



DIRECT DEMOCRATIC EURO-VISION NEWSLETTER

Vol. 13 (No.4)

November 2011



WORLDWIDE DIRECT DEMOCRACY NEWSLETTER DIRECTRACY

In the early fifteenth century, Master *John Hus*, headmaster of the University of Prague and follower of John Wycliffe, in his sermons held in the Bethlehem Chapel, launched furious criticism against the corrupt practices flourishing in the Catholic Church of his time. In 1415, he was summoned to the Council of Constance taking place in that period, where he was to defend his teaching. He received a warrant of impunity from the Emperor Sigismund. The prelates simply incarcerated him and forced him to revoke his criticism. He said: *For me, the only authority is the Holy Scripture. Show me in which respect my teaching goes against it. Only then I will revoke.* Obviously, they were unable to do that. Instead, they burnt him alive. He chose a horrible death rather than denying his truth. He became a martyr and a symbol.

The event provoked fury and tension in the Czech nation. In 1419, a crew gathered in front of the New Town Hall and demanded that political prisoners held there be released. The councillors mocked the crowd from the windows. The crowd broke in, threw the councillors down, and killed them. This unleashed the *Hussite Wars*. For fifteen years, the Czechs were victoriously fighting against almost the whole of Europe. Their peasant armies repeatedly defeated heavily armed imperial knights. The Commander in Chief, *Jan Žižka*, invented the tank: a peasant wagon filled with stones. The revolution only ended in 1434, by a civil war, when the moderate Prague wing defeated the radical Taborites. It is reported that among the Hussites, surprisingly modern ideas were emerging: removal of aristocratic rule, introduction of elements of democracy, equality of citizens...

Obviously, in the fifteenth century, it was too early for a revolution of this kind. **How about now?** However, in a way, our situation is more difficult. Contemporary party oligarchies have learnt the lesson: *Don't create martyrs! It is more efficient to neutralize rebellious doctrines by drowning them in silence.* So, to oppose the gigantic party-political establishment, we, adherents of true democracy, can only speak loudly and rely on our tiny personal resources. **So much the greater will be our final victory!**

New Town Hall, Charles' Square, Prague



In 1419, from the windows of this building, the councillors were thrown down and chopped to pieces by angry citizens.

INTERNATIONAL

9 September, Democracy International Newsletter,
by **Ronald Pabst**

www.democracy-international.org

"The voice of the citizens"

We are closely observing the protest movements, which are currently unfolding in many countries. What are the concerns of the young people taking part in the demonstrations?

There are similarities: In all cases, we experience a great deal of frustration. Yet, the protesters have different reasons why to be frustrated. In Chile, students demand social equity and a fair education system. Same holds true for the Spanish protests, where citizens demand equal opportunities and a greater say in politics. In Egypt, citizens are striving for basic human and democratic rights in order to escape a dictatorship. Although their initial reasons are different, the protesters are united by a common belief: citizens possess the power to influence politics."

UK

30 July, **I&Rgb** wrote (abbreviated): "Independent newspaper averse to debate citizens' democracy; Crazy to empower people just for joining a Facebook group.""Iniref comments: The Con/Libdem coalition has put forward a number of proposals, some in parliamentary bills, which go some way towards improving public participation in local and national politics. These proposals are outlined here <http://www.iniref.org/latest.html>

The democratic "tool" described in R.Marsden's article may be called the agenda-setting citizens' initiative. If the rules for it are well-designed, then it can be useful in bringing neglected problems and possibly good ideas to public attention and political debate. A way to avoid that trivial or malevolent proposals qualify to proceed is to set the "hurdle" at an appropriate level. That may take some trial and error, especially if on-line endorsements are going to be accepted. We could learn from the experience of other countries and from experts about how to optimise our democracy design."

9 August, **I&Rgb** wrote: "While the Con/Libdem coalition may be experimenting in an unserious way with e-petitions, there remain serious deficits in our democracy. Falling turnout in local and general elections including some Scottish constituencies reflects this. Especially worrying is the political abstinence of our young people. Many citizens have concluded that politicians do not represent them well. Realising that apart from voting in elections once every few years you can do almost nothing to influence the machinery of government, over 7 in 10 British adults in repeated surveys concur that an agreed, large number of voters should have the right to make a proposal which can lead to binding referendum on any public issue.

Although long overdue, we should begin serious consideration of how to improve effective participation in public life including politics. A review by political scientists (2006) lead to the conclusion that the two forms of democracy deserving priority are the citizens' assembly for review of state constitution, and the right to put forward a proposition and trigger referendum, mentioned above. A summary of proposals about the latter may be found online at <http://www.iniref.org/steps.html> "

Campaign for Direct Democracy GB

CITIZENS INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM ACT
campaign for direct democracy in Britain

I&R
GB

We want more and better democracy with town meetings, local public debate, the citizens' law-proposal (initiative), the veto-referendum to keep government in 'check' plus the right to sack (recall) the MP whom we elected. To achieve reform like this will need a successful country-wide campaign which brings strong public pressure for change. 01323 210522

Reason for change in Britain? Citizen-led democracy and the Con/Libdem government

Introduction and aims

Case for I and R

Sign the petition for DD in Britain

Elections UK: By-elections and 2015 Help the Campaign - IT INVOLV

Contribute, work

Resources: Forum

News

- Analysis, Comment
- Blog on-site
- Campaign Events
- Comment at our Blog
- Contact
- Cooperation: Members
- Facebook
- Join the campaign
- Partnership: Jobs
- Study Tours
- Subscribe for news
- Twitter
- Volunteers
- Website content

ICELAND

3 September, Mr. Paul Nolen sent round the article **A story missing from our media: Iceland's on-going revolution** by **Deena Stryker**.

"An Italian radio program's story about Iceland's on-going revolution is a stunning example of how little our media tells us about the rest of the world. We may remember that at the start of the 2008 financial crisis, Iceland literally went bankrupt. The reasons were mentioned only in passing, and since then, this little-known member (?? *It*) of the European Union fell back into oblivion.

As one European country after another falls or risks falling, imperilling the Euro, with repercussions for the entire world, the last thing the powers that be want is for Iceland to become an example. Here's why:

Five years of a pure neo-liberal regime had made Iceland, (population 320 thousand, no army), one of the richest countries in the world. In 2003 all the country's banks were privatised, and in an effort to attract foreign investors, they offered on-line banking whose minimal costs allowed them to offer relatively high rates of return. The accounts, called IceSave, attracted many UK and Dutch small investors. But as investments grew, so did the banks' foreign debt. In 2003 Iceland's debt was equal to 200 times its GNP, but in 2007, it was 900 percent. The 2008 world financial crisis was the coup de grace. The three main Icelandic banks, Landbanki, Kapthing and Glitnir, went belly up and were nationalised, while the Kroner lost 85% of its value with respect to the Euro. At the end of the year Iceland declared bankruptcy.

Contrary to what could be expected, the crisis resulted in Icelanders recovering their sovereign rights, through a process of direct participatory democracy that eventually led to a new Constitution. But only after much pain.

Geir Haarde, the Prime Minister of a Social Democratic coalition government, negotiated a two million one hundred thousand dollar loan, to which the Nordic countries added another two and a half million. But the foreign financial community pressured Iceland to impose drastic measures. The FMI and the European Union wanted to take over its debt, claiming this was the only way for the country to pay back Holland and Great Britain, who had promised to reimburse their citizens.

Protests and riots continued, eventually forcing the government to resign. Elections were brought forward to April 2000, resulting in a left-wing coalition which condemned the neoliberal economic system, but immediately gave in to its demands that Iceland pay off a total of three and a half million Euros. This required each Icelandic citizen to pay 100 Euros a month (or about \$130) for fifteen years, at 5.5% interest, to pay off a debt incurred by private parties vis a vis other private parties. It was the straw that broke the reindeer's back.

What happened next was extraordinary. The belief that citizens had to pay for the mistakes of a financial monopoly, that an entire nation must be taxed to pay off private debts was shattered, transforming the relationship between citizens and their political institutions and eventually driving Iceland's leaders to the side of their constituents. The Head of State, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, refused to ratify the law that would have made Iceland's citizens responsible for its bankers' debts, and accepted calls for a referendum.

Of course the international community only increased the pressure on Iceland. Great Britain and Holland threatened dire reprisals that would isolate the country. As Icelanders went to vote, foreign bankers threatened to block any aid from the IMF. The British government threatened to freeze Icelandic savings and checking accounts. As Grimsson said: "We were told that if we refused the international community's conditions, we would become the Cuba of the North. But if we had accepted, we would have become the Haiti of the North." (How many times have I written that when Cubans see the dire state of their neighbor, Haiti, they count themselves lucky.)

In the March 2010 referendum, 93% voted against repayment of the debt. The IMF immediately froze its loan. But the revolution (though not televised in the United States), would not be intimidated. With the support of a furious citizenry, the government launched civil and penal investigations into those responsible for the financial crisis. Interpol put out an international arrest warrant for the ex-president of Kaupthing, Sigurdur Einarsson, as the other bankers implicated in the crash fled the country.

But Icelanders didn't stop there: they decided to draft a new constitution that would free the country from the exaggerated power of international finance and virtual money. (The one in use had been written when Iceland gained its independence from Denmark, in 1918, the only difference with the Danish constitution being that the word 'president' replaced the word 'king'.)

To write the new constitution, the people of Iceland elected twenty-five citizens from among 522 adults not belonging to any political party but recommended by at least thirty citizens. This document was not the work of a handful of politicians, but was written on the internet. The constituent's meetings are streamed on-line, and citizens can send their comments and suggestions, witnessing the document as it takes shape. The constitution that eventually emerges from this participatory democratic process will be submitted to parliament for approval after the next elections.

Some readers will remember that Iceland's ninth century agrarian collapse was featured in Jared Diamond's book by the same name. Today, that country is recovering from its financial collapse in ways just the opposite of those generally considered

unavoidable, as confirmed yesterday by the new head of the IMF, Christine Lagarde to Fareed Zakaria. The people of Greece have been told that the privatization of their public sector is the only solution. And those of Italy, Spain and Portugal are facing the same threat.

They should look to Iceland. Refusing to bow to foreign interests, that small country stated loud and clear that the people are sovereign."

GREECE

23 september, a quotation from a letter sent by *Mr. Giorgios Kokkas* to the *DD-EV* discussion channel:

"The fact is that today in Greece, everybody has heard or been enough informed about Direct Democracy; almost 35% of the Greek people may ask for a Citizens' Constitution and State change, not party change in a direct democratic direction. I would say that, if we can have the correct support and strategic work, we may have a political change to the first (after Switzerland) direct democratic State in Europe, beginning with serious institutional changes after our next election!

This year, we made three assimilations of an Alternative Citizens' Parliament that gave examples and ideas to use Central Squares of big Greek cities to make the same during May, June and July, asking for institutional changes, and last March, we made an assimilation of a Popular Court that accused the parliamentarians who accepted the International Monetary Fund in Greece. Last week, we organized successful Direct Democracy Celebrations in Athens and Northern Greece with the main purpose to unite the different popular Movements that appeared during this Greek Crisis and we had the birth of a new broad winding together political anti-Party for a direct Democratic change in Greece. You may watch in our site: www.dimopolis.gr a lot of information in Greek and if you will use an interpretation tool, you may understand how much work we have done and success achieved in the meantime!!"



SWEDEN and International USA

26 July, a letter sent by Mr. **Paul Nollen** to Mr. **David Alexander**. "The only "electronic Direct Democracy" initiative that succeeded so far is DEMOEX Sweden

<http://www.participedia.net/wiki/Demoex>. They had an elected representative in 2002 and they are still active. In a way they inspired us all. Some of us tried already several times to get an elected seat but without success. Therefore it is of great importance that we all work together, that way we can support each other. Like you said, we all are glad that we are not alone.

We started working together internationally on Participedia and we are still there

http://www.participedia.net/wiki/E2D_International Most of us have a national or local movement or we are starting one, or we had one. We also are working together with Democracy International

http://www.participedia.net/wiki/Democracy_International; some of us are members of that organisation. While E2D is narrowly focused on Demoex type initiatives, Democracy International is broader in its ambitions. (Every step in the direction of Direct democracy is a good step.)

ISRAEL

Another quotation from the above letter: "One of the interesting authors I found when I found Demoex was **Akiva Orr** <Aki_ORR@netvision.net.il>. If you are in for a heavy discussion, he will be glad to meet you I think. He was not directly a fan of your movement (he is against all political organisations) but I am sure it will be very interesting. If you meet him say hello from me. We, from E2D are giving a workshop at Freiburg in august <http://www.ena2011.eu> (website is down for the moment) named after one of his books, *Politics without Politicians*, and we do have regular contacts with him despite some differences of ideas. He only asks to keep messages short because his health is not very good, he must be selective in his activities."

26 July, Mr. **David Alexander** wrote, "Yes, I know Akiva Orr personally and have read his books. And yes, I have offered him to join our party, but he has declined. He has some good point, but in my opinion he tends too much toward anarchy. I wrote my own book

(<http://democracyunleashed.com>). It will be published in a few months (first in Hebrew)."

Mr. **Lee Gottlieb** has placed on the web his revealing book **The Democracy That Never Was**. www.Gottliebsworld.com

A quotation from Mr. Gottlieb's letter (13 august): "So, if it meets with your approval, in your next newsletter ask subscribers who have a website to read the book and if they like the idea, they can either link to my blog or I can place the free download materials on their websites."

Lee, I am doing it with pleasure. We both think alike. JP
26 September, quotation from a letter sent round by Mr. **Bernard Clayson** (abbreviated):

545 vs. 300,000,000 people - by **Charlie Reese**

"Politicians are the only people in the world who create problems and then campaign against them.

Have you ever wondered, if both the Democrats and the Republicans are against deficits, WHY do we have deficits?

Have you ever wondered, if all the politicians are against inflation and high taxes, WHY do we have inflation and high taxes?

You and I don't propose a federal budget. The President does.

You and I don't have the Constitutional authority to vote on appropriations. The House of Representatives does.

You and I don't write the tax code, Congress does.

You and I don't set fiscal policy, Congress does.

You and I don't control monetary policy, the Federal Reserve Bank does.

One hundred senators, 435 congressmen, one President and nine Supreme Court justices equates to 545 human beings out of the 300 million are directly, legally, morally, and individually responsible for the domestic problems that plague this country. I excluded the members of the Federal Reserve Board because that problem was created by the Congress. In 1913, Congress delegated its Constitutional duty to provide a sound currency to a federally chartered, but private, central bank.

I excluded all the special interests and lobbyists for a sound reason. They have no legal authority. They have no ability to coerce a senator, a congressman, or a President to do one cotton-picking thing. I don't care if they offer a politician \$1 million dollars in cash. The politician has the power to accept or reject it. No matter what the lobbyist promises, it is the legislator's responsibility to determine how he votes.

Those 545 human beings spend much of their energy convincing you that what they did is not their fault. They cooperate in this common con regardless of party.

What separates a politician from a normal human being is an excessive amount of gall. No normal human being would have

This web is best viewed with the Firefox browser
As desired, use the "View" menu to zoom in or out



"It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than the creation of a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institutions and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new one."

the gall of a Speaker, who stood up and criticized the President for creating deficits. The President can only propose a budget. He cannot force the Congress to accept it.

The Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land, gives sole responsibility to the House of Representatives for originating and approving appropriations and taxes."

"It seems inconceivable to me that a nation of 300 million cannot replace 545 people who stand convicted – by present facts – of incompetence and irresponsibility. I can't think of a single domestic problem that is not traceable directly to those 545 people."

"Above all, do not let them con you into the belief that there exists disembodied mystical forces like "the economy", "inflation", or "politics" that prevent them from doing what they take an oath to do..... They, and they alone should be held accountable by the people who are their bosses. Provided the voters have the gumption to manage their own employees ... "

Comment: The above mentioned abuse of power does not concern the 300 million Americans only. From their cosy Washington offices, the 545 persons can adversely affect the lives of billions of people round the world. Together with honest and insightful Americans, these billions should work for a change of the current American system. Don't let the establishment, including mainstream professors of political "science" con you to believe that what exists now is democracy! JP

CANADA

In the previous issue, we brought an interview given by former Prime Minister of British Columbia, Mr. **Vander Zalm**, to Mr. **Ian Woods**, editor of *Global Outlook*. The interview continued on 26 august:

Mr. **Ian Woods**: "Hello Mr. VanderZalm, CONGRATULATIONS! You have won the referendum!!

According to the CBC, just now, it's the first time in history (in the entire British Empire) that a tax has been reversed by popular vote! This is indeed a HUGE victory for direct democracy! Can you give us your comments? What were the numbers? What percentage of the population was needed to vote? (I thought you needed a majority of the number of people who voted in the last election. According to cbc.ca only 52% voted in this referendum... or was that quite a bit compared to those who voted in the last provincial election?)

What are the implications? Might you be coming to Ontario to rally the troops before our upcoming Provincial election (October 6) to make it an election issue... i.e. Give Ontarians recall and initiative?

PS I guess you could say that the Angus Reid poll was way off! I read on cbc.ca that "support for those opposed the HST went from 82% in July 2010 to 56% this past June." And yet your people carried the day."

30 August, Mr. **Vander Zalm**: "Thanks Ian, it was a well organized long lasting event but we had lots of help in the field from thousands of volunteers. The Referendum requires only a simple majority of those that voted, we had slightly short of 55% and the other side had slightly over 45%. The number voting by mail in ballot was 52+ % of registered voters but the mail ballot showed us what a mess the voters list was in. Probably thousands were denied a vote in that they never received a ballot even after telephoning for one.

The government and big business alliance spent, our estimate, in the order of \$ 25 million and we had a budget of 250 thousand of which we had to pay 25 thousand in hst.

We were out advertised 100 to 1 and most of the advertising was misleading and false but the checks on this had been removed by government before it all started.

I do think someone in Ontario should start lobbying the party

leaders for a commitment on direct democracy – Initiative, Referenda and Recall.

Bill Vander Zalm"

BRAZIL

7 august, a letter sent round by Mr. **Jonas Liljegen**: "Brazil is using electronic direct democracy on a rather large scale and has done so for some years now. I think it deserves more attention.

[Http://www.vitalizing-democracy.org/index.php?page=viewcompiler&id_view=142&menucontext=43](http://www.vitalizing-democracy.org/index.php?page=viewcompiler&id_view=142&menucontext=43)

See Recife Participatory Budget.

Over 100.000 people have actively participated in budgeting, including suggestions, voting, implementation and evaluation. Both through local meetings and through the web. And this has been continually improved over ten years. I think that's worth looking at.

[Http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHxVj4lyWf0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHxVj4lyWf0)

I'm searching for more information now. Here is one page I found:

<http://www.recife.pe.gov.br/op/> OP is short for Participatory Budgeting

Here are the actual rules set up for the OP

http://www.recife.pe.gov.br/op/regimento_cop.php

And here is, as far as I can tell, a web interface for the actual voting:

<http://www.recife.pe.gov.br/op/mapa.php>

You can vote a) using a voting box, b) electronic voting machine, or c) through the internet. Maybe also through SMS from a mobile phone.

E-DEMOCRACY

29 july: Information from *The Friends of Digital Direct Democracy in Greece*:

www.dd-democracy.gr

About us: <http://www.dd-democracy.gr/article.asp?id=33>

31 july: Information from Mr. **Jonas Liljegen**, "Electronic Direct Democracy":

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-democracy#Electronic_direct_democracy

"Liquid Democracy" is hidden here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liquid_democracy#Delegated_voting

Jonas: <http://jonas.liljegen.org/myself/>

5 august: Information from Mr. **Paul Nollen**:

Electronic Journal of e-Government <http://www.ejeg.com>

Success Factors of Geneva's e-Voting System:

<http://www.ejeg.com/issue/download.html?idArticle=78>

20 augusti, Information from Mr. **Paul Nollen**: "The ENA 2011 dedicated forum is activated www.e2d-i.net

www.directdemocracy.be

http://www.participedia.net/wiki/Electronic_Direct_Democracy_-_EDD

www.basicincome.org

13 september: Information from Mr. **David Ruescas** sent to [e2d-international](http://www.e2d-international.org):

<http://www.agoraciudadana.org>

The basic text is in Spanish but the most important part – **Agora, a virtual parliament** – is in English. Highly interesting!



INTERNATIONAL

E2D - ELECTRONIC DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Task Force "ENA2011" - Conference - European Network Academy for Social Movements 9/ 14. Aug. 2011

[for more information](#)

LINKS

- [E2D International](#)
- [Democracy International](#)

BOOKS

- [Direct Democracy \(in 8 languages - free download\)](#)
- [Guidebook to direct democracy \(free download\)](#)
- [Akiva Orr books \(free download, some in nine languages\)](#)



WORKSHOP

[ENA2011](#)

ENAConference workshop "*Politics without Politicians*" based on the book *Abolish Power* written by AKIVA ORR

The [ENA2011 dedicated forum](#) is updated with the results of the workshop. (update sat 20 aug 2011)

We also wish to express our gratitude to all the participants of the workshop. Thanks to your contribution it was, also for us, a very interesting experience.

INFO (workshop preparation)

- [Description of the workshop](#)
- [Intro - Devilish details](#)
- [Politics without Politicians](#)

This presentaion is a short overview of the book "*Politics without Politicians*" of Akiva Orr Available in 9 languages.

- [FAQ](#)

This FAQ is a short overview of the FAQ from the book

"Direct Democracy" - Chapter 6.

Available in 8 languages.

WORKSHOP ENA2011 presentations

- [Introduction to Politics without Politicians](#)
- [DENEDEX, a failure or success?](#)

Discussion - Questions and remarks

From the public in the workshop and individual.

- [Forum ENA2011 task force](#)

WORKSHOP ENA2011 Report

- [Report workshop "Politics without Politicians"](#)

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION 20,- euro

ACCOUNT Nr.: JIRI POLAK, 002022-0168677293/0800

IBAN CZ74 0800 0020 2201 6867 7293

BIC - SWIFT: GIBACZPX

BANK ADDRESS: CESKA SPORITELNA, JUGOSLAVSKA 19, PRAHA 2, CZECH REPUBLIC



DIRECT DEMOCRATIC EURO-VISION NEWSLETTER

Vol. 13 (No.4)

November 2011

WORLDWIDE DIRECT DEMOCRACY
NEWSLETTER

Published by MDD - Movement for Direct Democracy
Responsible editor: Jiri Polak, Design: Bohuslav Binka, Picture: Kalka Svehlova

MDD - MOVEMENT FOR DIRECT DEMOCRACY

JIRI POLAK, ASSARHUSAVÄGEN 64, S-24736, S. SANDBY, SWEDEN
PHONE: 046/58891, E-MAIL: JIRI.POLAK@SWIPNET.SE

