



It's Simpol !

The Simultaneous Policy News • Spring 2006

The Need for SP in Brazilian Politics

George Vasconcelos Bezerra Alves, a candidate in the forthcoming Brazilian elections who has signed the Simultaneous Policy pledge, argues that SP may be essential if we are to make poverty history.

Page 3

Corporate Accountability and the Simultaneous Policy - a report on Simpol-UK's policy forum, held at the House of Commons page 4

New features in this issue:

The news-watch column: Unexpected Support for SP's Strategy page 6

Simpol Satire: a cartoon depicting another SP win-win solution in a competitive world page 11

It's Simpol !



The Simultaneous Policy

International Simultaneous Policy Organisation

ISPO promotes the Simultaneous Policy (SP), which aims to deliver social justice around the world, resolve global problems like environmental destruction and regulate the economic power of international capital for the good of all. ISPO seeks solutions to problems that individual national governments cannot resolve by acting alone. This is because the problems transcend national boundaries, and because the global competitive system means that any government that acted alone to try and resolve such problems could effectively make its country uncompetitive.

ISPO aims to achieve these objectives by encouraging ordinary people around the world to oblige their political representatives and governments to move toward co-ordinated international resolution of global issues for the good of all. This is because it is only by countries all agreeing to implement changes at the same time that problems no individual government dares tackle alone can be resolved in a satisfactory way. Simultaneous implementation of such policies would ensure that no country became uncompetitive as a result of pursuing policies that were right for the planet and which embodied people's higher aspirations.

All you need to do is sign up as a Simultaneous Policy Adopter which costs you nothing. By so doing you agree in principle to vote at elections for any candidate, within reason, who has signed a pledge to implement the Simultaneous Policy alongside other governments. Alternatively, if you have a party preference, your Adoption signifies you will encourage your preferred party to make this pledge. This is the simple mechanism Adopters use to advance their cause.

ISPO's approach is peaceful, open, and democratic. If you Adopt you will have the opportunity to contribute to the formation of specific policies that answer global problems and join with others in using your vote in a new and effective way to drive the politicians of all parties to implement these policies.

How do you want the world to be?

An occasional newsletter published by Simpol-UK
(www.simpol.org.uk) for the
INTERNATIONAL SIMULTANEOUS POLICY ORGANISATION
(ISPO) info@simpol.org

Edited by: Brian Wills (brian.wills@wanadoo.fr)
Production: Mike Brady.

Cover photo: Two sides of the road in Olinda,
Pernambuca State Brazil. The McDonald's sign and
shopping centre viewed from a favella. Mike Brady.

Editorial

The first three contributions in this issue have a very encouraging unifying theme.

They provide yet more evidence that politicians and transnational executives have already discovered that "our dream of making the world a better place" is achievable through the Simultaneous Policy. Or that they "favour the multilateralist approach" it provides. And the extracts selected from mainstream newspaper articles in our new feature, the *News-watch* column, show that a simultaneous and transnational regulatory approach is already supported in more places than one might expect - though sadly revealing that the politicians and executives featured don't yet know that SP exists and could deliver just what they're asking for!

The article about **The Need for SP in Brazilian Politics** is significant because it announces that a political party has decided to support SP as official policy - and this in Latin America where recent changes in political orientation, with accompanying shifts in the balance of power, have aroused global attention. It is significant, also, that the Policy Forum about **Corporate Accountability** in the British House of Commons in March was hosted by a Conservative MP. Organised by Simpol-UK at the seat of government, the event reflects growing cross-party interest in SP's global policy alternatives.

Writing about **Simultaneous Values**, the author of *The Possibility of Progress* considers "Simpol is ideally placed to shape the debate about the future prospects for humankind" because its values are shared "by people the world over." And SP Adopters in the USA, in the article about **World Trade Alternatives**, discuss among other things the economic distortions resulting from current US policies, and they endorse "Multifunctional Assessments of the potential impact of trade liberalization" as models for negotiators to use in arguing the case for fair trade.

On the lighter side, after **Campaigning** news, we hope readers will be pleased to see a **full-page cartoon** is included for the first time. Under the heading **Simpol Satire**, it is intended to retain this feature in future issues, with or without illustration, based on story-boards or dialogues received. For the present the best prize we can offer to contributors is the honour of being "Accepted For Publication" after careful consideration by our peer-review group!

Contents

Analysis :

The Need for SP in Brazilian Politics (George Vasconcelos Bezerra Alves): p. 3

Policy Forum report :

Corporate Accountability and the Simultaneous Policy (Franklin Frederick; Mike Brady; Craig Bennet; John Bunzl; John Penrose): p. 4

News-watch :

SP's Strategy Gains Support in Unlikely Places! (John Bunzl): p. 6

Analysis :

Simultaneous Values (Mark Braund): p. 7

Thinking aloud about fresh alternatives :

Simpol-USA Adopters Discuss World Trade Alternatives (Cynthia Josayma): p. 8

Campaigning :

News from Brazil; UK; ISPO (Mike Brady), p. 9

News Briefs and Policy suggestions :

Simpol-UK's policy committee presents suggestions received and news on forthcoming elections: p. 10

Simpol Satire :

Cartoon illustrated by Peter G. Davies (www.caswelldesigns.co.uk): p. 11

Analysis : The Need for SP in Brazilian Politics

In forthcoming elections, **George Vasconcelos Bezerra Alves** plans to stand as a State Deputy in Ceara, Brazil, for the newly-formed Eco-Socialist Party of Brazil, which is supporting the Simultaneous Policy as official policy.

A supporter of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, he argues here that its dream of constructing a better world may be unachievable without SP. (Contact: george_vba@yahoo.com.br)

The Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP, also known as Make Poverty History) (<http://www.whiteband.org/>) is an enormous effort from citizens around the world in forming alliances, which has already united 200 organisations and social movements in more than 70 countries. Its campaign, created in 2005, has the intention of pressuring all governments in the world to fulfil their promises to make poverty history.

The campaign is a social response to international activities that pay scant regard to poor populations. There are fewer resources for humanitarian assistance than are expended (contrary to the regulations of the World Trade Organisation) on subsidies in developed countries. Further, we see that the resources directed to poor countries have political and economic conditions imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Poor countries are unable to use the money needed to repay the loans for the public policies required to make significant progress in eradicating poverty.

The principal proposals of the campaign include the total cancelling of 'unpayable' debt of poor countries using a 'just' and 'transparent' method, bringing justice to the commercial and financial relationships between countries, increasing the volume and quality of assistance for facilitating development, and introducing democratic and transparent public policies to eradicate poverty and reduce social inequality.

Naturally such noble and just intentions depend on great social efforts in a complex tangle of relationships between citizens, NGOs, social movements and public organisations

around the world. But, in order that the effort is not in vain, a unique technology - the Simultaneous Policy (SP) - can be used to make this mobilization viable. It succeeds in uniting interests that run on different tracks into a strong and efficient force to achieve ideas that were previously judged to be utopian.

The central theme of the Global Call to Action against Poverty, eradication of poverty, is so just and universal that it has united many groups and citizens to work together with a political focus and single goal, through many different methods. It aims to achieve the principal objective through exercising our universal citizenship. The requirements of the campaign are based on the international commitments that developed countries have made on innumerable occasions, and in agreements that have then been so easily forgotten.

SP is innovative. It enables us to combine our universal citizenship with the strength of public opinion against the breaking of promises made by developed countries, in order to gain pledges from politicians to implement SP alongside other governments. What is interesting is that SP, by its nature, does not harm countries' competitiveness and financial markets, which can generate severe political problems internally for those countries that subsidise sectors of their industry in breach of WTO regulations and public opinion. As a fundamental element, new to the process, this becomes a catalyst capable of overcoming the barriers to change thrown up by internal politics.

So the SP process could produce a harmonious system in which wealth is not passed from one hand to another, but created in a united, focused way, following agreed criteria. In this way the need for the poor to be exploited by the rich is negated - doing away with the kind of exploitation that leads to social inequality and prevents resources being used in a sustainable way in harmony with nature and the new century's idea of justice. Thus, though our dream of making the world a better place may seem unrealisable or dependent on unimaginable effort, the Simultaneous Policy makes it achievable.

Policy Forum report : Corporate Accountability and the Simultaneous Policy

According to Corporate Watch (www.corpwatch.org), 51 of the world's top 100 economies are corporations. Royal Dutch Shell's revenues are greater than Venezuela's Gross Domestic Product. Using this measurement, WalMart is bigger than Indonesia. General Motors is roughly the same size as Ireland, New Zealand and Hungary combined. And there are 63,000 transnational corporations worldwide.

Cambridge SP Adopters' Group (CAMSPAG) has been looking at policies for 'Holding Corporations Accountable', and organized this Policy Forum on behalf of Simpol-UK to explore the matter further at the House of Commons on 8 Mar 2006.

The event was chaired by **Donald Martin** and hosted by Conservative MP **John Penrose**, who has pledged to implement SP alongside other governments. And other invited speakers were: **Franklin Frederick** (member of the Citizens' Movement for the Waters of Minas Gerais, Brazil), **Mike Brady** (Coordinator of CAMSPAG), **Craig Bennet** (Head of Corporate Campaigns, Friends of the Earth and member of the CORE coalition), and **John Bunzl** (founder of the International Simultaneous Policy Organisation).

Franklin Frederick

He told the Forum about the legal battle being fought against a water pumping and bottling operation launched by Nestlé in the historic spa town of São Lourenço, Minas Gerais state, in 1996.

In 2001 the public prosecutor investigated allegations of environmental damage to the springs in the water park after receiving a mass petition from citizens who feared tourism in their town was being affected. Following the investigation he filed papers to stop Nestlé's pumping, and for compensation. This remains tied up in the courts. Federal authorities commissioned their own investigation which led to an order paralysing all pumping activities in March 2004. Though bottling of the water has stopped, pumping continues and carbon dioxide is extracted from the water for use elsewhere.

Given the failure of the legal system to hold Nestlé to account in Brazil, Franklin has been travelling to Europe for assistance and, in particular, Nestlé's home country of Switzerland where campaigners successfully stopped a similar damaging pumping operation in the town of Bevaix. NGOs in Switzerland have held meetings raising the Brazilian case before the public and the media.

Religious organizations in Brazil and Switzerland have joined together calling for water to be protected as a human right and a public good. Franklin was in the UK to attend the launch of a similar declaration by NGOs including ActionAid, Baby Milk Action, Christian Aid, War on Want and the World Development Movement. Franklin

explained that Nestlé had written to the main organizations involved suggesting it was inappropriate for them to support his participation in the event.

Mike Brady

He said: "I have visited São Lourenço and spoken with public prosecutors, members of Congress, a hydrologist and others and compiled a dossier that substantiates the allegations made by Franklin and his companions. I brought this to the attention of the Forum, along with a statement issued by Nestlé on 2 Mar 2006 in which it claimed it had commissioned an audit that had certified its operations complied with all regulations. To me this illustrates perfectly the fallacy of believing we can trust corporations to regulate themselves. They can and do say anything, and hope that people distant from the events will believe their presentation without investigating further.

"But there is a problem with legislation, too, as Nestlé continues pumping despite the stop order, and the case drags on in the courts. The convention called for in the declaration launched by UK NGOs may help. I have experience through the Baby Milk Action campaign of holding corporations, including Nestlé, to account using international standards, in this case the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, and subsequent relevant Resolutions of the World Health Assembly.

"These are a tool by which to monitor corporate behaviour objectively, and Nestlé is found to be responsible for more violations than any other company, and thus an impetus for governments to introduce legislation. Over 60 have done so and, where the measures are monitored and enforced, aggressive



A few days after the Policy Forum, Franklin reported that Nestlé had bowed to the demand of campaigners. In an agreement with the Public Prosecutor the company said it would abide by the government order of March 2004 paralysing all activities at the Primavera Well in the bottling plant pictured above.

marketing of baby foods is stopped and breastfeeding rates are increasing, which helps to reduce infant mortality and morbidity.

“Where there is no legislation, grass-roots campaigns, such as boycotts, have to be used. There is no recourse to international measures. The UN *Global Compact* and OECD *Guidelines for Transnationals* are voluntary, partly introduced at the behest of corporations as an alternative to regulatory measures.

“An ideal would be to file cases against transnationals at the International Criminal Court. Or perhaps Switzerland could be held to account for allowing its corporation to breach international standards. And as the WTO system of punitive tariffs effectively compels governments to remove trade barriers and certain subsidies, why should there not be a similar mechanism to stop a country gaining unfair advantage by a lax attitude to corporate accountability? Such are the kinds of approaches SP enables us to consider.”

John Bunzl

He explained to the Forum the SP strategy of empowering ‘we, the people’ to decide the policies we wish to see implemented, and how this will be achieved. He explained why, in the end, only binding government regulations can deliver a comprehensive and lasting solution to the problem of corporate accountability.

The key barrier to this, however, is the fear that individual governments have that stricter regulations will result in businesses moving elsewhere, and this is why the SP approach, which obliterates this objection, is so vital. Furthermore, he explained why SP represents perhaps the first and only form of global electoral politics; a process which for the first time allows citizens to use their votes in national elections to drive their politicians to implement SP, and thus to solve many global problems.

He also cited how some business leaders are themselves calling for regulations to be introduced to create a level playing field. Without transnational binding regulations such as SP is designed to deliver, companies that do wish to do more to combat climate change, for instance, may find themselves bearing higher costs and losing business to competitors.

Craig Bennet

There is a current practical campaign aiming to promote corporate accountability. This is led by the Corporate Accountability Coalition (CORE :- see www.corporate-accountability.org.uk) which represents over 130 charities and campaigning organisations such as Amnesty International UK, Friends of the Earth, Christian Aid and War on Want, faith-based groups such as Christian Ecology Link, community organisations such as the National Federation of Women’s Institutes, unions such as AMICUS, GMB, UNISON and TGWU, businesses such as Unity Trust Bank, academic institutions like the University of Dundee, and elected representatives – local councillors, members of the UK Parliament and Assemblies and Members of the European Parliament.

CORE believes the only way corporate accountability will

become a reality is through new laws that make companies value people and the planet as much as they value making a profit, and is campaigning for new laws in three key areas.

- **Mandatory Sustainability Reporting:** Currently in the UK it is mandatory for businesses to complete financial reports. There are rules about what is contained in these reports, and as a result they are meaningful, measurable year on year, and comparable with other reports. CORE argues that companies should similarly report against a comprehensive set of key social, environmental and economic indicators. With a standardised approach comes the ability to measure companies’ operations and performance – in the UK and abroad – and compare them with other businesses.

There had been progress in this area as companies were being required to report on their environmental and social impacts. But the Chancellor of the Exchequer (in charge of the UK Treasury) recently announced to the Confederation of British Industry that he was scrapping these requirements. Friends of the Earth filed papers in court for a Judicial Review of the decision as it believed the Chancellor had been seeking to prove his pro-business credentials and had rushed through a radical policy reversal without following proper procedures, or the Government’s own consultation policy. The environmental group claims that the decision was made as a token gesture to big business. Craig said the Treasury had agreed to settle out of court and review the decision.

- **Directors' Duties:** Currently in the UK, directors are required by law to consider impacts to shareholders (i.e. profit) in all business decisions. As long as profit is the most important referral point for directors, responsible business will struggle to succeed. There needs to be a more balanced, real-world approach.

CORE wants the legal requirement of directors' duties to be expanded to include a specific duty of care for both communities and the environment. This will mean that a director will have to consider the consequences to communities, the environment, health and safety of their employees, and shareholders before making a decision – thus putting sustainable business at the heart of the company.

- **Access to Justice:** If a company had a burst oil pipe in the UK, damaging the environment and people’s property and livelihoods, it would be held to account. The UK has stringent laws that would require the company to pay for a clean-up operation, and reimburse people for their loss. To most people this is common sense – you make a mess, you should clean it up.

Unfortunately, UK companies don’t always clean up the mess they make, particularly if it occurs in the developing world or where environmental legislation is weak. CORE wants affected communities abroad to be protected under UK law, and able to seek compensation for any human rights or environmental abuses committed by UK companies or their overseas subsidiaries or associates. If affected communities are unable to claim compensation from UK companies in

their own country, they should have access to justice in the UK.

The aspirations of the CORE coalition in the immediate term are necessarily limited, but even these are proving difficult to achieve. Members of Parliament are being asked to sign Early Day Motions (EDMs) giving their support (Nos. 697, currently 203 signatures and 1283, currently with 67 signatures).

John Penrose MP

He is one of the Conservative MPs who have signed EDM 697 recognising that companies' "freedom to operate must be balanced with clear responsibilities to society and the environment" and calling for company law to enshrine a "duty for directors to identify, consider, act and report on any negative social and environmental impacts caused by a company's activities in the UK or overseas."

The Conservative party historically represents business interests, and opposing over-regulation is one of its rallying cries. CORE has criticized it in the recent past for opposing these measures in the Company Reform Bill. Asked about the Conservative view of corporate accountability, John Penrose commented that the Party is undergoing a policy renewal and three of the areas are relevant: Quality of Life (environmental policy, etc.); Economic Competitiveness; Globalisation and Global Poverty. It is due to report in stages over the next 18 months; but, as all their proceedings are in public, Adopters can make submissions via the Conservative Party website www.conservatives.com.

News-watch : Unexpected Support for SP's Strategy

Extracts from mainstream media sources contributed by John Bunzl.

From the *London Financial Times*, 19 Jan 2006
Business 'sees gain in binding standards on human rights' by Guy Dinmore in Washington

International companies have responded favourably to calls for binding human rights standards in the corporate sector as evidence mounts that voluntary guidelines are unfair and bad for business, Human Rights Watch said yesterday.

The global watchdog, launching its annual report in Washington, said multinational executives were privately starting to question the conventional wisdom that self-regulation and codes of conduct were sufficient. Kenneth Roth, Human Rights Watch's executive director, told the FT that companies had responded positively to the campaign, launched last year, for a level playing-field of enforceable global standards.

From the *London Financial Times*, 26 Jan 2006
Merkel calls for rules on global trade by Bertrand Benoit and John Thornhill

Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, said yesterday the international community would face 'grave social disorder' if it failed to agree on a global framework of rules to govern competition between old industrial and fast-developing economies. ...

SP does, of course, create a different set of circumstances as simultaneous implementation means fears of hobbling business with regulations that make it uncompetitive do not apply. Like existing regulations they become part of the business operating environment, affecting all equally. In this context John Penrose says:

"I'm in favour of a multilateralist approach, and I suspect that the precise measures will need some careful work. We need to be certain, for example, that any reporting on a company's social and environmental impact is simple, clear and transparent, so we achieve effective disclosure of bad corporate behaviour.

"The danger would be if proposed new laws are too subjective to have any teeth, or simply an expensive and bureaucratic form-filling exercise that doesn't reveal what's really going on. Part of the problem is that modern accountancy has been developed to track money and profits rather than environmental effects, so the new measures will need to be developed with great care."

Future action via Simpol-UK's policy development process

Though this process is in its infancy, Adopters should note that SP enables a radical re-think of not only how corporations are regulated, but the way they are constituted and the rights given to them under the law. SP enables us to re-write the social contract under which we allow business to operate. The Simpol-UK website has a Policy Zone where discussion documents can be found and Adopters can join the debate.

Globalisation, she said, has sparked fears throughout the developed world. "If we cannot find a conclusive answer to this question, very serious social disorder and troubles may develop, the consequences of which we will be responsible for. We need international rules to frame global competition," she said.

From the *London Financial Times*, 3 Feb 2006
Multinationals nudged into action

Almost 2000 company chairmen around the globe are this week being asked some searching questions about climate change. The quiz comes in a letter from the not-for-profit Carbon Disclosure Project - the latest salvo to encourage businesses to take climate change seriously.

Most businesses that have taken up the cudgels over climate change have called on governments to take action using market-based mechanisms - such as emissions trading schemes - along with long-term policies and targets to reduce emissions.

It is a rare company that goes looking for government regulation, but in this instance some multinationals are doing just that. Without an international level playing field, they fear that rivals with operations in areas without restrictions will gain a competitive advantage.

Editorial note: This column is open to contributions from all readers. Any offers - factual or ironic - for the next issue?

Analysis : Simultaneous Values



When reviews were being written about Mark Braund's book *The Possibility of Progress* (Shepherd-Walwyn, 2005), in which he argues that applying taxes on ownership and the exploitation of natural resources would widen our collective access to economic

benefits without threatening individual freedom, a friend wrote suggesting that SP's innovative strategy for political change could provide a mechanism by which to achieve this aim.

In this article Mark agrees, because "the policy content being formulated by SP Adopters" promoting economic independence, equity and justice expresses values "held simultaneously by people the world over." For this reason he stresses the need, in future Simpol campaigning, to emphasise these values. And to appeal, ambitiously, "to those not especially interested in politics", because "Simpol is ideally placed to shape the debate about the future prospects for humankind." (Contact: www.markbraund.com.)

The current political deficit

What makes the Simultaneous Policy initiative so different from most political ideas is its explicit acknowledgement that national governments can no longer solve domestic social and economic problems in isolation. In a global economy, politicians can effectively respond to citizens' concerns only through international cooperation towards common ends. The root causes of injustice are now embedded in global economic arrangements that are beyond the reach of national politics.

This separation of national politics and global economics is the result of deliberate policies on the part of previous generations of politicians. Whatever their motives, they bequeathed us a global economy that favours minority wealth and corporate power, which assures a steady widening of the gap between rich and poor, which offers no framework for addressing the environmental crisis, and which leaves national democracies quite unable to promote majority interests.

The economic revolution of the last quarter century is considered by most advocates of greater social justice to be a bad thing, but, while it undermines democracy and threatens the survival of our civilisation, it could also represent a tremendous opportunity.

Karl Polanyi coined the phrase 'double movement' to describe the process by which, each time the wealthy minority change the economic rules in their favour, an opposite reaction occurs in the shape of social measures implemented to redress the balance. In pre-democratic times, this was not so much a matter of social justice as of preserving the fabric of society, which then, as now, was stretched to breaking point. The question today is whether the reaction element of the double movement is achievable on a global basis. The only possible form that

reaction can take, it seems to me, is the path prescribed by SP.

Our common set of core values

Globalisation should be viewed as an opportunity not only because it forces nations to work together on solutions to common problems, but because, as the world is brought closer together, we are constantly reminded of how people of different cultures hold very similar core values. The most common argument against the possibility of progressive social change is the purportedly insurmountable obstacle of cultural difference: different groups holding quite different and irreconcilable values. But in my experience the reality is quite the opposite: the one thing that all human cultures and populations have in common is a set of core values, principal among which is a strong desire for economic security, preferably achieved through mutually beneficial cooperation with others, but without the subordination of the individual's economic interests to those of a powerful, corporate entity.

Worldwide, people desire the freedom to work for their own well-being and to receive a just reward for their efforts. Equally, people of all cultures dislike the injustice in economic arrangements that allow a small minority to enjoy the privilege of unearned wealth. In poorer countries this injustice is more acutely felt because poverty is absolute and the contrast between rich and poor is therefore more apparent, and because it is more obvious that the source of the undeserved wealth of the minority is the under-rewarded labour effort of the poor majority.

The values that are supposed to set us apart, and to make a world based on mutually beneficial cooperation impossible, are corrupted values that emerge only when people are denied the basic economic freedoms to which all citizens have a natural and equal right. Of course people behave competitively when such behaviour is the only way to ensure their children are fed. Of course they allow their values to be compromised when they hear nothing from their elected leaders about justice and equity.

The values of economic independence, equity in access to economic opportunities and justice in the distribution of the rewards arising from economic effort already feature prominently in the policy content being formulated by SP Adopters. These are precisely the values held simultaneously by people the world over. But the challenge now is to persuade people in sufficient numbers, on a worldwide basis, that SP offers a framework through which these commonly-held values can be translated into globally realisable policies. Despite growing support for SP, conventional politics remains stuck in the belief that there is no alternative to current economic arrangements, and that competition between nations reflects a natural and unassailable order.

SP and the search for a vibrant democracy

History suggests that inclusive values usually find a way to counter the forces of minority privilege; but this has never been tested on a global basis, and never have the

stakes been so high. Such a unique challenge demands a unique response, but to provide that response SP requires a fully functioning democracy and the informed participation of millions of people.

We need to breathe life into democracy so that it delivers structures and policies that promote majority interests and neutralise elite power. The scale of the change that SP implies for global political and economic structures will need to be matched by a similarly giant leap forward in people's perception and understanding. Support for SP needs to reach a tipping point past which it gathers a momentum of its own and enters the political mainstream.

To have any chance of achieving this, in its campaigning Simpol must talk about values. Economics without values is an empty discipline which cares only for abstract

statistics and nothing for human well-being. Simpol must counter the assumption that human nature makes competition the only possible basis for relations between people, nations and cultures. It must reach out to people at all points on the political spectrum, and it must appeal to those not especially interested in politics - can anyone be blamed for giving up on politics given its current febrile state? Most of all Simpol must be ambitious: there is no halfway house between our current unjust and anti-democratic global society and a world based on cooperation, inclusion and sustainability.

Simpol is ideally placed to shape the debate about the future prospects for humankind. If it can put itself at the heart of an international democratic mass movement for progressive change, then the Enlightenment aspiration for a world in which freedom and justice are the privilege of all citizens may finally be realised.

Thinking aloud about fresh alternatives : Simpol-USA Adopters Discuss World Trade Alternatives



In the last few years there has been an extraordinary increase in consumers' preference for products bearing the Fair Trade symbol, particularly in European countries. And SP Adopters world-wide have not been slow to join the debate on the global issues involved.

In this article, [Cynthia Josayma](#), National Coordinator of Simpol-USA, shares with us contributions to the debate made by US Adopters who have recently discussed among themselves the impact the USA's agricultural sector has on the country's ecological footprint, in the context of international negotiations at the WTO. An important conclusion is the lack of "a global commons discussion to address the complexity of ensuring environmental and socially responsible trade policies. One criterion to assist in promoting fair trade would be if all countries were accountable for developing Multifunctional Assessments of the potential impact of trade liberalization policies."

Economic distortions in US agricultural trade

This past December, 2005, the World Trade Organization hosted a five-day meeting in Hong Kong with the 148 member states, and agricultural issues were at the forefront of the negotiating agenda. As our trade ministers and corporate representatives converged in an attempt to smooth out trade barriers - tariffs and export subsidies - the key question for us is whether the US Trade representatives' future vision for our agricultural communities was truly aligned to achieve fair, balanced agricultural policies that are both financially viable and environmentally sustainable.

Here in the USA, family farm owner and SP Adopter Jerold

Hubbard points out that US food production is measured by only a half dozen farming industries, which are dependent on massive quantities of pesticides and herbicides. Excluded are millions of small-scale farmers who produce grain and livestock sustainably, but are forced to sell their produce for much less than the cost of production. Buyers then dump the product at artificially low prices in other countries, causing further disadvantage to family farmers around the world.

Simpol-USA Adopter Dick Richardson of Texas says that, fundamentally, the current agricultural system is designed to benefit the corporate distribution system, not the producers, as it externalizes other costs that reduce sustainability. Embedded in the economic distortion are subsidies disguised as USAID or other programs, which also may undermine local producers' income.

Such economic distortions keep the producers squeezed economically. There are other environmentally damaging effects, since fossil energy is under-priced, with many of its costs externalized. A producer price with the real costs internalized throughout the system should make local production more profitable, and increase many other aspects related to sustainability.

A recent World Bank study noted that US subsidies are keeping the costs of global food markets depressed by 35-50%, and that the majority of US farm subsidies - which have risen from the 2002 rates of \$15,600,000 to 2005 rates of \$24,065,000 - goes to support large incorporated agribusinesses, which constitute less than 10% of American farmers, and contribute only 14% of the national needs.

Fair agricultural production and trade debate in the USA

Fair trade principles incorporate all the externalities, from production through distribution. Simpol-USA Adopter Joyce Simmerman JD, from Nebraska, points to the number of progressive farming organizations such as the Center for Rural Affairs and Solari which support both local economies and independent community banks that provide micro credits to sustain independent family farms.

American consumers are increasingly directly supporting local farmers by buying only organic food produced by small, sustainable family farms or progressive cooperatives. Willie Nelson's Farm Aid for the family farmers, and the push for biodiesel along with the promotion of organic materials such as ethanol to replace petroleum fuel dependency, are just a few of the positive actions that US citizens support.

In terms of the ecological footprint, local production of organic food is around 10% of the resource use of industrial production in the global market. That this food is only about twice the price while using one-tenth the resources illustrates the magnitude of the price distortion in the opposite direction.

If US farmers are facing the same pressures as farmers in countries all around the world, and WTO negotiations do not address the issues of sustainability of small- and medium-size farms, and sustainable agricultural practices, what role might the SP strategy play in the international trade negotiation infrastructure?

Support for Multifunctional Assessments of trade liberalization policies is growing

Cynthia Josayma notes that the inherent flaws in the WTO's current negotiations stem from US trade ministers who are mandated to negotiate on behalf of large corporate interests that are already infamous for hurting the economic and environmental well-being of nations throughout the world.

What is missing is a global commons discussion to address the complexity of ensuring environmental and socially

responsible trade policies. One criterion to assist in promoting fair trade would be if all countries were accountable for developing Multifunctional Assessments of the potential impact of trade liberalization policies.

Multifunctional Assessments are measurement models that factor in a broad array of functions that agriculture lands provide, including environmental services and values. These models include not only agricultural commodities but also additional measurements such as fresh water and air, soil stabilization, biodiversity, as well as cultural identification and tranquillity. These models assess the increase or decrease of these values as a result of a change in trade policy, and are derived from local community inputs.

Multifunctionality is already supported by 49 member countries within the World Trade Organization, including the European Union, Canada and Japan. The USA, however, still refuses to introduce this to the US public. Most importantly, the countries that have adopted multifunctionality ensure that sustainable activities are measured by the uniqueness of the geography of a place. Establishing specialized geographical indicators for multifunctional benefits can significantly enhance the value of any commodity with recognition of its globally unique characteristics.

Simpol-USA Adopters can play a valuable role in opening discussions in our local communities regarding the World Trade Organization's emerging policies, and by asking our elected officials to support fair trade world-wide and to sign the pledge to implement SP alongside other governments.

Campaigning : SP Links Campaigners Around the World

News from SimpPol-Brazil

The main discussion of SP is on the Orkut webpages. See <http://www.orkut.com/Community.aspx?cmm=4077993>.

Our big news was receiving the first pledge from a candidate in elections scheduled for the end of the year. **George Vasconcelos Bezerra Alves** plans to stand as a State Deputy in Ceara, Brazil, for the newly-formed Eco-Socialist Party of Brazil.

News from SimpPol-UK

Spring and Summer Campaign Project

Barnaby Flynn, Coordinator of the Penzance SP Adopters' Group, will be sharing his experience and promoting SP across the country over the Spring and Summer. This is an exciting project which aims to boost the number of Adopters and MPs who have signed the SP pledge.

If you would like Barnaby to visit your town to set up a stall at a green fair or other event, or would just like help with getting a local SP Adopters' Group going, then contact Barnaby on barnawasp@hotmail.com or on 07791 835508.

Barnaby is putting together a schedule of events that will be publicised on the SimpPol-UK website www.simpol.org.uk

Policy Committee elections

As reported last issue, a provisional Policy Committee was formed to oversee the processing of policy suggestions. A schedule has now been put in place by the SimpPol-UK Management Board for the Committee to be elected. Any Adopter resident in the UK, or registered to vote in the UK, may stand for election.

There are 9 positions on the Policy Committee available. If you wish to stand please register by 7 June 2006. Papers for electing the Committee and for the initial ranking of policy suggestions received will be sent to UK Adopters within a month of this date. Elections are initially for 12 months. SimpPol-UK will arrange an inaugural meeting of the Committee for a handover from the provisional Committee. Methods of communication will be established at the meeting. The provisional committee has been communicating by email.

The role of the Committee is to:

- receive policy suggestions from Adopters,
- put these into good order,

- raise any concerns with the Adopter making the suggestion,
- communicate suggestions to other Adopters.
- organise ranking of policy areas and suggestions by Adopters.

The Policy Committee is responsible for designing the policy development process as it becomes more complex, ensuring that the views of Adopters are considered throughout in a democratic and transparent way.

If you wish to stand for election you must send the following information to Simpol-UK, PO Box 26547, London, SE3 7YT, or by email to policy@simplol.org.uk

- Your name
- Address
- Phone number
- Email address
- Name of another Adopter, supporting your registration
- Employment
- Your interest in SP (100 words maximum)
- Your reason for standing for election to the Policy Committee (200 words maximum)

If you would like to discuss standing before registering, you can contact Mike Brady, a member of the provisional Policy Committee using mikebrady@simplol.org.uk or 07986 736179.

Equal opportunities monitoring

Simplol-UK has introduced Equal Opportunities style monitoring of new Adopters and is inviting all existing Adopters to complete the form, which can be found at www.simplol.org.uk

This responds to a suggestion made at the policy development process planning meeting last October.

All monitoring information is confidential and is not kept with other data about Adopters. It is intended to guide

Policy suggestions : Adopters Put Forward their Proposals

Every Adopter has the right to submit proposals for consideration by other Adopters for inclusion by SP. You don't have to be an expert yourself. If you have come across a good idea, or an organisation with proposals you like, you can submit those too. Visit the 'policy zone' at www.simplol.org.uk to give your views on other suggestions. A round of voting will take place later in the year.

Provide the following information via the on-line form, in an email to policy@simplol.org.uk or in writing to Simpol, UK, PO Box 26547, London, SE3 7YT (Simplol-UK has offered to accept policy suggestions from Adopters in other countries for passing to ISPO).

- **Contact details:** Name (to be made public). Email address and other contact details (to be made public at the request of the proposer).
- **Title of your suggested policy.**

the Simpol-UK Management Board in ensuring campaigning strategies are reaching and involving all sectors of society.

The forms have been based on those used by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations. You may also make suggestions for improvements.

News from ISPO

The International Simultaneous Policy Organisation will be participating in the European Social Forum in Athens, 4-7 May 2006. The programme is still being arranged. See www.fse-esf.org for details.

If you are able to help with organising the ISPO seminar or stand, or would simply like to be kept in touch with developments, send an email to events@simplol.org.uk

News Briefs

Two more UK Members of Parliament pledge their support for SP

Since the previous issue, **John Leech**, Liberal Democrat MP for Manchester, Withington, and **Paul Rowen**, Liberal Democrat MP for Rochdale, have signed the pledge to implement SP alongside other governments.

This brings to 12 the number of MPs in the House of Commons who have signed. Full details and a pledge form to send to your MP are available at www.simplol.org.uk

Weblogs:

<http://simplol.blogspot.com>;
<http://entrepreneurialrevolution.blogspot.com>;
<http://therebeleconomist.blogspot.com>;
<http://clubofcountry.blogspot.com>;
<http://clubofcity.blogspot.com>

- **Summarise your policy suggestion.** This is a concise summary to be publicised to Adopters. Include a primary link or reference if relevant.
- **Additional details:** Give a longer explanation and sources of supporting information if relevant.

New suggestion

Title: Remodelling Companies to Become Stakeholder-Governed Organisations

Proposers: Brian Wills and Patrick Andrews

Summary: International legislation to replace archaic joint stock company law is now urgently required to "turn multinational corporations into nested networks of stakeholder-governed organisations accountable to local citizens" (Shann Turnbull).

Simpol Satire



TO PASS THE TIME, FIVE STRANDED TRAVELLERS
START PLAYING A BOASTING GAME —
WHO IS THE MOST POWERFUL ?

THE CORPORATION DIRECTOR
I am! My group of supermarkets can expand forever, simply by promising customers we always offer the best bargains.

THE GENERAL
That's just shopping talk! I get at people's fear. They support perpetual conflict because they're foolish enough to believe the war on terror is more important than the war on want.

THE MEDIA TYCOON
I go one better than that! My editors make sure that serious criticism of globalisation never gets media attention.

THE VOTING CITIZEN
Sorry guys, I'm the one that counts. Millions like me know that globalisation is imploding because its unsustainable....

THE MONEY-MARKET TRADER
Heck! What a lot of unnecessary trouble. In a few seconds trading with some of the unsecured trillions in circulation I can make FIFTY times your salaries.

We're developing alternative global policies ourselves

We have a democratic process that exerts powerful cross-frontier political leverage

We'll win, because enough of us want to stop you exploiting other people and the planet before you spoil it all.

And you'll win too, because unless we citizens ensure we have a sustainable planet, you won't have a business!

Imagine a world

Where values matter - Where leaders listen
Where the strongest superpower is *we the people*



The Simultaneous Policy

How can *we the people* get our leaders to listen to us and not just to the rich and powerful? How can we make our values their values, values like:

- fair trade and decent livelihoods
- respect for life, health and environmental sustainability
- true democracy - not "corporatocracy"
- freedom, security and equal opportunity for all
- zero tolerance for terror of all kinds - state terror and domestic tyranny included
- unity in diversity among peoples, nations and cultures
- an end to weapons of mass destruction and to war itself as an obsolete means of conflict resolution

If we the people had a say, would we vote for "money talks" and "might makes right" or for the rule of just laws and the rights of individuals and communities? Would we vote to share and conserve the planet's resources, or to hoard and squander them?

Why aren't governments taking action?

Today, global markets and corporations so comprehensively overpower individual nations that no politician or political party dares make the first move to solve global problems for fear of putting their own nation at a significant economic competitive disadvantage. Though legislators know that serious world problems such as global warming, monopolistic corporate power, poverty and environmental destruction all demand decisive action, they are loath to implement the policies needed to solve them. They legitimately fear that in today's liberalized global economy, investors, corporations and jobs would simply pick up and leave for more congenial destinations. However good their intentions, governments feel bound to conform to a straitjacket of market- and business-friendly

policies. That's why, whoever we vote for in the present system, little, if anything, changes.

The Simultaneous Policy

The Simultaneous Policy (SP) is our "people's globalization policy": a work-in-progress that all citizens who "adopt" SP are designing with the help of independent expert policy-makers. SP is to be implemented when all or sufficient nations are ready to do likewise - simultaneously. Simultaneous implementation means no nation loses out and all the excuses for inaction evaporate.

Here's how the SP strategy works

By adopting SP, we join with Adopters in our own and other countries who undertake to vote in future elections for ANY political party or candidate, within reason, that signs a pledge in principle to implement SP alongside other governments. Alternatively, if we still have a preference for a particular party, our adoption signifies our desire for our party to support SP.

For a politician, signing the pledge to implement SP does not require a change of policies until it is time to implement SP, and so carries no risk. But by moving the world a step nearer to implementation, the politician hastens the day when global politics shifts from competition to co-operation and global problems, about which many care deeply, can be addressed effectively. On the other hand, failure to sign the pledge could cost the politician their seat and hand it to someone who will support SP. With many seats decided by small majorities, the SP voting bloc could make all the difference.

SP is already gaining public and political support. It is not an alternative to other campaigns, but a parallel strategy, enabling us to look beyond fighting to change existing systems to joining with people around the world and collectively answering the question:

How do you want the world to be?

It's free to Adopt!

- I provisionally Adopt SP, and undertake to vote at elections (if I am eligible to vote) for any candidate, within reason, who pledges to implement SP alongside other governments when all, or sufficient, other governments have also pledged to do so. Alternatively, I will encourage politicians in my preferred party to make the pledge.
- I apply for membership of Simpol-UK and enclose my first annual payment of £25 (£10 unwaged/low-waged). Please send me a membership pack and Simpol-UK's Founding Declaration (UK residents or people registered to vote in the UK only - otherwise see the website for details of your National SP Organisation).
- Please send me the representative's/candidate's pledge form (politicians may also tick the other boxes).
- Please send me _____ copies of the leaflet *How do you want the world to be?*
- Please send me _____ copies of John Bunzl's book: *The Simultaneous Policy* at £12.50 each, including postage and packing (UK delivery - contact ISPO for prices outside the UK).
- Please send me _____ large/medium white/pale blue cotton round neck t-shirts with the message: *SP: How do you want the world to be?* at £12.95 including postage and packing (UK delivery - contact ISPO for prices outside the UK).



Mr/Mrs/Ms: _____ Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____ Signature: _____

Return form to: ISPO, PO Box 26547, London, SE3 7YT.

Alternatively sign-up on-line.

The Simultaneous Policy

www.simpol.org