

# The Simultaneous Policy

## Presentation Notes - WDM

Thanks for asking me to talk about the Simultaneous Policy. It was an idea that simply came to me in a split second about a year and a half ago and which I have since struggled to present in a book of the same title. During that time, the idea has attracted increasing attention from NGOs, economists, journalists, intellectuals and others. In the brief time we have available, I will try to summarise the idea as best I can but I must point out that such a brief talk cannot do proper justice to it. So I would urge you to take advantage of some copies of the book and briefing papers which you are welcome to take away afterwards.

The Simultaneous Policy (SP for short) is a range of measures to achieve economic justice both between peoples of North and South and between rich and poor within nations; to achieve the conditions for global economic and environmental sustainability, nuclear disarmament and a far more peaceful world. As you can see, SP is a very modest programme!

Before telling you more about SP, I'd like to reduce to one word what I believe to represent the core of our world economic, environmental and social problems. That word is COMPETITION.

I will not attempt to justify that statement in any depth, save to say that the reason world problems only seem to worsen is not because we lack the resources, knowledge or will. It is because competition induces fear. Governments fear implementing any policy that might incur the displeasure of internationally mobile capital for fear of devaluation, inflation or capital flight. They also fear imposing tighter controls on industry for fear of capital and jobs moving to other competing countries. Businesses resist the implementation of environmentally responsible technology not because it cannot be done but because they fear increased costs and reduced competitiveness resulting in lower profits and job losses. Mergers and acquisitions and their attendant job losses occur, not so much out of greed but out of fear for the company to retain competitive advantage and relative safety for fear of itself becoming the target of a takeover. Third World countries too, must compete with one another to attract investment from foreign multinationals by submitting to 'structural adjustment' and allowing their raw materials to be plundered and indigenous peoples displaced. To sum it up therefore, today, the main barrier to solving world problems is competition.

Furthermore, competition is not just the unacceptable symptom of global free trade. It is also the equally unacceptable feature of protectionism: the competitive vicious circle of tit-for-tat national trade barriers so often cited by free-marketeers as the cause of previous world wars. Indeed, neither free-trade *nor* protectionism on their own can offer an answer to our problems. Nor can economic justice or environmental and employment security be fostered within a framework of unfettered competition. After all, competition is not about justice or security – it's about winning. With neither of these paradigms offering an answer, it should be of little surprise that, in the aftermath of the so-called 'victory' of Seattle, NGOs are all frantically searching for a coherent alternative.

As the inevitable symptom of both hitherto available paradigms, it shouldn't be too difficult to deduce that competition *itself* represents the underlying problem. Competition is, however, neither simply

international nor industry-specific. In the age of globalisation, it's a truly *global* problem. And global problems require global – and simultaneous – solutions.

In a globally competitive context, we need to ask: How can we get from international competition to global co-operation? How can we build a genuine and co-operative community of nation states capable both of bringing competition back under control and of implementing measures to narrow the gap between rich and poor and to save the global environment? How can we build global unity and co-operation to tackle world problems whilst at the same time maintaining national diversity?

The Simultaneous Policy is a direct answer to those questions. In a globalised world, the only appropriate basis for co-operation which avoids the risk of capital flight and job losses is for a range of appropriate measures to be implemented by *all (or virtually all) countries simultaneously*. That is what I have called the Simultaneous Policy: SP.

The measures of SP would, amongst other things, tax all major corporations and global currency speculation, cancel Third World debt and abolish weapons of mass destruction. The re-regulation of financial markets and corporations would restore genuine democracy to nation states and the proceeds of the taxation would fund development of the poorest countries on a debt-free basis. Environmental protection measures would also be built-in.

Remember that these measures would be implemented by *all countries simultaneously*. SP therefore represents a low-risk way forward because it removes the key fear of business, governments and people alike: the possibility that *some* major corporations or *some* countries could gain unfair competitive advantage by escaping implementation thus causing a loss of competitiveness, profitability, jobs and votes for all others. In short, by eliminating competition at this level, we also eliminate its adverse consequences.

“But,” you might say, “how can we possibly succeed in getting SP adopted by all nations of the world?” The answer is that SP has some rather interesting advantages on its side:

Firstly, since *implementation* is to be simultaneous amongst all nations, it can only occur once *adoption* by all nations has been achieved. It is therefore clear that a gradual process of adoption or ‘adoption campaign’ must take place first: person by person, party by party and nation by nation. Adoption could therefore be described as an open ‘declaration of intent’ to implement its measures when all other nations do likewise. Who ever adopts SP risks little or nothing because implementation can only occur when *all* nations do likewise.

– ***SP is low-risk or no-risk; it eliminates fear and distrust.***

Secondly, any individual, any business, any NGO, any political party or any government may adopt SP provided it is adopted in full. It can also be adopted by a church, school or any other group or organisation.

– ***SP is universally inclusive: anyone can adopt it.***

Thirdly, since global simultaneous implementation refers to a point in time in the future at which all nations implement the same measures, this creates what could be described as a ‘future context’ of *co-operation* amongst nations – the new era of international global community. This ‘future context’ is clearly entirely different to the ‘current context’, as we have it today, which is one of *competition* amongst nations. Arising from this, policies that are unworkable and consequently undesirable in the current competitive context – like re-regulating capital markets,

for example - can, in a future context in which all cooperate, become entirely workable and desirable.

**- *SP transforms sterile into fertile; it provides the cooperative basis that allows necessary policies to be adopted.***

Fourthly, nations can still actively compete with one another whilst, at the same time, advocating cooperation in the form of their adoption of SP; these two policies can continue in parallel for as long as is necessary until all nations agree. However, the open adoption of SP by individuals, organisations, businesses, political parties and governments also crucially serves as a challenge to others who have not yet adopted. As the numbers adopting increase, so will the moral force of the challenge.

**- *SP challenges everyone to adopt it. Anyone not adopting can have no good reason for refusing.***

And finally, whatever the current politics of a person, organisation or political party, if they consider the measures of SP as desirable in a future context in which all cooperate, that is sufficient for their adoption. Because it relates only to the future context of cooperation, SP becomes a non-party political issue in the current context of competition. This allows it to be adopted by any person, organisation or party of any political leaning. Instead of dividing people along party-political or other lines, SP therefore unites them behind a policy for which there is already widespread support; support which, until the advent of SP, had no means of effective, political expression.

**- *SP is not right, left or centre but a policy for the whole world. It unites us instead of dividing us.***

So many other initiatives, appeals and charters calling for global change such as the Hague Appeal for Peace or Charter 99 represent merely petitions or 'shopping lists' of what they want to achieve – they express the 'what' but ignore the all-important 'how'. That is where SP is different: it also provides the 'how'. This crucially renders it capable of official adoption by political parties and governments.

All these are good reasons why SP will succeed. But, perhaps the most compelling reason of all is what I call "pseudo-democracy". Today, all political parties once in power, have no choice but to pursue only those policies that will not displease world markets. So whichever party we elect, and whatever they may say in their manifestos, the policies delivered inevitably substantially conform to those demands thus supplanting democracy with pseudo-democracy: an *illusion* of democracy in which it no longer really matters for which party we vote. As more and more people realise their votes can make little or no difference, they will increasingly be prepared to vote for ANY party that adopts SP seeing it as the only way to restore genuine democracy, economic and environmental security and peace around the world.

As each person, organisation or political party adopts SP, they recognise the futility and damage done by continued unfettered competition; they recognise the flaws of our capitalist system and are prepared to be seen to both admit them and stand ready to address them. In adopting SP, they openly demonstrate their non-violent resistance to the current world economic order; a resistance which, as numbers grow, will become a very real and potent force.

Remembering that in most countries it takes only a relatively small number of people to influence the 'swing' or 'floating vote', the target is to get that 'critical mass' of people in each country to adopt SP.

For if enough of us do, politicians will be powerless to ignore us. Indeed, when political parties realise that a critical proportion of the electorate is prepared to vote for *any* party that adopts SP, they are going to find adoption rather difficult to resist. They, too, will have no option but to succumb by adopting SP.

That is all I can say about SP in such a short time. I hope this talk and the positive reaction my book has received might encourage you to read it and to adopt SP. After all, adopting SP in no way replaces or negates our existing and very necessary activities with WDM or other NGOs. On the contrary, adopting SP is entirely complementary to them. If you would like to do so, more information and adoption forms are available.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity. If there are any questions, I will do my best to answer them.