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**VISIONS OF A NEW RENAISSANCE – Globalisation with Wisdom**

**THE SIMULTANEOUS POLICY**

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I am proud and honoured to have been asked to give this Schumacher Lecture and I thank the Schumacher Society for this opportunity to explain the Simultaneous Policy.

The Simultaneous Policy is a range of legislative measures to be implemented by all, or virtually all, nations simultaneously. These measures will be democratically designed to achieve economic justice both between peoples of North and South and between rich and poor within nations; to achieve the conditions for global economic and environmental sustainability, global social justice, nuclear disarmament and a far more peaceful world. So as you can see, it's a very modest programme!

I suggest to you, however, that we hardly stand a chance of ever achieving these aims without a framework of constructive international cooperation. That is because, as I shall explain, "sustainability" is not just about recycling our newspapers, putting solar panels on our roofs or environmentally friendly technology. Neither is it just about better corporate accountability or strengthening local economies. To some extent, of course it's about *all* those things. But primarily, I suggest, it's about achieving *cooperation*. Why? Because, as I shall explain, the root of our problems lies in the very opposite of cooperation; it lies in DESTRUCTIVE COMPETITION.

To fully understand this, we need also to understand the very different nature of our world today compared to the one which existed up to about the end of the 1970s. In those days, business and finance capital remained essentially NATIONAL. Capital controls imposed by governments in those days meant that businesses and financiers could not easily escape taxation and other government regulation designed to redistribute wealth to those less well off or to protect the environment. Any unwelcome side-effects of the wealth-creation process could thus be remedied by the framework of governance of the nation state.

But since the Reagan-Thatcher move to market liberalisation in the early 1980s, capital and corporations now move freely to wherever in the world that profits are greatest and costs lowest; they have thus become TRANSNATIONAL. And it is this ability of those key factors of economic prosperity – capital and corporations - to move, or merely threaten to move, out of any country they dislike which has created a vicious circle of destructive competition in which all governments now fear imposing any regulation which might incur market or corporate displeasure.

The ability of global capital to move freely across national borders has therefore paralysed governments the world over into an exclusively corporate and market-friendly stance, all in the name of maintaining their so-called “international competitiveness”. Today, therefore, capital and corporations operate beyond the framework of governance of the nation state and are now running out of any democratic political control.

To illustrate this destructive competition a little better, let me quote the kind of newspaper story which has by now become entirely familiar to us all (*The Independent* 9<sup>th</sup> November 1999):

**“Brown in ‘green tax’ climbdown.** GORDON BROWN will bow to pressure from big business today by announcing a climbdown over his plans to impose a “green” tax on industry.

In his pre-Budget statement, the Chancellor will disappoint the environmental lobby by curbing the climate change levy after lobbying by Britain’s bosses, who warned that it would harm productivity and cost jobs.”

Now, of course when the public hears that this or that policy will cost jobs, that policy immediately becomes a political hot potato and is quickly dumped. But what does “cost jobs” actually mean in this context? It does not mean that these jobs will be lost *per se*; it means that the higher costs of the tax will make British industries uncompetitive with those of other countries causing those jobs not to be lost, but only to be transferred from Britain to her competitors. And by the same token, governments in competitor countries are taking exactly the same decisions for fear of their jobs moving to Britain. This, therefore, is what I mean by destructive competition. It means that the interests of society and the environment are necessarily compromised by the ability of capital and employment to move elsewhere. And since we live in a global market, stories of this kind can be read daily in the newspapers of just about any country in the world.

With governments paralysed in this way and unable to regulate in the public interest, businesses are abandoned to a cut-throat and global battle for the survival of the fittest; a battle which favours the most internationally mobile corporations who are best placed to play one government off against another. Again, by way of illustration, here’s another familiar newspaper example (*The Independent* 29<sup>th</sup> May 1999):

“Senior Ford executives yesterday urged the Prime Minister to commit more state aid to a key British plant to prevent 1,400 jobs being lost. At a 30-minute meeting in Downing Street, the company told Tony Blair that the £30m in government subsidy...did not match the sums available elsewhere. It is understood that the German and Spanish governments have indicated that more generous packages might be available for plants in Cologne and Valencia. ...

A Ford spokesman said yesterday’s talks ... were the kind which took place in every country Ford was involved in.”

Now I don't wish to imply any particular criticism of the Ford Motor Company nor, indeed, of business executives in general. Because it's important to understand that they operate in a highly competitive environment. If Ford failed to engage in this kind of governmental blackmail and plunder of tax-payers' money, it would only lose out to its competitors who, of course, all engage in it themselves for just the same reason. Some of you will know the businessman's saying which goes: "If we don't do it, our competitors will." And as a businessman myself, let me tell you, it's true. So here again we see destructive competition at work.

And for those of you who think the European Union must surely be big and powerful enough to buck this trend, this further example shows how the EU is as much subject to the dictates of destructive global competition as anywhere else (*The Guardian* 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2001):

**"DANGER' CHEMICALS GET EU ALL-CLEAR FOR CONTINUED USE**  
Everyday chemicals suspected of causing birth defects, allergies and learning problems in children can still be produced and sold in the European Union under a white paper published yesterday by the European Commission. Shocked environmentalists said it was a victory for the chemicals industry, which had resisted curbs on products unless there was conclusive proof they damaged health. ... At a long and acrimonious meeting in Strasbourg, the commission environment directorate was forced to give way to the industry's lobby, which feared loss of jobs and competitiveness if everyday chemicals had to be tested. .... The industry, the largest in the world, is also dissatisfied with the white paper, albeit for different reasons. While it fully acknowledges large-scale testing is inevitable, it is concerned that any EU rules risk saddling it with red tape and damaging its competitiveness vis-a-vis the United States.... Some in the industry have already warned that if Brussels goes too far thousands of jobs could be at risk."

But this vicious circle is not a phenomenon confined to the developed countries of the North. Developing countries, too, must compete with one another in much the same way to attract investment from foreign multinationals by submitting to IMF-imposed 'structural adjustment' and allowing their raw materials to be plundered, their public services hollowed out and their indigenous peoples displaced. All this, of course, for fear of investment going to other competing developing countries. The World Bank and the IMF encouragingly call this "Short-term pain for long-term gain". But it is, in reality, just another manifestation of the vicious circle of destructive competition I have described.

So to sum up corporate globalisation in particular, and the global predicament in general, what I am saying to you is that we are dealing, here, not with an evil conspiracy on the part of market traders or corporate executives; not with a lack of education or technology; not with a lack of will or goodwill, but with a *systemic* problem of destructive competition and fear where all market players are locked in to their destructive behaviour and cannot stop for fear of losing out.

And what of our political leaders and statesmen? Can we expect them to find a way out? I think not. Because under these perilous circumstances governments of rich and poor nations alike – whatever the party in power – can only remain paralysed into what I call as state of ‘pseudo-democracy’: a state where democracy has become little more than an electoral charade in which whatever party we elect, the policies we get are just the same market and corporate-friendly measures merely spun in different clothing. Today, politicians have regrettably become but the pseudo-democratic puppets of globally mobile capital; the pawns of a dictatorship of destructive competition and the fear and paralysis it induces. And being merely puppets, is it any wonder that they never cease telling us, as Tony Blair did, that globalisation is “irreversible and irresistible” and that there is, as Mrs. Thatcher famously said, “no alternative”?

These statements coming from politicians of all colours reveals, I suggest, a curious but crucial psychological phenomenon. It’s what I call in my book, “the mind-set of competition”. It’s a fundamentally flawed thought-process which stems, quite naturally and logically, from the blind acceptance of international competition induced by the free movement of capital and corporations as inevitable. And if we, for a moment, put ourselves inside the minds of Tony Blair or the WTO’s Mike Moore, we can see only too easily how that flawed thought-process runs. It goes, I suggest, something rather like this:

“Capital and corporations are free moving, so nations must compete to attract them. And of course, the better a nation competes, the richer it will become. Since getting rich is good, so competition must be good. So to get richer, we must have more competition. More competition means more privatisation; more structural adjustment; more cuts in public services; lower environmental standards, and so on. We must, in short, implement any policy which makes us more attractive to international investors. Since all those things make a nation more competitive, so they will undoubtedly in time make them richer! Furthermore, for us all to become richer, we need a global competition-enforcer to enforce competition rigorously – hence our need for the WTO and for it to deliver more trade liberalisation.”

Tearing ourselves away, now, from the myopic mind-set of those who remain in thrall to corporate globalisation, I hope you can see how the flawed acceptance by politicians and the multi-lateral institutions of global competition as inevitable and exclusively beneficial can never lead to appropriate policies but only to *in*appropriate policies. For the mind-set of competition which accepts the free movement of capital and corporations as its premise necessarily dictates that the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF are bound to prescribe yet *more* competition as the cure to competition’s destructive effects and not less. In other words, the very institutions we expect to solve global problems are themselves afflicted with a pathological mind-set which causes them to apply policies which *exacerbate* the very problems they think they are solving.

However, it is not just the multi-lateral institutions who suffer from this dangerous mind-set. For the “anti-corporate globalisation” movement, too, can only remain fragmented and ultimately powerless until it comes to recognise that the myriad problems it is protesting against all find their source in the destructive competition I have described. Without such a recognition, they too can only remain locked in a negative framework of protest, unable to make the vital transition to a framework of positive action characterised by practical and feasible policy proposals and methods of implementation.

So all this is why I contend that achieving sustainability and social justice is not primarily about technology or education. Nor is it a highly technical problem soluble only by some benevolent high priest of economics. In essence, our problem is a very simple, human problem; the problem of destructive competition and fear. But make no mistake. It's not just businesses and politicians who are affected. For in one way or another, *all* of us are touched by it. After all, with companies able to move employment elsewhere, who amongst us is prepared to resist longer working hours? Who amongst us will vote for higher environmental standards at the cost of jobs moving elsewhere?

What must be understood is that, in any destructively competitive situation, the need to survive necessarily takes precedence over any other consideration and can therefore be made to justify almost any abuse under the sun. As such, it should not surprise us if ethics and morality become competition's first casualties as traditional values are steadily replaced by those of market competition. What sustainability is primarily about, therefore, is escaping this vicious circle by taking the practical steps that will take us from international competition to global cooperation. As I have said, however, in the age of 'globalisation' destructive competition is a truly global problem. And global problems require global – and simultaneous – solutions.

In a globalised and competitive world - indeed in *any* competitive situation which has got out of control - we need above all to seek out an appropriate basis for cooperation; in this case, a basis which avoids the risk of capital flight, job losses and the kind of destructive competition I have described. And that brings me to the Simultaneous Policy – or “SP” as it is known for short. The necessary cooperative basis we are looking for, I suggest, is the simultaneous implementation by all, or virtually all, nations of a range of appropriate and democratically designed policy measures. *That* is what I have called “the Simultaneous Policy”.

Now, I'm fully aware that SP constitutes a major proposal with far-reaching implications for governments in the international community. But before telling you *how* SP can come to be implemented, let me first explain more about *what* SP is, and what it is not.

Firstly, SP is not a single policy but a series of provisional measures that will be quite familiar to you, because thousands of groups which make up the anti-corporate globalisation movement are already campaigning for them. So SP's measures could

include the abolition of all tax havens and taxing all major corporations and global currency speculation as the well-known activist organisation ATTAC proposes; it could include a global tax on fuels, thus making long-distance trade more expensive and less competitive thus promoting local production and consumption. Such a tax is what many environmental groups who espouse “Localization” are calling for.

Other SP measures could include the abolition of weapons of mass destruction as many peace and disarmament groups around the world are calling for, thus releasing billions of pounds for peaceful purposes, and it could doubtless include many other environmental measures called for by many other activist groups. And if it were thought appropriate, it could also include the restoration to the state of the exclusive right to create money instead of the present ruinous situation of it being put into circulation as interest-bearing debt by commercial banks.

Since it is obvious such a wide range of measures could not practically be implemented all on one day, it is likely they will be implemented in agreed stages. However, SP’s central policy of re-regulating financial markets and corporations would aim to restore genuine democracy to nation states, and the proceeds of taxation could fund development of the poorest countries on a debt-free basis, allowing them to meet higher environmental and labour standards.

Secondly, SP is a policy which citizens are invited to adopt and support. And they are invited to do so even though its measures have not yet been fully defined. Now I realise that, at first, this might sound like a contradiction in terms. But although I have indicated some of the measures SP *could* provisionally consist of, it’s not for me to dictate what they should ultimately be. Instead, it’s for *everyone* who adopts SP to participate, if they choose, in the formulation of its measures. That is why, when you adopt SP, you do so only provisionally. So I hope I am making clear that SP is not a “policy-cast-in-stone” but, rather, a “policy-in-the-making”; a process which citizens are invited to join by first adopting SP themselves and then by collaborating in the two parallel processes of formulating the measures of SP and in furthering the campaign for its wider adoption by other citizens.

And because we live in a changing world, and as more and more people join that process, any proposed SP measure must in any case be regarded as provisional until agreement is reached amongst all those who adopt SP. It is therefore a policy which people everywhere can adopt, help develop and help bring to fruition in an open, flexible and democratic process; a process which is already being developed by the International Simultaneous Policy Organisation – “ISPO” for short. So SP will, above all, be a Citizen’s Policy, *not* one formulated by politicians or the multi-lateral institutions.

Thirdly, SP should not be thought of as a panacea for all problems but as applying only to a specific type of problem. Let me explain by drawing a distinction between two fundamentally different types of policy. On one hand, there are those policies which, if implemented unilaterally by a single nation or single group of nations would have an *adverse* effect on its competitiveness, capital markets, employment, etc. An

example here might be tighter regulations or higher taxes on corporations. These are the policies the world so urgently needs but nations cannot presently implement. On the other, there are those policies having a *positive* effect on a nation's competitiveness. These "positive" policies can, of course, be implemented by each nation immediately and independently and need not therefore have anything to do with SP. So it is those, and *only* those, policies which would have an adverse or "negative" effect on competitiveness if implemented unilaterally which clearly fall within the ambit of SP.

Indeed, this is how SP promotes unity where it is needed and diversity where it is not. It thus makes for full complementarity between the global-level focus of SP and the focus of all the many other NGOs and activists who are concentrating on achieving change at the national and local levels. This allows us to work together for *both* objectives; for the unity of SP and for the diversity of national and local initiatives. As Schumacher himself said: "We need the freedom of lots and lots of small, autonomous units, and, at the same time, the orderliness of large-scale, possibly global, unity and co-ordination."

A fourth point I would like to make concerning SP is the difference between "rules" and "governance". 'Rules' are policies or laws which, at their simplest, operate without making any allowance for fundamental differences between those who are subject to them. This is very much the present situation in the WTO where nations at fundamentally different stages in their economic development are made to compete against one another. It should not therefore surprise us if the outcome is as unfair and predictable as if I were pitted against Mike Tyson in a boxing match. 'Governance', on the other hand, encompasses not just rules but also a more sophisticated set of compensating measures which recognise those fundamental differences. And that is what SP envisages. So for example, if a global tax on fuels were one of SP's measures aimed at raising the cost of fuel and so to conserve fossil fuels, reduce pollution and promote local production and consumption, it is clear that oil-producing countries would lose out from such a tax. So part of the provisions of any such SP measure would be that those countries would be adequately compensated from the tax revenues raised.

A final point I would like to make, here, concerns competition itself. For it should not be thought that SP advocates the elimination of competition – it does not. It merely recognises that for competition to be constructive, rather than destructive, it must always occur within a cooperative and appropriate framework of governance and that is what SP aims to deliver.

Having said all that, let us remember, that each of SP's measures would be implemented by virtually *all countries simultaneously*. It therefore represents a low-risk way forward because it removes the key fear of business, governments and people alike: the fear of losing out by being the first to 'go it alone'.

So it's important to see the concept of "all nations acting simultaneously" not so much as a rigid condition 'cast in stone', but rather as a consensus-building strategy; a way of removing key objections and thereby building the necessary consensus for eventual implementation to occur. As Jackie Navarro of ATTAC Canada put it, "*With a system like SP, there's no way for governments to wriggle out. All excuses evaporate. It's a system which unmask all those seeking to hide behind theoretical impossibilities. I can't wait to see what follows.*"

So how can SP actually come about? How will it bring our blind politicians to take the steps I have spoken of? How does it work and what are its advantages? I will answer these questions by explaining the underlying Principles upon which SP is based:

Firstly, it is vital to understand the distinction between the adoption of SP and its implementation. Since *implementation* is to be simultaneous amongst all nations, it can only occur once *adoption* by all nations has first been achieved. It is therefore clear that a gradual process of adoption or 'adoption campaign' must take place first: person by person, political party by political party and nation by nation. Adoption could therefore be described as an open 'declaration of intent' to implement its measures when all other nations do likewise. Who ever adopts SP risks little or nothing because implementation can only occur when *all* nations do likewise.

*– SP is low-risk or no-risk; it eliminates fear and distrust.*

Secondly, any individual, any business, any NGO, any political party or any government may adopt SP provided it is adopted in full. It can also be adopted by a church, school or any other group or organisation.

*– SP is universally inclusive. Anyone can adopt it.*

Thirdly, since global simultaneous implementation refers to a point in time in the future at which all nations implement the same measures, this creates what could be described as a 'future context' of *cooperation* amongst nations – the new era of international global community. This 'future context' is clearly entirely different to the 'current context', as we have it today, which is one of *competition* amongst nations. Arising from this, policies that are unworkable and consequently undesirable in the current competitive context – like re-regulating capital markets, for example - can, in a future context in which all cooperate, become entirely workable and desirable.

*- SP transforms sterile into fertile; it provides the cooperative basis that allows necessary policies to be adopted.*

Fourthly, nations can still actively compete with one another whilst, at the same time, advocating cooperation in the form of their adoption of SP; these two policies can continue in parallel for as long as is necessary until all nations agree. However, the open adoption of SP by individuals, organisations, businesses, political parties and governments also crucially serves as a challenge to others who have not yet adopted. As the numbers adopting increase, so will the moral force of the challenge.

*- SP challenges everyone to adopt it. Anyone not adopting can have no good reason for refusing.*

And finally, whatever the current politics of a person, organisation or political party, if they consider the measures of SP as desirable in a future context in which all cooperate, that is sufficient for their adoption. Because it relates only to the future context of cooperation, SP becomes a non-party political issue in the current context of competition. This allows it to be adopted by any person, organisation or party of any political leaning. Instead of dividing people along party-political or other lines, SP therefore unites them behind a policy for which there is already widespread support; support which, until the advent of SP, had no means of effective, political expression.

*- SP is not right, left or centre but a policy for the whole world. It transcends party politics and unites us instead of dividing us.*

So many other initiatives, appeals and charters calling for global change represent merely petitions or 'shopping lists' of what they want to achieve – they express the 'what' but ignore the all-important 'how'. That is where SP is different: it also provides the 'how'. This crucially renders it capable of official adoption by political parties and governments.

All these are good reasons why SP provides our movement with the appropriate technology for success. But, perhaps the most compelling reason of all is what I call "*pseudo-democracy*". As I explained earlier, international competition dictates that whichever party we elect, and whatever they may say in their pre-election manifestos, the policies delivered inevitably substantially conform to market and corporate demands for fear of that investment and employment moving elsewhere. And that explains why the world's "Old Labour parties" have all become quasi-Thatcherite "New Labours" and how democracy has been supplanted by market-dominated pseudo-democracy: an *illusion* of democracy in which it no longer really matters for which party we vote or whether we bother to vote at all. And as citizens the world over come to realise that their votes can make no difference, they will increasingly be prepared to adopt SP seeing it as the only way to restore genuine democracy, environmental security and peace around the world. So the simple adoption of SP by individual citizens actually signifies their personal *commitment on how they will vote in future elections*. It signifies their willingness to vote for ANY political party – within reason – that adopts SP.

Now we should remember that in most countries it takes only a relatively small number of people to influence the 'swing' or 'floating vote'. The target, therefore, is to get that 'critical mass' of people in each electoral constituency in each country to adopt SP. (And as we have seen in the last U.S. Presidential Election when the entire result was hanging on just a few thousand votes in Florida, that 'critical number' can be extremely small indeed!)

Because SP is to be implemented only when all, or virtually all, nations do likewise, no one – including politicians - has anything to lose by adopting it. And if enough of us do, politicians will be powerless to ignore us. They, too, will have no option but to succumb by adopting SP for fear of losing the election. And this makes it not unlikely that *more* than one party, or even *all* mainstream parties, might adopt it because if they fail to do so, they consign themselves to almost certain defeat.

So SP has the potential to permit our movement to turn the global competition of 'corporate globalisation' on its head. Instead of the global economy forcing the people of the world to compete with one another economically to the detriment of humanity and the planet, the world's peoples can instead force politicians to compete with one another to adopt SP.

With the SP technology, I therefore suggest that there *is* now an alternative; there *is* now a way we can take action by using our right to vote. It's a choice which each of us can make in addition to any other campaigning work we may be involved in; an important and complementary way in which we can make the choice which Fritz Schumacher invited us to make so many years ago when he said:

"On the one side I see the people who think they can cope with our ... crisis by the methods current, only more so; I call them the people of the forward stampede. On the other side, there are people in search of a new life-style, who seek to return to basic truths about man and his world; I call them home-comers. ... In one way or another everybody will have to take sides in this great conflict."

Well, I don't suppose the hundreds of people from all over the world who have already adopted SP would normally call themselves "home-comers". But I think we can safely assume that they *have* taken sides, and have chosen to adopt SP as one viable way forward.

What is remarkable is that much has been achieved in the short time since the idea was conceived, and that *without* a formal structure and on the basis of voluntary action alone. Indeed, the collaborative process adopting SP represents was well-described by one of our members, Richard Moore, when he said:

"ISPO has a very compelling vision. It is at the same time simple and profound. In some sense, it's like offering a group 'stone soup': you put a stone in a pot of boiling water, and announce that everyone is invited to partake of a wonderful soup. Then you quietly go around and suggest to people that they donate a few veges, some sausages, or whatever - to 'spice up the soup'. In some sense it's a con game - you end up contributing nothing but the pot, the fire, and the stone. But in another sense you've contributed the most valuable ingredient: a focus for productive collaboration. I think of ISPO's initiative as "The Stone Soup Revolution".

*(Cue to switch on OHP)*

To give you an idea of how this “Stone Soup Revolution” is progressing, we are just now incorporating the first national SP organisation – ISPO-UK – here in Britain as the forerunner of other national, membership-based organisations with bottom-up, democratic structures.

We have national representatives at work in about 20 countries, and an impressive proportion of SP adoptions in Southern countries.

This decentralisation keeps travel costs to the minimum, because local adopters have assumed responsibility for almost all current campaigning activities. We have unity of purpose but act independently.

The Canadian Action Party, that has declared it is “opposed to the rise of corporate rule”, has recently become the first national political party to adopt SP.

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We are experimenting with electronic methods for democratic policy formulation as a supplement to conventional postal exchanges. They provide scope for viewpoint-exchanges on any issue of joint concern via internet discussion groups; and permit adopters to vote consensually in agreeing provisional SP measures, under procedures which ensure only SP adopters can participate.

We believe the use of such state-of-the-art consensus-making aids will arouse significant interest in what SP is trying to achieve, including among NGOs in the South. And they may in the future make it possible for global SP opinion polls to be published when new world events make them relevant.

More importantly, we believe authoritative independent advisers, whether their concerns are global or local, will find SP offers them scope for feeding their knowledge and expertise into the policy formulation process. And perhaps most important of all, we don't see SP so much as a “movement” but more as a tool or “technology” for use *by* the movement; a technology which all those NGOs and activists working for a better world can use to achieve their strategic objectives. We therefore hope they will want to join and contribute to SP for mutual benefit.

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So I end with the hope that you may want to join the “Stone Soup Revolution”. As you can see, the pot is beginning to simmer quite nicely. But as I said at the outset of this presentation, sustainability is primarily about cooperation. And if we are to bring the necessary pressure to bear on politicians around the world to adopt, and then to implement SP; if our soup is to continue simmering and to become a soup everyone will want to eat, it needs *your* ingredients, *your* participation and *your* cooperation to make it happen.

Thank you all very much indeed for your patience and attention.

John Bunzl – Founder and Director

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