on others. The ways in which elections serve the interests of state power have been admirably explained by **Benjamin Ginsberg** [9]. Ginsberg's basic thesis is that elections historically have enlarged the number of people who participate in 'politics,' but by turning this involvement into a routine activity (voting), elections have reduced the risk of more radical direct action.

The expansion of suffrage is typically presented as a triumph of downtrodden groups against privilege. Workers gained the vote in the face of opposition by the propertied class; women gained it in the face of male-dominated governments and electorates. Ginsberg challenges this picture.

He argues that the suffrage in many countries was expanded in times when there was little social pressure for it.

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Why should this be? Basically, voting serves to legitimate government. To bolster its legitimacy, if required, suffrage can be expanded. This is important when mass support is crucial, for example during wartime. It can be seen in other areas as well. Worker representatives on corporate boards of management serve to coopt dissent; so do student representatives on university councils.

Ginsberg shows that elections operate to bring mass political activity into a manageable form: election campaigns and voting. People learn that they can participate: they are not totally excluded. They also learn the limits of participation. Voting occurs only occasionally, at times fixed by governments. Voting serves only to select leaders, not to directly decide policy. Finally, voting doesn't take passion into account: the vote of the indifferent or ill-informed voter counts just the same as that of the concerned and knowledgeable voter. Voting thus serves to tame political participation, making it a routine process that avoids mass uprisings. The expansion of suffrage helps to reduce the chance that a revolt by an oppressed or excluded group will be seen as justified; with the vote, it is easy for others to claim that they should have used 'orthodox channels.'

Voting reinforces state power

Ginsberg's most important point is that elections give citizens the impression that the government does (or can) serve the people. The founding of the modern state a few centuries ago was met with great resistance: people would refuse to pay taxes, to be conscripted or to obey laws passed by national governments. The introduction of voting and the expanded suffrage have greatly aided the expansion of state power. Rather than seeing the system as one of ruler and ruled, people see at least the possibility of using state power to serve themselves. As electoral participation has increased, the degree of resistance to taxation, military service, and the immense variety of laws regulating behaviour, has been greatly attenuated.

The irony in all this, as pointed out by Ginsberg, is that the expansion of state power, legitimated by voting, has now outgrown any control by the participation which made it possible. States are now so large and complex that any expectation of popular control seems remote. Yet, as he comments, the "idea that electoral participation means popular control of government is so deeply implanted in the psyches of most Americans that even the most overtly skeptical cannot fully free themselves from it" [10]. Needless to say, this statement applies to many countries besides the United States.

Using Ginsberg's perspective, the initial government-sponsored introduction of some competition into elections in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe takes on a new meaning. If the economic restructuring seen as necessary by Communist Party leaders was to have any chance of success, then there had to be greater support for the government. What better way than by introducing some choice into voting? Increased government legitimacy, and hence increased real power for the government, was the aim.

Change in Eastern Europe has gone far past that planned by governments, of course. Still, it is revealing that a key demand of reformers has been to introduce multi-party elections. What is sought is a change in the running of government, not in the basic mechanisms of governance.

Although expanding the franchise does help legitimate government, it certainly does not close off political struggle. The introduction of voting and the expansion of suffrage may institutionalise political activity, but they do after all allow the activity. Elections may reduce the chance of radical challenges to the status quo, but that chance does exist. Electoral politics legitimates government to the extent that governments are to some extent dependent on the will of the people -- however routinised and institutionalised the expression of the people's will may be. Because elections provide a channel for radical change, even though a very constrained channel, the hope of radicals is maintained and their reliance on elections is encouraged.



Ginsberg's analysis leads to the third major limitation of electoral politics: it relies on the state and reinforces state power. Of course, this is simply another facet of the two previous objections, namely that elections don't work to bring about radical change (because the state machinery is designed for other interests) and that elections disempower the grassroots (because energy is channelled into the state).

The basis of an anarchist critique of voting is that voting participates in the legitimization of the state [11]. If the state is part of the problem -- namely being a prime factor in war, genocide, repression, economic inequality, male domination and environmental destruction -- then it is foolish to expect that the problems can be overcome by electing a few new nominal leaders of the state.

It is possible to paint a more sophisticated picture of the state, in which there are continual struggles inside and

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outside the state apparatuses to shape policies and to serve and empower different groups of people. In this picture, it is worth struggling within the state, for example for welfare measures for the poor or against aggressive military policies [12]. There are few who would object to this. But even with this more sophisticated picture, the fundamental critique of the state can still apply.

The basic point concerns whether the organisational structure of the state is neutral or not. If the structure of the state is assumed to be neutral, then the exercise of state power can be seen as the playing out of various power struggles, such as capitalist power versus workers' power or male power versus female power. If the structure of the state is neutral, then the state can be seen as a site for class struggle, gender struggle, etc. This is typical perspective adopted by Marxists, some feminists and most liberals. It is quite an improvement from the picture of the state as a complete tool of the capitalist class. But it does not question the basic assumption of the neutrality of the state structure, which as a consequence can be captured one way or another, either by the simplistic image of taking state power or by the more sophisticated image of working in and against the state.

The basic anarchist insight is that the structure of the state, as a centralised administrative apparatus, is inherently flawed from the point of view of human freedom and equality. Even though the state can be used occasionally for valuable ends, as a means the state is flawed and impossible to reform. The nonreformable aspects of the state include, centrally, its monopoly over 'legitimate' violence and its consequent power to coerce for the purpose of war, internal control, taxation and the protection of property and bureaucratic privilege.

The problem with voting is that the basic premises of the state are never considered open for debate, much less challenge. The state's monopoly over the use of violence for war is never at issue. Neither is the state's use of violence against revolt from within. The state's right to extract economic resources from the population is never questioned. Neither is the state's guarantee of either private property (under capitalism) or bureaucratic prerogative (under state socialism) - or both.

Voting can lead to changes in policies. That is fine and good. But the policies are developed and executed within the state framework, which is a basic constraint. Voting legitimises the state framework.

One response to the limitations of electoral politics is to campaign against voting and elections. This is useful in raising awareness of the limitations of electing one's rulers. But such a critique needs to be supplemented by the promotion of alternatives to the state. That is a harder task. After all, there's no use in criticising electoral methods if there isn't anything better.

Two: Alternatives to Elections

What participatory alternatives are there to the state and electoral politics? This is a topic on which there is a large literature, especially by anarchists [13]. So I can do no more than highlight some of the relevant answers and experiences. I will emphasise some of the limitations of the standard responses to this problem, since it is essential to be as critical of alternatives as of the existing system.

Referendums

One set of alternatives is based on direct mass involvement in policy-making through voting, using mechanisms including petition, recall, initiative and referendum. In short, instead of electing politicians who then make policy decisions, these decisions are made directly by the public.

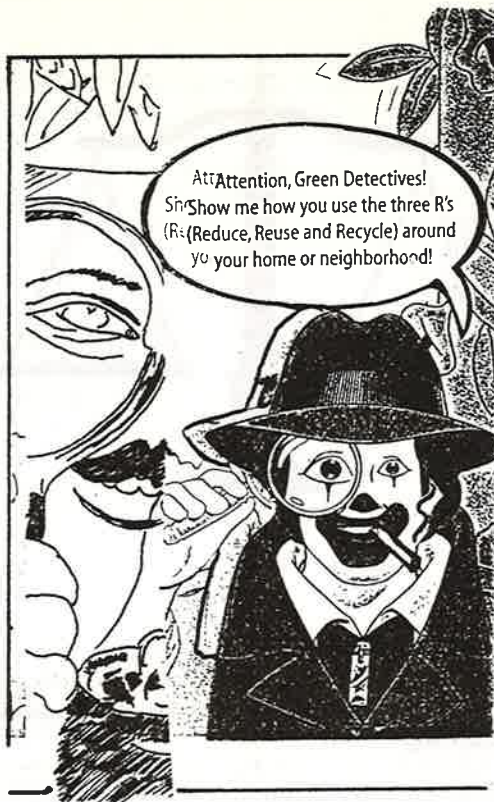
Referendums have been used widely in the United States, often to the consternation of powerful groups. The fluoridation of public water supplies as a measure to reduce tooth decay has resulted in hundreds of referendums, for example. The more frequent result has been against fluoridation, much to the consternation of proponents, who as a result have counselled against referendums and tried for implementation directly by governments.

In practice, referendums have been only supplements to a policy process based on elected representatives. But it is possible to conceive of a vast expansion of the use of referendums, especially by use of computer technology [14]. Some exponents propose a future in which each household television system is hooked up with equipment for direct electronic voting. The case for and against a referendum proposal would be broadcast, followed by a mass vote. What could be more democratic?

Unfortunately there are some serious flaws in such proposals. These go deeper than the problems of media manipulation, involvement by big-spending vested interests, and the worries by experts and elites that the public will be irresponsible in direct voting.

A major problem is the setting of the agenda for the referendum. Who decides the questions? Who decides what material is broadcast for and against a particular question? Who decides the wider context of voting?

The fundamental issue concerning setting of the agenda is not simply bias. It is a question of participation. Participation in decision-making means not just voting on predesigned questions, but participation in the formulation of which questions are put to a vote. This is something which is not easy to organise when a million people are involved, even with the latest electronics. It is a basic limitation of referendums.



McDonald's Closes Unionized Franchise

From: David J Knowles
<dknowles@dowco.com>

McDonald's have managed to maintain their union-free image despite a overwhelming vote by the staff at a Quebec outlet to join the Teamsters union.

The mainly part-time, minimum wage staff voted 80 per cent in favour of joining a union last year despite the best efforts of the McMurder Corp. to "persuade" them not to.

Faced with this, the franchise owner announced February 13th the restaurant would close.

He denies that the closure has anything to do with the impending union certification, and says it was purely due to the franchise not making a profit.

No one else is buying this argument. Steve MacDonald, a former staff member who voted to certify, told CBC Newsworld that he believed the decision was simply another anti-union move on the part of McDonald's, and nearly all of the customers interviewed felt the same way.

Clement Godbout, of the Quebec Federation of Labour, said the federation would consider a boycott of the multi-national as a result of this action.

Newsworld were denied an interview with staff, so visited the drive-through window to speak to them.

"When do you go for your break?" asked the reporter.

"I don't get a break" replied the drive-through server.

"Funny," commented the reporter, "I thought 'Have you had your break today?' was McDonald's motto."

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The key to this limitation of referendums is the presentation of a single choice to a large number of voters. Even when some citizens are involved in developing the question, as in the cases of referendums based on the process of citizen initiative, most people have no chance to be involved in more than a yes-no capacity. The opportunity to recast the question in the light of discussion is not available.

Another problem for referendums is a very old one, fundamental to voting itself. Simply put, rule by the majority often means oppression of the minority. This problem is more clear-cut in direct voting systems, but also appears in representative systems.

Historically, the referendum approach assumes the existence of a bureaucratic apparatus for implementing the decisions made. Referendums don't implement themselves, certainly. Who does? The state. Referendums, in practice, are a way of increasing participation within the parameters of centralised administration. This latter problem is not intrinsic to the referendum as a method. The challenge is to recast the referendum as part of a more participatory political process.

Consensus

Consensus decision-making has become widely used in a number of social movements in the past couple of decades, especially in portions of the anti-nuclear power movement. In general parlance, 'consensus' means gaining general agreement, but within social movements it has been given a more precise, operational meaning.

The basic aim is for a group of generally like-minded people to reach a common decision without greatly alienating

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anyone. This might be a collective working on a newspaper or a group planning a direct action against a military facility. Voting is avoided for several reasons. Those who lose a close or bitterly contested vote often fail to support the majority position, and sometimes even end up leaving the group. Lots of energy is wasted in lobbying and building factions for the purposes of winning votes rather than developing the best campaign. Finally, innovative proposals are often ignored because they seem to stand no chance in a vote.

The basic procedure in consensus decision-making is that various options are canvassed and discussed. If everyone seems to be agreeing, then a test is made for consensus. If no one disagrees, consensus has been reached. If anyone disagrees, they are encouraged to spell out their objections. Consensus is blocked if there is strong disagreement by even one person (or, in modified consensus, by a specified small fraction).

If consensus is blocked, then the group seeks ways to reach agreement. The arguments can be reexamined; new proposals can be raised and discussed; the decision can be postponed until a later time. For example, the group may break itself into a number of small groups which readdress the issue, seeking a resolution.

In many cases, the procedure works remarkably well. Those with divergent views generally see that they are taken seriously, and this builds the cohesion of the group. Sometimes a minority view eventually becomes the consensus view: there is no quick vote to overwhelm it. Most encouraging of all, sometimes brilliant new solutions are developed in the efforts to reach consensus.

That consensus methods often work well should come as no surprise, since they have long been used in an unacknowledged manner in all sorts of situations. For many organisations, official votes are ritualistic only. A vote is seldom taken unless it is obvious beforehand that everyone agrees, or at least that no one strongly disagrees.

The practice of consensus decision-making formalises the process. This is most important as the group gets larger. For large groups there are various methods involving subgroups and delegates which ensure that the basic consensus approach is followed.

An important difference between consensus and normal 'meeting procedure' is the role of leadership. The conventional method has a formal leader (the chair) and a set of formal rules for setting the agenda, speaking, making motions, voting, etc. -- the familiar Roberts rules of order. The consensus approach has no formal leader but instead 'facilitators' who are supposed to help the group do what it wants to. The facilitators are crucial to the success of consensus: they are supposed to test for consensus, encourage less articulate group members to participate, offer suggestions for procedure, summarise views expressed, etc. The ideal is when every group member helps in facilitation, so there is no obvious leader at all.

Consensus, then, is a method of decision-making without voting that aims for participation, group cohesion, and openness to new ideas. Combined with other group skills for social analysis, examining group dynamics, developing strategies and evaluation, consensus can be powerful indeed [15].

Yet anyone who has participated in consensus decision-making should be aware that the practice is often far short of the theory. Sometimes powerful personalities dominate the process; less confident people are afraid to express their views. Because objections normally have to be voiced face-to-face, the protection of anonymity in the secret ballot is lost. Meetings can be interminable, and those who cannot devote the required time to them are effectively disenfranchised. The biggest problem for consensus, though, is irreconcilable conflict of interest.

The best treatment of this problem is *Beyond Adversary Democracy* by Jane Mansbridge [16]. Mansbridge distinguishes between two types of democracy. What she calls adversary democracy is the familiar electoral approach. It is based on the assumption of conflicting interests, majority rule, secret ballot and equal protection of interests. What she calls unitary democracy is like friendship. It is based on a high degree of common interest, consensus-like methods, face-to-face decision-making and a rough equality of mutual respect.

Mansbridge closely analyses two cases in detail: a New England town meeting which formally uses voting but in practice often seeks consensus, and a work collective which uses formal consensus methods.

Mansbridge points out that the standard approach is to assume conflicting interests and to use adversarial methods, but that unitary interests are much more common than generally realised. Hence seeking unity, rather than assuming conflict, is often preferable. Her most important point though, for my purposes here, is that consensus has a complementary weakness: it can't handle deep-seated conflict.

Much of such conflict is based in inequality of power. To imagine employers and workers in a typical enterprise trying to reach consensus is difficult. They don't have common interests or, very often, equality of respect. In a self-managed enterprise, by contrast, there are no separate employers and consensus becomes more feasible.

Other types of conflict are just as difficult to deal with. Imagine a group of anarchists, Marxists and liberals (with a few conservatives tossed in for good measure) trying to reach consensus on a campaign for reducing crime. Even with the best will in the world, the different perspectives on the world are likely to undermine attempts at consensus on more than the most superficial level.

(Continued on page... 6)

Experiments in Deliberative Democracy

<<http://www.auburn.edu/tann/tann2/project2.html#PJ>>
by Christa Daryl Slaton and Ted Becker

Introduction

The voting-from-the-home movement is well underway in several countries, pioneered by a few political and governmental leaders, as a method of further empowering citizens in a representative democracy. Another impulse in this direction is also gaining speed and power, but this one is more experimental and has yet to be embedded in actual governmental processes as a way to COMPEL government to do anything, although on occasion some have been influential.

As a matter of fact, one of the major reasons given by those in power to oppose voting-from-the-home is their belief and/or bias that ordinary citizens will be relatively uninformed on the issues and that they will be voting without the aid of a deliberation process that will refine their assumptions, temper their prejudices, correct their errors of fact, and the like.

This general idea of developing informed and deliberated public opinion has had a relatively lengthy history of highly successful experimentation ... beginning roughly during the 1970s in the U.S.A. However, much of it has relied upon the same method of participation as the electoral system and a traditional view of what might be called public deliberation.

Thus, experiments like the Kettering Foundation's National Issues Forums over the past 15 years or so brings together self-selected groups of public-spirited citizens to discuss issues in face-to-face settings using information and opinion presented to them in issue-pamphlets prepared by the foundation. These forums have minimal influence on anyone in the halls of power, but they have proved year after year that citizens who take the time and trouble to learn about complicated issues and to talk about them in small groups can come up with highly sophisticated answers to thorny policy dilemmas. Also, they have demonstrated in no uncertain terms that these citizens feel good about such processes—even if they have little to no official impact.

A more significant step in this direction has come in a number of projects that add something of great importance to the process of providing basic information; providing expert opinion on the issue; and providing time, opportunity and encouragement to think about the issues to citizens before asking them to make up their minds. What is this added ingredient?

Instead of relying on those citizens who are most interested in this kind of process, the same kinds of active citizens who usually show up at public forums and public hearings anyway, these projects choose a RANDOM SAMPLE OF CITIZENS to participate in the deliberative process. Thus, depending on the size of the sample, the results are a relatively accurate, scientific representation of the ENTIRE public's considered opinion on perplexing issues ... including the proportional representation of citizens who usually shun public forums: young citizens, citizens who come from minority groups, and women (who are still highly underrepresented in the bastions of American governmental power).

What follows, then, are some of the most prominent examples of SCIENTIFIC, DELIBERATIVE POLLING/DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY ... all of which are still active and available for usage. They will be presented in this issue of TAN+N2 in chronological order, i.e., in the order in which they appeared on the political scene.

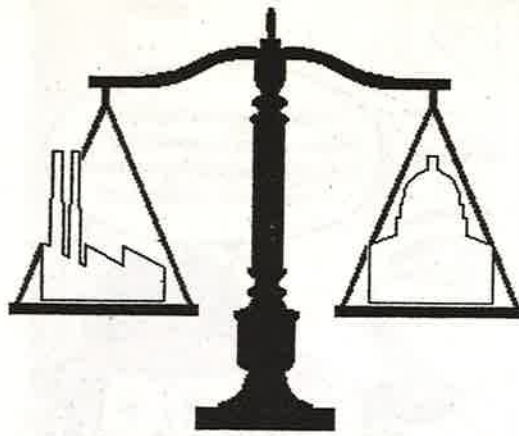
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Citizens Juries/Policy Juries

The Jefferson Center for New Democratic Processes
1111 3rd Ave. S, Suite 364
Minneapolis, MN 55404 USA
Founded 1973
Founder and Chair: Dr. Ned Crosby
President and CEO, Robert Meek
Tele: 612.333.5300
Fax: 612.344.1766
<http://www.winternet.com/~jcenter>

As far as we can determine, this is the first practical experiment in scientific random sample deliberative polling in the world,



(Deliberative Democracy...)

being founded by **Dr. Ned Crosby** in 1973 and continuing to the present time.

Here is the theory and methodology as it has evolved over the past score plus three years.

The idea is that the entire system of modern representative democracy needs a lot of help in involving representative bodies of American citizens meaningfully and creatively in a deliberative policy decision-making process. The American jury system was the model used. Here's the way it works:

The Jefferson Center staff selects a panel of 24 citizens from a city, state, or the nation via random telephone dialing. They also ensure, via an intense phone interview process, that important demographic variables (age, sex, race, education, socio-economic status) are proportionately present on each jury panel.

Those citizens who agree to participate as jurors are paid a modest fee for deliberating and their expenses are paid as well. They come together for a 4-5 day period of time where they are instructed in the process, where they hear numerous advocates and experts argue for one or another position, where they deliberate among themselves over the best possible solutions to the problems, and then present their verdict.

The Jefferson Center has conducted about 20 of these jury projects over the years and the results have been predictable. First, the citizens perform extremely well and usually arrive at reasonable, thoughtful, and widely acceptable solutions. The media report favorably on the process and the results. Politicians also lavish praise on the process and its results.

Issues covered have included: national health care; peacemaking in Central America; low income housing; and the federal budget. Obviously these juries are designed to and succeed in tackling tough, controversial, and complex issues. Also, despite the rigor and success of the juries there is no evidence that any of the verdicts have actually influenced the vote of anyone in a position of power.

The Jefferson Center, a nonprofit organization, can use financial help to continue its work, which has been funded mainly through donations of ordinary citizens, foundations, and corporations.

Australian Policy Juries in Local Government

The Institutionalized Policy Jury Experiments, Australia
(1991-95)
Lyn Carson, Organizer
Faculty of Education, Work and Training
Southern Cross University, Lismore, Australia
Tel: 61 66 20 3043
Fax: 61 66 22 1833

Lyn Carson is a mixture of political activist, political official, and political scientist. In her studies, but pursuant to her desire to increase the participatory base for important educational and political decisions, she decided to implement some of the work on policy juries done by the Jefferson Center in Australia.

There were three experiments. The first, in 1992, was sponsored by the Community Consultation Committee (CCC) of the Lismore City Council and was related to the development of "precinct committees" -- as a method of consulting with citizens. The City Council agreed to use the policy jury method in one of these precinct committees.

Consequently, a number of citizens were selected randomly in this district and it took a great deal of persuasion to get about half of them to show up at the first meeting of this policy jury. Even these somewhat cynical, expressing views that they doubted that the "Council would either listen to them or act on their concerns."

They were correct. Within a couple of weeks of this meeting, a majority of the Council withdrew the minimal funding needed to continue the project.

(Deliberative Democracy...)

The second, in 1993, used policy juries in a local school council so as to involve a broad segment of parents in setting goals for the school. A random sample was selected. The one evening meeting was facilitated. According to Carson, "evidence was presented. ... Each speaker spoke about their educational priorities and all avoided the use of jargon." Small group discussions followed.

At the end of the evening, the parents who attended learned a lot about how competent they were to participate in this policy jury. In addition, they recognized that there were many different yet equally valid viewpoints, and that the process was worthwhile.

Unfortunately, despite rhetoric to the contrary about empowering parents in educational priority-setting or decision-making, no school system has tried to continue this experiment.

The third was sponsored by a community information service in Ballina, a town on the east coast of Australia. This involved the planning of the future of the central business district and, once again, the citizens were selected randomly. The volunteers and coordinator of the service were trained in the citizen jury process and ran it themselves.

The citizen-jurors were asked to help envision the future. There were visual displays and many speakers who offered many different perspectives. Later, the jurors were allowed to relax, think and work with clay, crayons, and craft to create models of the future on their own. Once again, the jurors were creative, animated, dedicated and came up with "some wonderful suggestions." They also told the information center "that they found the process enjoyable."

Once again, though, there is no evidence that this policy jury had any impact on anyone with power. Ms. Carson remains optimistic about institutionalizing policy juries in Australia (as planners, as those who help set priorities, as consultants of public policy) mainly because her experimentation demonstrated clearly, time and time again, how well it worked with and for the citizens who participated.

The problem remains: how to overcome resistance by those who hold positions of power in all forms and levels of representative democratic government ... whether elected or appointed.

Ms. Carson has suggestions as to how to minimize or penetrate that resistance. Contact her for information along those lines or for more info on the projects themselves.

Televote:

Scientific/Informed/Deliberated Public Opinion
Department of Political Science
7080 Haley Center
Auburn University, Auburn, AL 36849 USA
Founded: 1978 (University of Hawaii)
Co-directors: **Dr. Ted Becker**
and **Dr. Christa Daryl Slaton**
Tele: 334.844.6168
Fax: 334.844.5348

Televote is an innovative method of public opinion polling, one which is designed to and has successfully produced informed, deliberated public opinion on very complicated planning, policy and constitutional issues from highly representative samples among populations in the City and County of Honolulu, Southern California, the State of Hawaii and New Zealand. There have been 12 such experiments, which are discussed in great detail and depth in Slaton's book: *Televote: A Quantum Leap in Citizen Participation* (NY: Praeger, 1992)

Citizens are called on the telephone using random digit dialing. Most agree to receive in the mail a colorful, easy-to-read brochure that provides a basic level of information, a variety of expert opinion, and a wide array of alternatives to a major public issue. They agree to read the material and to take as much time as they need to discuss and deliberate this issue with their family, friends, co-workers, etc. before making up their minds. This is the ordinary process of deliberation used by most citizens in forming their opinions on almost all issues and candidates for office and therefore replicates and reinforces that process.

The Televote staff continues to be in close touch with all respondents throughout the process until a certain minimal size of the sample mirrors the population. Once the sample (anywhere between 400-1000) has finished and the results have been tallied, they are distributed widely to the press and to all government officials who may be involved or interested in that issue. Often, this process is embedded within a wider Electronic Town Meeting format, so that the public is aware of the Televote before it even begins. And the Televote provides a scientific public opinion core to the broader ETM discussion.

Issues of Televotes have included: (a) whether a state should institute initiative and referendum; (b) the national budget; (c) alternative futures for the country; (d) what to do about financing a local medical clinic that faced a state funding crisis;

(Continued on page... 5)

(Deliberative Democracy...)

(e) various transportation options for the future. Citizen satisfaction with the process was extremely high (over 90%) and studies indicated that the poll was highly predictable of future voting patterns.

In addition, those Televote polls which were sponsored by governmental agencies helped them make key decisions in the areas of public health and public transportation. In others, due to their being widely publicized and then the results delivered to all relevant decision-makers, they were frequently used by decision makers in their public debate.

There has been a cluster of criticism emanating from a group of scholars located at Harvard, Brandeis and George Washington Universities in the U.S. The final chapter in Slaton's book Televote sets them forth and responds to them.

The Honolulu City Council Electronic Hearing

City and County of Honolulu
Honolulu, Hawaii

Coordinators: **Henry "Hap" Freund and Sean McLaughling**

On December 2, 1987, the Honolulu City Council sponsored an unprecedented public hearing on the issue of whether or not to renovate the Waikiki Shell in Honolulu. Previously, a wide variety of city council meetings had been aired over cable television, but this program was very different.

First, citizens who watched the hearing over cable TV were invited to testify live at the hearing -- by telephone. An electronic interface system was used to link the telephone callers with the city council's internal public address system. The rule was: three citizens who were physically present at the hearing were allowed to testify in person. Then, three citizens who were at home who called a certain telephone number put up on the TV screen and were told to wait their turn then got the opportunity to testify for 1 minute apiece. The rotation was: 3 witnesses present in the chamber; 3 witnesses from home; etc.

Another option for citizens at home was to vote on the issue itself. A computerized TV voting system was used which allowed the TV viewer to call one of two numbers flashed on the screen. One number was for those who favored the proposal. The other was for those who were opposed. However, no one was allowed to vote until the hearing was well under way. And the results were not made public until the final day.

There were many significant results of this experiment. First, nearly 7500 votes were cast for a public hearing. Based on previous experience with TV voting, an extremely conservative estimate is that roughly 10,000 people watched at least part of this hearing -- where only 100 could fit into the hearing room physically. This increased the public involvement by a factor of at the very least: 100! The QUBE public hearing experiment in Columbus, Ohio was hailed as a great success when it increased the public involvement by a factor of 10.

Second, the TV testimony was extremely well thought out and articulate. This indicated that while the home witnesses waited to speak, they wrote out their testimony.

Third, the public input into the process definitely had a major impact. It was clear that the City Council and those in the chamber (many of them who worked for the developer and were members of labor unions who would build the new amphitheatre) were initially very favorable to the project. Those at home, however, were not. This showed in the difference between the testimony in the chamber and that from the home viewers. It also showed in the vote which was released the next day: The project lost by a 3-1 vote. The Honolulu City Council did not try this experiment again.

Americans Talk Issues

10 Carrera Street
St. Augustine, FL 32084 USA
Founded: 1987
Dr. Alan F. Kay, Director
Tel: 904.826.0984
Fax: 904.826.4194
<http://www.auburn.edu/tann/ati/>

Americans Talk Issues (ATI) was originally founded by **Dr. Alan F. Kay** to go into much greater depth on major national security issues than conventional public opinion polls. Thus, it was first called Americans Talk Security. From the start, it has been a non-profit foundation and remains so today. Although it has recently moved its operations from Washington, D.C. to St. Augustine, FL, it still maintains an office in the nation's capitol.

There are several unique features to ATI's process of scientific deliberative polling.

It is performed by "opinion research professionals" who utilize the best practices in modern polling, and it also uses experts

*(Deliberative Democracy...)*

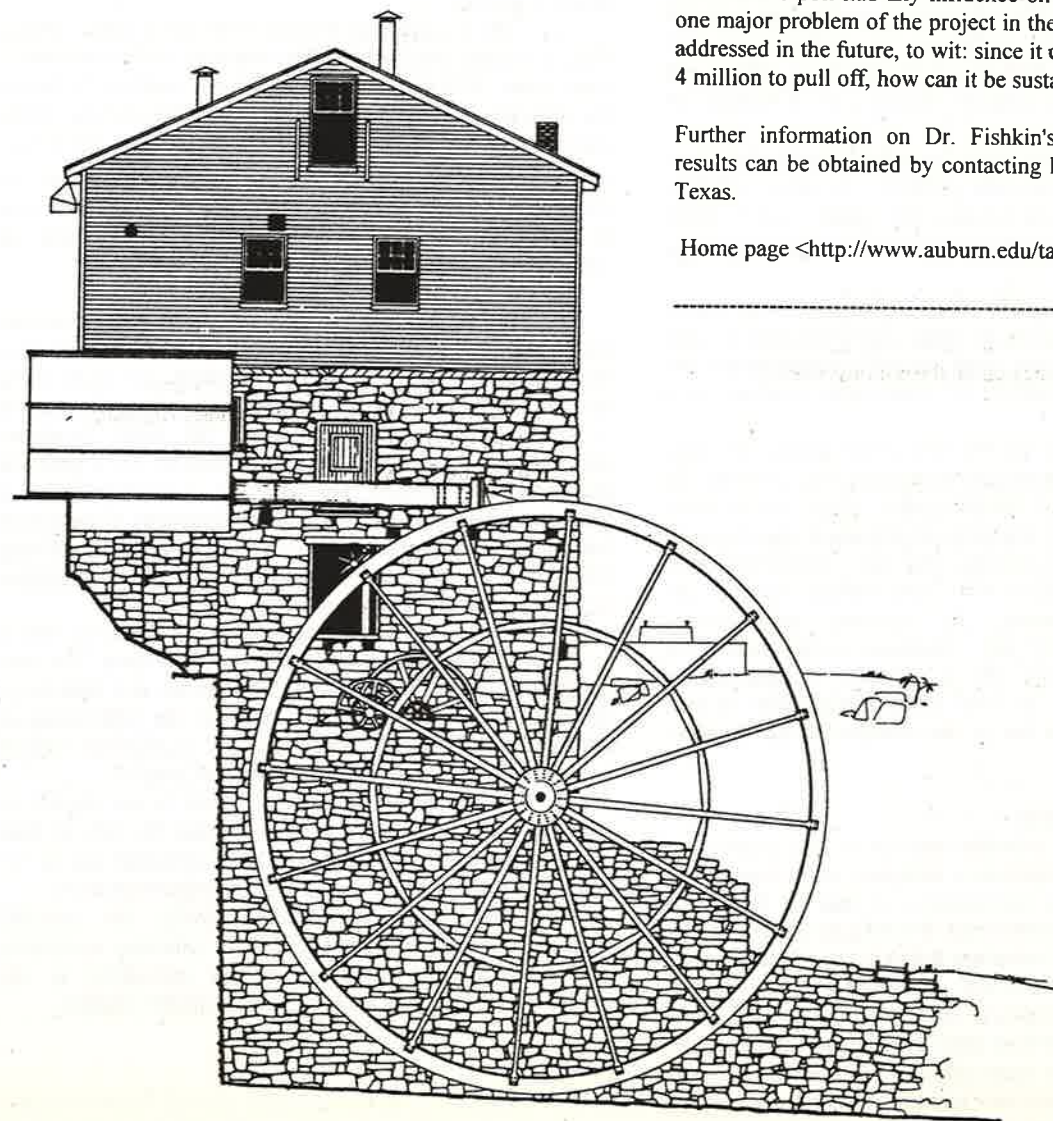
who specialize in the subject matter of the survey. Its aim is to determine as accurately as possible which proposals the public most favors for policy and legislation on major national issues. ATI takes great care to be "bipartisan" and "objective" in its posing of questions, presenting of facts and opinion. It uses experts on all sides of an issue in order to minimize any bias in the design, the questions and the analysis. The research team is dedicated to identifying and measuring public judgement on major policy alternatives when they are presented in a fair, balanced and accurate manner and bolstered by basic information plus pro and con arguments. The interviewers, by following a detailed interview script, get the citizens to weigh carefully the risks/rewards, costs/benefits, and probable consequences of each proposal.

In each survey, the average time a citizen spends deliberating with the research team is approximately 30 minutes. In order to develop a public deliberation over time, the ATI methods uses a SERIES of polls on each subject. This is done so that the analysts can "fill holes" in any emerging opinion patterns, and to go deeper into issues from survey to survey.

The goal of the ATI deliberative process is "Consensus Location." This is a search for the most widely held views in the public (over 70%, often over 80%) on even extremely complex and sophisticated issues, and it probes to make sure that these consensus hold up when subjected to tough tests.

ATI has conducted 18 such surveys between 1987-94, and has helped many organizations design their own surveys. Issues covered include national security; global economic issues; foreign policy; the domestic economy; and the environment.

The final one, up to now, is a particularly interesting one concerning many important suggestions for democratic reform of the American representative system. The 80-page report called "Steps for Democracy: The Many Versus the Few" is almost out-of-print but can be obtained, photocopied for 10, including postage. It is a "Contract From America" that would strengthen both the representative and direct democratic systems in the U.S.A...and it has the consensus of over two-thirds of the American public.

*(Deliberative Democracy...)**The Deliberative Poll:*

National Issues Convention
Department of Government
University of Texas
Austin, TX 78712 USA
Founded 1995
Dr. James Fishkin
Tel: 512.471.5121
Fax: 512.471.1061

The Deliberative Poll, as he calls it, was conceived, developed and is practiced by **Dr. James Fishkin** of the University of Texas. Dr. Fishkin's theory of democracy and deliberation is elaborated in his Yale University Press book of the same name: *Democracy and Deliberation* (1992) and it is in this book that he first describes what he means by a "deliberative poll."

In his view, a deliberative poll works like this:

a random sample of citizens in a country (state or polity) is contacted by phone and asked to participate in the following process: some number of them (from 400-600) will be paid to attend a conference or convention at some central location (like a college campus) where they will be polled on their opinions toward certain major issues of the day; and will spend several days thereafter listening to experts testify on such issues; and they will be broken down into several face-to-face discussion groups; and then will meet with several political leaders and ask them questions on the issues under deliberation; and then finally will be polled again on the same questions to see to what extent, if any, which opinions have been changed by this extensive and intensive process of deliberation.

Fishkin has developed a relationship with a major English commercial TV network and they have already experimented twice with this format very successfully. In each case, the citizens were extremely cooperative, deliberated seriously, and were very pleased to participate in this process. He replicated this experiment on PBS in the U.S.A. in January of 1996-- where the several hundred citizens asked questions of such political figures as Vice President Al Gore and Senator Phil Gramm (via teleconference). Dr. Fishkin went back to England in April 1996 to do another such project there.

He has his critics, however.

The Fall issue of Public Perspective out of the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut airs many of them in a series of articles. The major flaw, according to them, is that this is not a "scientific" poll because the citizens are isolated from their natural environments, that is, their homes. Fishkin replies: "So what?" In his view, this is just another type of public opinion. one evolved from a large face-to-face deliberative process. There are many other criticisms...but the major fact that cannot be debated is the serious deliberation that almost all the citizens participated in with great distinction and for which they almost unanimously had great praise.

Once again, though, there is no evidence that this kind of deliberative poll had any influence on policy-makers. There is one major problem of the project in the U.S.A. that needs to be addressed in the future, to wit: since it cost nearly 4 million to pull off, how can it be sustained at a national level?

Further information on Dr. Fishkin's methodology and the results can be obtained by contacting him at the University of Texas.

Home page <<http://www.auburn.edu/tann/>>

McDonald's strike in Macedonia Ohio USA

by Andrea Lynn Strnad
 <hw179@cleveland.Freenet.Edu>

Six employees at a McDonald's in Macedonia, Ohio went on strike on Easter Sunday to protest unfair wages and working conditions. The picket line lasted five days until an agreement was reached on Friday, April 17 with the help of the local Teamsters union.

"We are being treated like ground meat. I got a ten-cent raise after working here for a year," said Jason Cyphert, 18, who is paid \$6.10 per hour. Workers who were being paid \$5.85 per hour were being asked to train new hires being paid \$6.10 an hour. Managers didn't post work schedules in advance and there was little communication between workers and management when problems arose.

The agreement reached between the workers and management will apply to three restaurants in the area. The president of Teamsters Local Union 416, Dominic Tocco, was present and supported the workers during negotiation. The agreement raises base pay to \$6.50 per hour with pay commensurate with experience and includes: four crew meetings a year, employee-of-the-month recognition, anniversary pins, advance notice on procedure changes, weekly work schedules posted at least four days in advance, written performance reviews and paid one-week vacations for employees working 35 hours per week or more.

The story received national attention and more info can be found on news servers and AP.



(Democracy without Elections...)

participation can be ensured at the bottom level and consultation and some decision making occurs at the highest levels.

Delegates and federations sound like an alternative to conventional electoral systems, but there are strong similarities. Delegates are normally elected, and this leads to the familiar problems of representation. Certain individuals dominate. Participation in decision-making is unequal, with the delegates being heavily involved and others not. To the degree that decisions are actually made at higher levels, there is great potential for development of factions, vote trading and manipulation of the electorate.

This is where the delegate system is supposed to be different: if the delegates start to serve themselves rather than those they represent, they can be recalled. But in practice this is hard to achieve. Delegates tend to 'harden' into formal representatives. Those chosen as delegates are likely to have much more experience and knowledge than the ordinary person. Once chosen, the delegates gain even more experience and knowledge, which can be presented as of high value to the electors. In other words, recalling the delegate will be at the cost of losing an experienced and influential person.

These problems have surfaced in the German Green Party. Although formally elected as representatives, the party sought to treat those elected as delegates, setting strict limits on the length of time in parliament. This was resisted by some of those elected, who were able to build support due to their wide appeal. Furthermore, from a pragmatic point of view (which is often hard to resist), those who had served in parliament had the experience and public profile to better promote the green cause. Thus the delegate approach came under great stress even though the green politicians had little real power. In a situation when the delegates are truly making decisions, the stresses will be much greater.

The fundamental problem with the delegate system, then, is unequal participation. Not everyone can be involved in every issue. With delegates, the problem is resolved by having the delegates involved much more in decision-making, at the expense of others. This unequal participation then reproduces and entrenches itself. The more layers there are to the federation, the more serious this problem will be. Federations, as well, are not a magical solution to the problem of coordination in a self-managing society.

In this brief survey of some of the more well-known participative alternatives to elections, I've focussed on their limitations. But these and other methods do have many strengths, and are worth promoting as additions or alternatives to the present system. Consensus has been developed enormously over the past couple of decades as a practical decision-making method. The potential of decentralisation is undoubtedly great. Indeed, the greatest successes of consensus have been in small groups. As well as the idea of federations, there is also much attention to networks, which do not assume any set of levels for decision making.

Rather than dismissing these possibilities, my aim is to point out some of the problems that confront them. The most serious difficulty is how to ensure participation in a wide range of issues that affect any person. How can the (self-managed) activities of large numbers of people be coordinated without vesting excessive power in a small group of people?

I now turn to 'demarchy,' which is one answer to some of these problems. It is by no means the only or final answer. But it is an approach that holds potential and, in my opinion, is worth much investigation and experimentation.

John Zube advocates 'panarchy,' the peaceful coexistence of a diversity of methods for voluntary association [20]. In this spirit, demarchy can be considered as one candidate for organising society in a participative fashion.

(Democracy without Elections...)

Three: Demarchy

The most eloquent account of demarchy is given by John Burnheim in his book *Is Democracy Possible?* [21]. Burnheim begins by analysing the state and bureaucracy, and concludes that they are central obstacles to the achievement of true democracy. He includes electoral politics as part of the problem. Since the word 'democracy' is so tainted by association with representative government, Burnheim coined the word 'demarchy' to refer to his alternative.

Demarchy is based on random selection of individuals to serve in decision-making groups which deal with particular functions or services, such as roads or education. Forget the state and forget bureaucracies. In a full-fledged demarchy, all this is replaced by a network of groups whose members are randomly selected, each of which deals with a particular function in a particular area.

For example, in a population of 10,000 to 100,000, there might be groups dealing with transport, health, agriculture, industry, education, garbage, housing, art and so forth, or particular aspects of such functions such as rail transport. Each group would be chosen randomly from all those who volunteer to be on it. The groups could be perhaps 10 or 20 people, large enough to obtain a variety of views but small enough for face-to-face discussion. The groups themselves could use consensus, modified consensus, voting or some other procedure to reach decisions. They could call for submissions, testimony, surveys and any other information they wished to obtain.

Before going further, it is worth looking more closely at random selection (also called sortition). This was used in ancient Athens as a democratic selection device, but has been little used since. Of course, Athenian democracy was limited, excluding women and slaves. Nevertheless, there are many things that can be learned from it [22].

One of the values of random selection was to increase participation and prevent the formation of factions. When the assembly met, the chairman was selected by lot at the beginning of the meeting. In this way there was no opportunity for pre-assembly plotting to push towards particular outcomes by putting pressure on the chairman.

The Athenians used voting too, for example in choosing military leaders. In fact, they used a variety of democratic devices, each chosen for particular purposes. Writers on liberal democracy today draw on the Athenian experience selectively. They use it to justify representation, but ignore or dismiss the use of sortition. Indeed, democracy is often defined today as representative democracy.

The major use of random selection for important decision making today is the jury, which itself prospers in only the United States and a few other countries. 'Ordinary people' are randomly chosen to decide on the fate of their fellow humans. The jury is embedded in a political framework which constrains its potential: the framework of laws which is biased towards the interests of the privileged; the selective enforcement of law; manipulations by lawyers, judges and media. Considering these obstacles, the jury performs remarkably well.

Many governments have dispensed with juries, arguing that professional judges are more suitable. The argument that juries are less capable of dealing with complex technical issues is a vexed one. Arguably, a jury of a dozen people is likely to contain one or two people more technically competent than the average judge.

It is certainly the case that juries are hated by repressive governments. Judges can be pressured more easily by governments than can juries.

From a decision-making point of view, the great advantage of the jury is its capacity for testing opinions. In terms of participation in decision-making, the jury is a form of policy making, though this is greatly discouraged by most judges [23].

(Continued on page... 7)

(Democracy without Elections...)

The larger the group, the more likely there are to be fundamental conflicts of interests. Consensus is most likely to work in small self-selected groups. But as a democratic alternative to elections it has severe limitations dealing with large groups. The problems of consensus are also the problems of self-management in large groups [17].

Small size.

One solution to this dilemma is to keep group sizes small. Rather than centralisation of power, decentralisation is the aim. There is no intrinsic reason why education, health, investment and many other functions have to be administered at the level of many millions of people rather than, say, thousands or tens of thousands. Many of the most participatory polities, from ancient Greece to today, have been relatively small. Conversely, many of the ills of electoral politics seem associated with the enormous population in many countries [18].

Small size reduces the severity of many of the problems of decision-making. Even voting is not so limiting when the number of voters is so small that everyone is potentially known to everyone else. The use of consensus can be maximised.

Furthermore, small size opens the possibility of a plurality of political systems. Frances Kendall and Leon Louw propose a Swiss-like federation of autonomous political entities, each of which can choose its own political and economic system [19]. With Kendall and Louw's system, the difficulties of trying new methods, and the costs of failures, are greatly reduced.

Small size may make governance easier, but there will still be some large-scale problems requiring solution. Global pollution and local disasters, for example, call for more than local solutions. How are decisions to be made about such issues?

More fundamentally, small size by itself doesn't solve the issue of how decisions are made. There can still be deep conflicts of interests which make consensus inappropriate, and there can still be problems of domination resulting from electoral methods.

Finally, in all but the very tiniest groups, the basic problem of limits to participation remains. Not everyone has time to become fully knowledgeable about every issue. Consensus assumes that everyone can and should participate in decisions; if substantial numbers drop out, it becomes rule by the energetic, or by those who have nothing better to do. Representative democracy, by contrast, puts elected representatives in the key decision-making roles; the participation of everyone else is restricted to campaigning, voting and lobbying. In both cases participation is very unequal, not by choice but by the structure of the decision-making system.

Delegates and federations

A favourite anarchist solution to the problem of coordination and participation is delegates and federations. A delegate differs from a representative in that the delegate is more closely tied to the electorate: the delegate can be recalled at any time, especially when not following the dictates of the electors. Federations are a way of combining self-governing entities. The member bodies in the federation retain the major decision-making power over their own affairs. The members come together to decide issues affecting all of them. In a 'weak federation,' the centre has only advisory functions; in a 'strong federation,' the centre has considerable executive power in specified areas. By having several tiers in the federation, full

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Considering that most jury members are given no training in critical assessment of evidence and formation of conclusions, in consensus decision-making techniques or in the role of the jury itself, the decision-making record of juries is remarkably sound [24]. Rather than attacking the failures of the jury system, it would be more appropriate to develop ways of making it function better.

Returning now to Burnheim's picture of demarchy, how does it handle the basic problems of participation? Because there are no elections and no representatives, the problems of unequal formal power, disempowerment of electors, regulation of participation and so forth do not apply -- at least not in the usual way. Formal participation occurs instead through random selection onto 'functional groups,' namely groups dealing with particular limited areas. Random selection for each group is made only from those who volunteer, just as politicians must volunteer. The difference is the method of selection: random selection rather than election.

Few people would volunteer for every possible group. Most are likely to have special interests, such as postal services, art, manufacture of building materials and services for the disabled. They could volunteer to serve on the relevant groups, and also make submissions to the groups, comment on policies and in other ways organise to promote their favoured policies.

Demarchy solves the problem of participation in a neat fashion. Recognising that it is impossible for everyone to participate on every issue in an informed fashion, it avoids anything resembling a governing body which makes far-reaching decisions on a range of issues. Instead, the functional groups have a limited domain. The people who care most about a particular issue can seek to have an influence over policy in that area. They can leave other issues to other groups and the people most concerned about them. This is basically a process of decentralisation of decision-making by topic or function rather than by geography or numbers.

Leaving decision-making to those who care most about a topic has its dangers, of course: self-interested cliques can obtain power and exclude others. That is what happens normally in all sorts of organisations, from governments and corporations to social movement groups. Demarchy handles this problem through the requirement of random selection. No one can be guaranteed a formal decision-making role. Furthermore, the terms of service are strictly limited, so no permanent executive or clique can develop.

Another problem then looms. Won't there be biases in the groups selected, because only certain sorts of people will volunteer? Won't most of the groups, for example, be dominated by white middle-aged men? This poses no problem, given a suitable adaptation of how the random selection is carried out. Suppose, for example, that 80 men and 20 women volunteer for a group of 10, for which it is desired to have an equal number of men and women. The method is simply to select 5 men randomly from the 80 male volunteers and 5 women from the 20 female volunteers. In this way, the sex balance in the group can equal that in the overall population even with different rates of volunteering. The same principle can be applied to characteristics such as ethnic origin, social class, age, occupation and religion.

This may sound logical enough, but who is to make the decisions about what groups are represented in what ways? After all, if a group decides on its own criteria for selection, this is open to abuse. Burnheim's solution to this is what he calls second-order groups. These are groups which act analogously to a judicial system for the operation of demarchy. The second-order groups deal only with procedural issues, such as what (first-order) groups should exist, how the random selection should be carried out, and any other disputed point.

Obviously, members of the second-order groups should have had experience in the first-order groups. How should they be selected? Burnheim suggests that first-order groups should select from among their members those most suitable for second-order groups. Bob James argued to me that this really goes against the guiding principle of demarchy, which is random selection of interested people rather than selection on the basis of performance or popularity. He suggests that second-order group members be chosen randomly from first-order group members. My guess is that the differences between these two procedures would not be so great. Even with a random selection, it is likely that members seen to be performing well would be strongly encouraged by their colleagues to stand for second-order group membership, which would probably not be all that sought after anyway. Finally, the limited term of office on the second-order groups will prevent entrenchment of power.

Several features distinguish demarchy from representative democracy, including random selection, functional groups, limited tenure of office, and elimination of the state and bureaucracy. Some of these could serve as reforms to representative democracy, but there is also a coherency in the entire package.

For example, a limited term of office, say two years, would help prevent entrenchment of power in representative systems. Why should demarchy be better able to sustain such a requirement for turnover of members of decision-making groups? One difference lies in the legitimacy attached to the selection principle. Representatives justify their position in terms of repeated majority preference for their personal selection. Randomly selected individuals have no special legitimisation except the random process itself. The legitimacy of random selection lies in regular replacement rather than popular mandate or acquired experience, and this type of legitimacy more easily allows challenges should those in office attempt to extend their term. A similar difference can be seen in



Mediationism, A New Religion

by David Briars

I think I've discovered a new religion called "Mediationism". It is a new age phenomenon in which the adherents believe that the truth, or the path, lies in the exact middle of all opinions. It's highest goal is for everything to be... nice..

Imagine a scenario in which 2 people have a disagreement. One believes that the world is flat, the other believes that it is round. Enter a mediator.

At best a mediator could help them to get to know and understand each other. An adherent of the Mediationist religion would believe that this would then make them like and respect each other, but as Richard Nixon once said, "People assume that if they could only get to know each other they would like each other. Sometimes you learn that you really don't like the other person".

At worst the mediator would have some kind of legal authority to arbitrate like they do in our local school teachers' negotiations. Paid and approved by both sides, the mediator would firmly rule that the world was semi-circular.

So we begin to suspect that mediation has nothing at all to do with science, except perhaps to cloud it or slow it down by dignifying popular superstitions. Mediation has no value in evaluating logically consistent systems of thought like math. Mediation is weak in resolving issues between people with unequal power, and un-equal longevity. For example, an institution, who will be there next year to hire the mediator, vs an employee who may not.

Increasing numbers of people are finding Mediationism to be the perfect environment in which to shelter and dignify their unexamined beliefs. In the Mediationist world, all views are relative, all are equal. Such a world view is based more on consensus than common sense, often a consensus that is not real, but rather a wearing down of one of the parties by popular oppression. It can become a kind of personal endurance contest where the highest crime is to stick to your principles and hold people accountable for the consequences of their belief systems. To the Mediationist, this constitutes an unforgivable assault, and justifies a complete pouting refusal to deal with issues rationally.

Some Mediationist ministers are capable of remarkable devotion and sacrifice, enduring endless sharings of people's feelings in an attempt to produce harmony. Because the mediationist's over-arching goal is to produce harmony rather than to discover the truth, it can endlessly prolong conflict.

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the often lengthy tenure of judges, whether appointed or elected, compared to jurors.

There is not the space here to go into many of the issues raised by the concept of demarchy. Suffice it to say that there are many unanswered questions and many areas where further elaboration is required. I'll mention only a few here.

First, implementation of decisions. Burnheim has rejected the state and bureaucracy, so there won't be any permanent staff to carry out decisions made by the demarchic groups. Burnheim says that the groups will carry out the decisions themselves. That sounds fine in theory, but what will it mean in practice?

Second, how will decisions be enforced? Remember, there is no state and hence no military. Essentially, decisions will be effective if people abide by them, and this depends on the overall legitimacy of the system. Actually, this isn't too different from many aspects of present society. Most people accept the need to act in a sensible manner towards babies, public parks and (for that matter) private property, even when the possibility of legal sanctions and apprehension by the police is remote. Force plays only a limited role in the routine operation of society. In a more participatory society, force could play an even more limited role. The corollary of this is that unpopular decisions by demarchic groups would simply lapse through non-observance. The groups would have to take

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into account the willingness of the population to accept their decisions.

Without the state, there would be no military. How would a community defend itself against external aggression? One possibility is arming the people [25]. However, the most participatory alternative to military defence is social defence, based on popular nonviolent resistance [26]. Demarchy and social defence have many compatible features [27].

Third, a big unanswered question is the nature of the economic system associated with demarchy. In principle, a range of systems are compatible with demarchic decision-making. A group could make a contract for recycling services either with a privately owned company or with a self-managed collective. Demarchy, though, is not compatible with bureaucratically organised economic systems, either socialist or capitalist.

Burnheim argues for extension of the principles of demarchy to economics. For example, there would be demarchic groups to make decisions about particular areas of land. Rents could be charged for uses of the land, and the rents would take the place of taxation, since there is no state to collect taxes. This is an adaptation of Henry George's ideas. The random selection for groups making decisions over portions of land would prevent vested interests from gaining a stranglehold over the political-economic process. Burnheim would also extend this idea to control over labour and money as well as land. These ideas are in a very preliminary form.

One other important problem is the basic one of participation. What if people don't volunteer? What if certain groups don't produce enough volunteers for their quota? In some cases this would be a sign of success. If the way things are operating is acceptable to most people, then there would be no urgency about becoming a member of a decision-making group. By contrast, in controversial areas participation is not likely to be a problem. If topics such as abortion or genetic engineering generated passionate debate, then concerned individuals and groups would find it fruitful to educate as many people as possible about the issues and encourage them to stand for random selection. Indeed, any unpopular decision could generate a mobilisation of people to stand for selection. Furthermore, the people mobilised would have to span a range of categories: men and women, young and old, etc. As a result, participation and informed comment would be highest in the areas of most concern. In other areas, most people would be happy to let others look after matters.

It would be easy to carry on at length about the hypothetical features of demarchy. But what's the point if it's all just a vision?

Burnheim has given the most eloquent expression of demarchy, but he is far from the only person with these sorts of ideas. Random selection, after all, has been around at least since the ancient Greeks, and it should not be surprising that advocates emerge now and again.

Burnheim's vision is a very decentralised and participatory use of random selection. By contrast, others have advocated random selection for the US Congress, for example replacing the elected House of Representatives by a randomly selected 'Representative House' [28]. These proposals have many merits but leave intact the power of the state.

Of special interest are those who have tried out random selection in practice. One such person is **Ned Crosby**, a political scientist from Minnesota in the United States. In the 1970s, Crosby developed his own idea of a political alternative involving random selection, with a much more centralised system than Burnheim. But failing to find a publisher for his book, he decided to work on practical implementation.

Crosby set up an organisation which is now called the **Jefferson Center for New Democratic Processes**. It has devoted most of its energy towards practical experiments in random selection for policy-making [29].

One project concerned the question of whether to introduce school-based clinics to deal with teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, a very contentious issue in the state [30]. The Jefferson Center convened a number of groups of randomly selected people which they call **policy juries**. A 12-person policy jury was organised for each of the eight congressional districts in the state of Minnesota. Using the telephone directory, 100 people in each district were selected randomly and contacted and surveyed about their basic views concerning school-based clinics. Then a jury pool was set up from those contacted by ensuring that the demographic characteristics (ethnic origin, sex, social class) of those in the pool matched those in the overall population. Then people from each pool were selected randomly and invited to be policy jurors, until 12 jurors were obtained. In this process, it was ensured that the preliminary views about school-based clinics of the jurors matched the percentages found in the overall survey. Thus, the resulting policy juries very nearly matched the overall population both in demographic characteristics and in preliminary views on school-based clinics.

The policy jury in each district held 'hearings': they listened to various experts, heard testimony from partisans on each side of the issue, and discussed the issues among themselves. At the end of four days of deliberation, each policy jury took a vote concerning various policy alternatives. As well, each jury gave reasons for its views, made additional policy recommendations and evaluated the experience of the policy jury itself.

In addition to the eight district-based policy juries, a state-wide policy jury of 24 people was set up with three members from each district jury. This state-wide jury went through a similar process. The recommendations of the policy juries were made available to Minnesota state legislators, and also widely publicised in the media. Through all this, the

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Jefferson Center provided the essential support for the process. It carried out the surveys, the random selection, convening of the juries, arranging for expert witnesses, coordination of the jury deliberations and writing up and publicising of the recommendations. To carry weight, it was essential that the Jefferson Center be perceived as committed to a fair process and not to any partisan view on the issue being discussed.

In the above description, I've given only the basic outline of the process. There are many more details for those interested [31]. The basic question to be asked is "how well did it work?" In terms of democratic processes, the answer must be "remarkably well." The key test here is the response of the jurors themselves. They quickly became very committed to the process, taking it extremely seriously. They demonstrated a good grasp of the issues and made 'sensible' recommendations. They also evaluated the process very positively.

From the outside, the policy juries were also well received. They were given favourable reviews by the media and taken seriously by politicians, who recognised the grassroots origin of the views expressed. The Jefferson Center has had similar experiences and success with policy juries on topics such as pollution of water supplies by agricultural chemicals.

The policy juries are not the equivalent of the decision-making groups in demarchy. Policy juries have no formal power, which remains with elected representatives. The policy juries can only influence policy on the basis of the persuasiveness of their views and the process which led to them. But then, in one sense, this is not so entirely different from demarchic bodies, which would gain most of their power from community acceptance.

There are several lessons for promoting demarchy from the Jefferson Center projects. First, random selection can be seen as a legitimate basis for a process leading to policy recommendations. Second, participants become strongly involved in the decision-making process; policy juries are practical experiences in participation which may whet the appetite for more. Third, extensive and careful planning is essential to the success of policy juries. It should be remembered that enormous preparation and energy is put into making elections 'work' in legitimating a certain policy process. To be fairly judged, the same preparation and energy must be devoted to demarchic alternatives.

Finally, policy juries represent a practical intermediate stage for advocates of demarchy. Crosby sees random selection as a means for reforming and revitalising democracy in the United States, making government truly responsive to the will of the people. Demarchy, as presented here, is a more fundamental restructuring of society, eliminating the state altogether. This difference in goals need not cause any special problem. After all, there is a great need for practical steps which are valuable in themselves but also the basis for more fundamental change. Cooperatives can be an experience and a step towards an economy based on production for use rather than profit or control. Similarly, policy juries can be an experience and a step towards demarchy.

Quite independently of the Jefferson Center, similar projects were being undertaken in West Germany beginning in the 1970s, led by Peter Dienel at the University of Wuppertal [32]. The groups of randomly selected citizens brought together for these projects are called 'planning cells.' The cells have dealt with issues such as energy policy, town planning and information technology. The cell members are typically brought together for four days of talks, discussions and evaluations, and are compensated for wages foregone.

Planning cells have many similarities to policy juries. Here I'll just mention a few highlights, focussing especially on differences. First, the planning cells have usually been given wider briefs. Rather than focus on particular policy options on a well defined issue such as school-based clinics, a broader range of scenarios is dealt with. For example, in looking at energy policy, several options were canvassed, ranging from a heavily nuclear future to a soft energy path based on energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies.

These widely divergent futures are part of conventional political debate, to be sure. But seldom are they confronted in direct fashion in the normal course of policy-making, which deals for the most part with the issues in terms of particular urgent decisions on particular projects -- a waste disposal site, a regulatory decision, a funding decision. The planning cells are able to deal with broad social issues and take a long term view, certainly far longer than the typical politician concerned about the next election.

Second, the planning cells make more use of small group techniques. Much of the time of members of a 25-person planning cell is spent in groups of 5, discussing the issues. Whereas the policy jury seems to be modelled on an actual jury, hearing testimony and discussing the issue in the full group, the planning cells are somewhat more oriented to mutual support and building up the participation and understanding of the cell members.

But these differences are minor compared to the major similarities: random selection of group members to deal with policy issues. The striking result is that most of the randomly selected volunteers quickly become quite knowledgeable about the subject matter and committed to the decision-making process. Towards demarchy

Between the few experiments with policy juries and planning cells and Burnheim's vision of demarchy is an enormous gulf. What strategy should be used to move towards demarchy?

Burnheim has some ideas. He thinks that as various government bodies become discredited, they may be willing to switch to demarchic management in order to maintain community legitimacy. For example, a health service might be wracked by disputes over salaries, conflict over provision of

"Contrary to popular belief, conventional wisdom would have one believe that it is insane to resist this, the mightiest of empires.... But what history really shows is that today's empire is tomorrow's ashes, that nothing lasts forever, and that to not resist is to acquiesce in your own oppression. The greatest form of sanity that anyone can exercise is to resist that force that is trying to repress, oppress, and fight down the human spirit."

- Mumia Abu-Jamal

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high technology medicine or community support services, severe budgetary crises and claims of mismanagement and corruption. This wouldn't be unusual. In this crisis situation, management by randomly selected groups might be seen by state managers as a way of resolving or offloading conflict and delegitimising the health service.

These and other similar scenarios may sound plausible, but they really provide little guidance for action. After all, there are plenty of unpopular, discredited and corrupt institutions in society, but this has seldom led to significant changes in the method of social decision-making. More specifically, how should demarchy be promoted in these situations? By lobbying state managers? By raising the idea among the general population? One thing is clear. The idea of demarchy must become much more well known before there is the slightest chance of implementation.

The experimentation with policy juries and planning cells is vital in gaining experience and spreading the idea of participation through random selection. The limitation of these approaches is that they are not linked to major social groups which would be able to mobilise people to work for the alternative.

Amongst the 'major social groups' in society, quite a number are likely to be hostile to demarchy. This includes most of the powerful groups, such as governments, corporate managements, trade union leaders, political parties, militaries, professions, etc. Genuine popular participation, after all, threatens the prerogatives of elites.

In my opinion, the most promising source of support is social movements: peace activists, feminists, environmentalists, etc. Groups such as these have an interest in wider participation, which is more likely to promote their goals than the present power elites. Social movement groups can try to put demarchy on the agenda by the use of study groups, lobbying, leafletting and grassroots organising.

Demarchy, though, should not be seen only as a policy issue, as a measure to be implemented in the community as a result of grassroots pressure. Demarchy can also be used by social movements as a means. In other words, they can use it for their own decision making.

This may not sound like much of a difficulty. After all, many social action groups already use consensus either formally or de facto. Also, the system of delegates is quite common. It would not seem a great shift to use random selection for decision-making at scales where direct consensus becomes difficult to manage.

Unfortunately, matters in many social movements are hardly this ordered. In many cases, formal bureaucratic systems

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have developed, especially in the large national organisations, and there are quite a number of experienced and sometimes charismatic individuals in powerful positions. These individuals are possibly as unlikely as any politician to support conversion to a different system of decision-making. (This itself is probably as good a recommendation for random selection as could be obtained. Any proposal that threatens elites in alternative as well as mainstream organisations must have something going for it.)

Nevertheless, social movements must be one of the more promising places to promote demarchy. If they can actually begin to try out the methods, they can become much more effective advocates. Furthermore, the full vision of demarchy, without the state or bureaucracy, stands a better chance within nonbureaucratized social movements than amidst the ruins of bungled government enterprises.

One of the most promising areas for promoting demarchy is in industry [33]. Workers are confronted by powerful hierarchical systems on every side: corporate management, governments and trade union bosses. There is plenty of experience in cooperative decision-making at the shop floor level; difficulties arise at higher levels of decision-making. It is here that random selection presents itself as a real alternative. Works councils, composed of both workers and managers selected randomly to serve a short period, provide a basis for communication and coordination. This approach overcomes the defects of all forms of representation. Workers' representatives on boards of management have served to coopt workers, while representatives in the form of trade union delegates have often become separated from the shop floor. Demarchic groups provide a way to maintain shop floor involvement in large enterprises.

The key point here is that demarchy should not be treated as a policy alternative, to be implemented from the top, but rather as a method of action itself. The ends should be incorporated in the means. It is quite appropriate that groups promoting demarchy use its techniques.

Needless to say, the future of demarchy cannot be mapped out. It is stimulating to speculate about solutions to anticipated problems; Burnheim's general formulations are immensely valuable in providing a vision. But as democracy by lot is tested, promoted, tried out, enjoys successes and suffers failures, it will be revised and refined. That is to be expected.

The message is that the process of developing and trying out alternatives is essential for all those seeking a more participative society. True enough, some worthy reforms can be achieved through the old channels of electoral politics, but that is no excuse for neglecting the task of investigating new structures. Demarchy is one such alternative, and deserves attention.

Demarchy is unlikely to be the final word in participative politics. No doubt it has flaws. But it is certain that present electoral methods provide no final solution.

Electoral methods -- that brings me back to the greens. They may be one of the most exciting political developments in decades, but in entering electoral politics they may have limited their potential for bringing about radical change. Ironically, it is the popular, charismatic green politicians who provide least threat to established power structures. Their electoral success will ensure continuing reliance on the old system of politics.



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