

**2015 CONSTITUTIONALISTS UK and TRUSTEES ALL:
TAKING STOCK
Peter Challen & Ray Sheath – 9th September 2015
STATE OF THE UNION – A SNAPSHOT**

There is no point in further discussing or reading about the dysfunctionalities of the political & economic system. They are legion and constantly presented to us by polemicists, protesters, grass roots movements, Internet blogs and campaigners of every possible description. This cacophony is paralysing.

The consequences of the current system are mopped up every day by millions of people and thousands of charities and voluntary groups engaged in palliative care. And notwithstanding initiatives in establishing a local but approximate political economy such as Transition Towns, no practical alternative to this state of affairs at a national or international level is in sight.

The more enlightened within the current system wring hands, write books and articles, make speeches or propose tinkering as the system itself becomes more unstable day by day. Scotland, Conservative splits over the EU, Labour party in turmoil, NHS stresses, the government attacks on Bill of Rights, BBC, FOI and the continuing impact of austerity economics on the poorest of society and immigration means injustice and suffering grows as does the prospect of collapse. Some recent comments illuminate this syndrome:-

- “The urgent taskis to write something meaningful about the future and to write it in letters of fire.” – *Simon Schama writing on the spectre of populism in the FT recently*
- “Constitutional change has risks and interconnectedness and we are the place that can do this best.” *Helena Kennedy speaking on Bill of Rights and Scottish independence in the House of Lords 25th June 2015*
- “The practical problem is how power as domination can be won in order to turn it into a resource for power as transformation” *Hilary Wainwright editorial in Red Pepper Jan 2015.*
- “The BBC could stage a series of national conversations about Britain’s constitutional future. If a more urgent public service is needed right now I don’t know what it is” *Nigel Biggar Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford.*
- “It is depressing to accept that a complacent government and an unelectable opposition are what the country must now expect” *Martin Wolf writing in the FT on envisaging rational and radical policies that include land value taxation.*
- “To design wise policies, we need all the efforts of scientists, economists and technologists that the 21st century can offer. But we also need the full commitment of political leaders and the full support of the voting public” *Martin Rees, Astronomer Royal on using our knowledge to fulfil our responsibilities to future generations noting that our great grandchildren will be alive in 2120+.*

The “Insiders” hardly see the systemic and are incapable of changing the system and the “Outsiders” either deal in symptoms or do not engage with the systemic nature of the problem and therefore do not collaborate and gain critical mass to change it from the outside. The “Insiders” and the “Outsiders” do not have a strategy and so nothing happens. And this is a global issue.

AN ALTERNATIVE – RECAPITULATION OF OUR INITIATIVE

Fundamentally different foundations from those of the politics and economics of today have been part of society’s dialogue for decades and in some cases for hundreds of years. Land, money, democracy, ownership, capitalism are among the many such foundations

that have been rethought through and reconceptualised. And to repeat the “State of the Union Snapshot” there is simply no point in further discussing, reading about, campaigning or engaging with individual issues in isolation. A new constitutional settlement across the board is required of Restoration, Reformation and Renewal as laid out in our Manifesto. And its purpose always held in mind is *human flourishing & intergenerational flow* which is more radical than well being

Therefore all the foundations of the current political and economic system, without exception, need to be replaced and systemically connected one with another and in the process will embed different moral relationships –relationships that are mutual with oneself, with one another, with institutions, with the Earth and with the functional artefacts of humanity such as money, technology etc. This change in the foundations is visualised in the attachment “Rebuild our House and Make it a Home” and is captured by the aphorism “*Power with others not Power over others*”. This visualisation of House and Home can also be taken as a way of reading and understanding our Manifesto which now includes the 21st Century People’s Magna Carta (see the web site).

OUR DEVELOPING STRATEGY –THE (HUMAN) SYSTEMS APPROACH

- Use the System – *meaning put independent candidates forward in a general election*
 - Become the System – *meaning win a general election to get a constitutional parliament*
 - Change the system – *meaning steadfastness in purpose in establishing new foundations*
- The detailed processes in each of these phases are summarised in our manifesto and, like the Charter, have evolved over the last 15 months and will continue to evolve as this initiative goes to scale which is the ambition and the real only issue for us.

However a critical development has been the crystallisation of the role of citizens in these processes of changing the political and economic structures. Citizens are conceived as trustees in the full sense of that word. “Trustees All” is the mind-set, a Metanoia, that has to develop and is a level of engagement that moves participation beyond mere voting. Formal structural and institutional change catalysed by 2015 Constitutionalists UK must be accompanied by this social movement of cultural change and be in LOCK-STEP with each other.

The charge that this 3-stage strategy is “unrealistic”, “idealistic”, impractical” etc. can be refuted by pointing to Frome town council in the UK and Iceland where they are both learning to deploy exactly this strategy. A dialogue has been started with the players in Frome and it is interesting to note that the learning from this initiative emphasises structure and participation and the need for new language. In Iceland the analysis is the same but they have not quite managed to become the system and the politicians still hold sway.

Similar strategies can be seen developing in Greece, Israel & Bosnia but seem to adopt a position of seeding and growing alongside the system so ignoring it – a sort of large scale transition town movement. And none must be confused with the rise of new parties who “Join the system” (*Podemos and Syriza for example*) and are mere variants of the current system. Finally Catalonia in Spain is close to Scotland in a “separation” strategy for renewal.

GOING TO SCALE

The mechanism of going to scale is to find “SPEAKERS” who will both catalyse the process of independent parliamentary candidates coming forward and catalyse a participatory social movement through activities such as Democafes. Catalyse is

deliberately chosen for the mode of operation rather than manage. A speaker should cover a whole number of parliamentary constituencies and it is envisaged for example that 100 speakers could cover the 533 constituencies in England.

The process of going to scale quickly is SOS – a self-organising structure.

Having both structure, coherence, shared vision and shared language, and people being independent, self-selecting, self-funding, and not being under the power of any central governance or financial structures is self-organising. The political party that will usher in an independent constitutional parliament and the Trustees All movement that will participate in the constitutional settlement will both use SOS. The two social constructs of party and movement are separate but in a sense in a lock step necessary for a new settlement.

The 2015 Constitutionalist political party was approved by the Electoral Commission on November 4th 2014. The legal position is that it is an unincorporated association with the status of being a UK registered political party with the minimum of two people (Peter Challen & Ray Sheath). This facilitates candidates standing under a common banner. But the party should be an exemplar of SOS.

Firstly then and most importantly that means no organisational governance or funding to cover speakers and their domains. The use of the party name by independent candidates and the party accepting no responsibility for the selection of candidates or the regulatory reporting or funding across all constituencies needs to be explored further. The first step will be to seek approval to change the party name to Independent Constitutionalist and proceed from there. **Secondly** the party's shared vision, language and coherence expressed in the Charter, Manifesto and Compendium is mediated by the formal officers of the party. These documents have been "Crowd Sourced" through the Strategy Forum over the last year with Peter and Ray as "editors". This crowd sourcing now needs to be extended to the speakers and candidates via the web site – in effect establishing a Constitutional Wikipedia.

The Trustees All movement has the learning from one Democafe to call on so far. But there is huge experience to draw on in the UK about *participation and dialogue*. In 2004 ago a charity called INVOLVE explored this as did the New Economics Foundation and some 30 methods were identified. There is also the practical experience of particular institutions such as the Scott Bader Commonwealth and The Findhorn foundation among many others. There is a lot of "Re-inventing the wheel" going on right now that somehow needs to be woven into a participatory fabric.

The use of the website and social media in going to scale: This is huge subject but to summarise social media is probably most appropriate at the local constituency level and website technologies at the national level. The goal of local social media would be to direct traffic to the website which now needs to be simplified in its functions. Apart from being a constitutional Wikipedia, the web site can be a hub for signatories to the Charter organised by constituency, a newscast station, a home page focusing on news and needs such as recruiting speakers and a signpost to the "Outsiders" to demonstrate inclusivity (notwithstanding our criticisms of them).

Opportunities arising from going scale: By winning the argument that a comprehensive constitutional settlement arrived at by using the formal political structure of a constitutional parliament together with real citizen engagement is the way forward then all the "Outsiders" might engage and so eventually might the "Insiders" and a tipping point might be achievable and the outlook much brighter.

THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Notwithstanding that there is no intent to build a traditional political organisation or campaign that needs cash for operations and staffing, minimal financial investments are nevertheless going to be required as the past 12 months has shown. Since August 2014, expenses have been incurred by Ray and two creditors, the website developer Piers Caswell and the lawyers Bates Wells Braithwaite (both of whom Ray accepts responsibility for and will do personal crowd-funding to settle) to a total of £15,000. In addition Peter funds networking at School for Economic Science around £2,500 per annum.

But for these minimal funds and a lot of blood, sweat and tears by all involved achievements include inter alia (1) the establishment of a UK political party and meeting all the financial & regulatory requirements of that registration (2) the launch at Ankerwycke and local news coverage (3) the website and its newscasts, (4) the Grandparents Picnic on Magna Carta day, (5) the first convention with the second coming up on November 7th (6) the beginnings of crowdsourcing a Bill of Rights (7) The Godric Bader lecture to promote Trusteeship one of the new foundations (8) the compendium (9) over 50 meetings of the Strategy Forum that effectively crowdsourced the Charter, Manifesto and Compendium from initial expositions (10) representations and talks given at over 50 public and private gatherings over the last 12 months covering a huge range of civil society (11) Links with a global network exploring self-organising (*Heather Barnett*) (12) Dialogue with Flatpack Democracy and Town Council in Frome (*Peter Macfadyen*) (13) Dialogue on Natural Inclusionality (*Alan Rayner*) and last but certainly not least a dialogue launched on where moral authority in society lies.

In future a business account needs to be set with Triodos Bank in the name of the registered and regulated political party Independent Constitutionalists with the two officers Peter and Ray as administrators and no credit used from any source. personal or otherwise. In line with the strategy and going to scale future expenses are required for: • Finding speakers, • website development, • training & maintenance, • an email system for candidates and speakers based on Charter signatories, • running convention events, digital marketing and fund raising, • printing & communications, • meeting electoral commission regulatory demands, • legal costs, • running a mail box address, • travel expenses for meetings, • computer equipment for newscasts and opportunistic operations such as Bill of Rights crowdsourcing all require funds. *But voluntary work remains by far the largest input.*

Possible sources of funds are:-

1. Grant application to institutions. Only Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust will fund political projects. But given the right application they could well be interested.
2. Formal FCA approved crowd-funding platform and there are several that focus on donations such as Indiegogo. Ray is meeting the chair of the UK Crowdfunding Association Julia Groves to discuss. Julia also runs an environmental crowd-funding platform called Trillion Fund.
3. Email fundraising. Chicken and Egg problem – a list needs to be built by going to scale and then develop the web site and Aweber technology to seek small donations.
4. Large Donors – say £1000 and above. This depends totally on relationships and is usually very personal.
5. Personal fundraising through sites such as Just Giving and also through Friends and Family crowdfunding.

A proper budget with priorities and fund raising plans will be presented at the Strategy Forum on 9th September 2015.