



WORLDWIDE DIRECT DEMOCRACY NEWSLETTER

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Three types of I&R

(by Jiri Polak)

The idea of I&R could be made more palatable to the general public if we recognized and openly admitted that not every referendum is good DD. I believe it is fair to discern three types of this important instrument of citizen power:

1. *Genuine I&R.* The citizens are given the opportunity to directly decide on an issue of vital interest for everybody, an issue they can easily understand and the treatment of which affords predictable consequences. The most important issue of this type is the Constitution, if its draft is simple and clear, not trying to wrench, by obscure and demagogical formulations, power from the hands of the people instead of giving it to them. Such a risk is always present when the draft is written by political elites instead of the citizens themselves.
2. *Phoney I&R.* The initiative comes from vested interests instead of the citizens. Big corporations and power holders are able to organize brainwashing campaigns and even bribe poorly educated people, living in misery, to vote in favor of a proposal beneficial for the vested interest in question. Several such cases have been reported and they discredit the very idea of DD in the eyes of many people. In the last chapter of the *I&R Almanac* (see below), *Denis Polhill* writes, „The prospect of manipulation of a national referendum is real.“ The

ORÇAMENTO PARTICIPATIVO:

The remarkable experience of direct democracy in
a Brazilian town.

(Source: Information available on the web)



Porto Alegre is a Brazilian town with a population of about 1.2 million people, situated along the polluted Guaiba river in Southern Brazil. ... Since 1989, Porto Alegre is governed by the *Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT)*. This party was founded in 1980, when the military regime first allowed the creation of new parties. The PT emanated from a coalition of labor unions, urban and rural social movements, people from Christian base communities, and formerly revolutionary Marxist and Trotskyist groups. The PT has no well-defined ideology, but there are two main themes:

author mentions some notorious instances of abuse (by Gorbachev, Hitler, Mussolini and Musharraf). Especially Hitler's ascent to power owing to broad popular support is often mentioned as an instance of alleged undesirability of DD. Using this argument, the opponents demagogically disregard the profound difference between Germany of the 1930s and contemporary western societies. Attempts at manipulation of the I&R process have been, and surely still are, being made in the USA as well. But in the *Almanac*, Mr. M. Dane Waters writes,research shows that money can't buy a new law at the ballot box." ... "Simply put, money is necessary but not sufficient for success ..." (*Almanac*, p.456-457)

3. *Questionable I&R*. By this term, I mean referendums, even if resulting from initiative, that

require expert knowledge people in general cannot have. A typical example is a referendum on nuclear energy: Shall we use it or not? Facing this dilemma, people will be exposed to two kinds of brainwashing campaigns: Those who have a vested interest in a continuing use of nuclear energy will tell us: *Let's keep it!* Environmental fundamentalists, opposed to nuclear energy no matter what, will tell us with equal vehemence: *Let's discard it!* Whom shall we trust? In such cases, the best solution would be to first submit the issue for assessment to a series of *Planning Cells* and form a judgement on the basis of their recommendations. A referendum taking in consideration the conclusions reached by ordinary citizens in a PC process could not be brushed aside by anybody.

Inversão de prioridades (inversion of priorities): clientism benefitting elite groups should come to an end, and the needs of the poor should get priority.

Participação popular (popular participation). As in all other countries all over the world, the people of Brazil is in want of real democracy. **Rebecca Abers** quotes some interesting poll results. For instance, the question „Would the country be better if the people had the power to decide?“ received affirmative answers by 71-86% of those interviewed (1990). The original contribution of the PT consists in the insight that popular control on public spending was the key to real popular participation in policy. Therefore, the PT introduced the practice of *orçamento participativo* (direct democratic budgeting) from 1989 onwards.

How the system works

1. In April of each year, each region has an *open first round general assembly*. Moreover, there are also general assemblies for each of the 5 *thematic forums*: a) transportation and circulation; b) urban planning and organization of the city; c) education and culture; d) health and social assistance; e) economic development and tax reform. „*These 'first round assemblies have a mobilizational and almost theatrical character*
2. In the weeks following the first assembly, *Intermediary meetings in the neighbourhoods* are held. ... At these neighbourhood meetings, the *lists of investment priorities* are drawn up.
3. During the month of June, the second round of regional and thematic assemblies is held. Here, the preferred investment categories and projects are formally presented to the administration. Besides, *two representatives and two alternates to sit on the citywide Municipal Budget Council* are elected.
4. At stages 1. and 2., *the delegates for the Regional Budget Forum are elected*. The work of the Forums of Delegates continues all year long
5. The *Municipal Budget Council* coordinates the demands made in each of the regional and thematic forums in order to produce the city's annual investment plan

Results: The experience in Porto Alegre shows that direct popular participation dramatically increases efficiency of public spending.

Who participates? „Opinion surveys found that in 1994, about eight percent of the adult population had directly participated in the budget assemblies.“

Some further remarks: When the PT took over the office in Porto Alegre, the city was almost bankrupt. An inflated bureaucracy ate up almost all municipal resources. In 1990, revenues were already 40% higher than they had been in 1989. Now there was money to spend and the participatory budget policy became a real thing. In 1995, the total capital expenditure budget was about \$ 65 million, slightly less than half of this amount being subject to the direct-democratic decision-making process. ... After 1992, property tax rates were reduced, but city revenues continued to climb as tax evasion fell.

„People participate, not when they can obtain something for themselves, but when they are able to really change things for the better.“ This is exactly the same finding as that reached during the many years of the use of *Planning Cells!* (JP)

INTERNATIONAL

USA

Initiative and Referendum Almanac

Published by *Carolina Academic Press* (www.cup-press.com) 660 pages. A monumental and well-documented book summing up the history as well as recent developments of I&R in the USA. A „must“ for every serious student of DD in general and the I&R process in particular.

Attention: *Those who want to go on receiving information from the IRI USA have to register themselves at the Institute* iri@topica.email-publisher.com

10 July, a letter from Mr. Mark Davey: How to Rig an Election in the United States

http://www.truthout.org/docs_03/voting.shtml ..What you read here amounts to revelation of evidence of motive, opportunity, method, prior conduct, and a variety of items of, consistent unexplained circumstantial evidence. The story of how this story emerged is a great tale in itself. In the course of investigating the issue of the integrity of new electronic voting machines Bev Harris learned that people around the world had been downloading from an open FTP site belonging to Diebold Election Systems one of the leading manufactures of voting systems. Realising we had stumbled across

Initiative and Referendum Almanac

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MARYLAND • MASSACHUSETTS • MICHIGAN • MINNESOTA • MISSISSIPPI
MISSOURI • MONTANA • NEBRASKA • NEVADA • NEW HAMPSHIRE • NEW
JERSEY • NEW MEXICO • NEW YORK • NORTH CAROLINA • NORTH DAKOTA
OHIO • OKLAHOMA • OREGON • PENNSYLVANIA • RHODE ISLAND • SOUTH
CAROLINA • SOUTH DAKOTA • TENNESSEE • TEXAS • UTAH • VERMONT
VIRGINIA • WASHINGTON • WEST VIRGINIA • WISCONSIN • WYOMING

M. Dane Waters

what might be the equivalent of the Pentagon Papers for elections, the full contents of this website have been secured around the world at several locations. „Mr. Davey draws our attention especially to the following websites:

System Integrity Flaw Discovered at Diebold Election Systems:

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/HL0302/S00052.htm>

<http://users.actrix.co.nz/dolly/>

<http://www.lostpassword.com> <http://www.zip-repair.com>

Diebold - The Face of Modern Ballot Tampering

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/HLO211/S00081.htm>

Senate Ethics Director Resigns; Senator Hagel Admits Owning Voting Machine Company

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/HL0301/S00166.htm>

and a few more.

11 July, a letter from Mr. **John Suhr**: „Attempting to restore the discussion to DD, or EDD in this case, this site may be of interest: <http://www.majority-voice.com> It may be similar to Vivarto, but does have the advantage of being free (for now, anyway). Thanks to Mirek for noticing and posting it. Steve Magruder also has a new version of D2 up: <http://discuss.democracy2.org>

15 July, a letter from Mr. **Mark Davey**: „Secret Group Manipulates Vote Machines“

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„The widespread use of electronic voting machines has severely undermined the integrity of elections in the United States. Behind the companies that make the voting machines is a small and secret group of men, including a well-known U.S. Senator.“

Extract:

„As a result of the 2000 election fiasco in Florida, expensive electronic voting machines have replaced paper ballot voting systems in a growing number of jurisdictions across the United States. However, the electronic touch-screen voting and ballot counting machines lack the transparency and credibility of hand-counted paper ballots. Furthermore, troubling revelations about the people who are invested in the companies that make these voting machines raise a host of serious questions about the condition of the democratic franchise in the United States.“

4 April, a letter sent by Mr. **Evan D Ravitz** to the P2DDIntra discussion channel: „Nebraska DNC Call For Audits of Voting Machines To Democratic Partners in Leadership. This is an urgent message to alert you to a major crisis facing our Democratic

system. Vigilance has always been required to protect our voting rights and the ballot box from corruption. However, the use of computers to record and count the votes has created a major new problem. Today votes can be stolen electronically with software planted in the voting machines. It only takes one person to change the election results for a whole state.“

19 July, a letter from Mr. **Evan Daniel Ravitz** to the P2DDIntra discussion channel:

„I put the excerpts from Fossedal's book - better formatted - on my website at www.vote.org/Fossedal.htm

CANADA

4 October, a letter from Mr. **George Sagi**, MS: „It is my pleasure to announce the publication of my new book **THE DREAM**. The book can be ordered via the Internet store of <http://www.mcnallrobinson.ca> Search by Author's name: George Sagi Price: Canadian \$ 23.95 plus shipping cost (you will be advised on line or by email). My royalties are offered to the Canadian Cancer Society and the Red Cross.

Payment by credit card on line, or may send cheques or bank money orders to:

McNally Robinson Booksellers, 1120 Grant Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, R3M 2A6, Canada

Review by Dr. Miroslav Kolar: „George Sagi weaves a fictional story of the struggle for genuine democracy in the 21st Century. It is not a political science book, it is actually a genuine science fiction book. The book is really based on a dream - to acquire technical means to simultaneously destroy all the militaries, all the weapons in all countries of the world. It is a dream that many readers will undoubtedly identify with.

The book starts with a series of frightening historical events of the future that sweep civilization to the brink of destruction. The book's heroes, a small group of dedicated democrats, save the world from devastation and establish genuine global democracy. Many readers will probably question the approach they used: worldwide coup d'etat to impose from above a transitional political system that should educate the masses and lead them into genuine democracy.

However, by presenting one vision of the transition to a better system, **THE DREAM** is a provocative reading for all conscientious democrats concerned about the future of humanity.“

The Dream will soon be available in major bookstores. It can already be ordered from

<http://democracy.mkolar.org/pdda/page3.html>

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY on Electoral Reform ‘*What is the Citizens Assembly?*

The Citizens' Assembly was created by the Government of British Columbia with unanimous support of the British Columbia Legislature. It is an independent, non-partisan assembly of individuals who will meet to examine the province's system - that is, how our votes determine who gets elected to sit in the provincial Legislature.

Who will the members be?

The Citizens' Assembly will have 158 members, two from each electoral district. It will be representative of the province as a whole. ...

The selection process will begin in September with a random draw of names for provincial voter list. Those whose names are drawn will be contacted and asked if they wish to participate. Some restrictions on eligibility apply. ...

What happens if the Citizens' Assembly recommend a new electoral system?

The recommendation will be put to all the voters in British Columbia as a referendum question at the next provincial election in May 2005. If the voters endorse the Assembly's recommendation, then a new electoral system will be in place for the following provincial election in 2009.“

GERMANY

History, sociological theories behind the model, contemporary use and possible applications. One of the most important works of the world's sociological literature.

22 July, information from *Süddeutsche Zeitung*: Mr. **Eberhard Sinner**, Minister for Consumer Protection in Bavaria, has decided to organize 18 Planning Cells (August) to treat citizen proposals and recommendations concerning the future of the health care system. This was the second time that Mr. Sinner has availed himself of the PC model.

5 September, a letter from Mr. **Wayne Hall**: „Distribution via the Unanswered Questions Wire. Sign up for the wire at: <http://www.unansweredquestions.org/headlines.php>

9/11: Two events in Berlin Question Official Story Sunday, Sept. 7: <http://www.911truth.org/berlin2.html>
Watergate 2: An Evening with Michael Ruppert and Cynthia McKinney.

Information at: <http://www.911truth.org/berlin.html#exclusive>

24 October, information from Mr. **Steve Mathe** through Mr. M.Kolar:

„CRL web site has been revised and reworded: <http://citizensrightsleague.com.freeservers.com>



Prof. Peter C.Dienel: Die Planungszelle

28 October: At the University of Wuppertal, a *Colloquium on Planning Cells* was held to celebrate Prof. *Peter C. Dienel*'s eightieth birthday. CONGRATULATIONS!

Participants:

Podium I: The history of the PC model since the beginning of the 1970s. The model was originally developed to treat local problems, such as city planning and many, perhaps most, of the members of the

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| 10.00 | Begrüßung | Lietzmann/Dienel |
| | Podium I | <u>Die Anfänge</u> , - Resümee und Kritik
(mit J. Burgass, Th. Friedrich, D. Garbe, H. Hattenhauer, H. Koehler) |
| | Podium II | <u>Projekte jetzt</u>
(mit Cl. Delap, A. Faust, R. Franz, H. Harms, K. Nurekowska, J. Seifid, B. Trütken) |
| 13.31 | Mittags- mit Kurz-Präsentation | <u>Zukunft der Forschungsstelle</u>
(mit Rouge, Dienel, Lietzmann) |
| | Podium III | <u>Perspektiven</u>
(mit J. Brand, G. Bauner, B. Hellwig, R. Kadalic, Y. Kempen, J. Polak, O. Renn, A. Reimert, H. Sturm, H. Wills) |
| 17.00 | Ende | |

global DD network still look at the PCs in this way. However, it was stressed at the conference, that the model can be used for treatment of any type of issues. This is also the assumption behind the Czech Citizens' Constitution.

At the same time that Prof. Dienel developed the PCs in Germany, Mr. *Ned Crosby*, the founder of the *Jefferson Center*, developed *Citizen Juries* in the USA. He also established cooperation with Prof. Dienel. Both models are

very similar, but, according to the Anglo-Saxon juridical practice, the Citizen Juries are not multiplied like the PCs.

An exotic interlude: Presentation of Japanese dance performed by Mrs. *Rie Shiikawa*.

Podium II: Projects in progress. According to information, at present, about 300 Citizen Juries are run in the UK. Recently, a massive use of PCs is observed in India and Brazil. There was a discussion about the term to be applied to the PCs outside Germany. In the post-commu-



nist countries, the word *planning* is reminiscent of the totalitarian era. (That is why, in Czech Republic for instance, we use the term *Citizen Commissions*.) In Africa, by contrast, it is the word *cells* that arouses negative connotations. The term *independent planning units* has been proposed for that area.

Podium III: Future prospects. There is no doubt that the use of PCs will continue to grow. The most radical project put forward was the Czech *Citizens' Constitution Draft* in which the Citizen Commissions will be included into the system at the deliberative stage, as a complement to representative bodies and referenda.

Prof. Dienel was flooded by congratulations. A long letter came from his personal friend, Mr. *Johannes Rau*, the President of Germany.

Despite all the expressions of appreciation, the true understanding of the enormous importance of Prof. Dienel's brilliant invention is yet to emerge. If asked what it was that saved the European civilization from collapse in the twenty first century, historians not yet born will probably say, „It was the grassroots' common sense and survival instinct, formally included into political decision-making to check and subdue the megalomania and short-sightedness of political leaders, that tipped the scale.“

At the same time that DD procedures are gaining momentum, the mock-democratic party system decays. In Brandenburg, at the recent election, participation dropped by 30% (!), from about 70% at the previous occasion, to about 40% now. In Germany, only about 2% of citizens are now members of any party - about the same figure as in Sweden.

SWEDEN: murder and protest

Something is rotten in the state of Sweden. In the middle of September, the Government-sponsored campaign persuading people to vote yes to the euro was culminating. In the streets and squares of Stockholm, as everywhere, giant portraits of *Anna Lindh*, Foreign Minister and vice Prime Minister, expected to eventually succeed Mr. Göran Persson as Prime Minister, bombarded citizens by pro-euro propaganda. In the heat of this campaign, Anna Lindh went shopping, together with a lady friend, to a large shopping center downtown Stockholm.

Suddenly, a man pushed her to the floor and stabbed her to death. Imagine the scene: A helpless woman lying on the floor and evidently being murdered in full view of people gathered around. Nobody interfered, nobody tried to help her, nobody tried to pursue and catch the killer who managed to disappear (!!!!!!!!!?????). He was eventually arrested a few weeks later, after a large-scale investigation. The murder got enormous publicity in all media. All politicians and even journalists appearing on TV were wearing black clothes and black ties. The murder was called „a national trauma“. During the „five days that shook Sweden“, all other news receded into the background, suggesting that a top politician is million times more important and valuable than any ordinary citizen. *This* is called „democracy“!

Naturally, I feel sorry for Anna Lindh, but I would feel equally sorry for any other killed woman leaving behind a husband and two kids. And that was not all. The next day, inspired by the bombastic media coverage, a lunatic rushed into a kindergarten and killed a five years old girl. So, in the course of just two days, the Swedish political system got two unnecessary deaths on its conscience.

How to prevent a repetition? The analysts mostly recommended more body guards that should never leave the top oligarchs unprotected (thus further increasing the gap existing between us and them). My advice to the political aristocracy: Stop playing gods! Become ordinary citizens and introduce elements of DD into the system - and you will not need any body guards. I have never heard of any political murder in Switzerland. But of course, this is precisely what they will never do unless forced by public opinion. Power is sweet and well worth risking one's own and other people's lives.

There were speculations about the probable impact of the killing on the ensuing euro plebiscite. Prior to the killing, the *No*-side had had an edge, but it was now expected that people would vote *Yes* to show their sympathy. Not so! The *No*-side carried the day by 56%. Among the youngest (18-21 years of age), 66% voted *No*. Many commentators drew the conclusion: People rejected the Government's line just because they were (and are) increasingly fed up with politicians. To some extent at least, the voting was a protest. There was a poll asking politicians and grassroots: Was it right or wrong to let the citi-

zens decide? 52% of the politicians said it was a mistake. 56% of the grassroots said it was the right thing to do. In Parliament, the euro adherents have a majority of some 75%. Among the population, the adherents are a minority of slightly more than 40%. *This* is called representation.

(By the way, Sweden is a hereditary monarchy. How can a system be at the same time a monarchy and a democracy? It's either or, isn't it? So far, the Swedes have never been asked in referendum whether they wanted to preserve their Monarchy or not.) The ideology on which the Swedish system is based is increasingly becoming a farce. On the TV screen, some 50 people or so (politicians, journalists, union bosses ...), always the same persons answering always the same questions in always the same way, are performing a never ending political soap opera. *Quo usque tandem*

Several Swedes have already declared themselves willing to found a DD party on the national level, something which, in Sweden, would be the only way to break through the barrier of silence lying like a dead hand on all individual attempts to put forward, and at least start a discussion about proposals for reform. So far, no concrete steps have been taken. But, sooner or later, this is bound to happen. The scene is not completely dark, though. There is the **IRI - Initiative & Rådslagsinstitutet** presided by **Dr. Bruno Kaufmann**, one of the most prominent personalities of the European DD movement. Through his electronic channels and sometimes even in the media, he supplies those interested with information about the European Referendum Campaign and the many referenda that in fact *do* take place in Sweden, even if only on the local level. The latest IRI report brings information about 67 local referendums held between 1977 and 2003. They dealt with relatively marginal issues and were mostly initiated by politicians, not by the citizens. Dr. Kaufmann brings several recommendations concerning desirable democratization of the system: 1. Introduce obligatory referenda and the right to popular initiative; 2. Create an independent I&R authority under the Election Authority; 3. Abolish advisory referenda and make referenda binding for the politicians; 4. Establish transparency as to the referendum financing; 5. Reinforce communal democracy as well as democracy on the European level.

(All these demands are included in the Draft of the *Czech Citizens' Constitution*, but we want to go farther. *JP*)

The IRI has also analysed the recent referendum on the euro and found that on that occasion, the requirement of *free and fair election* was only partly met. Dr Kaufmann is active on the European level as well. The IRI materials mention two recent conferences: *European Referendum Monitoring Conference in Tartu/Estonia* (September 26-28, 2003) and *The options and limits of direct democracy in the European integration process* (Brussels, October 9, 2003).

For more information, you can look at info@iri-sverige.org, www.iri-sverige.org, www.iri-europe.org.

SWITZERLAND

20 September, information from Mr. *Vladimir Rott*: IEW Institute for Empirical Research in Economics - Working Paper #165 - July 2003: DIRECT DEMOCRACY FOR TRANSITION COUNTRIES by Prof *Bruno S.Frey*

(<http://www.iew.unizh.ch/wp/icwmp165.pdf>)

UK

26 August, a letter from Dr. *Michael Macpherson*: „It's commonly argued that referendum is bad for the country etc. because citizens are of low intelligence etc. The vast majority of them, so the critics, never deliberate on anything. We have argued against these points many times, often in the rough and tumble of the Usenet fora, see for example — Daily Mail „referendum“ — at

<http://www.iniref.org/debates.html>

Our „Case“ for more direct democracy in Britain and N.Ireland includes: Information and Deliberation. It is often asserted that the direct forms of democracy such as IRR do not allow adequate consideration of the issue at stake. Agreed, a rapid process conducted like an opinion survey might gather many unreflected replies. But that is not what is proposed here. There are very good ways to build in plenty of information, discussion and debating time (summed up as „deliberation“) into the processes of citizen-initiated lawmaking. For instance ...“

Dr. Macpherson enumerates several ways to give the citizens opportunities for deliberation and to make these opportunities attractive. All these methods are valuable and worth using. However, even if they give all citizens access to relevant information and open all possible deliberation channels for them, in practice, only an educated and politically active minority will use them. The process, even if improved, will remain biased. Therefore, we insist on the inclusion of *Planning Cells*, or at least *Citizen Juries* in the I&R process. The PC model, based on random selection, cannot be replaced by any other procedure. So far, its democratic potential has been underestimated in the DD movement. (*JP*)

ISRAEL - PALESTINE

13 October, a letter from Mr. *Miroslav Kolar*:

„I have just listened to the news about a doable compromise agreement reached secretly in Jordan after long months of negotiations between representative groups of Israelis and Palestinians, not connected officially to their respective governments. Then an interview with one of the Israeli initiators/negotiators of this initiative followed. He said they are now planning to distribute the agreement to every citizen of Israel and Palestine, explain it by all means available, and to demand a referendum on this initiative. It looks to me like DD (I&R) in practice, started almost from the grass-root level. It looks very exciting.“

AUSTRALIA

9 October, information from Mr. *Miroslav Kolar*: <http://www.plebs.org.au> - Australian attempt at Direct Participation. An organisation seeking to implement a model of direct democracy in the Australian Parliament.

Claudio Bernardinatti, c.berardinatti@uws.edu.au

TAIWAN

12 October: Mr. *Dane Waters* and Dr. *Bruno Kaufmann* participated at a discussion about I&R published on *Taipei Times*, commenting on the Government's proposal of a referendum law.

EUROPE

21 September: Mr. **Paul Carline** wrote,“We (i.e. those who have the energy and commitment and vision of a different kind of European community/family of nations based not on competition, but on solidarity and mutual support - at least that´s my vision!) should ´do something´ to create an alternative to the technocratic, undemocratic, business-oriented organisation which the EU is/has become. My own suggestion would be that we (i.e. the members of the ´democratic community´ of Europe - those who espouse the fundamental principles of democracy (which would have to be clarified and agreed upon) could create an alternative ´People´s Convention´ whose task would be to draw up the alternative constitution.”

29 September: Mr. **George Kokkas** wrote, „.....we are proud to announce you that after six months of deliberation and research (since the Barcelona Forum held by IRI there on March 28 this year - and during the Citizens´ Assemblies, held parallel to the last European Summit in Chalkidike, Greece, ... up until now) we formed finally (Wednesday, Sept. 17th in Greece) the Network called „Democratic Euro-Vision“ with the aim to enforce the following instrument of the European Civil Societies in the Constitutional Treaty, through the Intergovernmental Conference beginning its work on October 4th. ... Please comment on the following initial text and join our efforts: EUROPEAN Civil Society´s ASSEMBLY for SOCIAL MONITORING

(Those interested in the idea and wanting to read the text outside the ciddd channel, please contact Mr. Kokkas.)

22 July, information from Mr. **Ronald Pabst**: A British campaign to hold a referendum on the Constitution - see <http://www.vote-2004.com>

26 July, information from Mr. **Heiko Dittmer**: Eurobarometer -

http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/flash/fl1142_convention.pdf

Quotation: „Over 80% of citizens across the 25 European countries positively perceive the idea of a referendum on the draft Constitution.“

GLOBAL DD

16 July, excerpts from a letter sent by Mr. **Syd Baumel** to the Simpold discussion channel:

„My point is that politics has to catch up with the fact that we now really are a global village, not just metaphorically, but thanks to telecommunication technology - especially the internet - literally (and virtually).

We have the means for direct democracy, and we don´t need permission to begin exercising it in an unofficial, „if we build it, they will come,“ soft power way. George Monbiot recently proposed an elected World Parliament; but for now we the people could build a Yahoo! of world democracy and let anyone and everyone - individuals, organizations, corporations, politicians - with ideas and interest come to discuss the business of the world and any of its regions and locales, propose policies, vote on them, and present the results to the official political powers that be as an increasingly reasonable facsimile of the sovereign will of the people. In time, these people´s parliaments, councils, or assemblies could vote to be granted official political status and power and, if necessary, take to the streets to get it.

This just in ...

People´s Disarmament Bill Passes by a Landslide
New York (Rooters) - The People´s Global Parliament voted today by an overwhelming majority in favor of the Universal Disarmament Bill. The Bill would see the phased global dismantlement and criminalization of all weapons of mass destruction under the supervision and oversight of „an empowered United Nations inspection and monitoring agency.“

In a voting process that lasted 21 days, 27,836,045 registered members of the People´s Global Parliament (PGP) - nearly 75% of the PGP´s membership - logged on to the Internet-based e-democracy website at www.globalparliament.org

E-DEMOCRACY

3 September, excerpts from a letter by Mr. *Steven Clift*:

*** Democracies Online Newswire

- <http://e-democracy.org/do> ***

Some related links:

Markham election 2003:

<http://www.markham.ca/vote2003/index.htm>

Stephen Coleman, Oxford:

<http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/staff.shtml>

<http://www.mail-archive.com/dowire@tc.umn.edu/msg00557.html>

Past articles: <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/edemocracy3.htm>

Past articles: <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/edemocracy3.htm>

Steven Clift: <http://www.publicus.net>

Updated articles on „local“ forums:

<http://www.e-democracy.org/do/commons.html>

The Current: Part 2

E-Democracy - Markham

It's no secret that in many of the world's democracies, fewer and fewer people are actually interested in the old ways of doing politics ... such as voting, for example. Countries like Canada and Britain are quickly catching up to the low voter-turnout levels long associated with the United States.

All this voter apathy has led some people to look to the promise of the Internet as a way to engage average citizens in everyday politics. And their vision of so-called „e-democracy“ is gathering steam.“

26 September, a letter from Mr. *Patrik Haguenauer*, sent to Mr. Wayne Hall:

4TH WORLD FORUM ON E-DEMOCRACY AND POLITICSONLINE ANNOUNCE THE 25 WHO ARE CHANGING THE WORLD OF INTERNET AND POLITICS

Issy-les-Moulineaux, France - PoliticsOnline and the

4th World Forum on e-democracy announce the results of its second world wide survey recognizing the top 25 individuals, organizations and companies that are having the greatest impact on the way the Internet is changing politics.

In recent years, the Internet and burgeoning information technologies have inexorably altered our body politic, fundamentally changing the way we do democracy. On Friday, at the 4th Annual Worldwide Forum on Electronic Democracy, PoliticsOnline recognized the best of the best — the innovators and pioneers who blaze the e-political trails.

PoliticsOnline asked its 300,000 readers and subscribers to name the people, organizations and companies that are changing the world of Internet and politics. From these nominations, 25 world changers and five rising stars were selected.

„From the beginning, politics has been about two things - ideas and the people that make these ideas realities,“ said PoliticsOnline President Phil Noble, a guest speaker at the annual Worldwide Forum on Electronic Democracy. „With this announcement, we honor the most innovative ideas and the most influential individuals.

„With so many people doing so much in this field, narrowing the list down to so few proved a more difficult task than we ever could have imagined - we thank everyone that submitted nominations, and we congratulate all those that were nominated“, said Mayor Andre Santini, founder of the Forum. „As with any list of the best, debate is sure to follow. We certainly hope it will, and that the ongoing conversation about the Internet and politics is carried further.“

(One of those selected is the ISPO. For the list, you may contact Phil@PoliticsOnline.com or David@PoliticsOnline.com)

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**Merry Christmas and
Good Progress in 2004!**

