



DEMOCRATIC WORLD FEDERALISTS

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FOR OVER 60 YEARS, WORLD FEDERALISTS HAVE PROMOTED THE NEED FOR A DEMOCRATIC, SECULAR, FEDERAL SYSTEM FOR GOVERNING THE WORLD, AND SOUGHT TO HELP INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS, CIVIL SOCIETY, INSTITUTIONS, AND GOVERNMENTS WORK TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL.

Federalism and the Right of People to Self-Government

*“Hearken not the voice which
petulantly tells you that the form
of government recommended ...
is impossible to accomplish.”*

James Madison,
The Federalist No. 14

The correlation between wars and chauvinism and extreme ethnocentrism, not just between nation-states but within them as well, is self-evident. Nevertheless, many persons with a mindset that views one's own ethnic group as the “chosen people” or one's own country as the center of their universe still think that peace might be achieved if only leaders of other groups and countries behave themselves and “outsiders” don't interfere in their country's internal affairs. Similarly, too, many rulers of member states of the United Nations, while claiming absolute sovereignty, with impunity oppress their own inhabitants or threaten those of neighboring countries. Meanwhile, since its founding in 1945, the U.N. -- the second major league of states created in the 20th Century -- has had to depend on the good will of the governments of its members, especially the five permanent members of the Security Council that gave themselves privileged status, to function.

In order to overcome the war syndrome and continued ability of autocrats to commit crimes against other humans in many parts of the world, (i) the United Nations should be transformed into an effective global government appropriate to the needs of the world community of the 21st Century and the Third Millennium, and (ii) viable democracy must be promoted in countries where it is lacking. This may be achieved through a participatory **democratic world federation**.

HOW DO FEDERATIONS & CITIZENSHIP RELATE TO DEMOCRACY?

The source of sovereignty -- legitimate authority to govern -- is the citizens, who associate together and delegate and entrust powers outward to institutions of government in increasingly larger communities. In a federal system, powers are distributed to governments of communities at different levels; the community may be the municipality or other local authority or tribe, the province/constituent state, the country, the continental or transnational regional federation, and ultimately the world federation. In a democratic federation problems should be solved at the lowest level of government at which there are no external effects, and government at every level is accountable to its citizens.

Each inhabitant may be a citizen not only of smaller communities but also ultimately of the Earth's polity. Citizens have a right to **democratic** government and to participation, either directly or through freely chosen representatives, in the governments of their respective communities. Without vigilant, active citizens in civil society with the power to influence their governments, tyranny or anarchy reigns, leading to victimization of the people and loss of their rights.

Indispensable elements of democracy include periodic free and fair elections, by secret ballot, with universal suffrage for adult citizens and regulation of campaign financing; equality before the law and an independent judicial system; civilian control of the military; freedom of belief, speech, assembly, and free media. Also desirable are: separation of the state and religious authorities, limited terms of office of officials (appointed as well as elected), widely available education, the initiative, referendum, and recall, and ombudsmen to assure accountability of officials, protect human rights and safeguard against corruption.

HOW CAN FRIENDLY RELATIONS BE ASSURED BETWEEN COMMUNITIES?

To assure respect for their own rights, people must respect the rights of others. Fundamental human rights and freedoms are expressed in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, which proclaims that no “State, group or person [has a] right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth.”

Along with the **right** to local autonomy is the **responsibility** and **duty** of citizens to be good neighbors and communicate and cooperate, economically as well as politically, with residents of adjacent communities. They join together in larger communities, sometimes in democratic federations, seeking the common welfare.

Citizens become more effective to the extent that they learn and use the language(s) of their neighbors and any over-arching *lingua franca* of their region. In order for immigrants to become participating citizens of, and benefit from, the community into which they move, they should learn its principal language(s).

HOW CAN CONFLICTS BETWEEN PEOPLES BE RESOLVED?

As a general rule, people who resided earlier in an area should be free from encroachment on their lands by more recent migrants and to practice their customs, so long as these do not jeopardize the health or safety of others. Refugees returning to their communities should be able to recover their own homesteads from later occupants, especially when the latter's settlement resulted from an invasion. At the very least, returning refugees are entitled to just compensation fixed by the government of the relevant supranational region or the United Nations.

Disputes between peoples within the same political entity may be settled by mediators, arbitrators or ultimately by judges of a court. Similarly, disputes between countries should be settled in an amicable way, through regional or U.N. institutions for mediation or arbitration or ultimately by judgment of a regional court or an empowered International Court of Justice.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT OPPRESSIVE REGIMES?

Conflicts often occur between dominant and oppressed groups where democracy is weak or non-existent, especially in ideological, theocratic, or military dictatorships. Conflicts are especially likely within the power vacuum created by disintegrating empires, whose constituent political units were often left with arbitrary boundaries and minimal preparation for democratic self-government after independence.

Whenever a government fails to provide for the safety and well-being of its people, the people have the right and responsibility to change it by elections; failing this, then by appealing to arbitration or an independent international tribunal. Moreover, people who had been conquered and involuntarily incorporated into an empire or other polity have the right to establish their own self-governing entity. When oppression by imperial regimes persisted, as a last resort following the Declaration of Independence the

United States of America and most of the colonies of Latin America severed ties with the metropolitan countries. Today the world community through the United Nations has a moral obligation to help oppressed groups.

An oppressive ruler often insists that his/her regime is "sovereign" with license to rule the subject people, immune from "interference in its internal affairs" by the outside world. However, having been usurped from the people, his/her power is illegitimate. Thus the world community is obligated to find a means to restore to the oppressed people their basic rights. In a democratic world federation, the rights of all groups would be safeguarded, precluding the rise of tyrants.

Oppressors who commit crimes against humanity must be held personally accountable, and U.N. peace-enforcing or peace-making forces must have the authority, the personnel, and other means necessary to apprehend them and restore peace. The International Criminal Court must be empowered to try such criminals under codified laws. In a world federation it *would* have such authority.

DISPUTED & UNINHABITED TERRITORIES

Those cities, enclaves, or other inhabited territories claimed by more than one political entity should be offered plebiscites with the option of becoming self-governing under the supervision of a restructured and democratized United Nations. The United Nations would also directly administer uninhabited territories such as Antarctica, the Spratly and Paracel Islands, the ocean beds, and ultimately Outer Space.

TRANSITIONAL AUTHORITIES: ACHIEVING & MAINTAINING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS

Democracy needs to be constantly nurtured at all levels of government. Where a polity has collapsed into chaos, a strong United Nations Transitional Authority, supported by an appropriately equipped peace-making force and police, should be set up to administer the country and slowly but surely promote

a democratic system of government and reconciliation between the opposing groups.

During the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic government under a U.N. Transitional Authority, a free press, independent parties, and public debates on issues should be encouraged, and the first elections should be administered, supervised, and/or monitored by the United Nations, along with appropriate regional organizations and civic groups. The United Nations should not confirm the transfer of authority to the people and a government resulting from the elections until a peaceful future is assured.

CITIZEN ACTION NEEDED

To promote acceptance and implementation of the above principles, and to move from a system of international anarchy characterized by wars and bloodshed within, between, and among states, and victimization of innocent people, concerned citizens throughout the world must act. Working directly, through civic action groups, and where possible through their political leaders, they must strive to restructure and democratize the United Nations: to transform it from a league of quarreling, nationalistic, even chauvinistic, countries -- many with antidemocratic and repressive regimes -- into a democratic world federation under world law, in which everyone in the world is fairly represented and all can freely exercise their rights and responsibilities.

An earlier version of the above statement of principles by a multinational committee of the World Federalist Movement, in which a World Federalist from Northern California was a major contributor, was approved by the Commission on Federalism/Regionalism/Subsidiarity at the XXIIIrd W.F.M. Congress, held in Chennai, India in November 1998. This version resulted after discussion by a committee of the World Federalist Association during 1999. This statement was endorsed by the Board of Directors of the Democratic World Federalists, to which you may want to send any suggestions, comments, or questions.

YES !

I believe that all people of the world -- as members of a common humanity -- are potentially self-governing citizens of the world, and that global problems can best be solved through world law enacted in a democratic federal system. I would like to support the Democratic World Federalists and their program for promoting these concepts with a tax-deductible contribution of:

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