

Letter to World Citizens  
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On my answering machine last week was a message asking me to join a conference call sponsored by the Fully-Informed Jury Association. It was my first conference call.

I listened to people from Missouri, Alaska, Georgia, Texas, Washington and other unidentified states to find out what it was all about. Gradually, I learned that these good people wanted to found a "parallel government" to the United States!

While vaguely stated, the main aim was to revise the Constitution and, in particular, to reaffirm the Ninth and Tenth Amendments referring to the sovereignty of the people.

As the conferees spoke about citizen sovereignty as represented by the jury system, I discovered that in the early days of America, the jury was a sovereign body constitutionally empowered to decide whether laws were just or unjust. Moreover, a jury could override a judge's directives on what it should consider in its deliberations.

In short, the jury system was originally an indispensable guardian of civil liberty in the face of a potentially oppressive government.

As I listened, I thought of the nations that have no jury system at all or one that is controlled by the government itself. I realized, too, that there could be no world jury system without a world judicial system. The 15 judges at The Hague, sitting as the International Court of Justice, have no law to adjudicate, much less a jury of citizens to appeal to!

Someone new to the conference call asked what the coordinator meant by a "parallel government." Her response was vague. However, she did indicate that "Washington" was the "enemy" and had to be "replaced." A caller from Alaska warned that "parallel government" might be misconstrued as talk of secession, which carries severe risks. Our host replied that the movement was non-violent.

After a half-hour of general discussion, she invited me to explain to my fellow conferees who I am. Before speaking, I considered the essence of their concerns: that national government no longer represents the sovereign people and that the legal tools nevertheless still exist to reclaim that sovereignty, particularly through the jury system.

"Thanks for inviting me," I began. "I'm fascinated by the conversation, especially as it relates to constitutional rights. I myself used the Ninth Amendment in a case before the Supreme Court. I renounced my nationality in 1948 and claimed the right to choose my own political allegiance. I claimed world citizenship. So the idea of the people of a jury being endowed with sovereign power is very appealing."

At this point, the hostess interrupted, rather annoyed. We have many enemies in the nation itself, she said, and we must deal with them first before thinking of the outside world. But our problems, I replied doggedly, were not merely national but global. The Founders of the U.S. Constitution, I added, were conducting an experiment which now, 207 years later, had to be extended to include the world citizenry.

At that point, I figured I had said enough. But then several of the listeners asked for our address and telephone number.

After hanging up, it struck me that this is what the World Syntegrity Project is all about, reaffirming the sovereignty of people... but as world, not national, citizens. The historic precedent of the jury system seems to me a valid, nay, indispensable item for the next Infosets.

Postscript: I was requested the next day by the coordinator, with apologies, not to "attend" any more of their conference calls.