

Simultaneous Policy Annual Vote 2009

Introduction

Simultaneous Policy Adopters and the wider public were invited to vote on proposals put forward for dealing with global problems. They were also asked to indicate what they believe to be the top three issues that should be addressed by the Simultaneous Policy (Simpol).

Voting began on 21 October 2009 and was originally planned to run until 14 November. This was extended to 25 November to give people more time to vote and because the *It's Simpol!* newsletter with news on the vote was only available at the end of this period. Adopters were also emailed several times to encourage them to vote.

There were only 86 votes counted, less than half than in the vote last year (183 votes). 94% of votes were from people who had already signed up as Adopters compared to 81% in 2008. The decrease in an already low involvement may be due to policy proposers being less active in encouraging people to support their policies this time around. There had only been one new policy submitted since the last vote.

People were asked to provide and name and email address as a check on multiple voting. Where people voted more than once, the last vote submitted was counted.

Top issues

Ten issues were listed, based on suggestions put forward by Adopters in the first annual voting round in 2006. Voters were asked to indicate their top three priorities. They could suggest up to three issues of their own as alternatives to those listed. The issues may be addressed directly or indirectly by one or more policy. The list of issues is a useful tool for the Policy Committee when it is considering topics for the newsletter and public meetings.

The ranking of the issues is as follows (with comparison to past years)

Ranking	Issue	Weighted vote	2008	2007	2006
1.	Climate change	147	1	1	1
2.	International financial markets and other financial issues	86	4	7	7
3.	The power of transnational corporations	74	2	3	5
4.	Governance (global and national)	71	5	9	8
5.	Environment	62	3	2	3
6.	Human Rights	52	7	6	9
7.	The system of international trade	35	6	5	4
8.	Conflict resolution	27	10	4	2
=9.	Understanding between peoples	26	8	10	10
=9.	Disarmament	26	9	8	6

The weighted vote = 3 * number making this top issue + 2 * no. making this second placed issue + 1 * no. making this third place issue.

There were some additional issues proposed, given in the appendix. Two people commented that the issues are inter-related, which is undoubtedly true. However, this does not mean that Adopters necessarily believe all of these issues should be addressed by the Simpol or that there is no need to add other issues.

It is interesting to see how the issues of financial markets and global governance have risen up the list following the financial crisis, which was developing during the 2008 vote.

Rating of policies

Policies are given below with the votes according to the following key:

A - indicates you like this suggestion and it should be developed further.

B - indicates you think this issue is important, but the approach is wrong.

C - indicates you think this suggestion is not suitable for inclusion in Simpol.

D - indicates you need further information to understand the suggestion better before you can give your view.

The most popular policies will be given space in the newsletter and in public meetings. The ranking is based on the 'A' vote, with the 'C' vote used as a tie breaker (the smaller 'C' vote being ranked higher). These are the policies in order of popularity, with greater details below:

- **Contraction and Convergence: 87%**
- **World Transnational Corporation Regulatory Authority: 83%**
- **Nuclear Disarmament: 73%**
- **Beyond GDP: 72%**
- **The Oil Depletion Protocol: 71%**
- **The Tobin Tax: 67%**
- **International Clearing Union: 67%**
- **International Farm Animal Welfare Standards: 67%**
- **Remodelling Companies to Become Stakeholder-Governed Organisations: 65%**
- **A Defensive Defence Policy: 64%**

Contraction and Convergence: 87%

- A: 87%
- B: 7%
- C: 5%
- D: 1%

Proposer: John Bunzl

Summary: A policy requiring nations to equitably effect, over a defined period of time, a global CONTRACTION of greenhouse gas emissions to within sustainable levels, as well as an equitable CONVERGENCE of permitted emissions levels between nations. While widely acknowledged as an appropriate policy to tackle global warming, C&C is likely to require the international political framework offered by Simpol if it is ever to be implemented.

Contraction & Convergence is promoted by the Global Commons Institute www.gci.org.uk. Full information can be found on their website.

World Transnational Corporation Regulatory Authority: 83%

- A: 83%
- B: 6%
- C: 6%
- D: 6%

Proposer: Mike Brady

Seconders: John Bunzl, Peter Challen, Bill Clarke, Graham Edwards, Doug Everingham, Gerard O'Donovan, Morgan Gallagher, Linda Gamlin, Brian Jenkins, Dawn Johnson, Chaitanya Kalevar, Brendan Maher, Caroline Mitchinson Lawther, Ruth Moss, Jill Philips, Jilna Shah, Shilpa Shah, Jonathan Ward, Brian Wills, Valerie Yule.

Summary: This new body will be responsible for ensuring that transnational corporations abide by existing human rights, environmental, labour and other relevant agreements. It will accept reports of breaches from appropriate authorities or public petition and, if it finds there is a case to answer, will bring a prosecution before the International Criminal Court. The Court will be empowered to levy fines based on annual turnover on the corporation and to award governments the right to levy punitive tariffs on the home government of the corporation for seeking an unfair competitive advantage by failing to enforce the agreements. Corporations with a turnover and geographic coverage above set minimums will be required to register as 'globally incorporated companies' and submit annual independently-audited reports of their performance against standards already agreed to in the UN Global Compact for assessment.

Nuclear Disarmament: 73%

A: 73%
B: 7%
C: 10%
D: 9%

Proposer: Mark Horler

Summary: Nuclear weapons pose a risk to all human life, to our civilisations and also to the biosphere upon which we depend (though we may not think it) for our survival. This is one of the most fundamental risks we face as a species - from catastrophic loss of life to the worst case scenario of extinction. We must deal with this now. I can only suggest that all visit the CND site: www.cnduk.org. Also I suggest reading 'The fate of the earth' by Jonathan Schell.

Beyond GDP: 72%

A: 72%
B: 7%
C: 13%
D: 8%

Proposer: Brian Wills

Seconders: Diana Trimble, Brendan Maher, Graham Edwards, Doug Everingham, Peter Challen, Brian Jenkins, Hugh Steadman, Richard Lawson, Mark Braund.

Summary: Complement Gross Domestic Product as a money-based index of national wealth with a basket of indicators that prioritise health, social and environmental criteria. In the knowledge that health, social and environmental statistics are as important as economic ones in the comparative measurement of each nation's wealth, governments should agree to complement GDP with a basket of indicators that prioritise these additional criteria, presented in a document for implementation through the UN or another appropriate international organisation or treaty.

The Oil Depletion Protocol: 71%

A: 71%
B: 6%
C: 12%
D: 12%

Proposer: Tony Troughton-Smith

Summary: The Oil Depletion Protocol, also called the Rimini (or Uppsala) Protocol, describes a plan for the equitable international management of oil supplies during the impending period of escalating depletion, to mitigate the effects as fairly as possible between and within countries, prevent corporate and national profiteering and encourage an orderly transition to a

period of global energy shortage. The Protocol requires and encourages increasing cooperation between countries, societies and private corporations, reminding all that we share a single, finite planet.

A new initiative by the Post Carbon Institute provides the facility for organisations and individuals to adopt the ODP (much as Simpol supporters adopt the Simpol idea). ODP adopters pledge to reduce their energy usage by 25% over the next 10 years.

The Tobin Tax: 67%

- A: 67%
- B: 6%
- C: 12%
- D: 15%

Proposer: J A Murray McGrath

Summary: The Tobin Tax, as I understand it, is a very small percentage (say, 0.5%) on all money market transactions. It would produce a huge income from activity which is totally non-productive. Check it out on: <http://www.ceedweb.org/iirp/> and <http://www.tobintax.org.uk/>.

International Clearing Union: 67%

- A: 67%
- B: 8%
- C: 12%
- D: 13%

Proposer: David Smith

Summary: This proposal was made by John Maynard Keynes in 1942 and was featured in George Monbiot's book: 'Age of Consent'. The object is to provide a mechanism to ensure every nation maintains what Monbiot calls a 'balance of trade', but is more correctly called a balance of payments. Experience has shown that once a small to medium nation gets seriously into deficit it can never climb out. Also the mad scramble to try to run a surplus encourages destructive trade. Keynes' key innovation was to give creditor nations an incentive to come back into balance as well as debtor nations. The US was determined to run a surplus after the second world war, and so Keynes' proposal was rejected at Bretton Woods.

International Farm Animal Welfare Standards: 67%

- A: 67%
- B: 3%
- C: 26%
- D: 3%

Proposer: Diana Trimble

Seconders: Denis Robb (UK), Rory Short (South Africa), Brian Willis - (France), Syd Baumel (Canada), Hayley Warner (UK), Suzanne Trimble (USA), Barbara Panvel (UK), Spinoza Pitman (UK), Bill Clarke.

Summary: With the help of Compassion in World Farming, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Simpol Adopters, small farmers and animal health professionals, strict guidelines for acceptable levels of care for each type of animal, covering environment (physical space, socialisation, access to outdoors), handling, treatment, methods of slaughter, hygiene, and waste disposal will be developed into a document for International ratification. These guidelines would be part of the Simultaneous Policy package of interconnected economic, environmental, labour, health, and aid policies, to ensure that no nation need risk competitive disadvantage when making obvious ethical and healthy choices.

Remodelling Companies to Become Stakeholder-Governed Organisations: 65%

- A: 65%
- B: 7%
- C: 15%
- D: 13%

Proposers: Brian Wills and Patrick Andrews

Summary: International legislation to replace archaic joint stock company law is now urgently required to "turn multinational corporations into nested networks of stakeholder-governed organisations accountable to local citizens" (Shann Turnbull).

A Defensive Defence Policy: 64%

- A: 64%
- B: 7%
- C: 14%
- D: 15%

Proposer: Barbara Panvel

Summary: I propose that we work to encourage all nations to follow the example of the governments of Sweden, New Zealand, Japan and Switzerland in adopting a defensive defence policy. Some groundwork has been done in the UK [follow the link for information on other countries]. Dr Steve Schofield was commissioned to write a research report on the

implications for the UK of adopting such a policy. It was launched in a Commons committee room in December 2002 by former defence minister Peter Kilfoyle. In addition to those attending interest and support was expressed by forty-six people with a good track record, including nine MPs, one being Simpol's Andrew George, and two former MPs, Alice Mahon and Tony Benn. Three people have agreed to show the excellent video/DVD "War no More" and open a discussion about defensive defence. SIMPOL UK's backing and promotion would be of great benefit to this cause which is in harmony with SP's desire to adopt policies leading to a more peaceful world.

Policies dropping out of the process

Policies receiving less than 50% approval drop out of the process, but in the next round of voting there will be a chance to save the policies with a 'keep' vote, before it is archived.

However, in this round, all policies achieved above 50% of the vote.

One policy that took part in the 2008 vote was withdrawn by the proposer and so did not take part in the 2009 vote: Weapons spending excluded from GDP calculations.

Policies failing a 'last chance' vote

Adopters could vote to keep the following policies in the process, but none gained the 50% vote necessary. There was some rallying around the Monetary Reform, but this didn't quite gain the 50% support required to remain in the process. However, it can be resubmitted in the same or revised form.

Monetary reform: 47% vote to keep it in the process.

ETI (Environmental Tax on Imports): 31% vote to keep it in the process.

Discussion on issues and policy voting

Involvement in voting is still very low, falling back to the levels seen in the 2007 vote, which was also conducted solely on line. From the first vote in 2006, it is known that participation is higher if there are resources to directly mail Adopters.

As last year, the financial systems and global governance issues have risen even further up the lists of priority issues. Generally policies have gained a higher level of support than previously, which may be due to Adopters becoming increasingly familiar with them. Many have also gained media coverage either directly (such as nuclear disarmament - the subject of an international campaign launched in the year - and the Tobin Tax - now backed by the UK government). Some media attention has been indirect, such as when an oil price crisis led to discussion of peak oil.

Contraction and Convergence gained increased support and climate change was once again the most important issue for many Adopters.

The only new proposal, International Farm Animal Welfare Standards, also gained good support, perhaps benefiting from the discussion and promotion of it by seconders. It was also a topical issue with the swine flu outbreak in the news.

Several people discussed other possible policies on the discussion board and email list, but none of these were developed to the point of being submitted.

As in previous years, these results will prove useful to the new Policy Committee in deciding the issues and policies to highlight. The results are also useful in promoting the campaign. For example, in discussions, letters and press releases relating to climate change we can state that: "Climate change is the most pressing global problem, according to Simpol Adopters participating in the 2009 annual vote. The Contraction and Convergence proposal from the Global Commons Institute, one of those put forward by an Adopter to address climate change, received 87% approval." This demonstrates the democratic aspirations of the campaign. However, the low number of people voting means Simpol cannot make as much of the results as would otherwise be the case, particularly when single issue online campaigns often gain many thousands of supporters.

While the increased support for policies could be looked upon as a consensus being reached, the low numbers voting also means it is dangerous to read too much into the results. If there was more debate and even competing approaches for addressing global problems (whether singly or holistically) then more could be made of the results. The policy development process surely needs to be more dynamic - policies have not been modified over the course of the year to strengthen them. Alternatives have not been put forward. Policies that have dropped out have not been resubmitted.

It will be for the new Committee to decide whether changes are needed to the policy development process, in consultation with Adopters. There have been two offers of support from Adopters interested in joining existing members. **Given there is no competition for places, it is recommended to the Simpol-UK AGM that those who wish to continue on the Committee should do so, joined by the new volunteers should they wish to go ahead.**

The voting forms and spreadsheet with the analysis will be provided to the Simpol-UK office for archiving in accordance with data protection requirements. This report will be added to the website and the policy pages and discussion forum updated with the results.

Prepared by:

Mike Brady, Organiser of the 2009 vote on behalf of the Simpol-UK Policy Committee