

*Tom Paine was the author of 'Common Sense' written in 1772. His short pamphlet, published anonymously, was the spark that ignited the 'American Revolution' in the thirteen colonies of British North America and led in 1776 to the 'Declaration of Independence'.*

# Common Sense



*This 40-page booklet spells out the nature of the global crisis and shows how local communities can move beyond it to the human scale world of tomorrow*

**Prepared for 'The Radical Consultation'**

by

**CESC**

edited by

**Peter Etherden**

with contributions by

**John Papworth, Dr. Aidan Rankin & Kirkpatrick Sale**

## **Contents**

*Foreword*

1. The Global Crisis
2. Local Opportunities
3. Radical Declaration
4. Real Communities Charter
5. Real Nations Charter
6. Action Guidelines

*Afterword*

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**Foreword by John Papworth**

Despite everything we are letting the grass grow under our feet. Many organizations are springing up to protest or reform some or other of the effects of the global crisis; they are often doing useful work, but we are concerned with its causes. On this there is still no unity, no clarity and consequently no activity. Environmental degradation continues non-stop.

There is a need now as never before to define those factors which are preventing human societies from flourishing on a sustainable basis, a basis which enables us to work with natural forces rather than seeking to dominate them and which expresses an innate respect for the environment rather than automatically and unthinkingly abusing it.

The 19th century isms which have dominated the radical scene for so long, such as communism, socialism, liberalism and so on, are played out and give no indication today of how they might tackle an environmental crisis so monumental as to threaten to wipe civilization off the pages of history altogether.

We have allowed our societies to become dominated by values, which are destructive, demeaning, and ultimately suicidal. The moral imperatives by which any society needs to live are being marginalized by market and political forces too powerful to be controlled by citizen moral judgment. They are too powerful because they are too big.

How do we achieve a non-centralized, power-dispersed, multi-cellular, organically structured society within which citizen moral judgments can be effective in terms of controlling policy decisions? The fact that today they don't and that *on a mass basis* democracy proves to be an oxymoron because power accrues to centralized structures, which in turn control rather than serve the citizen interest, is why we are in a state of crisis at all.

What next?

We give notice of a consultation exercise to discuss ways and means by which we CAN unite to counter the lowering shadow of the global crisis whilst there yet seems time to do so.

We believe that effective unity requires a radical political agenda with five constituent parts:

- The breakdown of giant states into human scale units of no more than five to ten million people and hence the need to support ethnicity, tribalism and bioregionalism.
- Support for all forms of decentralized community power to village or neighbourhood level, not least in the field of politics, economics and communications.
- The setting up of independent global and local study commissions to work on key global problems like US Expansionism and the European Unity Conspiracy. And in like manner to address other problems such as refugees, ecology, population, human rights and liberties, poverty, progress...the list is endless.
- The establishment of a continuous programme of meetings, lectures, seminars, courses and so on in every country in the world to deepen knowledge and understanding of the human scale approach.
- The establishment of properly equipped Human Scale Study and Research Centres with archives, libraries and other requirements of scholarship for pinpointing problems of the human scale and how solutions may be applied.

# Common Sense Chapter One

# The Global Crisis

*Being an attempt to indicate what may be done to resolve the global crisis of the twenty first century*



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## Contents

*Foreword*

### **Part I. The Global Crisis**

Power

War

Population

Ecology

Resources

Alienation

### **Part II. The Origin of The Crisis**

Failure

Excess

Error

Big Powers

Big Wars

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## Foreword

It is nearly two decades since this document was first published<sup>1</sup>, yet as a statement of intent it might have been written today: but if it were, the emphasis would shift. First, the environmental crisis would be given much greater priority, as, in this revision it has, for the opening decade of the new millennium indicates that the dangers arising from the continued abuse of the environment are so great that they should surely dominate all discussion on public affairs. Not least of these dangers is that they continue to be either ignored or given only subordinate attention, even though they now threaten the very existence of civilisation.

Another shift would relate to the development of ‘globalisation’. Since this document first appeared the concentration of boardroom power has rampaged through human affairs at an ever-accelerating speed and the prospect now emerging is that before long all the major sectors of economic activity will each be controlled by a handful of powerful boardroom buccaneers on a global scale. The forces promoting this are concerned only with private gain; they are not elected by the people, neither are they answerable to them; they are elected by shareholders, which effectively means in most cases by themselves, and they are answerable only to the annual shareholders’ meetings, again, effectively themselves.

Economic activity devoid of moral purpose is merely brigandage, and it is the colossal power wielded by brigands on a global scale, which is now destroying the ecological basis of human existence. They are operating primarily today through attempts to impose a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) on governments and through the promotion the europlot. Both are attempts to destroy the effective power of people to determine the objectives and the conditions of economic activity of their countries through their own elected representatives so that their rapacity may have a free hand to wreck ecological mayhem in any ways, which sustain or enlarge their profits. The discussion of just how this global buccaneering can be brought to heel, made responsive to the dire perils it is creating and responsive to real human needs has scarcely begun.

And this is the cause of the crisis of the new millennium we have entered. There is simply no clarity of mind or purpose on where we are or why we are at the brink of the most awesome disasters that have ever surfaced in the human record, nor indeed the direction in which we should move. Simply to spell this out would only be to repeat what follows, to which the reader’s attention is accordingly directed.

Here it must suffice to add that without such clarity and a broad unity of purpose relating to it, without a forthright rejection of the mass party politics, as well as the consumerist lifestyle into which boardroom propaganda has so sedulously ensnared so many of us, we shall continue to flounder helplessly as these giant forces proceed to bestride the world like a colossus and wreck what they will. But with that clarity we can counter their evil and yet save the world.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This declaration is based on one first drafted in 1980 and which was revised several times before being presented to the **FIRST ASSEMBLY OF THE FOURTH WORLD**, which was held at the City University, London, in August 1981. One minor amendment was made at the first session of the Assembly, but attempts at the final session to make further amendments were abandoned owing to some procedural confusion. What follows is a fresh draft, which, besides seeking to accommodate the gist of some of the proposed amendments, has been substantially recast.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that where the term ‘village’ is used it refers to any settled human community, whether rural or urban, unless the contrary is implied.

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## **Part I: The Global Crisis**

### **POWER**

Human life today is embroiled in a vast crisis of power, and the dangers stemming from it carry all the signs of a civilisation in an advanced state of disintegration and under the shadow of eclipse.

### **WAR**

The most obvious of these dangers is that of war. Not only do modern war weapons represent in themselves ultimate forms of destruction, which threaten the survival of numerous species, including man, their very existence is creating fears and phobias about ‘security’, which are generating a dangerous momentum towards precisely the kind of global conflict their possession is presumed to prevent.

### **POPULATION**

Human numbers are clearly out of control, a consequent and dangerous deterioration in the quality of life, even as experienced in rich countries, is already manifest, and there is every indication it will worsen. Population control measures which have been imposed on people regardless of their community identity, and with no respect for community significance, have always failed and doubtless always will, for such an approach is seeking to cure the disease with at least some of the elements of its cause.

### **ECOLOGY**

No less urgent is the disruption of the ecological balance and of the interlocking life-support systems of the planet by modern, giant-scale methods of industrial and agricultural production. The wickedness, the waste, and the despoiliveness of these systems is beyond any compute and it is probable that the ill-effects they have engendered in terms of the poisoning of the elements of the biosphere, the obliteration of many species of flora and fauna, the destruction of vast forest areas and the ensuing rapid and continuous increase in the desertification of huge areas of the earth’s land surface, will quite inevitably blight human life for generations to come.

The same may be said for the medical dead-end of many types of supposedly disease resistant drugs now in common use, especially antibiotics, which are promoting a barrage of biological resistances, as well as the incidence of complementary declining disease immunities, which can only expose those now living and their immediate posterity to world-wide uncontrollable epidemics and other biological hazards – in which entire populations will be either decimated or destroyed as a matter of course.

### **RESOURCES**

There is no prospect at all that ownership of most of the mechanical appurtenances common to the households of ‘rich’ nations, and on the mass production of which the economic fortunes of such nations depend, can ever be part of the life-style of the swarming millions of the world’s poor and undernourished. The production of these and other items, especially of automobiles, is already at a level of consumption of finite resources, which cannot possibly be sustained. Any attempt to make them generally available on a global scale will result in many forms of resource exhaustion and beggar our global posterity.

It needs also to be noted that any attempt not to do so will, by breaking the momentum of mass production for global markets, result in a major dislocation of economic activity. At present there is literally no power on earth, with the possible and inadvertent exception of serious mismanagement that can slow down the rush to resource bankruptcy, which is now in train.

### **ALIENATION**

The general (and increasing) burden of sickness of body, mind and spirit now apparent in all developed countries is at once cause and effect of a profoundly sick social order, and suggests a wholesale disruption of the inner world of human kind in its perennial quest for personal and social fulfilment.

Despite, and frequently because of, many rapid and extensive changes in the material conditions of life, the generality of people today have become strangers to the kinds of personal fulfilment in the spheres of religion, culture, work and family life their forbears were wont to accept as natural.

Our hospitals and prisons, like our barracks, our police forces and our centralised economic and political bureaucracies, get larger and fuller, whilst the quality of life for millions diminishes and becomes increasingly empty of meaning or direction.

Urban vandalism, an addictive resort to many kinds of sedative, stimulant or hallucinogenic forms of drug, combined with a passive acceptance of a doom-laden destiny, are now only the most obvious indications of the internalised and externalised destructive drives which modern alienation is promoting in the human psyche.

Thoughtless transformations of the conditions of work, man's chief relation to reality, by the rampant impact of ill-considered forms of mechanisation, have robbed millions of any creative role in providing for the means for life as much as for the life abundant in terms of spiritual fulfilment, have had their own effects of creating a way of life devoid of meaning and purpose and of dangerously subjective despair.

## **Part II. The Origins of The Crisis**

### **FAILURE**

None of these factors – armaments and war, population excess, ecological abuse, resource despoliation and social alienation – is peculiar to any part of the planet governed by any particular political creed; they appear to prevail regardless of any political climate. Yet each element bespeaks a common factor, that the political social, or economic mechanisms, which are presumed to govern them are in fact failing to operate. Human societies are out of control. That is the basic cause of the global crisis; that is the reason why, despite all our advances in the field of learning, we are confronted with developments which are leading us away from those adventures and triumphs of the spirit they once promised, towards a destiny of damnation nobody of sound mind could possibly want.

### **EXCESS**

There appear to be three principal causes of a loss of control and all of them are in terms of particular forms of excess – excess of speed, of temperature, or of size. In the realm of politics we are concerned primarily with physical magnitudes and hence with the factor of size; our societies are out of control because they are too big. Never have our societies and their infrastructural institutions been so enormous, never have they been so unmanageable, and it is only the factor of excessive size, which is of sufficient novelty and pervasiveness to account for the scale of the multifaceted disaster which now confronts humanity. Giantism has become public enemy number one of the human race.

### **ERROR**

The war danger does not stem from communism or capitalism, there was a world war between the great powers before any communist government existed, and two communist great powers were formerly locked in heavily armed global rivalry.

### **BIG POWERS**

It is the great powers who make great wars mainly, because the greatness of their power dwarfs the moral and physical significance of their citizens, and because in such vast units power is always bespoken by those who are most adept at pursuing the goal of power, regardless of moral objectives as an end in itself. (If they failed to do so they would be displaced by those who do.)

### **BIG WARS**

In smaller units the more human qualities (such as moral judgement) have greater play and are thus able to more effectively influence the course of events.

In global terms all giant powers are dangerous warmongers unable to control their own actions, whereas the only nations, which are really pacific, stable, prosperous, liberal and tolerant are all, without exception, small.

It does not follow of course that all small nations are peaceful, free, progressive or prosperous. There are no straight lines in nature and none in human nature. It remains true none-the-less that on the evidence that small nations *can* achieve desirable social objectives; it is also true that giant federations can eliminate wars internally, but this has to be balanced in the reckoning by their innate propensity for war externally.

A *Pax Americanus* has to be seen in the context of a global *Militarianism Americanus*. The bigger the political entity the bigger the wars into which it inevitably becomes embroiled. This is the basic flaw in the reasoning that a united federal Europe will achieve peace.

## Common Sense Chapter Two

# Local Opportunities

*Being an attempt to indicate what may be done to resolve the global crisis of the twenty first century*



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### **Contents**

Human Control  
Human Scale  
    Reversal  
    Subsidiarity  
    Freedom  
Size of Nations  
Decline of Empires  
World Government  
    United Europe  
    Dispersal

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## **Local Opportunities**

### **HUMAN CONTROL**

In the light of this conclusion we are confronted with a challenge to effect the most thoroughgoing revolution in human affairs ever undertaken, for *human survival now depends on the swiftness with which our political, social and economic institutions can be made small enough for them to be made manageable and more adequately responsive to human control.*

### **HUMAN SCALE**

However contrary to the conventional wisdom such a conclusion may be, the human race can have no future if it does not proceed to adapt its pattern of life to a scale commensurate with its own humanity and its capacity to implement its consensual moral judgements. Our societies are not in a state of crisis because they are implementing any particular economic or political creed; on a monster scale all such creeds become unmanageable, just as on a human scale almost any creed people want to adopt can be made to serve its purpose.

### **REVERSAL**

There is a need today for a major scrutiny of every form of power, not with the object of making it communist or socialist or capitalist, but with the object of making it human in scale. We have unthinkingly allowed giantism to destroy the political, economic and cultural identity of our villages and urban wards. This process needs now to be reversed. Villages are the blood cells of civilisation and it is a condition of normal social health that they should enjoy untrammelled decision-making power over their own affairs. A situation where villages are only allowed to undertake those functions permitted by the central government needs now to be transformed into one where the central government is only allowed to perform those functions permitted by its villages.

### **SUBSIDIARITY**

The need for certain powers to prevail which are wider than those exercised by the village is not for a moment disputed; what is asserted is that it is the village community which shall decide the nature and the extent of its participation in such arrangements, and that if it is suggested that the practical common sense of village people cannot be trusted to make sound judgements, we need to recall it is only the inhabitants of other, and possible defunct, villages who are saying so.

### **FREEDOM**

In view of the many threats to freedom now being posed by giant, over-centralised government machines, it is of especial importance that such localised forms of power should be restored in the fields of police and schooling.

### **THE SIZE OF NATIONS**

This has been largely a result of geographical circumstance and historical accident. No conscious reasoning process appears ever to have been applied to the question and clearly it is a matter of urgency now to do so. From a pragmatic survey of existing nations it would seem that effective and pacific government is best achieved in nations of around the ten million figure or less. In some cases very much less; the principality of Liechtenstein has a population of less than thirty thousand. It has its own parliament (complete with opposition) and has one of the highest *per capita* standards of consumption in the world. Those concerned about the largely imaginary problems of ‘Balkanisation’ should be reminded of the imposing advantages of Scandinavianisation, and the extent to which the real problems, which made the term ‘Balkanisation’ a synonym for war and strife were the products of ‘great’ power interference.

### **DECLINE OF EMPIRES**

The call to break up the ‘great’ powers into sensible, controllable, human-scale units may well appear daunting to an extreme, yet few of them have been in existence for more than a century and all of them are showing marked signs of top-heaviness, fissiparousness and decline. A century ago the world was dominated by half a dozen or so giant colonial empires. Where are those empires today?

### **WORLD GOVERNMENT**

It follows from the above that any proposals for a world government, which, if realised, could not fail to result in a global orgy of totalitarianism, should be dismissed out of hand. A world of many small states would need to co-operate at numerous levels and for a variety of purposes, for postal services, epidemic control, lighthouse maintenance, air safety standards, and so on. There is no reason at all to suppose that they would not do so as common sense indicates and that they would fail to participate in the separate authorities they would need to establish.

### **UNITED EUROPE**

To unite Europe is to create, foolishly and needlessly, yet another giant power beyond the control of its citizens, and to help set the stage for another global war. We do not need a Europe under one flag, we need a Europe of a thousand flags of free communities from the Atlantic to the Urals, that is the way forward to peace, economic stability and cultural progress.

### **DISPERSAL**

To defeat the danger of war and social collapse humankind's most urgent need today is to create a micro cellular, non-centralised, power-dispersed global order in which the humanity of people everywhere is respected and reflected in the power they wield to govern the affairs of their immediate locale in terms of their moral judgement.

# Common Sense Chapter Three

# Radical Declaration

*Being an attempt to indicate what may be done to resolve the global crisis of the twenty first century*



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## Contents

Unity  
Locality  
Numbers  
Governance  
Autonomy  
Co-operation

Danger  
Sharing  
Decentralising  
War  
Ecology

Resources  
Limits  
Waste  
Population  
Alienation  
Giantism

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## **The Radical Declaration**

*We therefore declare as follows:*

### **UNITY**

We are the people of the Fourth World, we represent a broad global spectrum ranging from ethnic, cultural and linguistic, to religious, economic ecological and community concerns, many of which have been submerged to one degree or another by the disastrous onrush of giantism of the last two centuries or more. We are united in our determination to defuse the prevailing anarchic crisis of power by seeking to create our own social, cultural and economic patterns as we see fit in our own localised communities.

### **LOCALITY**

We declare that it is only through small social units, which are capable of being subject to the control of their members that the peoples of the world will ever defeat the dangers of global war. We call for the breakdown of all giant nations into entities of no more than ten million or so, and for all nations to practice and respect the principle of non-centralised, human-scale, democratic decision-making at the village level. We insist that the political and economic power within each nation shall be so localised that no central government shall ever again encompass the capacity for any large-scale act of military or economic aggression against its neighbours.

### **NUMBERS**

In the same way it is only by such means that they can resolve the problem of excess human numbers, make effective a proper respect for their material environment so as to defeat the ecological peril, and end the curse of alienation from life and fellowship which now afflicts millions upon millions of people in many parts of the world. We and our neighbours seldom desired this development of giantism, very often it was fiercely resisted, it was rarely accepted and now we proclaim of it our total repudiation.

### **GOVERNANCE**

We assert in its place our inalienable right to live as free, independent, autonomous and self-governing peoples and we reject the validity of any arrangements, however long-imposed, especially by giant political units, which seek the continued denial of this right.

### **AUTONOMY**

We further assert our right in our own villages or urban parishes to operate and control our own schools, hospitals, police force, banks, industries, commercial trading and transport arrangements, forms of taxation and other matters of community concern as seems best to us, without external interference or coercion.

### **CO-OPERATION**

We accept the need for many forms of association and co-operation across local and national frontiers, if only to realise the potential enrichment of human life such co-operation can achieve; we are happy to acknowledge this need and whilst repudiating the bleak, unthinking nonsense of ‘world government’, which could only be a global dictatorship based on a monstrous bureaucratic nightmare, we look to a far greater degree of transnational co-operation in specific political, economic and social spheres than prevails today. We affirm our readiness to participate in such co-operation wherever the mutual or general interests of the people are thus best served, but in so doing we reserve to ourselves the inalienable right to decide in what ways we shall participate, and the full freedom to withdraw from any such arrangements at any time.

### **DANGER**

In general terms we assert that any state which exceeds modest, human-scale dimensions is at serious risk of being unable fully to control its own affairs and is thus a danger to its own and other people in terms of war, ecological excess and economic dislocation: the bigger the state, the bigger the danger.

## **SHARING**

The grim lesson of political life of the 20th century, which has already inflicted more murder, suffering and infamy on the common people than has been perpetrated in any previous period, is that the only safe form of power is shared power. We therefore further affirm that even within such human-scale nations, in order to overcome the dangers of war and the overgrowth of human numbers, to check the spread of the spiritual void of mass alienation, and to widen the boundaries of freedom, there is an urgent need for a new respect for the rights and powers of decision-making and control of both political and economic institutions by the members of localised communities in their villages, wards and parishes as the case may be, in every part of the world. Such a programme of non-centralised political and economic power as is here envisaged is an essential safeguard to prevent the power of the state being seized by any group for the purpose of war, aggrandisement or oppression.

## **DECENTRALISING**

For the same reason we hereby affirm our unreserved opposition to any attempts to increase the size or the scale of political units or any moves towards further governmental centralisation. We denounce such trends as likely to lead to yet a further loss of human control, to result in further assaults on freedom and a further increase in the prevailing global dangers.

## **WAR**

We call on people everywhere to end the curse of global war by repudiating the uncontrollable giantism which is the chief cause of it; we urge the dismemberment of all giant entities of power into sensible, human-scale, controllable nations of no more than ten million people which shall be governed on the basis of the maximum degree of non-centralised power by vesting all powers of government in the hands of village communities.

## **ECOLOGY**

Unless we transform our life-styles and make a more realistic appraisal of the resilience of the mutual support systems of the biosphere, large parts of our planet could, in a few more generations, become uninhabitable. We urge every village and village-sized community in the world, especially in the advanced world, to examine the impact of its mode of life on the ecology of the planet and order those changes which will ensure that what is now ecologically malignant is made stable and benign.

## **RESOURCES**

The life-style of rich nations is making demands on the finite resources of the planet, which can only widen the gulf between rich and poor peoples and beggar the posterity of both by degrading the habitat. We call for an immediate reappraisal of this life-style, especially by communities in rich countries, in all particulars where finite resources are being consumed, in order to establish a way of life, which is beneficially sustainable for all peoples.

## **LIMITS**

We call for an end to waste and an end to policies, which presume a subservience of the resources of the habitat to a quest for unlimited economic expansion. We call instead for a profound sense of reverence for all the elements of the natural order and a deliberate policy of thrift and careful husbanding of all planetary resources, in place of the present policies of exploitation and abuse, with their dangerous disregard of the consequential effects on the interlocking equilibriums of the biosphere, on which the well-being of all life depends.

## **WASTE**

We condemn the rapacious manner in which the finite resources of the globe are being squandered, as evidenced particularly by mass air travel and mass motoring as being ignorant, foolish, wasteful and immoral. We urge the adoption of standards of consumption which make a minimum demand on such resources, and which are served by a maximum reliance on self-renewable resources. We urge people everywhere to reject products, which make needless demands on finite resources, which constitute the heritage of all our posterity temporarily in our keeping.

## **POPULATION**

The largely unconscious biological mechanisms, which control numbers in the animal world were also operative in human societies until quite recent times. They operated on the basis of decisions made consensually (and frequently instinctively) in small groupings. Today there is a need for those responses to be reinforced by a conscious process of reasoning; instead we have largely destroyed the small communities, which were their basis. This is the real cause of the population crisis. No small self-governing community threatened to be swamped by its own numbers would fail to do something to prevent it if it had the power to do so. We declare that the need for base power in our village societies is imperative if the crisis in human numbers is to be resolved. No government of a mass society can solve this problem except by means, which are totalitarian and an assault on human dignity. Community responsibility for community affairs is a precondition for the control of community numbers. It follows that community power is a precondition for community survival.

## **ALIENATION**

Human fulfilment is a product of religion, work, culture and relationships; the blind pursuit of economic growth as an end in itself, and the giant forms of organisation it promotes, puts a discount on moral principle, degrades human labour to being a mere appendage to organisations or machines, devitalises culture by destroying the power to create and to decide, and undermines the basis of family life by substituting money measurements for the bonds of mutuality and reverence for relationships which are the core of any worthwhile civilisation. We denounce this process as being inevitably destructive of human happiness and well-being.

## **CONCLUSION**

We call on people everywhere to repudiate the march to giantism and loss of social control, to affirm their membership of the human family and their duty to advance its well-being in terms of peace, freedom and ecological sensibility by joining with us to establish **THE FOURTH WORLD**, a world where power is fully shared by people in modest-sized communities which enable the social process to do full justice to the inherent majesty of the human spirit and to serve the noblest potentialities of its creative genius.

**Common Sense Chapter Four**  
**Draft Charter**  
**for**  
**Real Communities**



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**Real Communities Charter**

Over the last century or more there has been a sedulous transfer of the power of local villages, parishes and neighbourhoods to the ambit of central government. The measures involved have been presumed to be justified on the grounds of efficiency and economy. Neither has been justified by events.

Numerous services heretofore often conducted on a voluntary basis by dedicated, public-spirited local citizens have been taken over by salaried officials appointed by the central government, with a number of consequences which has helped to create a gratuitous social tragedy of ever widening dimensions.

It is a tragedy which has been accentuated by the emergence of new forms of power in commerce, communications and transport which have also been deployed on a non-local basis and which have served even more to divorce the citizen from any real control over many of the many factors that now dominate citizen life.

Two centuries ago an average villager had a distinct element of control over his school; medicine, police, entertainment, dress, cookery, food production, transport; shopping, welfare and social provision. Today such control has passed from citizen hands into the hands of powerful central bureaucracies appointed by the central government or into the hands of no less powerful commercial concerns.

This process has often been justified by reference to the extension of the franchise, but again what is evident is an increasing decline of citizen influence or capacity to control as giant political parties, subject to their own highly centralised bureaucracies, ordain their workings and their general policy direction.

What emerges from this process is not one in which the citizen is able to express preferences which party or government then seeks to effect, rather is it a matter of policy decisions by powerful centralised bodies to which the citizen has no effective response except to assent.

It is a process which gives enormous powers of patronage to party leaders and even more to heads of government and it is one quite incompatible with the spirit and practice of the democratic ethos. Such patronage is a powerful weapon in the hands of those who deploy it to secure subservience to their wishes rather than concurrence with the wishes of the citizen.

One overall consequence of this lack of citizen control is control by boardroom moguls pursuing purely short-term pecuniary gains. It is a deployment of power, undemocratic, irresponsible, pervasive and importunate, which has come to act on a global scale and helped to create the current ever deepening global crisis that now dominates all human life.

It is a crisis which is destroying significant elements of the life support systems of the planet, vast proportions of irreplaceable reserves of finite resources and involving a wholesale degradation of the quality of life at numerous levels. Not least it has set in train a number of forces which betoken the most catastrophic consequences, whether in terms of another global war, environmental collapse or social disintegration, which ought now to be the central concern of all public policy considerations.

It is a crisis which can only have ensued from a grotesque distortion of the decision-making power within human societies and can only be resolved if that distortion is corrected so that such power is effectively in the hands of the people in their neighbourhood communities.

*We therefore resolve:*

The council of a neighbourhood community, as constituted by its members, shall exercise full power to determine its:

- Schools
- Clinic
- Shops
- Police
- Banking
- Roads
- Planning
- Property



It shall also exercise power to elect as its representative for membership of all regional boards governing:

- Police
- Water
- Gas
- Electricity
- Sewerage
- Postal Services
- Rail and Bus Services
- Radio
- Television
- Health
- Education

and such other regional services as may be necessary for its common interests with other neighbourhoods of the region.

The purpose of this Charter is to provide support for the promotion of all forms of decentralised community power to village or neighbourhood level, not least in the field of politics, economics and communication.

We cannot expect to transform the bureaucratic and market-dominated subversion of democracy now prevalent overnight. So often we are not even in contact with our neighbours, and in seeking change we tend to immerse ourselves in mass political bodies - themselves part of the disease rather than its cure, or in good causes such as campaigning for 'peace', or for the homeless, or to save the rain forests, where concerned people tend to find themselves in a moral ghetto largely tend to talking to each other.

A new approach to secure neighbourhood power means we have to focus on the neighbourhood and on the problems and its possibilities for both local and wider social transformation. No body can be healthier than the cells of which it is comprised. We cannot begin to do this if we are not in contact with our neighbours and this means we need to explore and adopt such measures as enable us to form and maintain working community relationships.

*To this end we might consider some of the following initiatives:*

- A street community notice board. Set up with fanfares and a celebration. Let people know it is their media to use when they want to exchange, sell or share anything, advertise lost pets, parish sports team fixtures, church service times, social or cultural events etc.
- A parish community journal dealing with all the concerns and problems of the community including jobs, health, schooling, transport, poverty, etc. The three key people here are someone with good writing skills, someone to chase the advertising and someone who won't take no for an answer which enables it to be a freebie and a distribution monarch.
- Weekly, fortnightly, monthly regular coffee bar or pub meeting to socialise and discuss parish affairs and empowerment problems.
- Promote parish social sporting and cultural clubs and events.
- Shop locally and support local traders' campaign and how to promote boycotts of giant supermarket chain stores and chain pubs or restaurants.
- Grow your own food or buy from local organic sources.
- Promote a local credit union or a local bank. Boycott big banks.
- Set an example of living simply. Recycle garbage, compost kitchen waste. Don't own or drive a car when public transport is available. Economise on electricity, gas, water and oil.
- As a representative of your parish seek out reps of other parishes to form grass roots reform and pressure groups to counter the endless abuses of central power.
- Make yourself a focus and a catalyst for political and economic transformation. Ensure the parish journal focuses on real problems, especially on poverty, pollution and powerlessness and is not just a bromidial bout of wishywashyness and social chitchat.
- Promote parish celebration events for parish life. A special banquet or dance for prominent parish people' birthdays or parish anniversaries.
- An annual 'Parish Day' when we elect the mayor and councillors, celebrate with a procession, sports event, dancing, feasting and celebrating.

Mass anonymity is its own form of mass powerlessness. Power cannot be in two places at once. If centralised government controlling a mass electorate has the power, then the citizen in no way has it or, on such a basis, can have it.

By itself the power of a single parish can be pricked out of existence as easily as a bubble, but multiplied around the world as it must be, and as it surely before long will be, its capacity to prevail, like that of any organic multicellular structure, will prove unassailable.

Common Sense Chapter Five  
**Draft Charter  
for  
Real Nations**



Prepared for 'The Radical Consultation'  
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[www.realnations.net](http://www.realnations.net)  
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## Real Nations Charter

To draw up a plan or a blueprint for the creation of a human-scale non-centralised global order would be as foolish as it would be futile. If the principle of the human scale is accepted then clearly each human scale community will be concerned to work out its own way of life, in accordance with its own judgements. Any suggestion of acting in accordance with a centralised plan would be the extension of a disease rather than the application of a remedy.

People will only act in accordance with a principle if they understand and accept the principle itself and to that end a major and multifaceted drive to educate and to generally promote the principle of the human scale is now a task of the utmost urgency.

Since everything must have a start and a point of origin somewhere what follows is simply certain proposals for action which could advance the principle to wider acceptance; they are neither comprehensive nor exclusive, they are the product of a number of trends already beginning to emerge, trends which appear to be moving in the direction of human control by means of the human scale and away from giantism, and to yield the promise of further useful developments.

It is proposed that membership of the *'League of Real Nations'* will be confined exclusively to those nations whose population numbers less than ten million and its objects shall be as follows:

- To defend the political, economic, geographic and cultural integrity of its member nations, especially against the expansionist tendencies of the bigger nations and those afflicted with giantism.
- To do everything possible to promote the principle of the human scale throughout the world.
- To give support to ethnic or other human scale groupings, such as regions and bioregions, in their struggle for autonomous independence either individually or in concert with fellow members with economic or financial support and by giving diplomatic status and recognition to such peoples who may wish if need be to establish a government in exile.
- To achieve the maximum degree of non-centralised political and economic operation in each country within its own frontiers, with particular reference to the empowerment of village communities whether urban or rural.
- To reduce global war dangers by refusing to participate in any military, political or economic alliance with bigger nations.
- To withdraw from membership and to refuse to give any further support to the United Nations Organisation, its specialist agencies or any of its subordinate or associated bodies and to promote the principle of neutrality in foreign relations.

It should be understood that what is being proposed here is not some kind of incipient mini-world government or any similar form of totalitarian global inanity.

What is proposed instead is that in those areas where a clear functional need for an international body and for a common global acceptance of specific regulation exists...such as a postal union, maritime law, the use and control of oceanic resources, pollution controls, the containment of epidemics, emergency and disaster contingency provision, some forms of crime prevention etc...that separate bodies for each of these needs shall be established and that each should have a clear locus of control stemming from the basic unit of government within each nation in its village communities.

It does not follow that there need be a representative of every village in the world on the governing councils of such bodies. What does follow is that the means must be established whereby any substantial body of citizens of any region should be able, if it feels the need, to make its views known and be able to secure changes through its voting power if it so wishes.

How this shall be done will doubtless vary considerably from one body to another. What humankind dare not risk is the danger of the kind of global tyranny on a world scale of which the Nazi and Communist dictatorships of the 20th century have shown is all too feasible if we are foolish enough to permit the present centralised forms of power to continue and to coalesce around one centre.

The emphasis of the organisation will be on the human scale and on human control. To that end the new body will be simply an association with absolutely minimal executive powers. The nearest comparable structure which comes to mind is that of the Commonwealth...formerly the British Commonwealth of Nations...yet even here there appears to be an undue emphasis on its secretariat and a disposition to develop organisationally in an increasing number of directions as is common to governmental bureaucracies everywhere.

The new body will be wise to insist on an annual change of presiding officer and perhaps a triumvirate of senior executives, each of whom will serve a maximum of three years and one of whom, each year after serving as top executive, will resign.

## Notes on the Function & Structure of the League of Nations by Dr. Aidan Rankin

### Principles

First, the *'League of Real Nations'* needs a clear statement of principles, on which its supporters of diverse political backgrounds can agree. For these, I would suggest:

- the right to self-determination for all peoples who wish to be independent;
- the responsibilities of independent states to their own people, the environment and respecting the integrity of other states;
- the right of independent states to develop their own systems of government, provided they respect human dignity;
- the repudiation of political violence and terrorism;
- the commitment to settling secessionist disputes by peaceful means.

### Research Bureau

Secondly, what would the *'League of Real Nations'* do?

I shall start with the academic, or 'think tank' side of the *'League'*, which will be needed to give it political clout and intellectual credibility.

The *'League'* should act as an information and resource centre for the study of independence and secessionist movements. It should commission and publish papers, some 'scholarly', others 'popular', on relevant subjects.

These would not only be about specific independence movements, but broader issues such as globalisation, the impact of technology, economics, ecology, different forms of democracy (i.e. not just the politically correct 'Western' model), the emergence of 'super-states' and trade blocs, or the survival of 'indigenous', or native cultures.

### Action Centre

One of the main problems facing nations seeking independence is isolation.

A function of the *'League'* should therefore be to forge links between peoples facing similar situations, through conferences and media events to give a mouthpiece to unrepresented peoples.

An important aspect of the *'League'* should be political lobbying - drawing the attention of politicians and opinion-formers, both in the UK and abroad, to issues affecting independence, or the rights and responsibilities of self-determination.

Non-violent conflict resolution should be one of the *'League's'* priorities. It should provide a forum for negotiation between independence movements and governments, or between small states in dispute over borders, populations and resources.

Another function of the *'League'* should be to provide practical and peaceful assistance to peoples seeking independence. This could include map-making which helps such peoples clearly to define their borders, or help with adapting traditional forms of government into systems compatible with international norms but still distinctive.

### Structure

All these functions of the *'League'* more or less overlap. The research aspect of our work would strengthen the campaigning strategy and vice versa.

I believe, therefore, that the *'League'* needs to establish itself as a registered charity, with a board of trustees drawn from politics (cross-party), academia, business, the media and other relevant areas. A short-list needs to be drawn up.

The *'League'* will need an office and a few dedicated research and campaigning staff. This is not to suggest that the *'League'* should become a 'typical NGO'. Quite the opposite. But it cannot rely solely on voluntary work.

The financial possibilities of this will need to be discussed. One option would be 'full independence. Another would be an affiliative status...at least until the *'League of Real Nations'* were ready for full autonomy.

*edited from a private correspondence (8<sup>th</sup> June 2000)*

# Common Sense Chapter Six Action Guidelines



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**Papworth's Laws of Political Dynamics**

*Whichever party group wins an election it is seldom the people, for their role in casting a vote in elections today is largely symbolic and akin to being asked to kick off at a football match. In whatever direction they kick, or whichever side they may favour, it has no bearing on the subsequent progress of the game or its result. Quite other forces are at work.*

**LAW 1**

As a political unit increases in numbers, the capacity of the individual citizen to control its workings declines.

**LAW 2**

A community may be defined as a political unit of such modest dimensions that the personal relationships of the members, and how those relationships become expressed in terms of morals and values, can take precedence over every other force.

**LAW 3**

A large political unit which lacks the organic, non-centralised structure of localised community life is called a mass society and as such cannot long endure. Whilst it holds sway it will be chronically subject to wars, economic upheavals and other attributes of political decadence.

**LAW 4**

A mass democracy is a contradiction in terms.

**LAW 5**

Whatever power exists there inevitably arises a conflict between those who exercise it and those who don't, and the diminution of the power of individual members of a mass society to control its workings is always accompanied by an increase in the power of the forces at the centre.

**LAW 6**

In a mass society power is always pursued as an end in itself.

**LAW 7**

If politically ambitious people in a mass society fail to pursue power as an end in itself they will be replaced by others who do.

**LAW 8**

In a mass society, public policy is determined by private leadership groups, seldom by public opinion.

**LAW 9**

In a mass society mass movements of reform acquire the same characteristics of centralised control and personal alienation of the members as the mass society itself.

**LAW 10**

Giantism, centralisation and excessive speed now represent a doomsday triumvirate that has become public enemy number one of the human race.

## **Common Sense Principles compiled by Kirkpatrick Sale**

### **The Law of Government Size**

Ethnic and social misery increase in direct proportion to the size and power of the central government of a nation or state.

### **The Population Principle**

As the size of a population doubles, its complexity, the amount of information exchanged and decisions required quadruples, with consequent increases in stress and dislocation and mechanisms of social control.

### **The Beanstalk Principle**

For every animal, object, institution, or system, there is an optimal limit, beyond which it ought not to grow.

### **The Law of Peripheral Neglect**

Governmental concern, like marital infidelity or gravitational pull, diminishes with the square of the distance.

### **The Self-Reliance Principle**

Highly self-sufficient local communities are less likely to get involved in large-scale violence than those whose existence depend on world-wide systems of trade.

### **The Principle of Warfare**

The severity of war always increases with an increase in state power; and that war centralises the state by providing An excuse for an increased state power and the means by which to achieve it.

### **The Principle of Limits**

Social problems tend to grow at a geometric rate, while the ability of humans to deal with them, if it can be extended at all, grows only at an arithmetic rate.

### **Lucca's Law**

Other things being equal, territories will be richer when small and independent , than when large and dependent.

### **Man is The Measure of All Things**

This does not mean that size and its companion notion of scale, or sizes in relation to each other, is the only measurement to make in judging something. But it does make sense that it should be the first, and the central consideration, in as much as it is likely to affect, in one degree or another, all other considerations.



**Afterword by John Papworth**

I was reared in the 20s and 30s in an orphanage. It was built in the 1880s by 'The Board of Guardians' of the 'Parish of St Leonard's' in Shoreditch. The parish was in one of the poorest parts of London and it had a problem of hundreds of homeless children.

The members of the emphatically working-class 'Board of Guardians' proceeded to purchase several hundred acres of open farmland in Essex. They commissioned an architect to build 'cottage homes', each of the dozen or more cottages housed 30 boys in the care of a married couple and 30 girls in the care of a single woman.

The cottages were set in lawns and flowerbeds either side of a broad winding gravel drive and at a central point there was, on one side, a school, a gymnasium, and a chapel, whilst on the other side was a yard surrounded by offices and workshops.

Each cottage had a large playground surrounded by garden plots in which the children, if they wished, could grow whatever flowers or vegetables they could get hold of.

What rivets my memory today is that all this was accomplished by a group of ordinary people in a poor London parish. They had a problem and they solved it in a quite exemplary and commendable fashion with no suggestion of any interference by an almighty ministry of this or that and, like hundreds of children who passed through it, I have always been profoundly grateful that I was so well cared for.

By modern standards the place might be regarded as seriously deficient. There was no central heating and in winter a grate piled high with mostly coal dust might yield little warmth. If we were judged to have stepped out of line the superintendent had a cane which was seldom far from some bare backside, and I was about six before somebody thought to inform me that there was a girl who had the same name and who might be, as she was, my sister.

No doubt the finer points of childcare might be little regarded as seen through modern eyes, but no doubt too, had the place not been shut down in the 60s, those responsible would have kept pace with the times and made changes accordingly. But 'those responsible' are no longer there. 'The Board of Guardians' has vanished, as has the 'Parish of St Leonard's' as a local government unit. Why?

What has been achieved by this satanic abolition and the creation of units of 'local' government, which are about as local as a moon rocket and as responsive to citizen needs as a dead dinosaur? This is not just a matter of 'politics' or efficient administration, but a matter of whether the quality of life is being enhanced or degraded.

Each of us possesses a need to create as a basic element in our endless quest for fulfilment, a need expressed not simply in great art, in poetry, literature, painting, sculpture, music or architecture, but in a multitude of mundane forms once known by every tradesman who once served our daily needs.

It was the democracy of creativity throughout society which was the seedbed of all the cultural achievements of the past; in our day, now that vital seedbed has been virtually abolished by boardroom get-rich-quickery, Is it any wonder that high art forms have become increasingly sterile, discordant and uninspiring?

And the damage the boardroom brigands have done to work is reflected in what the politicians have done to our social structures. Local government once involved the energies, dedication, commitment and genuinely altruistic spirit of service to the community of a high proportion of local people.

Today a kind of Fabian fascism has brushed all this aside as being of no account. Instead of members of a local community hospital or welfare committee being involved in the day-to-day running of local institutions, organising fetes and celebrations to raise funds and keeping the show on the road; doing it in ways which gave their lives meaning, status and, again that word, fulfilment, they are now relegated to the role of voting fodder in the mass political charade.

We now have 'national' schemes and ministries for health, education, welfare and other essentially local matters. The evidence abounds and grows that these bodies are increasingly wasteful and inefficient, where they are not indeed riddled with the maggot of corruption, and not least of course they operate on organisational parameters which make a mockery of democratic principle.

Somehow the illusion has been fostered, for example, that people who have devoted their lives to clambering to the top of the greasy pole are better qualified to ordain how children should be educated than are the parents and their local committees.

So our public prints are loaded with otiose speculation about ‘national’ examination standards and results, and about the content of ‘national’ educational curricula; meanwhile, in rural areas, large numbers of children are bussed to giant ‘comprehensive’ schools where they learn about computers and nothing about how to grow food.

Local government, instead of being a power in its own right but working in tandem, where necessary, with national government, is now the pawn of the latter, which is making a mess of the whole works. It is time to cry halt to the assault on freedom involved in all this centralisation; time to restore the power and the spirit of local power, responsibility and commitment of genuine local government as a precondition of a healthy democratic way of life.

*Suggestions for amplifying and clarifying these papers are most welcome and may be sent to:*

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