

On Democracy as a Basis for Planetary Management

Copyright © 2003 Joseph George Caldwell. All rights reserved. Posted at Internet website <http://www.foundationwebsite.org>. May be copied or reposted for non-commercial use, with attribution to author and website. (14 July 2003, updated 16 July 2003)

Someone asked me once what I thought of democracy. What do I think of democracy? I think it's great! I have enjoyed the richness of life in a free, prosperous country, where I was free to move where and when I wanted and pursue and realize my dreams. I think democracy is fabulous! Democracy is the basis for a glorious multiplayer game, in which every citizen is given the opportunity for a significant role. It is the means for an exciting, challenging, and fulfilling life as a human being.

But wait just a minute! If democracy is so fabulous, why have I blasted it (along with free-market enterprise, economics, industrial development and globalisation) so many times in my writings as a major problem in the world today? Well, the problem is that, as great as democracy may be for some people (myself included), and as useful it may be as an ingredient for accomplishing some things (e.g., a powerful, industrially developed country), it is not a useful or good system for accomplishing certain other things. It is not a good basis for planetary management in a technologically advanced world, if the objective is the long-term survival of mankind and the other species of the biosphere.

Democracy works well in situations where there are few resource constraints, i.e., few people relative to the available

resources (space, energy, water, etc.). Under these conditions, it is a very useful system for motivating people to work hard, since they enjoy a significant portion of the fruits of their labour, and they have the freedom to enjoy it. Democracy is a great system for assisting the conquest and exploitation of a new land. It worked well, for example, in assisting the conquest of North America a couple of hundred years ago. The new arrivals from Europe were able to take possession of as much land as they wished. With a low population density and a temperate climate, they had access to large amounts of (solar) energy per person (in the form of wood, wind and hydropower at levels sufficient for a low-energy-consuming society). They had private ownership of property, a high standard of living, and the freedom and opportunities to enjoy it. (Democracy and freedom were not available for everyone, such as the displaced Native Americans and the Negro slaves.) They had large families. Later, they had access to much coal and petroleum. In the twentieth century, the incentives of democracy proved very effective as a basis for economic and industrial development. With its incentives for production and efficiency (i.e., opportunities for acquisition and retention of material wealth), it can generally outperform any other system of government on the basis of industrial production and material standard of living (given comparable resources).

So what's wrong with democracy? What is wrong with high levels of individual liberty and industrial development? Well, what is wrong with democracy is that it is a very poor system for promoting the long-term survival of the biosphere as we know it – either of the human species or the other species in it. The concept underlying democracy is that it helps people pursue life, liberty and happiness. With a large amount of personal freedom, the prospect of keeping a large share of

the product of one's labour, and access to plenty of resources, the citizens of a democracy work hard to achieve more. And they do produce and achieve more. But more is never enough. No matter what the standard of living, every nation strives for a higher standard of living. No matter what the total amount of national economic output, every nation wants to increase it. This works fine as long as the human population is so small that mankind's presence and activities do not have any significant impact on the biodiversity of the planet, but it does not work well at all as soon as the size of the human population and its industrial development reach a stage where they begin to make significant changes in the biosphere.

And that is where we are now. Solely as the result of large human numbers and industrial production, mankind is now causing the sixth mass species extinction of the biosphere. And humanity is powerless to stop it. It is not just democracy that is at fault, or is even the principal cause of this problem. All species strive to propagate to fill the space available to them. With the advent of technology and the windfall of fossil fuel, mankind possessed the wherewithal to reproduce (and produce) to the extent that it was eventually displacing every other species on the planet. It would not matter if the world were run by socialism, monarchism, communism, or any other system of government that encourages people to destroy nature. All that matters is whether the system in place allows the human population to grow and produce and consume without limit, to the point where it is destroying much of the natural habitat of the planet. And democracy, coupled with a social commitment to unrestricted growth, is accomplishing this very effectively at the present time. Under democracy, combined with a high level of personal freedom, industrial activity and growth

continues and natural habitat continues to shrink in quantity and quality (diversity).

The weaknesses of democracy as a system of government have been known since time immemorial. Plato noted two serious flaws: the tendency of the masses to pick poor leaders, and the tendency of democratically elected leaders to pander to the desires of the electorate. He also noted that democracy lacks cohesiveness and engenders a lack of respect for authority (moral or political), and leads to a breakdown of law and order. The diversity and variety of democracy is very appealing, but it leads to chaos, dissension and tyranny. Democracy panders to the lowest common denominator. As you will see from what follows, however, these weaknesses have nothing to do with my criticism of democracy.

Democracy is not good as a basis for a mission-oriented organization or activity, when the mission is important. No one would think of letting a platoon of soldiers decide by vote what they did or did not want to do. The same is true of an airplane or a ship, or a business, or a religion, or a family. Democracy is fine and works well for running a student body or a parent-teacher organization or a book club or any other social club, whose “mission” does not really matter. It may even be useful for operating small parts of a larger organization, subject to overall control by an executive. As long as human society has no specific mission (other than to “populate and dominate the Earth”), democracy is a fine system of social government. But when human society recognizes and accepts its role as the management organization of a planet, democracy becomes an inadequate (at best irrelevant, at worst pernicious) basis for global social government.

The founders of our country (I am referring here to the US) were aware of the shortcomings of democracy, and they took steps to try to neutralize or at least moderate them. As the ancient Greeks had done, they too restricted the vote to a small proportion of the population (free, adult, educated men). They established systems of “checks and balances.” Most significantly, they did not allow *direct* democracy at all, even for the limited electorate: they established a *democratic republic*, in which the few people who were allowed to vote were allowed at most to elect representatives and electors. The government civil service is certainly not a democracy. About the only democratic bodies in our federal government are the two bodies of congress – 535 people out of 287 million! And most of these are either wealthy men or people controlled by wealthy men.

The concept of “self determination of peoples” was touted by the Nation’s founders, but as soon as South Carolina attempted to secede from the Union, that concept was quickly tossed out the window. The Nation’s founders realized that democracy had serious shortcomings, and they took many steps to restrain it. They allowed the introduction of democratic *concepts* into society, but severely restricted its practice and effectively controlled its effects (e.g., “checks and balances,” republicanism). They did not envision or envisage the radical individualism and the radical egalitarianism of today, and had no intention of allowing for direct democracy (e.g., referenda) or extending democracy to all people. A level of participation (of people in government) was tolerated, but not to the degree of relinquishing a significant degree of control. Democracy was introduced to give the masses a sense of participation, as long as it did not significantly interfere with the accumulation and distribution of wealth for the small proportion of society that was in, and remained in, control. Although the founders

were able to establish a mass-appeal system that enabled them to continue in control (in their activity of accumulating wealth and exercising power), they had little concern or regard for (or, at that time, impact on) the global environment. They founded a system that pleased the masses and enabled the powerful to prosper very well, but they did not foresee the tremendous environmental damage that this system (based on ever-increasing growth, industrial production, and destruction of nature) would eventually cause, once technological development continued for some time. And that time has come. It is time to pay the piper. The party's over.

The founders saw democracy as a good system for running a nation, for enabling them to stay in control and accumulate wealth. It is, in fact, an excellent system for running a nation in a community of nations. It encourages economic development, industrial growth, and population growth, and enables the nation to compete very effectively against other nations. Each citizen perceives that he has a "stake" in his nation's success, and works hard not just for himself but also to improve his nation's strength relative to other nations. The engine of economic growth that free-enterprise democratic government has spawned is truly impressive. The trouble is, however, that once the global industrial activity reaches a point where it is significantly affecting the biosphere (as has been the case now for quite some time (centuries)), the species diversity of the biosphere degrades.

It is simply not possible to maintain a system of over 200 nations, each one of them champing at the bit to outproduce the other. It is not possible to maintain a system of unrestrained population growth and industrial development. It does not matter what form of government the individual nations have, whether democracy or dictatorship. It turns

out that (because of its incentives to produce and grow) the democratic ones will generally outperform the others, so that they will eventually be in charge of the planet's nations.

About the only thing that is different with democratic governments in charge is that the pace of industrialization grows more rapid (faster technological developments, faster growth in industrial production), causing more and faster destruction of nature. Since the system is not sustainable, however, the end result is the same – catastrophic collapse. The only significant issue is to what extent the biosphere is changed when that collapse occurs.

The industrial system in place on Earth is fuelled by fossil fuel, which is about half consumed. The system will collapse by the time the fossil fuel reserves exhaust, i.e., within 50 years, at current rates of consumption. The biosphere has been severely damaged by global industrial activity to date (each year, it is estimated that about 30,000 species are made extinct by mankind's activities). If the current system does in fact continue for another 50 years, the collapse of the industrial world may be accompanied by the collapse of the biosphere as well. There is no chance that the global engine of economic activity will slow down. It will continue as a runaway train, raging unrestrained, gathering momentum as all the world's nations climb on board, destroying nature with abandon, until it either runs out of fuel or the biosphere collapses. There is nothing that can stop this process. All the world's nations envy and are attempting to emulate the industrial development of the Western world. All entrepreneurs want bigger, more successful businesses. All people want a higher material standard of living, better health, longer lives, more leisure time, better opportunities for their children. No nation will take steps to significantly reduce its population. No family is willing to forgo having the number of children it desires. Driven on the one hand by

greed and on the other hand by a very human desire for a better life for oneself and one's children, the system will not slow down. It will continue until it collapses catastrophically. All that matters is what is left of the biosphere when this system collapses, and what system is put in place after its fall.

When the planet had a low population and mankind had very limited ability to increase its numbers or production, it did not matter (from the viewpoint of long-term-sustainability of the biosphere) what form of government was employed by the tribes and nations of humanity. Now, it matters very much. The world is controlled by a large number of "sovereign" governments, and that system is rapidly destroying the planet's biodiversity. Many of those governments are democratic. Much of the planet is also controlled by communism and other authoritarian forms of government. This system – many sovereign nations, all competing to produce – has proved itself totally incapable of running a planet (regardless of the form of government of the various nations). It is little more than "organized anarchy." Note that it is not just democracy that has proved itself incapable of running a planet. Socialism, communism, monarchism, oligarchy, fascism and various other dictatorships have all committed themselves to increasing the size of the human population, increasing industrial production and destroying natural habitat. From the point of view of planetary management, no system of national government presently established on the planet has demonstrated that it is capable of responsible planetary management. In a technological world, there is no place for any of these systems. It has no place for a system committed to ever-increasing industrial production, with ever-increasing destruction of nature. There is no place for a community of sovereign nations, no matter what their form of government.

Would I choose democracy over communism or fascism or other dictatorships presently operating on the planet, for myself or for others? You bet I would! In today's world, would I choose to live in a democratic country? Absolutely! But that is not the choice that I would prefer to make. What I would prefer to choose is a synarchic government of a minimal-regret population. But today that choice is not available. The current system – a sort of “multinational anarchy” – has a strong grip on human society, and will not voluntarily stop its destruction of nature. Since it exists only because of the one-time windfall of fossil fuel, and because that source of energy will soon exhaust, the present system of planetary government will soon collapse. It is at that time that there will be an opportunity to establish a new system of planetary management. And that system will be a synarchic government of a minimal-regret population. (See the *Omega Project* for information on how this will be brought about.)

It is not that I dislike democracy. I love democracy. Democracy has treated me very well. Despite its recognized faults, it has tremendous advantages over many other systems. In a world in which human society has not yet reached its resource limits and is not destroying the biosphere's diversity, it is a fabulous system for allowing and enabling and promoting self-realization. It is a desirable ingredient for “fast-track” development of advanced technology. It is a good basis for games (competitions) among large groups of people (nations), when resources are essentially unconstrained. Nations that adopt democracy will have a tremendous advantage (with respect to industrial productivity) over those that do not. But today, on planet Earth, its time has passed. The time for multiple sovereign nations has passed. Democracy is no longer relevant, since it will not work to accomplish long-term stability of the

remaining biodiversity of the planet's biosphere. Communism will not work. Fascism will not work. Theocracy will not work. Russia, China, Iraq, Iran and Indonesia have destroyed their natural environments every bit as much as the US, India, Britain, Germany and Mexico. A global system based on multiple sovereign nations of *any* governmental type will not work. The planet has encountered a "paradigm shift" (the advent of advanced technology), and none of the old systems will work. Even synarchy will not work, if it is oriented toward promotion of a large human population and industrial production. What will work is a rational, mission-oriented system of planetary management that ensures that the human population will not destroy itself or the other species of the biosphere. What will work is a synarchic government of a minimal-regret population of ten million people. And that is what I am committed to.

The diversity and freedom of democracy allow for a fascinating variety of human interactions and developments. With all of the personal freedom, a democracy is truly a "gunslinger's paradise," a "paradise island" – one "wild and crazy place." Democracy is fine for running small organizations that do not matter. It's just not suitable as a basis for planetary management, or for running any other system that matters, without stringent constraints in place. It is not a suitable system for running anything that matters on a long-term-sustainable basis, in Heaven or on Earth. It does not exist anywhere in the animal kingdom.

One final point. A big to-do is made these days, in this era of radical individualism and radical egalitarianism, of "government by the consent of the governed." Some may criticize synarchy on this point (since the "Initiates" or "Guardians" in charge are not democratically elected).

Unfortunately, “government by the consent of the governed” is not a practical scheme for running anything that matters (whether it be a family, a religion, or a planet). Moreover, under *all* forms of government, there are some restrictions on personal freedom. But that is not the issue. The issue is “what works.” And democracy (or any other form of national government implemented to date) does not work for running a planet (i.e., maintaining the species of the biosphere over the long term).

Just for the record, I will comment there is a tremendous amount of freedom under a synarchic government of a minimal-regret population – far more freedom than there is today in democratic nations. All of the hunter-gatherer tribes are free to adapt whatever form of government they wish, including democracy (although history has shown that this will not be done). The significant issue is what works to run the planet, not whether government is by the consent of the governed – although, after global nuclear war, it is very likely that the survivors will be very much in favour of a synarchic government of a minimal-regret population.

For everything on Earth there is a time, and democracy’s time, as well as the time for a multiplicity of nations of any governmental type, has passed. Now that advanced technology has arrived, it is time to move to a New World Order in which a single planetary management organization is in charge. And that organization will be a synarchic government of a minimal-regret population of ten million people.

FndID(150)

FndTitle(On Democracy as a Basis for Planetary Management)

FndDescription(On Democracy as a Basis for Planetary Management)

FndKeywords(planetary management; democracy; globalization; world government)