Robert C. Johansen

Dear WOMP colleagues:

I appreciate Richard's paper and believe that WOMP II is very much needed in today's world. I draw this conclusion because I share his sense of anguish about contemporary violations of human dignity and their likely continuation, and his reminding us of the acute dangers posed by contemporary expressions of statism, militarism, capitalism, and general insensitivity to environmental deterioration. As a U.S. citizen, I must say that long-term changes in U.S. political culture, in which rightist influences are exerted through religious movements, the media, public and private education at all levels, unregulated money in electoral politics, and deeply compromised legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government, have reached an alarming stage. I will comment in more detail on Richard's very sobering analysis, with which I agree, when we are together. To move forward with WOMP II is justified by the need to continue the intellectual, normative, and published contributions of WOMP I. These two were especially valuable: (1) the project's invitation to use our imaginations to depict a better world (and the scholarly legitimation of doing so) and (2) the WOMP participants' critiques of the existing international system and the primary policies expressed therein, which was a prophetic telling the truth about power.

Although WOMP I did not lead to many programmatic consequences, it did influence scholarship and teaching in ways that were path-breaking, significant, and positive. There is a continued need for intellectual, normative, and publishable contributions to influence today's and tomorrow's discourse. This need will continue until major world order reform has been achieved. Although some of WOMP's early messages have become widely accepted -- such as the idea that the world is highly interdependent -- the establishment of governance structures that would flow logically from believing such messages has not occurred. The illogic that WOMP I pointed out, often "ahead of its time," has actually deepened in today's structures and policies.

Richard's lament, if we call it that, that not all WOMPers agreed on a dismissal of world federalism or on an attractive alternative vision, does not need to deter us now from resuming the WOMP project. We need not have consensus on what kind of world governance is needed. Pluralism in pursuit of a preferred world is desirable. As Richard has always emphasized, we can be quite clear about the values to which we are committed while we remain experimental about the institutional means by which they may be implemented.

In my view, we cannot successfully address militarism or environmental deterioration without more justice, and we cannot reliably achieve and sustain more justice without more effective law. This in turn requires new forms of global governance accompanied by significant vertical dispersal of sovereignty.
In any case, in WOMP II, participants may by necessity be more dispersed, more diverse, and less centered in the North and West, yet the experienced WOMPers have a lot to contribute because of all they learned in WOMP I.

A renewed WOMP can provide much moral and bridging imagination. At the same time more effort could be made to enlist the endorsement of well-known moral leaders and activists (including human rights organizations) throughout the world to provide collective, legitimizing support for structural change.

In addition to directions suggested by Richard for a future WOMP, I would like to see us consider giving more attention and weight to the world order dimensions of the following six topics:

(1) core human rights as a lingua franca for universal discourse and a touchstone for evaluating policies and structures and motivating political action;

(2) processes of personal, inner change of consciousness and identities, changes without which I am pessimistic about bringing sufficient structural political change (these explorations should include intrafaith and interfaith dialogues);

(3) explorations of the nature, variety, and respective utilities of diverse democratic forms and values at every "level," from local to global, with more explicit clarification that democratic values are being lost in national systems that remain national in scope while the causes of their plights often arise from beyond their boundaries and the consequences of their policies spill outside their boundaries;

(4) explorations of the nature of and antidotes to harmful dimensions of "globalization," in the context of the preceding examination of democratic values and processes;

(5) explorations of the meaning of and antidotes to the scandalous perpetuation of poverty for millions of people, which could be abolished without negatively affecting the richest 10 percent of the world's population, and recognizing that if abject poverty were abolished this would bring the single biggest human rights gain imaginable in today's world; and

(6) developing more nuanced indicators of support for the primary preferred norms so that the normative disposition of governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental actors might be accurately discerned, rewarded (or at least acknowledged) when it is positive, and might be named and shamed and possibly penalized when it is negative.

I look forward to seeing each of you and hearing your discussion our common interests.