

Subject: FW: Democracy worldwide

Date: Wed, 21 Aug 2002 20:59:33 -0700

From: Ernie Crist <ernie_crist@dnv.org>

To: "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

CC: Mayor and Council - DNV <Council@dnv.org>, Directors Team <managecomm@dnv.org>

A Message from Ernie Crist:

I am passing this message on to you as you might find it interesting. Colin Stark along with Corrie Kost, Brian Platts, Eric Anderson, etc., was one of the movers and shakers of the "Direct Democracy" effort in the District. Direct Democracy is a method of governance under which the public is given the power to initiate referendums. It also empowers the public to demand referendums on any Council policy. After first setting up a Blue Ribbon Task Force and endorsing the concept in principle, the previous Council including Don Bell, Janice Harris, Lisa Muri etc, voted against putting it to public referendum during the last election.

The "Direct Democracy" Task Force had urged Council to ask the residents of the District whether they would be in favor of Direct Democracy as part of the election process. An effort on my part to bring the issue back following the election of the present CCA endorsed Council was also defeated. "Direct Democracy" is operating in Rossland, BC with great success and the public has used its power only sparingly. "Direct Democracy" is operating in Switzerland and is considered to be the ultimate form of democracy. No National Debt in Switzerland, no control of Switzerland by the "Globals" and unlike the Canadian Dollar no appreciable diminution of the value of their currency against the Euro or the US Dollar.

Most observers of the District Scene were not surprised that Don Bell and his CCA endorsed Council refused to ask the public whether they wanted "Direct Democracy" or not - unofficial surveys projected a YES vote. After 3 years of CCA endorsed District Council performance many people understand even better why. The above events are based on the best of my recollection.

Ernie Crist

-----Original Message-----

From: Colin Stark [<mailto:cstark@npsnet.com>]

Sent: Saturday, August 10, 2002 8:50 AM

To: CDD Listserv

Cc: Listserv GPBC; Ingram-Show-Past-And-Future@yahoogroups.com

Subject: Democracy worldwide

Here is an interesting comment on democracy worldwide, and one of several responses, from an International Direct Democracy Listserv.

Reply-To: cicdd@yahoogroups.com

Date: Fri, 09 Aug 2002 19:32:28 +0200
From: Jiri Polak <jiri.polak@swipnet.se>
Subject: DD Europe

There is a fundamental difference between the American Constitution and the constitutions of European countries (and all other constitutions for that matter, probably except Switzerland). The American Constitution was written and adopted by true representatives of the people. Therefore, this genuine democratic basis need not be changed, but only completed by successive amendments reflecting the growing complexity of American society.

By contrast, European constitutions have been written and adopted by party-political parliamentary oligarchies hiding behind a red herring of quasi-democratic slogans. These constitutions pretend that the basis of democracy has to be a system consisting of at least two parties, general suffrage and periodical ballots. The majority of westerners are still so brainwashed that they believe this humbug. As a matter of fact, no system based on the rule exerted by political parties can be democracy.

Except in Switzerland, there is and never has been any democratic country in Europe.

Nevertheless, organizations, groups and individuals demanding increased opportunities for direct citizen participation in politics are mushrooming up in most of these countries. So far, what they demand is almost exclusively the right to I&R to be included in existing constitutions. This is a step in the right direction, but it still belongs to the paradigm of "mendicant democracy", to use the term coined by Senator Gravel. I believe the moment has come to follow the glorious example of the framers of the American Constitution even in Europe. Instead of patching up undemocratic constitutions, let us write and adopt Citizens' Constitutions and then seek support for them by a petition process. If such a truly democratic constitution gains support of at least two thirds of the citizens in the respective country, it will abolish and replace the former oligarchic constitution, by-passing the political establishment.

The Citizens' Constitutions should be based on the following principles:

1. Separation of the legislative and the executive powers. As it is now, both these powers are amalgamated in the hands of party-political leaderships - a mockery of democracy.
2. Inclusion of I&R without prohibitive thresholds in the legislative process.
3. In cases requiring special knowledge, combination of I&R with a preparatory phase in which the issue in question would be submitted to deliberative procedures (citizen juries, planning cells or scientific deliberative polling). I had the privilege of discussing this idea with Senator Gravel during his visit to Sweden (June 2001) and he expressed

full agreement.

4.The possibility of recall of representatives even during the mandate period.

5.Some other mechanisms to be discussed and assessed later on.

I believe it might be easier to promote Citizens' Constitutions than to promote I&R alone. A competing constitution is a more spectacular and fascinating project, likely to attract more attention even on the part of the media.

I intend to launch this idea in Czech Republic. At the first International DD Conference (Pribram, CR, 1998) Senator Gravel said: The most difficult task is to establish genuine democracy in the first country. When this succeeds, other countries will soon follow. We Europeans can have a competition: Which country will be the first one, after the USA and Switzerland, to introduce democracy?

A similar method can be used for the EU. For many years, Eurotopia Transnational has been promoting the idea of a European Constitution, but so far, I have not heard of any concrete steps toward this objective. The proposed European Referendum Campaign is again limited to I&R. What are we waiting for? Let's summon a European Constitutional Convention and adopt a Constitution without caring a damn about the quibbles and lobbying taking place in Brussels and Strasbourg.

What do you think?

In the long run, We the People cannot fail to carry the day!

Sincerely

Jiri Polak

Message: 2

Date: Fri, 9 Aug 2002 20:29:04 +0200

From: "Franz Isemann" <mehr.demokratie@chiemgau-online.de>

Subject: DD Europe

Dear Jiri,

your new idea, we should all make our country's constitution ourselves, is a very interesting one.

But in practice, the USA governance and policy making is not any better than the European. Just the contrary, from European viewing angle.

The Swiss law making, I assume, was even more "Bottom-up", than the American. And the Swiss practice in governance has many good qualities, such as trust and confidence of citizens in their politicians, no fear of data abuse, no frights of weak or wrong decisions, since citizens see their decisions as on probation. If decisions were right, they will stay, if they were wrong, they would be changed the year after. There is calmness and self-confidence in Switzerland.

I think, each continent has its history and its characteristics. The arising of peoples new constitution-making needs a certain historic situation, a kind of tabula rasa or of revolutionary impact. Neither can I welcome for the Europe of to-day. And the last thing, I would do, is to give support to an American acquisition. Sorry.

On the other hand, with EU being argued about and being an undemocratic monster, and having the "Convent" to plan a "Constitutional Treaty", we Europeans may have a chance. So I see our European Referendum Campaign not restricted to enabling I & R. Together with rising difficulties of EU and with the new challenge to create something new and original, our campaign might be a pebble which moves other pebbles.

In this sense I welcome your todays letter to CICDD. Maybe it is just another pebble and can help to get something on the move.
My congratulation to your never ending energy in matters of DD.

Franz Isemann

[This message contained attachments]

