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Notes from the Field

[My apologies to John and others for failing to include this in the June issue of Integral Leadership Review. It is my opinion that the information is interesting and relevant and it is presented here.—Russ]

The UK General Election: A New Integral Politics – A New Way to Vote

John Bunzl
(Founder of Simpol)



Those interested in integral politics will perhaps be interested in the progress made by the Simultaneous Policy (Simpol) campaign at the recent UK general election held on May 7th, 2010. Studies of voter participation in elections show that, ever since the 1980s, turnouts have generally been falling around the world. In the UK and elsewhere, considerable concern continues to be expressed about “voter apathy” and the general disinterest, especially on the part of the young, in party politics. Interestingly, this trend towards increasing voter apathy seems to have started when globalisation really took off and when capital markets became globally integrated. The connection between the free-movement of capital and voter apathy may not seem immediately

obvious. But the ability of capital, investment and jobs to move freely across national borders means that governments effectively have no choice but to keep their national economies “internationally competitive”; that is, to keep them attractive to global investors. The policies they can implement are therefore highly restricted to a narrow, market- and business-friendly, range; a range that necessarily excludes policies to protect the environment or the poor. It’s little wonder, then, that whoever we vote for, the policies that get implemented remain substantially the same, and hence one can see that voter apathy is actually a very reasonable reaction on the part of electorates, even if they may not be conscious of the causes.

It is to overcome this state of affairs that the Simpol campaign was launched some years ago. Simpol allows citizens around the world to use their votes in a completely new way to drive politicians to cooperate to solve global problems, so overcoming the policy straight-jacket that the free-movement of capital imposes. The attached press announcement, released following the UK election, explains what the campaign is about, how it operates, and the success it achieved.

So, people’s rejection of party politics is, in my view, not only a logical development, but a healthy one. It’s the first, necessary step of disidentification with the present system. For if we are to move higher level

of political engagement—that is, to a genuinely integral politics—we surely won't get there if we remain identified with the idea that nation-centric institutions, such as national party politics, can possibly solve what are, beyond any doubt, world-centric problems. But healthy disidentification can all too easily slip into pathological alienation; that is, into political disengagement: the idea that withholding one's vote can somehow rob the system of legitimacy and so bring it to collapse. For not only would that be pathological, the nonparticipation even of large numbers would hardly bring the system down. Instead, we need to engage in the hard graft of real transformation which is not achieved either by continuing to participate in party politics on the system's own terms (pathological fusion), nor by abstaining from electoral politics completely (pathological alienation). Rather, genuine transformation involves re-engaging with the system but on new terms and in a new, transformative way. And Simpol, as I hope you'll recognise, allows citizens to do that very powerfully.

Simpol

International Simultaneous Policy Organisation

PRESS RELEASE: 7th May 2010

UK Election Builds Cross-Party Support for Simpol's Global Justice Policies

The Simultaneous Policy (Simpol), a range of measures to solve global problems like climate change, out-of-control financial markets, and social injustice, is now officially supported by no fewer than 23 UK supporters achieved this success by writing to all candidates in their constituency announcing they would be voting for ANY politician or party—within reason—that pledged to implement the campaign's package of global policies simultaneously alongside other governments. Or, if they had a party preference, they encouraged their party candidate to sign that pledge. In that way, supporters still retained the ultimate right to vote as they please, but they also made it very clear to all politicians that they would give strong preference to those who had signed the Pledge, to the exclusion of those who failed to do so.

In the run-up to yesterday's election, and urged by Simpol's supporters to "work together", 32 Labour candidates, 3 Conservative, 87 Liberal Democrat, 74 Green, and 4 others pledged, if elected, to implement Simpol's developing package of global problem-solving policies alongside other governments. In nineteen parliamentary constituencies, two or more candidates signed the Pledge. So whichever of those candidates won that seat, Simpol gained support in parliament regardless. Citizens who have become disillusioned with politics are increasingly seeing Simpol as a new, powerful, crossparty means of re-engaging with electoral politics in a way that enhances party-political competition to achieve the international cooperation needed to solve global problems. For a full list of Simpol-pledged MPs and candidates, please go to www.simpol.org.uk/simpol-in-action/whos-signed-up

Simpol's range of citizen-designed measures is to be implemented by nations simultaneously, only when all or sufficient nation's have pledged to do so. By signing the Pledge, not only do politicians attract the votes of Simpol's supporters, they avoid the fear that unilateral action could harm the nation's economic competitiveness, an important reason why climate change and many other global problems still remain largely unaddressed. By getting nations to act simultaneously on multiple issues, Simpol becomes a win-win proposition while allowing nations that might lose on one issue to gain on another, so enhancing the chances of nations like China or the USA cooperating on emissions cuts. Meanwhile it invites citizens to develop and ultimately approve the necessary policies and to drive politicians towards their implementation. Being perhaps the only form of global electoral politics available, Simpol campaigns are also emerging in other countries where some Members of the European and other parliaments have signed on, so building towards

the global coverage needed. The campaign has supporters in over 70 countries and endorsements from many philosophers, economists and ecologists.

For further information visit www.simpol.org (global site) and/or www.simpol.org.uk (UK site) or contact Diana Trimble on +44 (0)20 8290 9512.

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See Voter Turnout Since 1945—A Global Report, available from Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance www.idea.int

About the Author

John Bunzl is the co-author of *Monetary Reform – Making it Happen!* by James Robertson and John Bunzl and author of *People-centred Global Governance - Making it Happen!* He is the founder of Simpol, a group that seeks coordinated solutions to global problems. After studying modern languages and business studies in France, Switzerland, and Italy, John pursued a commercial career trading in raw materials for the paper industry and, more recently, in the sale of specialized technical papers primarily to the filtration, abrasives, and medical supplies industries.

Having had only a passing interest in international affairs and in the thinking of E. F. Schumacher, in 1998 the idea for Simultaneous Policy suddenly occurred to him as a potential means to remove barriers to solving today's global problems. In 2000 he founded the International Simultaneous Policy Organisation (ISPO) and launched the Simultaneous Policy (Simpol) campaign. In 2001, he outlined the campaign in his first book of the same name. The Simpol campaign has since steadily gathered increasing attention, recognition, and support among citizens, activists, nongovernmental organizations, politicians, businesses, and many others.