

15. Children's suffrage executed by parents: institution for harmony

Leo M. Semashko

Children's Suffrage:

Democracy for the 21st Century, Priority Investing in Human Capital as a
Way toward Social Harmony

Book

Concept, Research Proposal, Legislation, Lecture Series, First Responses, Conference
Suggestions, Dialogue with UNICEF

Dedicated

To a future International Conference on "**Children's Suffrage**"

Leo M. Semashko

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And Way toward Social Harmony**

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First publishing in Russia 2004

St.-Petersburg State Polytechnical University. 29, Polytechnicheskaya st., St.-Petersburg, 195251,
Russia

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ISBN 5-7422-0655-0

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Abstract

Children's suffrage means that children younger than 18 will be granted THE RIGHT to vote, and entered into electoral registers, but the EXERCISE of this right (the voting) will be incumbent on their parents or legal guardians. Children's suffrage is to ensure, at all levels of the legislative power, the formation of a legislative (parliamentary) majority, to create an efficient governmental mechanism for addressing children's problems, first of all by placing them high on the list of priorities for budgetary financing. This mechanism will seek to eradicate "poverty, discrimination, and society's neglect of children," problems emphasized by the UN Special Session on Children in 2002. Children's suffrage, by ensuring top-priority investment in human capital, and enhancement of its quality, will provide nations of the world, first of all developing nations, with an innovative, strategic instrument for accelerated development, in this new, Information Age, and in an era of increasing global interdependence. The expected impact of children's suffrage can be summed up like this: Children's suffrage, exercised by the parents and guardians -- legislative majority to address children's problems -- top-priority budgetary financing of the children's sphere -- priority development and new, effective quality of human capital as a primary, societal resource -- prosperity and social harmony at all levels.

This brochure does not call for political action now. Rather, it proposes a broad, scholarly and public debate, as well as sociological, psychological, and legal studies in preparation for children's suffrage, so that, in five to ten years, interested nations can begin to introduce appropriate legislation through national referendums.

The author expresses enormous gratitude to Martha Ross DeWitt for editing, participation and important amendments and also to the World Vision International for the grant, which has allowed participating in the 36th IIS World Congress, Beijing, July 7-11, 2004

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Introduction: Letter to UNICEF

Ms. Carol Bellamy

Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Dear Ms. Bellamy,

We are pleased to send you our Concept of children's suffrage (19 pages) and Concept for international sociological research on attitudes of parents to children's suffrage (10 pages). Below we suggest, briefly, a systemic framework for children's suffrage, and the anticipated consequences for societies and their political systems.

Children's suffrage means that the law grants children under age 18 the RIGHT to vote and entitles them to be entered into electoral registers, but the EXERCISE of the right (the voting) is incumbent, by law, on their parents or legal guardians. Children's suffrage will eliminate the age qualification, a characteristic of industrial society, and put an end to society's neglect of children. It will abolish political discrimination against children and make them equal with adults in electoral rights. A result will be the formation, in legislative bodies, of *a parliamentary majority* (the votes of parents and their children will constitute a majority of the total votes), which will result in a governmental mechanism for the efficient handling of children's problems (education, health, crime, drugs, homelessness, prostitution, etc.). This mechanism will find resources to ameliorate the problems of children's welfare and raise their families' living standards. It will strengthen the authority and importance of parents, especially mothers. It will ensure priority financing for the social sphere, with considerable salary increases for teachers, doctors and all others employed in childcare, which is certain to make society truly social. *All* population groups are due to benefit from the adoption of the law. Children's suffrage will cause a major transformation of the electoral and political system, purge it from corruption, promote a socially oriented redistribution of the state budget, and provide a systematic solution for the problems of childhood. Children's suffrage is regarded by us *as a key right of the child, the execution of which provides effective performance of ALL rights of children*, as prescribed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The necessity, content and social consequences of children's suffrage are considered in more detail in Concept-1 (enclosed).

Historically, this idea has been around, in various forms, for nearly a century! Here we highlight two public events. It was brought up as far back as 1905, by the well known Russian scientist D.I.Mendeleyev, albeit in a slightly different form -- he proposed to indirectly introduce a "children qualification" for members of the State Duma. (*Zavetnye Mysli*, Moscow, 1995, p.344). And recently,

in January, 2004, Belgian cardinal Gustaaf Joos has ridiculed the electoral principle of “one person - one vote.” He has said: “I find it strange that (an) 18 year old has the same vote as a father of seven. One has no responsibilities whatsoever, the other provides tomorrow's citizens.” (Australian newspaper *The Age*, January 23rd, 2004, p 8). The idea returns frequently, on the one hand because of "poverty, discrimination, and society's neglect of children," and on the other because of a need "to make the world fit for children," which the UN Special Session on Children stressed in 2002, in a session carried out under the auspices of UNICEF.

In Concept-2 we propose a comparative, sociological study to determine attitudes toward children’s suffrage in different countries of the world. The first part of the study would examine the attitudes of 1,000 parents and guardians in four large cities, two in rich countries (US and Australia or France) and two in poor ones (Russia and Brazil). (This selection might be amended later.) Based on the findings, if parents in at least one of the countries approve of children’s suffrage, a proposal will be prepared for UNICEF, calling for the introduction of a special clause about children’s suffrage in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

So, our Concepts are pivoted around objectives set by UNICEF, and intended to provide, first of all, a method of efficient IMPLEMENTATION of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children’s suffrage, as a social institution, is believed to be such a method

In connection with the above, we request UNICEF to become a sponsor of the international, sociological study, to include it in UNICEF's program for the next three years, and to consider the possibility of *financing the project in the first stage, in the amount of the USD 130 thousand (optimal), or 55 thousand (alternative, minimal version), or financing a part of the first stage.* We also ask UNICEF to make recommendations on aspects of the Concepts and the study, especially the questionnaire, the pool of countries under examination, the hypotheses, the pool of researchers, the number of interviews, and additional sources of possible funding.

With deep respect and hope for acceptance of our proposal,

Leo Semashko and Martha Ross DeWitt

February 9, 2004

2. Children, Youth and Democratic Suffrage in a Globalization Era

2.1. Children's Suffrage and its Social Effects (Concept-1)

Abstract

Concept-1, which highlights the ideology¹ of children's suffrage on the basis of postpluralist tetrasociological theory, does not in the least claim to cover exhaustively the problems of children and children's welfare in the modern global world, -- such coverage lies within the purview of international and national information sources. The concept attempts to propose a single, albeit, in our view, the most effective, mechanism for improving children's welfare and solving children's problems in the new century, -- namely, children's suffrage exercised by children's parents or legal guardians. The aim of the concept is to demonstrate this. The concept analyzes the social, political and moral necessity of children's suffrage, and its connections with the constitutional and electoral law in general. The concept outlines the fundamentals of children's suffrage, its main provisions and an appropriate political mechanism for the urgent and systemic handling of children's problems. The concept outlines a spectrum of the positive effects the law may have on all societal strata, and social obstacles to its adoption. The concept defines theoretical, or, more precisely, tetrasociological foundations of children's suffrage and provides relevant statistics and facts. The second part (Concept-2) outlines main parameters and hypotheses for an international, comparative sociological study of attitudes toward the bill of parents and guardians, as key actors (subjects) of children's suffrage.

Keywords: children's suffrage as exercised by their parents or guardians; children's suffrage law; child's vote.

The importance and welfare of children in the world. UN and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children's importance for society is reflected in an old adage "children are our future." Everything in society -- people, culture, politics, economics -- depends on what becomes of children. The quality of children's lives determines the quality of society's future, its people, culture, politics, and economics. Children are the beginning of everything. This is an axiom. It reflects the vital importance of children for society's future. But the future originates from and is being shaped today. One would assume that because of this, society is to give primary consideration to the situation and welfare of children today and put it at the top of the agenda. However, obviously, children are not a

primary concern. Children remain a low-priority issue for governments and linger in the backyard of society. The most authoritative international documents confirm this.

For instance, the UN Special Session on children (May 2002), initiated by UNICEF and attended by 180 States, arrived at the following distressing conclusions. The final Declaration of the Session pointed out that the current tendencies for economic globalization have resulted in the "deterioration of the situation of the young generation." This was underscored by the following figures: "More than 10 million children die each year although most of those deaths could be prevented; 100 million children are still out of school, 60 per cent of them girls; 150 million children suffer from malnutrition; and HIV/AIDS is spreading with catastrophic speed." "So far we have failed to combat *poverty, discrimination and society's neglect of children*. Investments into social welfare are still *insufficient*. The childhood of millions continues to be devastated by hazardous and exploitative labour; the sale and trafficking of children, including adolescents, and other *forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence*." Faced with these facts, the UN Special Session called upon "all members of society" to join the "global movement that will help *build a world fit for children*"² (italics added). So, it is indirectly acknowledged that the world we have is unfit for children.

We witness the same situation with the principle implied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child -- "for children - the best," which means that so far children have not at all been getting the best things. This foundational international document emphasizes children's *paramount* importance, their right to *special care, special safeguards*, to the *maximum* extent, the *best* possible maintenance, etc. Here we quote some provisions of the Convention. "Childhood is entitled to *special care and assistance*" (Preamble). "The child... *should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding*" (Preamble). "The child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs *special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection*" (Preamble). "In all actions concerning children... the *best* interests of the child shall be a *primary* consideration" (Article 3.1). "States Parties... shall undertake such measures (for realizing children's rights--L.S.) to the *maximum extent* of their available resources" (Article 4). "The *best interests* of the child will be their (parents or legal guardians--L.S.) *basic* concern" (Article 18)³, etc (italics added).

But in reality children often not only don't get things "best," "special," "to the maximum extent," but they don't get even the most basic things. So why aren't children put at the top of the agenda? Why are children's problems, to which different nations attach varying degrees of importance, NOT becoming a high-priority issue even in the most prosperous countries? Why is it that "poverty, discrimination and society's neglect of children" have persisted over the centuries? From a systemic

viewpoint, what accounts for it *is the age qualification set for children in election legislation*, which prevents the contemporary democracy from creating a *political* mechanism for monitoring and handling children's problems. Care that children receive from their families and the state is obviously insufficient for eliminating "poverty, discrimination and society's neglect children."⁴

Care for children provided by families, society and the state

As is evidenced by the statistics and facts, both in poor and rich countries (see below), care provided for children (and the children's sphere) by families, society and governments is insufficient. The children's sphere is the most important section of the social sphere, because of its function of population reproduction. It embraces from 20 to 35% of the population under the age of 18 (majority) in different countries of the world. The children's sphere encompasses all the factors and resources of childhood: family, birth and mortality rates, pre-school education, school-level education, child healthcare, children's leisure, children's sports, etc. It encompasses the problems of the child: pre-school and school upbringing and education, obstetrics and healthcare, birth and mortality rates, summer vacationing, leisure and sports, orphanhood, homelessness, drugs, crime, prostitution, labor of children under age 14, etc. In all countries, children's problems have a tendency to grow and become more exacerbated. Families and the state today fail to satisfactorily handle children's problems by *old, traditional* means. In the modern, post-industrial world the family, the child and the state have changed cardinally, while the methods and mechanisms of handling children's problems, and the importance attached to them, remain the same as centuries ago.

Politically, children are relegated to the backyard and form a big political "black hole." In legislative organs, children's interests are not represented by deputies who are accountable to children. Children have families to care for them, but the means of the families are very limited, which is evidenced by a growth of juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, prostitution, sickness rates, homelessness, etc. Families fail to handle these problems, and so one is led to believe that children are deprived of adequate care by society and the state. So, children remain in fact the population's most marginal social group, which results in an accumulation and exacerbation of social problems, and worsens the quality of life for populations and individuals. The more marginal children are, the more inferior their quality of life is, the more marginal the future of humankind and of individual countries is bound to become. The quality of population depends on the quality of children's upbringing, education and health, for which families, society, and the state become increasingly responsible. An especially

large share of the responsibility is incumbent on the state, given its wealth of resources for handling children's problems.

Children's problems: how the state handles it

Unfortunately, not a single nation in the world today places children's problems in the forefront. Economic and military problems continue to dominate. This has been a strategy of industrial societies over the last two centuries. However, in the second half of the 20th century the developed countries started to promote a slogan of "social state," "social democracy," meaning that social problems are receiving primary consideration. However, in fact, even in these countries the situation remains the same, and not a single nation regards children's problems as a high-priority issue. Nearly all nations continue to handle children's problems through the traditional mechanism of residual federal financing. This mechanism has been especially typical for the former Soviet republics, and especially for Russia. The current strategy is to give an overwhelming priority to economics, which results in a residual financing for the children's sphere. Conversely, giving priority to the children's sphere is overwhelmingly a strategy of the future. Nations today prefer the strategy of today, rather than the strategy of the future, which leads to an aggravation of children's problems and a crisis for society. The state presently does not have an efficient instrument for solving children's problems. The state directs its efforts to the consequences, rather than to the causes, of child problems. Why has such a strategy prevailed? Because the democratic election process inherited from industrial society, is seriously flawed. The present concept sets forth a thesis that *children's suffrage, exercised by parents and legal guardians, is an efficient instrument* for eliminating this flaw and an effective tool for handling children's problems at the state level. Children's suffrage and its fulfilment will legitimise top-priority financing for the children's sphere and will direct a democratic government's efforts to the causes, not the consequences, of children's problems, which will put a long-term strategy for the future at the top of the government's agenda.

The history of suffrage: The age qualification as a political cause of "poverty, discrimination and society's neglect of children"

The history of suffrage has been diffusive: wealthy adult males were the first to get the vote, eventually all adult males, then women, then the young over the age of 18. Modern suffrage is a legacy

from a disappearing industrial society. For more than two centuries the vote has been gradually shedding its numerous restrictions -- racial, property- and gender-related, etc. The last remaining restriction -- age qualification -- holds. Children under 18, who constitute about one quarter of the population, remain in the "black hole" of suffrage. The "black hole" in suffrage leads to a "black hole" in politics and the state. So, an outrageous unfairness towards and discrimination against children persists.

Becoming a nation's citizen from birth, a child becomes a voter only after 18 years, as if in the intervening years the child lives outside society, is not its member, does not have problems and needs, and does not do anything of social importance. In fact, children do the most important thing: they reproduce themselves as a nation's major, human resource, the one that is later to reproduce ALL of the nation's resources, and on which, therefore, the nation's future TOTALLY depends. *Why then don't we see deputies elected on children's behalf, who will represent children's interests in the legislative organs of democratic nations? Why is it that every other population group has its interests represented, while children's interests are not represented and basically excluded from politics in general?* What accounts for this is a deeply-rooted electoral tradition, a legacy of industrial society, which allows ONLY for direct and single voting: every able-bodied citizen has only ONE vote, (s)he may vote only in person, on his/her own behalf, never on anyone else's. *Such is the major voting principle of modern democracy*, a principle formed in the industrial society. At a first, superficial, glance it seems quite fair. However, a closer examination reveals that this principle is fair for adults ONLY, and not for children. The implication of the principle is that children are incapable and, because of their age, unable to make a conscious, political choice (this premise seems fair and valid), while it is PROHIBITED that any other person can make a political choice on their behalf. *And this one is unfair*, because this restriction, a *political* one, leads to discrimination against children and validates injustice done to them. This injustice, a legacy of industrial society⁵, *conflicts* with the social function performed by children. This injustice perpetuates a cumbersome political legacy of *generational or age discrimination*, curtails modern democracy, impedes its modernization, and conflicts with the demands of a postindustrial, informational society of the globalization era. *The age qualification, depriving children of a voice in the political process, is a seminal cause of children's "poverty and discrimination" and should be abolished through the adoption of children's suffrage.*

Social, political and moral necessity of children's suffrage

Children, from birth, are members of society and citizens of a nation. Like adults, they have pressing needs and engage in a wide spectrum of daily activities. They do something which is very important for society: they reproduce themselves as a major social resource. They are engaged in socializing themselves. And this activity is just as important as any other socially useful activity. Moreover, for society, the socialization of children and the younger generation is a most important life-spring, which determines society's future and its quality. The process of socialization is very difficult and arduous for every child. Children's socialization is needed not only by children but by adults, by society in general, as well. So, society should use all available opportunities to make the process of socialization effective. And if socialization requires an efficient political instrument, such as children's suffrage, then society should add it to its political process. So, there is a social necessity for children's suffrage.

Its political necessity arises from the fact that the political process of a democratic government is flawed and inefficient without children's suffrage, without having the vote granted to nearly a quarter of the population excluded heretofore. Democracy's completion and maturity is predicated on the completion and maturity of citizens' suffrage. Suffrage is the beginning and the fountainhead of democracy, the gateway to it, whose quality and breadth determine the quality and breadth of a democracy. Contemporary suffrage is restricted to adults, and excludes children under age 18, who make up nearly 25% of the population; and for this reason contemporary democracy, from the viewpoint of suffrage, is only 75% complete and mature. Suffrage is a principal resource for the formation of power structures in a democratic nation. And if one quarter of this source is blocked, and people -- the source of power -- are "shortened" by one quarter, then the quality of a democratic government is significantly lessened in comparison with the possibilities of its completion.

Children, as well as adults, have their special interests, and *politically*, children's interests must be taken into account as much as adults' interests. Thus, children are in fact entitled to participate in elections and referenda on an EQUAL footing with adults. Children's suffrage, secured by law, has an enormous political significance, as it broadens and deepens democracy, lending to it a child's kindly face. Through children's suffrage, democracy broadens its resource base -- people -- to include the totality of its population. Democracy needs children's suffrage as much as children do. Adopting children's suffrage is the only way for democracy to prove its viability and to show contemporaries that, paraphrasing Winston Churchill, although it is the worst form of government, all the others that have been tried are worse still. Such is a general political necessity of children's suffrage. Politically, suffrage must be made more inclusive. To achieve this, the vote, which is direct (on one's own behalf)

and single (prohibiting voting for another person) must be complemented with a vote that is VICARIOUS (*not only on one's own behalf*) and MULTIPLE (*on one's children's behalf*). Inclusion of children *enlarges* the main electoral principle. Only if we introduce children's suffrage, to be exercised by parents or legal guardians, can we elevate children's problems to a political level, and to acquire at that level a sustained political will and a systemic mechanism for handling children's problems. On the other hand, of all possible transformations of democracy, a transformation through children's suffrage is the deepest, most humane and socially efficient.

There is also a moral and psychological need, which stems from the two needs outlined above. We talked earlier about the social *unfairness* of the key principle of suffrage upheld by modern democracy, a principle that completely excludes children from politics. As is well known, because of their age, children are unable to politically articulate their interests. This principle allows adults to ignore children's interests in the electoral systems of democratic nations and to deprive children of the vote. However, children's inability to articulate their interests does not mean they should be deprived of the vote. Is it fair to deprive children of the vote only because they are unable to articulate their interests? If children's problems and interests are as important as those of adults', then, for fairness sake, *adults, rather than exclude, should incorporate children's interests into the political sphere; rather than deprive children of the vote, should give it to them.* If we are to follow this line of thinking, *adults, rather than barring children from participation in election, should HELP* them to participate, ASSUMING, as parents or legal guardians, the task of articulating children's interests by way of ELECTING fitting parliamentary deputies, who would promote children's interests in the legislative bodies of the government. Helping children is a moral and psychological obligation of adults, parents and guardians above all. *What is it that prevents adults* from fulfilling the obligation? This obligation does not require from parents that they spend too much time, energy, money, etc. So, there are no serious obstacles. Moreover, present conditions, the deterioration of children's quality of life and the at-risk nature of their situation makes this project all the more urgent. Such is the moral necessity of children's suffrage. Exercise of children's suffrage by adults is an indicator of growth of both obligation to and responsibility for children, which the contemporary situation calls for. This is also an indicator of parents' growing *consciousness*. What generation of parents will become aware of a growing obligation to and responsibility for children? What generation will *understand* that the exercise of their children's suffrage *does not conflict with their love for their children*, but just the opposite, *strengthens and enriches it* with a new and important component. These writers hope that

their research will sustain the hypothesis that the present generation of young parents is already prepared for new parental responsibilities.

Children's suffrage as a demand of globalization

Children's suffrage is called for by globalization and a qualitatively new, postindustrial, informational, society. Progress of the global world toward social harmony and equality, and elimination of injustices inflicted by globalization, are impossible without a systemic political monitoring of the interests of children, who make up approximately a quarter of the global population. Globalization of economics, politics, science, education, along with an informational revolution and acceleration of the pace of life; transition from a law-based democracy to a social one; aggravation of the problems that younger generations and young families encounter; the increasing importance of education, the rise in visibility of the social sphere, the strengthening of civil society, a shift in global strategic interests from confrontation to cooperation -- these, and many other factors, call for an extension of suffrage to include children. Only children's suffrage can help ensure that children's interests are incorporated into politics internationally on a systemic basis. Therefore, children's suffrage, if adults approve it and grant it to their children and grandchildren, should be secured in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the relevant laws of different countries around the world.

Childhood problems are relevant not only to individual nations, but to the world in general and, therefore, to globalization. The future of globalization, its quality and degree of fairness, is determined by the quality of life of children, and depends on their education, health, mental outlook and welfare. Children's suffrage is an efficient instrument for achieving a high quality of children's education, health, mental outlook and welfare, and also a means for handling children's problems successfully. Children's suffrage is a demand of globalization, a prerequisite for the enhancement of its fairness and equality with regards to, above all, children's future. Children's suffrage is a prerequisite for the new democracy, which can become truly social only on a global scale, as is evidenced by the global flows of immigration. Fair globalization is possible only when conditions for child-rearing are universally favorable around the world, and children's suffrage ensures that the situation will be favorable. Today it is difficult to determine whether globalization is beneficial or detrimental to children, and whether, as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires, it gives children the best things, since it seems obvious that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Children's suffrage is able, if not to

eliminate the gap altogether, then at least to shorten it for children of the world, to ensure that children have the best things and live in a world that is fit for them. Adding to globalization and democracy a child dimension, children's suffrage transforms their oligarchic face into a kindly, human face. *The global world and global democracy require a new suffrage, new electoral system, free from all restrictions, including the age qualification.* It may be that children's interests can be placed in the forefront only at a global level. But time will show which level, global or local, will prove more sensitive to children's interests, to their suffrage, and at which level an introduction of children's suffrage *will start*.

Children's suffrage, the constitution and electoral legislation

(Russia, as an example. Other countries need individual consideration)

Constitutional and electoral legislation are the legal factors that have paramount importance for introduction of children's suffrage. Obviously, if society and governmental institutions *recognize* the social, political, moral and psychological necessity for children's suffrage and deem it necessary to secure it legislatively, then it will become possible to introduce appropriate amendments into constitutional and electoral legislation. But before broaching this subject, we should determine at first whether the constitutions of individual countries have provisions conflicting with children's suffrage and how rigid age qualifications are in their electoral legislation. Below we examine, from this viewpoint, the relevant legal documents of Russia.

The Russian Constitution states that children are citizens of the country whose "fundamental human rights and freedoms are inalienable... *since the day of birth*."⁶ One of these rights is suffrage -- "the right to elect."⁷ (Citizenship legislation, too, recognizes that children are Russian citizens since the day of birth⁸). The Constitution *does not provide* an age qualification for the right to elect. Thus, the Constitution *does not deprive* children of the vote, it does not contain such a prohibition. So, in Russia there are *no constitutional obstacles* to children's suffrage and an adoption of the relevant federal law. Introduction of children's suffrage would *not require* any amendments to the Russian Constitution.

However, the current federal election legislation⁹ provides for an age qualification -- an age-based restriction to the right to elect. The age qualification *conflicts* with the Constitution, which recognizes that citizens from birth have the right to elect; it *conflicts* with the definition of citizenship in the citizenship legislation, as well as the key definitions of the election legislation. Below we examine these definitions and the contradictions.

"Voter means a Russian Federation citizen who is entitled to an active electoral right."¹⁰ But individuals become citizens *from birth*, therefore, children have the vote too, i.e. they should be voters, but they aren't.

"Active electoral right ("active suffrage") means the right of a Russian Federation citizen to elect to bodies of state power and bodies of local self-government."¹¹ It follows from here that children have suffrage too.

"Passive electoral right ("passive suffrage") means the right of a Russian Federation citizen to be elected to bodies of state power and bodies of local self-government."¹² Doesn't it mean that children have the right to be elected too?

"Electoral rights of citizens means the constitutional right of citizens of the Russian Federation to elect and be elected to bodies of state power and bodies of local self-government."¹³ Children are citizens, therefore, they enjoy all voting rights.

"A citizen of the Russian Federation shall participate in elections on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot."¹⁴ Children are citizens, therefore, they should participate in elections.

"Universal Suffrage and Right to Participate in Referendum: A citizen of the Russian Federation who has attained the age of 18 years shall be entitled to elect, vote at a referendum."¹⁵ HERE IS THE AGE QUALIFICATION! UNIVERSAL suffrage turns out to be NOT UNIVERSAL, but RESTRICTED exclusively to citizens over the age of 18.

"Citizens declared incapable by a court or held in custody under a court sentence shall not be entitled to elect and be elected or to participate in a referendum."¹⁶ Citizens below 18 are not included in this category, which conflicts with the preceding article.

"Equal Electoral Rights and Right to Participate in Referendum: 1. Citizens of the Russian Federation shall participate in elections and referendums in the Russian Federation on an equal basis. 2. If, at an election to a legislative (representative) body of state power or to a representative body of local self-government, electoral districts are established with different number of seats, each voter shall have an equal number of votes."¹⁷ Children are citizens of Russia, therefore, they are entitled to participate in elections and referenda on an equal basis with other, adult, citizens, who are 18 or older.

"Direct Electoral Rights, the Right to Direct Expression of Will at Referendum: At elections or a referendum a citizen of the Russian Federation shall vote directly at elections or a referendum for or against a candidate (a list of candidates) respectively, for or against a referendum question."¹⁸ So, children, as citizens, they too are entitled to vote directly, by themselves.

"Secret Ballot: Voting at elections and referendums shall be by secret ballot, which shall exclude any control over expression of a citizen's will."¹⁹ So, children being citizens, any control over their voting is prohibited.

And now we sum up the analysis of the articles of the election legislation concerning age qualification. As is clear, the legislation contains many legal inconsistencies and absurdities with regards to children. It would be not unwarranted to say that this legislation, depriving children of the right to elect because of age, *politically discriminates against children and violates the Russian Constitution*. The election legislation *does not address* the major real conflict between *children's citizenship and the impossibility for children to exercise their right to elect*, which, as citizens, they have from birth. The legislation does nothing but complicate the contradictions. There is only one remedy for this: in view of children's incapability (inability to make decisions and choices independently), *the right to vote and the exercise of this right should be SEPARATED*. Children have the right, while parents/guardians should assume the task of exercising it. But to achieve this, parents/guardians, the state and society on the whole need to have a moral and political WILL *to eliminate* electoral discrimination against children, *to recognize* children's right to vote, and *to restore* this right as one of the basic human rights, which children enjoy from birth and which is inalienable from them.

A special federal law, which we would call 'Children's Suffrage Law', is needed in order to materialize the will, if there is one, and to separate children's suffrage from the exercise of it. The current election legislation should be amended to conform to the Children's Suffrage Law: the age qualification should be eliminated, and the following principle introduced: "*every citizen since the day of birth has the right to elect (the vote), which before the child attains the age of 18 should be exercised by the child's parents or legal guardians.*" Below we examine more fully the content and meaning of the proposed law.

Legal mechanism for implementing children's suffrage

A legal tool for children's suffrage is the federal Children's Suffrage Law. This law is to become a legal mechanism for implementing the right. The question here is when exactly Children's Suffrage Law will be adopted? This will vary by country. Some countries will adopt it sooner, some later. But in any case, in every country the project is to start off with an elaboration of the concept

similar to the one described here, as well as public opinion polls, of parents/guardians first of all. Below we formulate the meaning, major principles and notions of Children's Suffrage Law.

The *political* meaning (function) of Children's Suffrage Law consists in a formation, at every level of the legislative branch of a democratic government, of a stable *parliamentary majority* (more than 50% of deputies). This majority includes approximately 25% of deputies elected by children votes, and over 25% of deputies elected by parents/guardians. We'll call these deputies, elected by the votes of children and parents/guardians, "*children's (or youth's) deputies.*" So, children and their parents/guardians constitute the *social buttress/base* of this majority, a base only Children's Suffrage Law *can create*. (It should be noted that this buttress is *universal and permanent* for all countries, rich and poor alike, because it is a part of *universal sphere classes of population*, permanently present in every nation, -- we'll talk about it later.) The function of children's deputies and relevant factions and committees in legislative organs at every level is to create a permanent and efficient federal system which would handle children's problems, i.e. eliminate or suppress social causes of the problems. *Major principles and notions of Children's Suffrage Law:*

1. "The major principle of Children's Suffrage Law": EVERY CHILD IS GRANTED THE RIGHT OF THE VOTE (or to participate in referenda), WHICH SHALL BE EXERCISED BY THE CHILD'S PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN. This principle reflects the bifurcation of children's suffrage: a) *the right of vote/choice*; b) *the right of voting/electing*, i.e. to *exercise* the right of vote/choice. This is bifurcation of an *abstract right* and its *real exercise (participation* in voting, in election). This principle ensures an equality in and meaning for society of the children's interests by way of granting children the vote, though not the right to *exercise* it, because they cannot realize this right due to their age-specific incapability.

2. "Universal suffrage, children's suffrage, adults' suffrage, adults' suffrage tied to their children" are four different but interconnected notions. Adults' suffrage is the right enjoyed by citizens above 18 to vote on their own behalf, to be *independent* voters. Adults' suffrage tied to their children is the right of citizens above 18 to vote on their children's behalf. Children's suffrage is the right of citizens below 18 to have the vote and to be *dependent* voters. Universal suffrage is the right enjoyed by the totality of population and it includes both the vote and the right of voting. It does not allow citizens to vote on behalf of other citizens, except on behalf of their children below 18.

3. "*Independent voter/elector*" is an adult able-bodied citizen who has the vote and the right of voting, both on his/her own behalf and on his/her children's behalf. "*Dependent voter/elector*" is a child who has the vote, is entered into electoral register, but does not have the right of voting, the latter right

being exercised by his/her parent/guardian. Under certain circumstances a dependent voter can become independent. Children's Suffrage Law should have a clause stipulating that in exceptional cases a special commission may allow gifted children aged 10 to 18, if they wish so, to participate in elections independently, after taking an appropriate examination or a test;

4. Children's suffrage is the right of vote for child/children below 18 reflecting the fact the child has (is granted) the vote that this right is given to the child. Children's suffrage can be *only active*, but not *passive*, which means that children have only right of *a choice/vote* but have no right *to be elected*. Herein lies the main distinction between children's suffrage and adults' suffrage (about other distinctions see below). ANY child is granted the vote, from birth, irrespective from his/her health, domicile and living conditions. So, children's suffrage is universal for children. The adoption of it will make the suffrage truly universal, embracing the whole of the population, except incapable adults. The pool of voters will include almost the population total.

5. In those countries in which minor children comprise more than 25% of the population (or other figure corresponding to demographic politics of government), it may not be feasible to grant voting rights to all of the children in every family. In such countries, the Children's Suffrage Law might contain notions of "potential" and "actual" children's suffrage, and limit the number of children on behalf of whom a parent may vote -- this defines the actual children's suffrage. Potential children's suffrage would apply to all children. Actual children's suffrage would apply to a given number of children per family. In these countries, not all children would be entered into the electoral register at any given time. However, as older children in a family attain majority, the younger ones would be registered, and potential children's suffrage and actual children's suffrage would eventually become the same. Conversely, when a nation's children comprise less than 25% of its population, it may not want to limit the number of children with actual votes, and the law would not have to include a distinction between potential and actual rights.

6. "Adults' suffrage tied to their children" is the parents/guardians' right to exercise their children's suffrage. This right means that able-bodied parents/guardians assume a certain amount of votes, equal to the amount of children they have (unless the law restricts the amount). This clause makes adults' suffrage tied to their children INDIRECT, UNEQUAL (according to the number of children) and MEDIATED, but it maintains the vote of adults themselves DIRECT and UNMEDIATED. Thus, universal suffrage retains only two definitions: UNIVERSAL and SECRET. If a child is orphaned, does not have any of the parents left, or his/her parents are deprived of parental rights, then (s)he is assigned a guardian, who is to exercise children's suffrage. Adult spouses with

children are to independently decide how (taking turns or permanently, in equal parts or not) they will be exercising their children's suffrage. An appropriate decision with regards to this, which can be changed at any time, spouses shall write down, notarize and turn in to a local election board. If a parent is below 18, then his/her right tied to his/her child will be delegated to the parent's parent/guardian.

7. "Parents/guardians' obligation to exercise their children's suffrage " implies not only an entitlement, but also a parents/guardians' *obligation* to vote for own children. Nobody understands children's interests better than parents/guardians. Nobody else would be able to make the best possible choice among the candidates in the child's interests. For this reason the obligation to exercise children's suffrage is put on children's parents/guardians. Because of the social importance of this duty, any evasion from it, except when for valid reasons, is punished with a fine. The law should provide for a listing of the valid reasons and the penalty amount. In this section, universal suffrage, no more voluntary, becomes compulsory, by reason of the paramount importance of children in society. On the other hand, in order to motivate parents/guardians, it would be useful that the law provide for incentives, e.g., work or tax benefits, a small financial reward for the exercise of children's suffrage, etc.

8. "Principal executors (subjects) of children's suffrage" are children's parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are the most active group of a population, mostly between ages 18 and 60, a majority of whom are young persons between 18 and 35. At this age, most people start families, give birth to children and bring them up in the early, most important, stages of life. Thus, children's suffrage is important, first of all, to young people, to all parents/guardians; but it also assigns them certain responsibilities. If they do not actively support children's suffrage and exercise it at all elections and referenda, the law will remain inoperative. So, parents/guardians are the principal subjects of children's suffrage. If parents/guardians do not exercise it, children's suffrage is dead. Whether children's suffrage is to live or to die depends on parents'/guardians' eagerness, sense of duty and concern for their children, and first of all, on their willingness to exercise children's suffrage. If parents/guardians do not see the need for children's suffrage, other people will hardly see the need, either. Politically and legally, parents/guardians are key figures in two aspects: a) as agents of implementation of children's suffrage; b) as participants in elections, where they are to have, by law, in addition to their own vote, their children's votes as well. This means that approximately 25% of the population, a group made up of parents/guardians, is to possess (control), together with their children's votes, more than 50% of ALL votes. Some may consider this seeming disparity²⁰ unfair, but as we showed earlier, only this proportion is fair to children. What would we, adults, prefer: *formal* parity or *actual* fairness to our

children? There is no simple answer to this question. Therefore, an initial sociological study blazing the trail for the introduction of children's suffrage should examine the willingness of parents/guardians to be the principal subjects of a Children's Suffrage Law (see Concept-2).

9. "Restrictions on the parents/guardians' right to vote on their children's behalf" should be introduced for parents who are alcoholics, drug addicts, etc. Children's Suffrage Law should envisage a mechanism restricting (through the amount of children, benefits, time) or annulling their right to vote on their children's behalf upon a request from the organs of education or local self-government. For the most hardened cases of alcoholic parents, the law should envisage an accelerated procedure for depriving them of parental rights. Such sanctions against alcoholic parents are due to lead to a decrease in their number and to improve the psychological climate in such families.

10. In every nation, the issue of adoption of children's suffrage and Children's Suffrage Law should be put up for a national referendum, after conducting relevant sociological studies. The referendum should be preceded by a far-reaching, intense and long (at least year-long) campaign explaining the social and political benefits of a Children's Suffrage Law²¹.

The Children's Suffrage Law outline presented here, complemented with sanctions against its abuses, will create a necessary legal mechanism for regulating the EXERCISE of children's suffrage. All social effects that Children's Suffrage Law may produce are *harmless*, but as with any law, it can be used in nationalistic, racist and similar anti-human or mercenary purposes, and in those cases, the perpetrators, not the law, should be held accountable. Therefore, Children's Suffrage Law should provide for sanctions against those who abuse it. The only drawback of the law, which is bound to evanesce soon, is its novelty, unusualness.

Children's Suffrage Law: legislative (parliamentary) majority and top-priority budgetary financing of the children's sphere

Below we examine more fully the main function of Children's Suffrage Law. This law creates a unique political opportunity to have a majority (over 50%) of parliamentary seats at all levels taken by children's deputies, elected by the votes of children (approximately 25% of the electorate) and of their parents/guardians (more than 25% of the electorate). Of course, this is an optimistic estimate, because in reality hardly all parents/guardians will be participating in elections. However, because other groups of voters do not participate in elections to their full capacity, either, the probability of children's deputies taking a majority of seats in parliaments is very high and bound to increase concurrently with an increase in parents'/guardians' voting activity. (Children's Suffrage Law introduces into elections an

new element of competition between groups of voters, which is bound to boost considerably the elections turnout.) A parliament where children's deputies make a majority is bound to give first priority to children's problems both by raising its visibility and by augmenting the federal financing. *Top-priority budgetary financing of the children's sphere is the primary, most effective and important consequence of children's suffrage. It is a key strategy to improve of children's well-being in an age of globalization.*

"Children's" (or "youth's") parliamentary majority is due to create the much-needed system of sustained and efficient handling of children's problems. So, Children's Suffrage Law is to become a legal guarantee that children's problems receive a primary consideration; it will also provide an instrument for creating an efficient system for handling the problems, a system addressing, first of all, the causes of children's problems. Without Children's Suffrage Law, children's problems will NEVER be a priority, will NEVER have a permanent and efficient mechanism for addressing the issues and providing a top-priority financing. Without Children's Suffrage Law, the situation of children in the world will NEVER *qualitatively* change for the better, and all children's rights stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are bound to remain tokenistic, unbuttressed by a legal mechanism for upholding it.

Children's Suffrage Law: the instrument for a systemic handling of children's problems

Children's problems are systemic. This means that they, on the one hand, are a product of all branches, spheres and institutions of society, and on the other hand, have a reverse negative impact. Therefore, a resolution of children's problems is not something that can be achieved by separate parliamentary committees or commissions, by separate ministries or departments of state. A systemic nature of children's problems requires an equally systemic mechanism for grappling with them, a mechanism to be built and fine-tuned continuously and across the whole spectrum of society's spheres, state ministries and departments. At all levels of government, only a parliamentary majority can handle this task. And ONLY a Children's Suffrage Law, as appropriate election legislation, can help create a parliamentary majority that will systemically address and give a primary consideration to children's problems. Thus, Children's Suffrage Law is an instrument for a high-priority, and systemic, across the whole spectrum of government departments, handling of children's problems. Creating a systemic mechanism for handling children's problems is a long-term and extremely complex project, requiring a

permanent, legislatively secured buttress, which only Children's Suffrage Law can provide. Without this Law, no such mechanism is possible.

Other positive effects of a Children's Suffrage Law

A Children's Suffrage Law, as a systemic law transforming electoral and political systems, has a huge spectrum of positive social implications, some of which -- those not discussed earlier -- we want to emphasize. We have tried to group these effects into those affecting individual spheres of society, and those affecting society in general. So, the adoption of this law and creation, on the basis of this law, a governmental mechanism for high-priority and systemic handling of children's problems:

For society in general:

- will open up a new avenue for an innovative and accelerated development of nations, first of all third-world nations, by turning the negative factor of overpopulation (overproduction of children) into a beneficial resource to these nations' welfare (such is the dialectics of Children's Suffrage Law),
- will shift priorities from economic and military competition between nations to competition in children's welfare -- this is the most humane kind of competition (it can be called humanitarian),
- will shift the global priorities from animosity, distrust, injustice, violence, armies, etc., to children's welfare, i.e. to peace, justice and cooperation for children's sake,
- will enhance the humanistic component of globalization, lending to globalization a human face and a children dimension. A globalization era requires a new quality of people, which starts with a new quality of children, which, accordingly, starts with an adoption of children's suffrage,
- will considerably strengthen the forces of peace, humanism and dialog of civilizations in international relations of the new century, the culture of peace,
- will overcome the crisis of society, the government and democracy, will rejuvenate and modernize them,
- will reinforce and expedite the development of civil society,

In the social sphere:

- will considerably ameliorate the situation of children (and children's sphere) in society, enhance the quality of children and their socialization (education, healthcare, leisure, sports, etc.),

- will strengthen the family, reinforce the importance and authority of parents not only in society, but for children as well,
- will reinforce the parents/guardians' moral and psychological sense of duty to their children,
- will overcome the dehumanization of education and enhance the moral upbringing of school children,
- will have an especially beneficial effect on the position and the rights of mothers, especially younger ones, carrying most of the burden of childcare at the early stages of children's development (Children's Suffrage Law has also some other gender implications),
- will create an efficient mechanism for handling demographic problems, a mechanism apt to increase birth rates in some countries²², while in some others, to reduce or hold it in check, by way of introducing relevant clauses into Children's Suffrage Law, granting the vote to all or only some children in a family, envisaging additional benefits for or taxes on children, etc,
- will enhance the exchange of services between generations, as well as ties between them, reciprocal sense of duty and mutual help. At first parents vote on their children's behalf, take care of children's welfare; and then, when children grow up and live independently, they are bound to take a better care of their parents' well-being and health. (There are also other generational implications from Children's Suffrage Law),
- will act as a powerful social anti-terrorist force, which will block the use of children as suicidal terrorists. There will be more usefulness in rearing the child and voting on his/her behalf, than in using him/her as a suicidal terrorist,

In the cultural sphere:

- will qualitatively enhance political culture and the consciousness of families (parents and children alike), because parents will start discussing with children party tickets, the candidates and their platforms, and which among the candidates are likely to make a better children's deputy. The growth of political culture and the rise of children's consciousness will allow in the future to lower the age qualification at first to 16, then to 14, and then maybe even to 12 years of age,
- will improve the monitoring of children (through electoral registers) and will allow the state to have more control over how parents use their children; this is apt to become a powerful instrument of monitoring and prevention of juvenile delinquency and children's rights abuses. Electoral registers, including children's records, are bound to become tantamount to nearly annual censuses,
- will establish a highly cultured moral and psychological climate of trust and mutual help between generations, between parents and children,

- will sanitize the media, will release them from a propagation of violence and pornography, will expand and will improve the information for children,
- will make the "special care" about children by simultaneously national and global idea of societies, more stronger, than the "American dream",

In the organizational sphere:

- children's votes will increase the electorate amount by approximately 25%;
- will greatly decrease the rates of juvenile delinquency, prostitution, drug-taking, homelessness and children's alienation from society and the family,
- will ensure the implementation of children's rights and the parity between the rights of children and those of other population groups (first of all in election legislation). Without this law, the children's highly commendable right to "special care and assistance" from society, stipulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, will remain tokenistic,
- will create a novel, fairer political scheme of distribution of power and wealth between social classes, sexes and generations. If presently almost every nation has power belonging to population groups who are predominantly male, older and wealthier, then Children's Suffrage Law will ensure a more harmonious distribution of power between generations, sexes and classes,
- will enhance the role played in politics by children and families, especially younger ones,
- will augment parents/guardians' political sense of duty, their political activity,
- will break the tendencies to absenteeism (election-shunning), will greatly increase the proportion of young people, especially young parents, among voters, the young voting not only on their own, but also on their children's behalf,
- will raise the political visibility of social sphere in general,
- will strengthen and humanize the democracy, will maximally expand its social base, will lend to democracy a kind human face and children dimension. Children's Suffrage Law will confirm that politics is not always dirty,
- will make the state social, by ensuring prominence of social sphere,
- will create an efficient mechanism for consolidating governmental organizations in decision of children's problems, and for consolidating the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations handling these problems,
- will ensure political equality in suffrage for all population, for all its social groups, including children,

- will organizationally consolidate the efforts of families and the government for addressing children's problems,
- will shape children, who are now an inactive political resource, into a powerful positive political resource of society,
- will make the organs of local self-government a leading force in the matters of handling children's problems locally, will ensure these organs' priority financing,
- will enable the countries who ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to respond to *violations* of it, especially violations of the Article 4, which says "States Parties shall undertake *all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures* for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention... to the *maximum extent of their available resources...*", as well as a *violation* of the Human Rights Declaration principle that children are entitled to a "*special care*."²³ (Italicized is what State Parties fail to accomplish.--L.S.). Only children's suffrage can ensure that the state provide children with a *special care*. *Who* is to demand it from the state?
- will ensure a new sense to struggle against terrorism, corruption, drugs and criminality as to struggle *for* children and "*a world fit for children*",
- will raise the social value and meaning of suffrage in general,

In the economic sphere:

- will increase manifold child benefits and children's material welfare,
- will lead to a twofold or fourfold increase of space allocated to children's institutions (kindergartens, schools, children's clinics, sports and leisure facilities, etc.), and this, in turn, will curb the tendencies to an overcrowding of children's facilities, especially school classes, lowering the size from 30-35 students down to 15, and then maybe even to 8,
- will raise the salary levels of children's institutions' employees to the highest level among state employees,
- will increase many times over human capital, i.e. economic investments in the people.

In conclusion, we want to emphasize that adopting a Children's Suffrage Law is the only way to build a "world fit for children," to eliminate "poverty, discrimination and society's neglect of children" and to overcome the "deterioration of the situation of the young generation," mentioned in the Declaration of UN Special Session adopted in May 2002. Deprived of suffrage, children, in fact, do not enjoy other rights stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child either, the Convention's

provisions being mostly ignored by most nations, as the UN Special Session pointed out. In this hopelessly irreparable situation, Children's Suffrage Law becomes, in fact, a driving force for all the child's rights.

Roadblocks on the way to children's suffrage

As demonstrated above, Children's Suffrage Law leads to a radical overhaul of the political system and society in general, to their cardinal modernization, to a legitimate re-distribution of power and wealth in favor of children and children's sphere. For this reason, Children's Suffrage Law is bound to encounter a correspondingly powerful opposition, because normally "the force of counteraction is equal to the force of action." So what are the roadblocks?

A first, and the most powerful social obstacle is a centuries-old entrenched psychological tradition of neglecting and discriminating against children in politics, of an unchallenged supremacy of adults²⁴. This tradition is very deeply rooted in the minds of modern people, having been nurtured as it was, over millennia, by the past agrarian and industrial societies, used to ignoring children's interests in politics. It will be very difficult to turn around the mass mentality, although the modern life has already undermined it. The younger generations are more apt to shed this mentality, rather than hold on to it. (This issue calls for a special socio-psychological research.)

Second. Children's Suffrage Law is bound to encounter resistance from those groups, which presently own the bulk of the state budget -- officials (bureaucrats), state security forces, the military-industrial complex. Children's Suffrage Law will entail a re-distribution of the government money in favor of children, and this is due to encounter resistance among powerful social groups.

Third. The oligarchs, who are not interested in re-distribution of national wealth in children's favor, are bound to respond negatively too.

Fourth. A majority of today's deputies and lawyers, who are in the service of the powerful groups and oligarchs, will be an oppositional force as well.

Such are the main roadblocks and opposition forces, which Children's Suffrage Law is apt to encounter. However, parents, low- and middle-income groups, especially young people and women, people employed in the social sphere (teachers, doctors, etc.) are bound to see in this law a powerful instrument for raising the well-being of their children and families, and a majority of them will surely support the law. A series of sociological studies is planned now for investigating this issue (see Concept-2).

Tetrasociology as the theoretical source for the idea of children's suffrage, and the origination of this idea from practical experience.

Children's suffrage is one of the logical outgrowths and applications of tetrasociology²⁵. Tetrasociology is a postpluralist (i.e. based on a definite number of society's dimensions) "grand theory" and a multi-dimensional model of society in 24 parameters of four-dimensional spatial-temporal metrics. The author has been working on the theory in Russia for more than 25 years. The theory started to be known in the West in 2002, when a book about it was first published in English²⁶. Tetrasociology made five social discoveries "at the tip of a pen," and because of this, they are hypotheses in need of a fundamental empirical evidence to corroborate it. These discoveries-hypotheses include: sphere classes²⁷ as actors of social harmony, sphere democracy, sphere sociological statistics, sphere informational-statistical technologies, sociocultural technology of prosperity through harmony and information. Although it originated in Russia, tetrasociology is not a national, but rather, international and tolerant, paradigm. It belongs to Western culture, continuing and developing the "tetrarchy," four-dimensional, pluralist tradition of Western thinking, a tradition originating from Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato and Aristotle in the antiquity, and then on to M. Weber, Braudel, Parsons, Toffler, Bourdieu, Giddens, Sztopka and Castells in the 20th century. Tetrasociology rests on these giants' shoulders²⁸ and draws on the ideas of many other scholars as well. Among the latter, we want to point to C. Wright Mills' idea of sociological imagination²⁹, Bernard Phillips' web approach³⁰, Jeffrey Alexander's cultural sociology³¹, Reimon Bachika's universal values³², Martha Ross DeWitt's power sharing³³, Hilarie Roseman's enlightened heart³⁴, Craig Calhoun's cultural difference and historical characteristics³⁵, Jonathan Turner's four emotional forces/resources³⁶, Fritjof Capra's four social perspectives³⁷, Bernd Hornung's and Bernard Scott's sociocybernetical straight connections and feedback³⁸, and many others.

Tetrasociology's chief achievement consists in a discovery of particular, sphere classes of population, differing by the main employment in one of society production spheres and constantly trying to achieve social harmony, overcoming the other social groups' disharmony and inequality. Tetrasociology recognizes children as equal in rights participants and members of sphere classes, first of all of social class, which is employed in people reproduction. (Tetrasociology uses the notion of "social reproduction of people," which embraces all sections of social sphere: education, health, religion, leisure, sports, etc. This concept should not be confused with the concept of biological

reproduction, which refers only to birth rates.) Children are equal with other people with regards to the reproduction of the self. Children are employed in reproduction of themselves, and for society, this is the most important function, because children are the only source society can use to replenish its human resource. If children are recognized as society members, equal with other members in reproductive employment, if they are recognized as citizens from birth, then they should also have from birth the right of vote in a democratic nation. Tetrasociology distinguishes between children's suffrage and election employment (participation in elections), which is a characteristic of adults alone. The separation of children's suffrage from the exercise of it by parents/guardians is based on this distinction.

As we emphasized above, children and their parents/guardians are to become the social base/buttrass of a parliamentary majority to be created by Children's Suffrage Law. This social base is unusual and can be explained only from the position of tetrasociological sphere classes³⁹. The nature of this social base is determined by sphere classes, which are global and harmonious, and which weaken the rigid boundaries between traditional antagonistic classes and groups. So, the social base, made of these classes, has a distinctive nature -- global and harmonious. Children and their parents/guardians have a sphere-based social structure and belong to sphere classes employed in social reproduction spheres. Children belong to the social class, but *they* prepare themselves for employment *in all four* sphere classes, while parents/guardians already belong to sphere classes and are employed in them. Thus, the social base including children and their parents/guardians is *common* for all countries of the world, rich and poor, big and small, and, therefore, this base too is global and harmonious. Children's suffrage and Children's Suffrage Law share these characteristics.

There is also another important connection between children's suffrage / Children's Suffrage Law and sphere classes. On the one hand, children's suffrage is needed by people as members of sphere and harmonious classes, on the other hand, children's suffrage helps people to become aware of a novel, sphere-based, universal identity and community. This is an instance in the process of the growth of political self-awareness of sphere classes and their progress toward social harmony, including harmony between age groups and generations. This harmony is politically reflected in children's suffrage, which, on the rebound, helps shape an appropriate political framework (organisation) for harmony. The introduction of children's suffrage will significantly raise the level of social harmony and people's self-awareness. Such is the most general outline of tetrasociology as a source of the idea of children's suffrage.

This theoretical source of children's suffrage is represented in the systemic political thinking, which a cohort of scholars guided by Prof. A.I.Yuriev⁴⁰ conceptualizes within a political psychology framework. The political-psychological aspects of children's suffrage call for additional research.

In terms of practical experience, the idea was a product of one of my work as a city council member and an NGO activist. In 1990-1993 I was elected as a deputy of the city parliament (LenSoviet/PetroSoviet) of St.Petersburg and was in charge of children's and families' problems. In 1990-1997 I was the president of F.M.Dostoevsky Children's Foundation of St.Petersburg, which I created. In 1991 a draft of the first Family Code of Russia⁴¹ was produced under the Foundation's auspices and my guidance, and the Code's first chapter was devoted to children's rights, although it did not yet mention children's suffrage. The experience of tackling children's problems as a city council member and a children's foundation's president, in a city with a 5,000,000 population, taught that these problems are intractable within the existing political system and that when one homeless, drug-addicted, or orphaned child is settled, 2 or 3 kids with similar problems "fill in the vacancy," and that the total social-political system reproduces children's problems on a large scale. The system is set to address only consequences, not causes. It started to become clear then that in order to address children's problems earnestly, rather than in a usual lackadaisical manner, a systemic federal mechanism was needed, and *that its social base could be formed only through children's suffrage*. The idea, which originated in around 1993, then seemed to the author too crazy. But gradually, pondering over its various facets, the author became convinced that the idea was good and useful. In 2000 the idea of children's suffrage was *first* mentioned publicly⁴², and developed in my books and publications later on⁴³. So, the children's suffrage concept is rooted both in theory and in practice and has matured over time, which makes it viable.

Children's suffrage as a new general right and universal standard of the globalization era.

The new era expands civil rights and liberties, and expansion of freedom of expression and the processes of obtaining and disseminating information is a very clear evidence of it. Consumers' rights take off and reach far around. Suffrage expands. If it is to be expanded comprehensively, the age qualification would have to be abolished as a rudiment of industrial society, and children's suffrage, an instrument for making suffrage truly universal, would have to be legally secured. Children's suffrage has a big impact on other civil rights and liberties, abolishing restrictions imposed on those by the age qualification. Here are several important points.

A) The age qualification bounds so universal a value as *love* for people, and, in particular, reciprocal love between parents and children. The age qualification bars parents from channelling their love and care for children into politics. Children's suffrage, conversely, abolishes this restriction and enables parents to wield a powerful political tool of electoral system for the affirmation of their love for children; and this, in turn, is apt to augment the grown-up children's love and care for their parents.

B) The age qualification limits people's *freedom* and prevents parents from realizing the freedom of making political choices for their children's benefit, i.e. the most humane aspect of this freedom. Children's suffrage, conversely, abolishes this curtailment of freedom, humanizes and significantly expands freedom, complementing it with a qualitatively new kind of freedom -- freedom to elect on one's children's behalf.

C) The age qualification encroaches on *equality* among people, leads to a patent political discrimination against children and shrinks the political salience of children's interests. Children's suffrage, conversely, eradicates discrimination against and political inequality of children and equalizes children with all other population groups in so politically significant a right as suffrage. Children's suffrage ensures a true electoral equality, which will help to confer on "the right to elect" the status of a universal civil right and *to add it both to* the Human Rights Declaration and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

D) The age qualification raises insurmountable obstacles on the path to *fraternity* of the humans, social justice and harmony. Children's suffrage, conversely, abolishes these obstacles and helps make a considerable progress along the road, the social significance of this advancement being very simple, but profound: if children are having a better life, the society on the whole, all people are bound to live better too.

Thus, children's suffrage, abolishing the restrictions imposed by age qualifications on civil rights, liberties and universal human values, and humanizing the quality of the understanding and usage of those, itself becomes a new right, a new freedom and a new universal norm of the globalization era. *Children's suffrage modernizes and elevates the principles of "freedom, equality and fraternity" to a new humanistic level.* It becomes a legislative manifestation of the universal attitude toward children. Through children's suffrage, the new, informational society overcomes a restriction such as age qualification inherited from the old, industrial society. Children's suffrage is a qualitative transformation of this society's rights, freedoms and values.

What political party will make children's suffrage its own manifesto?

Children's suffrage is a political phenomenon, and if it is to be instituted, this would have to be done by political means, first of all through the efforts of a political party. Hence arises a question to which there is *no answer today*: what political party will make children's suffrage its manifesto and a part of its electoral platform? Obviously, this would have to be a party with a novel mentality and ideology, with a novel awareness of civil rights, freedoms and universal values, an awareness befitting the new era. What population groups are likely to make a social base of this kind of party? The young and women -- they are the first to benefit from children's suffrage. We will not further elaborate on the political aspects, because our Concept is not about politics, but about science and a sociological study of the parents/guardians' relations to children's suffrage. But, obviously, these two subjects are interconnected. To demonstrate the urgency of children's suffrage, I want to quote several examples.

Appendix. Children's plight 2003: several facts

Below I quote several most typical and fresh facts concerning children's situation 2003 in different countries.

In Russia children are a source of poverty, rather than joy. 45% of families with kids have incomes lower than the subsistence wage⁴⁴. This means that about half of Russia's children -- approximately 17 million people -- are living in poverty, malnourished, get sick often, go to bad schools and have few chances of going to college. According to experts' estimates, Russia has about 4 million homeless children⁴⁵, which is nearly 12% of all children. 2003 was especially tragic for Russian children, albeit in a typical manner. About 50 children were killed by fire that occurred in two schools in March, and in November about 40 undergraduate students were killed by fire in a student dorm. These facts symbolize children's situation in Russia: both literally and figuratively children are burning in Russia, devoured by their plight. Russia's socio-political system is incinerating children by its neglect and indifference. And what do people of Russia think of children's problems? As the polls show, children's problems don't even make it to the top lists of the people's main concerns. Poverty gets mentioned the frequents of all -- by 47% of those surveyed, economics -- by 32%, and so on, and children's problems are simply missing from the list⁴⁶. These figures confirm society's neglect of children, which the UN Special Session highlighted.

Another telling fact: When asked about their views for their children's future, 45% of parents⁴⁷ could not give an answer! This means that nearly half the parents do not think about their children, their future, a help to and responsibility for them. Maybe children's suffrage, which they will have to exercise, will make this sort of parents think better and make them fewer in number? The state's neglect of children is reflected in the child benefit amount -- 75 roubles, hardly sufficient to buy 5 kilos of bread or 7 litres of milk! And this is to last for a month! This is the "value" placed on children by the Russian government today! We can quote ad infinitum similar instances⁴⁸ of society's and the government's indifference to children, but just talking we will do not undo these facts, nor will make the children's life better. To fight the plight, we need different, efficient, means, and children's suffrage is the best one.

USA. Here are two quotations from U.S. newspapers. First: New York Times, November 27, 2003. *School Is Haven When Children Have No Home.* By Sam Dillon.

“Homeless adults get little help from the government, since many poverty relief programs were dismantled in the 1990's. But a federal law that requires local districts to seek out and enrol homeless students and provide services to them has forced public schools across the nation to become safety nets of last resort, educators and experts on the homeless said.

Experts say they can only estimate how many students are homeless across the United States because nobody has gathered nationwide data since a 2000 report to Congress by the Department of Education. That report said there were 930,000 homeless youths, 621,000 of whom were enrolled in public schools. Dr. Martha Burt, a researcher at the Urban Institute in Washington who in 1996 led a federally financed nationwide survey of homeless people, said the department's 2000 figures undercounted the school-age homeless considerably...

Statistics from individual states suggest that their numbers are rapidly rising. In October 2002, Colorado Department of Education officials counted 4,103 homeless students enrolled in public schools there. By May, the number had risen to 5,963.

Maryland state officials counted 5,605 school-age homeless children two years ago, but last year the number grew to 7,322.

In Oregon, officials used data from a census of people living in shelters to estimate that there were about 21,000 homeless school-age youths in the state two years ago. Using the same methodology this fall, Oregon put the number at 28,600.....

The McKinney-Vento law, passed in 1987, strengthened the rights of homeless students when Congress reauthorized it in 2002⁴⁹. It requires each of the country's 15,000 school districts to designate

a "liaison for homeless children and youth," whose duties include searching for children living in shelters, motels, campgrounds and other irregular residences, helping them enrol in school, and ensuring that they get immunisations and other medical and dental care. It also requires districts to provide transportation so that homeless children can attend the same school, even if their parents move about seeking shelter or jobs. Federal grants to states to help comply with those mandates totalled \$50 million this year (only one million on state! – L.S.). Educators say that financing falls considerably short of the need. Many school districts supplement the grants with federal money appropriated to help poor children.

Under the law, a child who becomes homeless anywhere in the United States has the right to be enrolled in virtually any school district in the country, immediately, simply by showing up there, and can remain enrolled unless the district disproves the homeless claim.”

The second quote is about homeless pupils.⁵⁰

“Increasing poverty and homelessness is ‘a great mountain to climb’ in removing barriers to academic success for *Milwaukee Public Schools* students, the district's superintendent said Friday (Nov. 21, 2003) as officials reported that more than 7,000 MPS students are homeless.

According to Superintendent William Andrekopoulos and other MPS officials who attended a forum on student homelessness and mobility:

From 7,000 to 8,000 students now attending MPS are classified as homeless.

About 10,000 students live in public housing.

More than 25,000 MPS students have no health insurance.

In addition, Andrekopoulos said, some 80% of the district's 100,000 students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, which means they are poor⁵¹.

Andrekopoulos said what's also needed is more public sensitivity to the critical issue of poverty facing students.

‘We need to increase sensitivity in the hearts and minds,’ he said. ‘We must see the world through the eyes of children whose only meal a day may be the one they have at school.’⁵²

Other MPS officials who attended the meeting at the Social Development Commission, 4041 N. Richards St., said they want to form partnerships with government agencies to deal with the growing poverty issues among students.

But Joe Volk, the chairman of the Emergency Shelter Task Force and coordinator of the Continuum of Care Homeless Coalition, said it's been hard over the years to get MPS to work with homeless groups on this issue.

‘We have had a very hard time energizing MPS around this,’ he said at the forum, which included representatives of MPS, the Social Development Commission, community agencies and a few elected officials.

‘We meet monthly,’ said Volk of the Emergency Shelter Task Force. In addition, he said, ‘The Continuum of Care works with many private non-profit groups, but MPS rarely shows up.’

‘We encourage MPS to come to our meetings and get involved.’

Volk said MPS is always sent meeting notices but rarely responds⁵³.

Australia. From: Age, Monday, 8th December 2003, page 11, Opinion, "*The children of middle Australia are in crisis*" by Angela Shanahan.

"There seems to be something wrong with the way our young are brought up. ...Child abuse has become the focus of media comment on children, but it should be remembered that it is indicative of the extreme ends of dysfunctional, which we either blame on grave social pathologies or downright personal evil. But what of the majority of Australian children who have never been subject to cruelty, abuse or even material deprivation? There is a growing body of evidence that children from the "mainstream" of suburban Australia are displaying serious physical, intellectual and emotional problems. We know about the seemingly inexplicable rise in behavioural disorders from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder to mild autism. We know Australian children are fatter than they should be and are getting type 2 diabetes. We know boys are falling further and further behind girls in academic achievement and that an alarming number are killing themselves.....Last month a report was published that added to that body of evidence. It indicates that many more Australian children than previously thought might be at risk of not being able to fulfil their educational potential. Based on the widely used Canadian Educational Development Index, this report revealed alarming deficiencies in Australian children that could lead to delayed cognitive development. The results revealed that 26 per cent were vulnerable to not being able to achieve their educational potential, and 13 per cent were at high risk, particularly in the cognitive and linguistic skills area.....Australian of the Year Fiona Stanley is calling for more early childhood intervention.....As for children at the hopelessly dysfunctional end of the spectrum, such solutions are a waste of time...the problems of Aboriginal children are hopelessly endemic and will not be solved by classic interventions.....whether their mother works or not, whether they go to child care or not, whether they are black, white, immigrant or native born, whether they are clever or not,.. they need both mother and father. .the Australian family is imploding from outside pressures as much as any failing of people with it".⁵⁴

The facts mentioned above show that the problems of childhood beset poor and rich countries alike. These are persistent problems. However, governments have yet to learn to seek systemic and comprehensive solutions, addressing causes rather than consequences. Children's suffrage and Children's Suffrage Law open up for the state, as well as for the family, an opportunity to address the problems systemically and comprehensively. Of course, the proposed instrument is not universal; however, it appears to be the most efficient method available today. Children's suffrage, when included into the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and secured by appropriate national legislations, will be really able to "*create a world fit for children*" and "*to eradicate poverty, discrimination against and society's neglect of children*", the plagues which nations of the world "have failed so far" to combat in the 20th century, as the UN Special Session declared in 2002.

January 24, 2004

The author expresses a profound gratitude to the following wise, enlightened and generous women who have brought up children and grandchildren, and have contributed to development of the idea of children's suffrage: Larissa Litvinova (Russia), who became a "starter" of the concept; Hilarie Roseman (Australia), Master of Art, mother of eight children and grandmother of ten grandchildren, whose kind heart, prayers, ideas, and newspaper materials very much helped my work; Alexandra Achilova, Mary Ovchinnikova, and also Vladimir Kavtorin (Russia) for their valuable remarks.

References and notes

¹ By ideology we understand a teaching concerning social ideals within a concrete worldview. Our concept examines the ideal of children's suffrage within a tetrasociological worldview (see notes on Semashko's published work, below).

² *At the UN Special Session the World Leaders Promised to Make "World Fit for Children,"* in "One Country," Moscow, April-June, 2003 (in Russian).

³ *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.* Protect me. Moscow, 1995.

⁴ Poverty, discrimination and neglect of industrial society to children are ingeniously opened still Korczak. See: Janusz Korczak (1990). *How to Love the Child.* Moscow

⁵ It is necessary to note that in the industrial epoch there were attempts to take into account the interests of children politically through the suffrage qualification. For example, the great Russian scientist Dimity Mendeleev in 1905 offered to enter instead of the property and educational qualifications a "fatherly or children's" qualification for the deputies of the State Duma (Russian parliament) and them electors. This qualification stated that, "all electors and the half chosen deputies were the fathers having not less certain number of children", namely 3-4 children. The children's qualification, from his point of view, would ensure high quality of the deputies and subordinate their work to interests of the future. See: Mendeleev D.I. *Treasured ideas.* Moscow, 1995, p. 344.

⁶ *Constitution of the Russian Federation.* Moscow, 1994, Article 17.2

⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 32.2

⁸ Federal Law of the Russian Federation of May 31, 2002 "*On Russian Federation Citizenship*":

Article 12. Acquisition of the Russian Federation Citizenship by Virtue of the Birth

1. The child shall acquire Russian Federation citizenship by virtue of birth, if as of the date *of birth of the child* (italics mine.--L.S.): a) both his/her parents or his/her single parent have Russian Federation citizenship (irrespective of the child's place of birth); b) one of his/her parents has Russian Federation citizenship

⁹ Federal Law of the Russian Federation of June 12, 2002: On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Rights of Citizens of the Russian Federation to Participate in a Referendum

¹⁰ Ibid., Article 2.18

¹¹ Ibid., Article 2.26

¹² Ibid., Article 2.27

¹³ Ibid., Article 2.28

¹⁴ Ibid., Article 3.1

¹⁵ Ibid., Article 4.1

¹⁶ Ibid., Article 4.3

¹⁷ Ibid., Article 5.1, 5.2

¹⁸ Ibid., Article 6

¹⁹ Ibid., Article 7

²⁰ This *inequality* of adults will ensure *equality* of children, and will eradicate their political discrimination. Therefore, the inequality of adults, in this case, is justified politically and morally. If their inequality on riches, education, prestige etc. is admitted, why not accept an inequality of electoral votes based on the number of children? Of all inequalities it is the most noble, worthy and politically necessary, as there is no self-interest and egoism, and gives "a *special care*" and equality to children. What adult would not renounce this equality for the sake of equality and well-being of children? The electoral inequality of adults is not only a political, but also a moral requirement of society. The question of to what measure it realizes this requirement is the subject of our study.

²¹ A political party is needed for managing this campaign. What parties will put a Children's Suffrage Law on their agenda? Are there such parties? Will the "parties of power" be willing to? Are there parties which are concerned about the strategic, long-term welfare of the country? So far, there is no answer to these questions. What is clear is that political parties playing "the children's" card in political poker will be the most productive and effectual.

²² The demographic function of children's suffrage as an instrument for addressing the issues of depopulation and stimulation of the birth rates in Russia is investigated in a large and thorough article of a notable St.Petersburg sociologist, see A.V.Baranov. Depopulation, a social challenge to the government, in *Zvezda*, 2001, N 1, pp. 172-179.

²³ Of all social groups, the Declaration confers on children alone the right to "*special care*," which, however, the state still fails to give them. So, the governments violate this international norm.

²⁴ This sad tradition has opened Janusz Korczak ingeniously. See his mentioned above book.

²⁵ In total, the author has published about 40 papers and five books on Tetrasociology, the last two of which have been translated into English, see below.

²⁶ Semashko, Leo. (2002). *Tetrasociology: Responses to Challenges*. <http://www.tetrasociology2002.spb.ru>, St. Petersburg: Technical University. Semashko L. with co-authors (2003) *Tetrasociology: from Sociological Imagination through Dialogue to Universal Values and Harmony*. St.-Petersburg State Polytechnical University.

²⁷ Existence and dynamics of the sphere classes on an example of Russia prove to be true by statistical researches of the author in the book (2002, p. 84-93)

²⁸ The ideas of these authors are considered by L.Semashko in the book (2002, 23-27)

²⁹ Mills, C. Wright. (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press

³⁰ Phillips, Bernard. (2001). *Beyond Sociology's Tower of Babel: Reconstructing the Scientific Method*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter

³¹ Alexander, Jeffrey (2003). *The Meanings of Social Life. A Cultural Sociology*. Oxford University Press

³² Bachika Reimon (2003) *Tetrasociology and Values*. In: Semashko L. *Tetrasociology: from Sociological Imagination through Dialogue to Universal Values and Harmony*. St.-Petersburg State Polytechnical University, p.191-195

³³ DeWitt, Martha R. (2000). *Beyond Equilibrium theory; Theories of Social Action and Social Change Applied to a Study of Power Sharing in Transition*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

³⁴ Roseman, Hilarie (2003). *The Enlightened Heart: Common Values Engage the Sacred with the Secular*. Manuscript

³⁵ Calhoun, Craig (2003). *Critical Social Theory. Culture, History, and the Challenge of Difference*. Blackwell Publishing

- ³⁶ Turner, Jonathan (2003). *Face to Face. Toward a Sociological Theory of Interpersonal Behavior*. Stanford Univ. Press
- ³⁷ Capra, Fritjof (2003). *The Hidden Connections. A Science for Sustainable Living*. Harper Collins Publishers
- ³⁸ Scott, Bernard. (2000). *Cybernetic explanation and development*, *Kybernetes*, 29, 7/8, pp. 966-994
- Hornung, Bernd R.(2002). *Emergence - A Key Concept for Sociocybernetic Theory of Information Society*, Paper presented at the 15th World Congress of Sociology, Brisbane, July 8-13, 2002, RC51 on Sociocybernetics.
- ³⁹ About sphere classes making this social base and determining its (her) global and harmonious character, in more details see L.Semashko's works.
- ⁴⁰ Yuriev, Alexander I. (1992). *Introduction to Political Psychology*. St. Petersburg University (Russian)
- _____. (2002). *Russian Project: the Claims on the Future*, *Bulletin of Political Psychology*. # 2 (Russian)
- _____. (2002). *Globalization as the New Form of Political Power Changing Man and the World Order*. Russia: planetary processes. St. Petersburg University (Russian)
- ⁴¹ *Family Code of Russia*. Project. (1991). Semashko L., chief of group of the developers. St.-Petersburg
- ⁴² Semashko, Leo (2000). *Tetrasociology as a revolution of social thinking, way of harmony and prosperity*. St-Petersburg. It was suggested that in the framework of future sphere democracy "the right to vote will be received by all children, this right is realized by the parents up to (the age of) majority of children", p.45.
- ⁴³ Semashko, Leo (2002), p 105, 134; Semashko, L. (2003), p 34-35; Semashko, L. (2003). *Processes of democratisation of a society and the children's suffrage*. Philosophy of childhood and sociocultural creativity. Materials of the X-th International Conference. St-Petersburg, p. 336-339. My abstract about the children's suffrage "Tetrasociology: Children's Suffrage" are submitted in the Program of Iberoamerican Congress on Childhood, Health and Society ' Globalization and Social Equity ' University of Guadalajara, Guadalajara, Mexico, November 3-5, 2003 <http://www.cucs.udg.mx/INBOX/congresoibero.htm>
- ⁴⁴ Arguments and Facts, 49, 2003.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 46, 2003
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 49, 2003
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 46, 2003
- ⁴⁸ See, for instance, a publication of F.M.Dostoevsky Children's Foundation, "*Black book of crimes against children in St.Petersburg. Facts, documents, comments.*" Ed. by L.M.Semashko, A.I.Anoshin, G.A.Kryshnya, F.S.Makhov; St.Petersburg, 1994. Unfortunately, over the past 10 years the children's situation, far from improving, became considerably worse.
- ⁴⁹ Laws strengthening the rights of homeless children provides a logical transition to the children's suffrage law, which will eliminate the *reasons for children's homelessness*.
- ⁵⁰ Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, November 21, 2003, "7,000 MPS students reported homeless..." by Georgia Pabst
- ⁵¹ Let's pay attention to this, apparently paradoxical fact that poverty of 80% of pupils is acknowledged in a large city of the richest country of the world! This means, the riches of the country do not translate into riches for its children. That the riches of the country co-exist with poverty of its children speaks about discrimination and neglect to children even in rich countries. This true has opened still great Janusz Korczak.
- ⁵² It is a remarkable appeal to a society and citizens, but it is a utopia without children's suffrage. To rich America, as well as to poor Russia, the problem of poverty of children cannot be solved without this right.
- ⁵³ In the USA, as well as in Russia, many governmental departments are engaged in problems of childhood, deprived of organizational and legal unity, making their efforts inefficient and scattered, and shifting the responsibility from one to another. It leaves problems of childhood unsolved. Only children's suffrage can ensure unity, necessary for them, and also for the efficiency of their work.
- ⁵⁴ If the families of the Australian natives and their children are not integrated in the state, if the natives do not participate in elections, then, really, their problems are not decided by classical methods, including children's suffrage. It is a special problem. How many of such children in the world?

2.2. Proposal for an International, Comparative Study of Parent/Guardian Attitudes toward Children's Suffrage (Concept-2)

Goal and objectives of the study

The concept of children's suffrage that we've called "Concept-1" formulates a social ideal with regard to the current state of affairs that includes hypotheses of potential acceptance/rejection by different population groups. These hypotheses require an intensive, sociological study for which "Concept-2" lays the groundwork. Concept-2 sets forth the project goal, research objectives, a survey questionnaire to test specific hypotheses, organizational arrangements, scheduling, etc. Following is a summary.

The goal of the project is to determine *attitudes* of different social groups in different countries toward the idea of children's voting rights. In the most general terms, by "attitudes" we mean levels of approval or disapproval (acceptance or rejection) of this idea. An investigation into the attitudes of different countries' populations toward children's suffrage will show which nations are prepared to accept it, and which are not; or maybe all nations reject it, or maybe all are prepared to accept the idea. No matter what the findings may be, they are bound to be very important socially. Positive findings can be seen as an indication that the society is aware of the need for an efficient mechanism for tackling children's problems through the adoption of children's suffrage and the enactment of appropriate legislation. Negative findings will be an indication that the society is not yet aware of the issues, and this result, in turn, can lead to a new study, trying to explain *why* this awareness is missing. The society may be disintegrating and unable to understand its vital needs, or it is satisfied with its current operating mechanisms of handling children's problems, or it is indifferent to these problems, or whatever other explanation can be offered. The range of possible findings of the study is described in more detail below.

Research objectives. The general goal of the study includes several objectives specific to the social groups and countries selected for study.

With regard to *social groups*, the study has three parts, the investigation of attitudes toward children's suffrage on the part of: 1) Parents and legal guardians of children younger than 18, 2) Adult populations other than these parents and guardians, and 3) Children age 14 to 17. The *sociological* findings may call for *psychological* research, requiring additional concepts. As for social inclusiveness, this study includes all groups of the population except children younger than 14, most of whom may be unable to form attitudes toward children's suffrage.

With regard to *countries*, the study also has three distinctive parts, the investigation of attitudes toward children's suffrage in the populations of: 1) Rich countries, 2) Poor countries, 3) The poorest countries. These countries are selected only from *democratic* countries, in which suffrage has already been demonstrated to work. Differentiation criteria are gross domestic product per capita and income per capita. Due to its international scope, the project from the start is oriented toward a global, and not just regional, analysis. The project's international scope and comparative nature will allow us to determine *levels of sensitivity* to children's suffrage in different regions of the world and different groups of countries (rich, poor, and poorest). Every country-specific subproject should provide a rationale for placing the country into one of the three economic groupings. The country-specific subprojects will seek to determine in what countries (of those selected) the introduction of children's suffrage is likely to occur, or whether it will occur at all. To compare social groups within economic groupings of countries, each economic grouping will include at least two countries.

Although the goal of the project includes nine separate objectives, the first phase of our study *is limited* to two. The nine study objectives designate analysis of three social groups in three groupings of countries, but *our* subjects will be selected from only one social group, parents and guardians of children younger than 18, in only two groups of countries, rich and poor.

Parents/guardians of children as key subjects of study

Minor children's parents/guardians are the first subjects of study. The attitudes of this social group toward children's suffrage are crucial for children's suffrage. The reason is obvious: if the *exercise* of children's suffrage is incumbent on minor children's parents/guardians, then whether children's suffrage is to live or die depends on them. Even if other social groups say "yes" and this group says "no," their "no" will outweigh the "yes." Indeed, is there any group that knows children and their interests better than parents/guardians? makes better choices among political candidates for their children's benefit? loves their children more, takes better care of them, bears more responsibility for them? There is only one answer – no group other than the parents and guardians. The paramount importance of parents/guardians to the welfare of children makes this group indispensable for a study of attitudes toward children's suffrage. For this reason, our study will be limited to a survey of *attitudes of parents/guardians of minor children*. The majority of this group are age 18 to 45, because this is when people are bringing up their children through the earliest, most difficult, stages of children's socialization. So our research is essentially a study of attitudes of young parents.

Selection of countries and cities

In the selection of countries, our project is confined to *two groups*: rich countries and poor countries, which are presently the most typical kinds of countries, inhabited by the majority of the earth's population. (Investigation of the poorest countries is reserved for subsequent studies.) It is presumed that rich countries have significantly higher levels of children's and parent/guardians' welfare than poor countries. Ideally, we would want to include *all* rich and poor, democratic countries, but this does not seem necessary for a preliminary study. For *our* study it is enough to select two rich countries from different continents. For instance, potential pairs of rich countries might be the U.S. with France, Australia, or Great Britain; Canada with Japan, Germany, or New Zealand; etc. Our study will include only *one pair* of rich countries, e.g., the U.S. and Australia. The final selection will depend on availability of census data from which to draw appropriate samples, permission from host countries, travel allowances for the principal investigator(s), and participation of resident sociologists.

Potential pairs of poor countries include the following: Russia with Mexico, Brazil, or India. Again, the final selection will be based on census data, permission, travel allowances, and selection of participant sociologists. Because the project is being initiated in Russia, Russia will be included in the study. In summary, the study will include *four democratic countries*: two classified as rich and two as poor.

To simplify the study, each country selected will be represented by a large city with a diverse population that resembles the country as a whole on key variables. For Russia, the city of choice is St.Petersburg, with a population of 4.7 million. For the U.S., the city of choice might be Chicago, with a population of two million. The selection of cities in other countries will be made by participating sociologists in those countries. Later on, affiliated research projects can be conducted in other countries and cities using the tested methodology from this preliminary study.

Key hypotheses of the study

The manner of selection of groups, countries, and cities for examination allows us to formulate *key hypotheses* regarding attitudes of parents/guardians toward children's suffrage and related legislation in different countries. These hypotheses reflect various *assumptions about causes and consequences of positive and negative attitudes*. Our hypotheses pertain to positive attitudes (approval

of the concept and acceptance of appropriate legislation) and negative attitudes (disapproval of the concept and rejection of legislation) by parents/guardians of minor children. Attitudes will be considered positive if a significant majority of respondents answer "yes," and negative if a significant majority answer "no." Hypotheses differ by quality (positive and negative) and by countries (rich and poor). Apart from such definitive answers, the study also will be taking into account *indeterminate attitudes*, exemplified by answers such as "don't know, unsure," etc. Indeterminate attitudes, having a multitude of possible explanations, are not reflected in our hypotheses. Possible causes will be explored during our interpretation of findings. There are other potentially significant differences, *within* poor country and rich country clusters, reflecting variations in attitudes toward children's suffrage *given* a relatively "rich" or "poor" national environment. Variations that are not included in our hypotheses may appear when the project findings are analyzed, and these will require additional interpretation.

Based on the mentioned premises and limitations, we have formulated six main hypotheses, which the research findings will either corroborate or refute.

Hypotheses for rich countries

1. Parents/guardians of minor children WILL NOT SUPPORT children's suffrage if they regard children's welfare and the handling of children's problems in their country as *satisfactory*. In this case, children's suffrage is NOT seen as a pressing issue for their country at the present time.

2. Parents/guardians WILL SUPPORT children's suffrage if they consider a high level of children's welfare and the handling children's problems *insufficient* in their country. In this case, *adoption of appropriate legislation* ALSO will be seen as an important issue.

3. Parents/guardians WILL SUPPORT the idea of adoption of children's suffrage in poorer countries as a way to enhance the quality of life in poorer countries. In this case, we envisage *approval of assistance* from rich countries to poorer countries toward conceptualizing and realizing children's suffrage. This hypothesis reflects a global level of awareness, in rich countries, in response to the concept of children's suffrage.

Hypotheses for poor countries.

1. Parents/guardians of minor children WILL NOT SUPPORT children's suffrage, if they a) distrust their government, do not believe in its ability to enhance children's welfare through any means,

including children's suffrage; b) are themselves indifferent to their children's welfare, which is a disturbing indicator of an intergenerational rupture and disintegration of society from within. Each of these causes is evidence of a systemic crisis, and calls for urgent action on the part of the government as well as relevant sociological research. In these countries, appropriate legislation can become a mobilizer and consolidator of society, and prevent society's collapse. Because of these capabilities, this legislation is very important for the society, even though the society has not yet become aware of it. This situation calls for an intense and comprehensive campaign, to explain to citizens the advantages of children's suffrage.

2. Parents/guardians WILL SUPPORT children's suffrage, if they a) are concerned about their children's welfare and the way the nation handles children's problems, and b) they believe in the government's ability to address these problems. This would indicate that there exists a reciprocal sense of duty between generations (first of all, parents' sense of duty to their children), as well as a reciprocal sense of duty between the population and its government. This inspires optimism, and hope for an improvement of children's welfare and living standards. In this case, *adoption of appropriate legislation* ALSO will be seen as an important issue.

3. Parents/guardians WILL SUPPORT adoption of children's suffrage in rich countries, as an example to follow and as a source of assistance to poorer countries. Again, this hypothesis reflects a global level of awareness in response to the concept of children's suffrage.

The general hypothesis of the study is this: parents/guardians of minor children in poor countries *will be more likely to support* children's suffrage, while parents/guardians in rich countries *will be more likely not to support* children's suffrage, and this is a result of differences in the general living standards in these countries, including the living standards of their children.

And yet, another possible result, which we consider the least likely, is that a majority of respondents will opt for the "DON'T KNOW," "UNSURE" answers, and this will demonstrate either indifference to the problems of their children or insufficient knowledge about the concept of children's suffrage.

The social significance of negative findings (demonstration of a negative attitude toward children's suffrage) will be as great as the social significance of positive findings. Whereas, indeterminate findings will mean that we have work to do, to acquaint the global community with the importance of giving children the full rights of citizenship, exercised through their parents or guardians, to improve their quality of life and their likelihood of doing the same for future generations.

Questionnaire -- the key research instrument of the project

The questionnaire, to be administered in conjunction with a stratified random sampling technique, is designed to meet the requirements of the objectives and hypotheses of the study. The questionnaire, to be distributed to parents and guardians of minor children, includes a brief explanatory note, a list of questions with coded responses, and biographical data to classify respondents by socio-economic group.

SURVEY:

PARENTS'/GUARDIANS' ATTITUDES TOWARD CHILDREN'S SUFFRAGE

Dear parents and legal guardians!

This international survey seeks to learn what you think of the idea of a National Children's Suffrage Law.

Children's suffrage means that minor children, younger than 18, will have a legal RIGHT to vote, and to be entered into electoral registers, whereas the EXERCISE of this right (the actual voting) will be done by their parents or legal guardians.

The main goal of the Children's Suffrage Law is to ensure priority state (budgetary) financing for the children's sphere. It will establish by the parliamentary majority at all levels of legislative power. This majority is created by votes of parents and their children making the majority of voters. But do you, as parents and guardians, want to vote for your children, to establish priority financing of the children's sphere, which includes all conditions of childhood - family, education, health care, sports, leisure, children's problems of orphanhood, homelessness, drugs, crime, prostitution, etc.? This is our key question.

Your answers to the questions in the questionnaire will help us test our hypotheses, and learn about attitudes toward children's suffrage in different countries of the world.

Questionnaire prepared by Leo Semashko, Ph. D., A/Professor, St. Petersburg, Russia,

QUESTIONNAIRE

(Your anonymity is protected. Please circle the numerical code for only one answer to each question):

1. In your opinion, how important is children's sphere for our country?

- 1 Most important, the future of our country depends upon our children
- 2 Important but not paramount. One or two more important spheres are:

3 I do not know

2. Are you satisfied with what the government is doing about the following problems of childhood:

- | | | | |
|---|------|----------|-------|
| a. Education of children? | 1 NO | 2 UNSURE | 3 YES |
| b. Health care for children? | 1 NO | 2 UNSURE | 3 YES |
| c. Summer programs and after-school recreation? | 1 NO | 2 UNSURE | 3 YES |
| d. Safe neighbourhoods for children? | 1 NO | 2 UNSURE | 3 YES |
| e. Homelessness of children? | 1 NO | 2 UNSURE | 3 YES |
| f. Delinquency of children? | 1 NO | 2 UNSURE | 3 YES |

-
- 3. Are you satisfied with what the government is doing for the children's sphere?**
1 NO 2 UNSURE 3 YES
- 4. Would you like to establish priority budgetary financing for the children's sphere?**
1 NO 2 UNSURE 3 YES
- 5. If priority budgetary financing of the children's sphere can be ensured only by a legislative (parliamentary) majority, how you will consider it?**
1 (I shall not support it) 2 (I do not know) 3 (I shall support it)
- 6. If only children's suffrage will establish a legislative (parliamentary) majority and priority budgetary financing of the children's sphere, how will you consider this voting right?**
1 (Negatively) 2 (I do not know) 3 (Positively)
- 7. If the right to vote for your children is given to you, will you use it?**
1 NO 2 UNSURE 3 YES
- 8. Do you vote in elections?** 1 NO 2 YES, in some elections 3 YES, in most or all elections
- 9. Do you believe in the ability of the government to do more for the children's sphere?**
1 NO 2 UNSURE 3 YES
- 10. Do you want priority budgetary financing for the children's sphere?**
1 NO 2 UNSURE 3 YES
- 11a. Should rich countries support the idea of children's suffrage in poor countries, as a way to improve the quality of life of children?** (Question only for rich countries)
1 NO 2 UNSURE 3 YES
- 11b. Should poor countries support the idea of children's suffrage in rich countries, as a way to improve the quality of life of children, as an example and source of help to poor countries?** (Question only for poor countries) 1 NO 2 UNSURE 3 YES
- 12. How well do you understand the idea of children's suffrage (voting right for children, exercised by their parents) and its possible consequences?**
1 (I fully understand the idea and its consequences)
2 (I partly understand the idea and its consequences)
3 (I have just now learned about the idea from your questionnaire)

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

(Please circle the numerical code for your answer, except for Q. 15, Number of children):

- 13. Your parental role:**
1 (Mother) 2 (Father) 3 (Female Legal Guardian) 4 (Male Legal Guardian)
- 14. Your age:**
1 (age 18-25) 2 (age 26-35) 3 (age 36-50) 4 (51 or older)
- 15. Number of children in your household in each age group:**
() 0 through 6 () 7 through 11 () 12 through 17
- 16. With whom are you raising your child/children:**
1 (spouse) 2 (alone) 3 (alone, but with the help of another adult/adults)
- 17. Your highest grade in school/degree completed:**
1 (none) 2 (elementary school) 3 (high school) 4 (4 year college or university) 5 (advanced degree)
- 18. Your current work status:**
1 (employed or self-employed) 2 (other)
- 19. Sphere of your basic employment (within the past year):**
1 (*Social sphere*: e.g., health, education, entertainment, pensioner, homemaker, student, disabled, jobless)
2 (*Information sphere*: e.g., scientist, engineer, media personnel, computer programmer, designer, advertiser)
3 (*Organizational sphere*: e.g., government, courts, correctional system, lawyer, manager, banker, military)

4 (*Material sphere*: e.g., industry, farming, sales, construction, transportation, food processing, food services)

20a. Household income per month in thousands of roubles (Russia*):

1 (less than 1.5) 2 (1.5+ to 3) 3 (3+ to 5) 4 (5+ to 10) 5 (10+ to 30) 6 (over 30)

20b. Household income per month in US dollars (Russia*):

1 (0-50) 2 (51-100) 3 (101-170) 4 (171-330) 5 (331-1000) 6 (over \$1000)

*(for other countries, appropriate scales will be created for comparison)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ANSWERS!

With two exceptions, questions for all four countries are the same or similar. The standard questionnaire has 12 opinion questions and 8 biographical questions. The opinion questions are designed to obtain respondent attitudes regarding various aspects of government response to the problems of childhood, from the most general evaluations of the importance of children's problems, to assessment of the value of voting behaviour, to specific questions regarding perception of the potential for children's suffrage. Pivotal for the questionnaire are questions **4, 5, 6 and 7**. The opinion questions of the questionnaire are reduced to two simple key questions:

1. **Do you, parents and guardians, want priority budgetary financing for the children's sphere?**
2. **If only children's suffrage will establish priority budgetary financing of the children's sphere, how will you consider this voting right?**

The biographical questions are intended to help researchers assess the responses of more narrowly defined social groups within each sample, and to estimate how closely the sample represents the demographics of the country. The opinion questions in the questionnaire are designed to provide reasonably precise tests of the hypotheses. *The unit of observation is a parent/guardian legally responsible for a child/children younger than 18.* (Studies involving other population groups will have different observation units, and variations of the questionnaire will be designed for those studies.)

The distinctive feature and representativeness of the study, the method of random sampling

Given its concept and questionnaire, our project defies rigid categorization. The distinctive feature of our project is that it combines characteristics of different types of sociological research.

First, it is *innovative*, i.e., no one, anywhere, has conducted this type of research. The project examines society's attitudes to the novel idea of children's suffrage, as a political process which, as yet, has received little awareness or scholarly attention. So, researchers should be prepared to encounter obstacles and surprises, a result of the novelty of the project and its proposed realignment of political forces.

Second, the project is *field research* (not a lab experiment), and a *diagnostic* (problematic) study, whose purpose is to illuminate a practical social problem -- the problem of finding an efficient way for society to respond to problems of childhood by means of awarding children full rights of citizenship.

Third, this is a *pilot study*, meaning that it has several strong limitations (with regard to social groups, number of countries involved, cities, etc.), due to which the present project may become a *starting point* for the expansion of the research on a grand scale.

Fourth, it is a *mass survey* (rather than an expert one), with the population totalling millions of observation units (parents/guardians). It should be noted that in St.Petersburg alone the population of parents/guardians totals about 1.5 million people, with the city's overall population being 4.7 million and the number of children about 1 million.

Fifth, the selection of subjects must be *randomized* (respondents selected by means of a random sample). According to our estimate, the sample should be 1,000 observation units, i.e., 1,000 parents/guardians in the city under examination.

The sample should be representative of the general population on the following eight characteristics:

- * Relationship of respondent to child/children (mother, father, legal guardian)
- * Gender of respondent
- * Age group of respondent
- * Distribution of children by age group, or number of children younger than 18
- * Percentage of single-parent families
- * Education of respondent
- * Income level of household
- * Employment status of respondent

(These are maximum requirements, with three minimum requirements: respondent's gender, age, and education)

All parameters are included in the questionnaire's biographical section. The sample will be drawn through the method of stratified random sampling. This method's advantage is that it is likely to produce a more balanced representation of the population under examination than will a simple random sample.

The project's scheduling and timelines

In most general terms, the scheduling and timelines of this sociological study are as follows.

Preparatory stage: November 2003 - February 2004 (concepts, organization and financing).

1st stage: study of parents/guardians in 4 cities in 4 countries: March 2004 - June 2004. Findings of the first stage will be summarized in a joint presentation, to be delivered at the 36th International Congress of the International Institute of Sociology in Beijing in July, 2004. This paper will be sent to UNICEF.

2nd stage: study of parents/guardians in 4 countries (countries, not cities, the focus of the study). September 2004 - December 2004.

3rd stage: study of adult population, except parents/guardians and children aged 14-17, in 4 cities in 4 countries: January 2005 - June 2005.

4th stage: study of adult population, except parents/guardians and children aged 14-17, with the focus on countries, rather than cities. September 2005 - December 2005.

5th stage: completion of the final report encompassing the whole complex of the objects in the four countries, and the drafting of a research plan, for the same objects, in five continents (5 countries in each continent, plus Australia): January 2006 - June 2006. On the basis of the final report, a joint paper will be prepared, to be delivered at the 16th International Sociological Congress of the International Sociological Association in Durban (Africa), in July, 2006. The final report and the paper, complemented with appropriate proposals, will be sent to UNICEF.

Alternative scheduling(simplified variant of study)

Preparatory stage: November 2003 - February 2004 (concepts, organization and financing).

1st stage: study of 1000 adults in 4 cities of 4 countries: March 2004 - June 2004

2nd stage: study of the attitudes of population (as represented through the three designated groups) to children's suffrage in four countries (the focus on countries, not cities). September 2004 - June 2005.

3rd stage: study of the attitudes of population (as represented through the three designated groups) to children's suffrage in four continents, 4-5 countries in each. September 2005 - December 2005.

4th stage: the completion of a final report on the whole complex of the objects in four continents (plus Australia). January 2006 - June 2006.

Gathering and analysis of data from the first stage

As noted earlier, the data is gathered through a randomized survey of parents/guardians in four large cities in four countries. For each city a city-specific research plan is to be drafted, but the method

of drawing the random samples remains the same -- randomized stratified sampling. The sampling quota for each city would equal approximately 1000-1500 observation units.

Data is gathered through questionnaires, a sample of which is presented above. Parents are polled in pre-school childcare establishments or high education establishments (or in school districts, in those locales that have them). In schools, it appears advisable to conduct the polling at parents meetings of different classes. Guardians will have to be located through local education authorities (or school districts) and special arrangements will have to be made for polling them.

Alternative method of data gathering. Data is gathered through telephone interviews using representative samples (1,000 respondents). Gender, age and education level are designated as control variables. This method will help to get responses to the questions pertaining to the subject under examination and will provide information on share amounts of population having underaged children, amounts of children in different social strata, share amounts of single-parent families, share amounts of children cared for by guardians. This method will help to evaluate the attitudes to children's suffrage not only on the part of parents/guardians of underaged children, but the rest of the population as well.

The methods of data gathering can be adjusted to suit specific nations; what is important is that the methods ensure representativeness and comparability of the results.

After a designated amount of questionnaires is completed, the data is statistically processed. This involves the checking of completed questionnaires, the closing of semi-open-ended questions, the coding of responses, statistical grouping, the compilation of tables, the calculation of statistical averages and other statistical measures.

The analysis and presentation of results

The analysis of findings will involve an analysis of the distribution of responses to each question, the compilation of a profile of each sample, and a compilation of tables in accordance with the guidelines for an analysis of responses to questions **4, 5, 6, and 7**. Especially important is the task of comparative analysis of the results along two lines of inquiry: comparisons between cities representing rich and poor countries, and comparison of cities within groupings of rich and poor countries.

For each of the four cities, the findings will be presented in two languages: national and English (only one language, English, will be used for English-speaking countries). These results will be put together in a single report, which will make the basis for the joint presentation/paper. Both the report and the presentation/paper will be discussed by the project participants. The report and the presentation,

accompanied with appropriate proposals, will be submitted to UNICEF, sociological congresses, governmental bodies, the media, political parties with an interest in the issue, and non-governmental organizations.

The project's organizational arrangements and financing

To implement the first stage of the project, covering four cities in four countries, a group of sociologists will be recruited in each of the four cities; the number of researchers in each group to depend on the city, but generally, two to five. Each city's group will select its own project leader. The four groups will be united in an international group, which, in turn, will appoint two project leaders: a creative manager and an administrative manager. Members will communicate with the international group primarily through e-mail.

The international group will determine under the auspices of what international organization(s) it will conduct the research. UNICEF, since the UN Children's Fund takes charge of the majority of internationally important research projects related to children, seems the most appropriate choice. Undoubtedly, children's suffrage is a project of international significance, both scholarly and practically, of great import for all children of the world. So, the international research group should attempt to secure the patronage of UNICEF. As for the other international, regional and national organizations -- International, European, and American Sociological Associations, women's, parents' and youth associations, the International Institute of Sociology, etc., -- it is desirable that all of these organizations, too, provide sponsorship for the project, first of all in financial matters, and also by assisting in organizing groups of researchers on the basis of already existing sociological laboratories and centers.

Financial matters will be handled by the international group together with the organizations under whose auspices the research will be conducted. It is not unreasonable to expect that these organizations will become, if not the sole, the major sources of funding. The funding amount will depend on the country and the project stage, the volume of labor involved, and standard wages for sociologists in these countries. *For instance, the preparatory and first stages in Russia, in St.Petersburg, will require approximately USD 10,000, from which 5000 are necessary for survey realization of interrogation, and 5000 are necessary for preparation of the concepts and reports.*

All surveys of the population on our theme at all stages can be conducted by the Agency of Social Information (ASI) in St.-Petersburg, which is one of the most famous research centres of Russia. ASI is ready to join the International Research Project *Attitudes of different population groups to*

children's suffrage. In 2003 ASI conducted research of international importance. The **European project** was carried out on behalf of the news agency *Rosbalt* on the eve of Saint-Petersburg's 300-year anniversary. The main purpose of the project was to find out respondents' attitudes to the celebration of Saint-Petersburg's jubilee, but the survey also included issues of international importance.

The project was unique, since the survey was carried out in 12 capitals of Western Europe in their native languages, and all of this was accomplished from the company's office. Fifteen hundred European citizens were surveyed.

Cities included in the project:

Amsterdam (Holland)	Madrid (Spain)
Brussels (Belgium)	Oslo (Norway)
Copenhagen (Denmark)	Paris (France)
Hamburg (German)	Rome (Italy)
Helsinki (Finland)	Stockholm (Sweden)
London (Great Britain)	Vienna (Austria)

In January, 2004, ASI conducted the next international research in eight capitals of Western Europe. This investigation is assessing European attitudes toward different regulations of the European Union Constitution, and toward the potential of Russia's joining the European Union.

International surveys of this kind are conducted on the base of computer assisted telephone interviewing – CATI BEELVIEW FUSION/TCI system. The technology provides the quickest way to receive accurate and reliable data. The main advantage of CATI technology over all other research methods is that the processes of data collection and input occur simultaneously. This allows a researcher to get the necessary information content about one or another issue in the shortest possible time. The work of interviewers is under control. As a result, one gets the highest quality of information as it's possible to get in a survey.

The cost of one computer assisted telephone interview depends on sample methods, necessary quotas, length of interview, respondent's city and country. The interview can be carried out in all European languages, and also in all the most widespread world-wide languages.

The following table shows the cost of one CATI interview with a questionnaire up to 10 minutes (USD).

	St.-Petersburg	Other cities of Russia	European cities (on average)	Cities of other continents

Main quotas: Gender Age Education (simplified variant)	2.00	5.30	13.20	15.80
Additional quotas: on parents/guardians (multiplies fieldwork minutes by 2.5 times)	5.00	13.00	33.00	39.60

A CATI survey of 1000 respondents (parents/guardians) in St.-Petersburg costs USD 5,000, in another Russian city – USD 13,000, in a European city – USD 33,000, in cities of other continents – USD 40,000.

Hence, the preparatory and first study stages will require *in all* USD 130,000. In the alternative (simplified) variant it will require USD 55,000.

A survey of this type takes from one and a half months, if one city is involved, up to two and a half months, if four cities are involved. This includes all preparatory work, the survey itself, the data analysis, and preparation of a presentation.

Contact persons in ASI

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In conclusion, we want to emphasize that Concept-1 is a theoretical-methodological foundation for a proposed international, comparative study of attitudes toward children's suffrage, while Concept-2 carries forward the proposal, with a plan to obtain survey data from randomly sampled parents/guardians of minor children in four large cities, in four countries.

3. First Responses of Sociologists

From Brazil

Dear Professor Leo Semashko,

I read attentively your paper "Concept of the children's suffrage", which you had kindly sent to me. Your proposal, besides being brave and bold, seems to me very timely, mainly your considerations in "Concept 2". I am copying this message to Prof. Ute Craemer, teacher and mentor of one of the most meaningful experiences of healthy socialization in the Brazilian slums. She is the president and founder of the "Alliance for Infancy" in Brazil, an international movement bent on the task of creating awareness in the government and society about the urgency of focusing our attention on the children of the world. I believe your exchange with Prof. Craemer, to whom I am sending your paper, will be both productive and encouraging. I will also make your proposal known to Judges and Public Prosecutors in the field of Childhood and Adolescence during their 20th National Congress, in which I will take part as speaker.

Receive my warm regards and wishes of a promising work for the children of the world.

Lia Diskin, Professor of Sociology, Sao-Paulo University, Brazil
 Associacao Palas Athena, February 27, 2004

From Japan

Dear brother Leo!

It took me sometime to respond to your enthusiastic proposal for a new book-dialogue about the children's suffrage including views on various religions. Yes, indeed a great idea again... I admire your enthusiasm, but, to continue our metaphorical language, I watered your sakura trees and now you ask me to work in your tetrasociological garden!!! My own little sakuras and other flowers are waiting for attention. I neglected them for so long! Also, I have a side job: RC 07 and the conference I have to work for. Again, I have to start a new course this April on Modern society...

For our International Conference ISA RC07 Futures Research (Culture, Values, and the Future of Society, Kyoto, Bukkyo University, September 24-26, 2004) I would welcome you for a presentation on "Children's suffrage as new political culture and value of the future" but children's suffrage as such is more about an institution than about values. It is more about a political movement than about values. There is a big difference being value in the singular and values in the plural. Concepts are very important in our work. With every good wish for you and your work,

Reimon Bachika,
 Professor, dept of sociology, Bukkyo University, Japan
 President ISA RC 07 Futures Research (International Sociological Association)
 February 29, 2004

From Britain

Dear Leo,

I read over your children's suffrage paper with great interest. It seems a very worthy topic and well worth provoking debate. I have been too busy to respond in more detail.

Best wishes, Bernard

Dr Bernard Scott,
 Cranfield University
 Royal Military College of Science, UK
 April 26, 2004

4. Legislation: Law of Children's Suffrage for the Russian Federation

Article 1. Regulations Governing Voting Rights of Minors.

1) Suffrage of minor citizens of the Russian Federation shall presuppose a division of voting rights into active and passive, into potential and actual, and, most important, into a right to the ballot granted to a child, and a right to vote (to use/cast the ballot) granted to a child's parent or legal guardian.

2) Minor citizens of the Russian Federation should have the active electoral right (the right to elect), but they should not have, by reason of incapacity, the passive electoral right (the right to be elected).

3) Minor citizens of the Russian Federation should have the electoral right to the ballot (the right to a child's election ballot), but they should not have, by reason of incapacity, the electoral right to vote (de facto use of a child's ballot at elections or referenda), which right shall be entrusted to parents and legal guardians.

4) Minor citizens of the Russian Federation should have, from birth, a potential electoral right, which makes every child the possessor of a potential vote.

5) The fact that a child is entered into voter registration records, and enjoys the right to a child's election ballot, shall ensure an actual electoral right of the child.

6) In the Russian Federation, only two children of each parent or guardian shall enjoy the actual electoral right; consequently, each parent or guardian may enter into the voter registration records and receive, for the purpose of voting, no more than two children's election ballots.

(The note. The problem of determining the amount of children a parent or guardian may vote for is a very complex one and should be handled in conformity with the nation's established demographic policy. If this policy is aimed at limiting the population's size, then two parents (mother or father) may vote only for one child. If this policy is aimed at a minimal, nearly stable accretion of the population, then one parent may vote for one child. If the policy is aimed at a moderate population growth, then one parent may vote for two children. If this policy is aimed at a maximal population growth, then a parent may vote for all of his/her children. In this case, the actual electoral right merges with the potential electoral right. The present Project implies a demographic policy of a moderate population growth in Russia. The relevant provision of the law is to be amended accordingly with transformations that may occur in Russia's demographic policy.)

7) At the birth of a first or second child in a family, this child shall be granted the actual electoral right of voting. The right of a child who reaches majority (age 18) shall pass automatically to another (third or fourth, etc.) child of the parent. (Legal grounds for succession may be elaborated further.)

8) Minor children who possess the actual electoral right shall be entered into voter registration records, become dependent voters, and have the right to a child's election ballot, which one of their parents or legal guardians can then use/cast.

9) A child shall have only one child's vote, and therefore, only one parent (mother or father) or one guardian may vote on the child's behalf.

10) If a minor child loses a parent or guardian who can exercise his/her voting right, the child shall be assigned a legal guardian to whom the exercise of the child's electoral right shall be entrusted.

11) A minor child who is self-supporting, and who maintains a separate residence from his or her parents or legal guardian, may petition the local election board for permission to cast his/her own child's ballot in elections. If permission is granted, the election board is obligated to change the voter registration, accordingly, and to notify the parents or guardian of the minor child's **independent voter** status.

12) If a parent has not attained the age of 18, his/her electoral right tied to his/her child (children) may be assigned to his/her parent or guardian, unless he/she has attained **independent voter** status.

13) Adult spouses (age 18 and older) who have minor children in common, and spouse-parents who have minor children from other unions, for which they have been assigned voting rights, shall decide independently for which child each spouse-parent shall vote. Spouse-parents shall have their written decisions certified by a public notary (or other appropriate public official) and submitted to the local election board in the district where the child (children) reside. Based on these written requests from parents and guardians, local election boards shall enter the children into voter registration records next to the parent's/guardian's registration, taking care to avoid duplicate registrations. Parent/guardian decisions may change, at any time, provided they are appropriately notarized and submitted.

14) How children's votes are distributed among parents (spouses, ex-spouses, and single parents) may be regulated not only by Federal law, but also by territorial laws that supplement Federal law.

15) Procedures for entering children's names into voter registration records shall be determined by individual jurisdictions, and shall be flexible to allow for appropriate changes.

16) The exercise of children's suffrage shall be mandatory for parents/guardians who are eligible.

Article 2. Rewards, Sanctions and Revocation of Parental Voting Rights

1) Incentives may be offered by local jurisdictions to parents/guardians for fulfilling the obligation of voting on their children's behalf.

2) Administrative sanctions, including but not limited to fines, shall be determined by local jurisdictions for parents/guardians in breach of their obligation to vote on behalf of their children.

3) Conviction of a criminal offence, including but not restricted to: child abuse or neglect, assault with a deadly weapon, alcoholism, and chronic drug addiction, shall be legal grounds for revocation of the right of parents/guardians to vote on their children's behalf, in addition to depriving them of other parental rights in accordance with Federal Law.

4) Sanctions will be determined by Federal Law and administered by local jurisdictions for abuses of children's suffrage, including but not limited to: bribery or attempted bribery of parents and guardians, inappropriate attempts to use/cast children's ballots at polling places, and similarly motivated abuses committed by political parties, party blocs, and political candidates or persons acting on their behalf. These sanctions will be further specified by Federal Law.

Article 3. Definitions

For the purposes of this proposed legislation, definitions applied herein shall be understood as follows:

1) **children (child)** -- citizens (citizen) of the Russian Federation from birth until the age of 18 (the age of majority) are granted by the Constitution of the Russian Federation "the right to elect" (article 32.2) "from birth" (17.2); citizenship status of children (child) is to be determined in compliance with the Federal Law of the Russian Federation of May 31, 2002 "On Citizenship of the Russian Federation" (article 12); the concept 'children' is identical to the concept of 'minor citizens';

2) **parents (parent)** -- citizens (citizen) of the Russian Federation having children (child), for the purpose of the proposed law, younger than age 18; whose parenthood is certified by appropriate documents: certificate of birth of the child, certificate of child adoption, or other documents recognized as official in the Russian Federation;

3) **legal guardians (guardian)** -- citizens (citizen) of the Russian Federation who have (has) legalized their guardianship of the children (child) in compliance with the laws and regulations of the Russian Federation;

4) **domicile of the child (children)** is the place of residence (the name of the entity within the Russian Federation: district, city, other settlement, street, house and apartment number or the number of the state-sponsored and public childcare institution) where the minor citizen(s) of the Russian

Federation is (are) registered as residing by organizations in charge of registering citizens' places of sojourn or domiciles in the Russian Federation;

5) **child's ballot** – a child's ballot for voting in elections or referenda; the child's ballot is to be submitted to the child's designated parent or legal guardian by their local election board, upon the presentation of required documents, and in compliance with the regulations of this legislation;

6) **children's (youth's) deputy** is a person elected, with the votes (ballots) of children and their parents or legal guardians, affiliated with an appropriate electoral district, to a representative organ of state power or to a representative organ of local self-government, on the basis of universal suffrage, by secret vote;

7) **independent voter** -- a citizen of the Russian Federation who is age 18 or older and entered into a record of voters possessing the active electoral right, or who is younger than 18 and has successfully petitioned the election board for independent voter status;

8) **dependent voter** is a child younger than 18, who is a citizen of the Russian Federation and is entered into voter registration records and possesses the active and actual electoral right, to be exercised by the child's designated parent or guardian;

9) **the active electoral right of the child (children)** is the right enjoyed by minor citizen(s) of the Russian Federation to elect to organs of state power and organs of local self-government via their parent(s) or guardian(s);

10) **the passive electoral right** is the right of citizens of the Russian Federation age 18 and older to be elected to organs of state power and organs of local self-government;

11) **the absence of the passive electoral right of child(ren)** is denial, to minor citizens of the Russian Federation, the right to be elected to organs of state power and organs of local self-government, by reason of incapacity, the inability to hold elective offices in government;

12) **the electoral right to the ballot (the right to use/cast election ballots)** is the constitutional right enjoyed from birth, by citizens of the Russian Federation, to elect to organs of state power and organs of local self-government;

13) **the electoral right to vote (the right to use/cast election ballots)** is the constitutional right of citizens of the Russian Federation age 18 and older to elect to organs of state power and to organs of local self-government, either independently or on behalf of their child (children); adult citizens have the right to vote only on their own behalf or on behalf of their minor children; they may not vote at elections or referenda on behalf of other persons;

14) **the electoral right of children (child)** is the constitutional right of minor citizen(s) of the Russian Federation to elect to organs of state power and organs of local self-government;

15) **the electoral right of parents and guardians with respect to their children (child)** is the right enjoyed by citizens age 18 and older to vote on behalf of their children (child);

16) **the electoral right of adults** is the constitutional right enjoyed by citizens of the Russian Federation age 18 and older to vote on their own behalf, that is, to be an independent voter;

17) **universal suffrage** -- the constitutional right of citizens of the Russian Federation, which includes the electoral right to the ballot and the electoral right to vote; universal suffrage in the Russian Federation applies to all citizens, including children, as well as all adults who are legally capable, and is secret;

18) **the vote** is the ballot (voting paper) of a citizen of the Russian Federation;

19) **voting (at an election or referendum)** is the use of the election ballot (ballots) by citizens of the Russian Federation age 18 and older;

20) **the potential electoral right of children** is the right to the ballot by all minor citizens of the Russian Federation;

21) **the actual electoral right of children** is the right to the ballot by those minor citizens of the Russian Federation whose parents and guardians are granted the right to vote on their (minor citizens') behalf; the grounds for and the scope of restrictions to be determined by this legislation;

22) a **children's (youth's) candidate** is a person who is nominated, in compliance with this legislation or an amendment to this legislation, as a candidate for elective office or a membership in an organ of state power or an organ of local self-government, or has been registered by an appropriate election board as a candidate nominated by children's parents and guardians, or by an association of parents and guardians;

23) a **listing of children's (youth's) candidates** is a listing of candidates who have been nominated by a political party, a party bloc or an association of parents and guardians, for an election to a legislative (representative) organ of state power, or to a representative or other elective organ of local self-government, and certified or registered by the board in charge of the election.

Article 4. Application

1. This legislation shall apply to children younger than age 18 and their parents or legal guardians who are citizens of the Russian Federation.

2. It stipulates terms and conditions under which minor children, as citizens of the Russian Federation, shall exercise their constitutional right to participate in elections and referenda conducted in compliance with the laws and Constitution of the Russian Federation, and with the laws and statutes of regional, state, and local governments within the Russian Federation.

3. It shall apply in all territories governed by the Russian Federation, and shall supercede all age-specific restrictions of voting rights in laws, statutes, and administrative rulings, except as stated herein.

4. Federal Law and the laws of governing entities within the Russian Federation may provide additional terms and conditions of children's suffrage, to supplement those stipulated by this legislation, provided such terms and conditions do not conflict with the intent of this legislation to remove the age-restriction.

5. Principal terms and conditions of the right to participate in elections and referenda granted to minor citizens of the Russian Federation by this legislation may be amended by introducing appropriate amendments to existing Federal law.

6. Federal law, constitution (statutes), laws of governments within the Russian Federation, other regulatory legal acts concerning elections and referenda, either adopted or being reviewed for adoption in the Russian Federation, shall not conflict with this proposed legislation. If federal law, constitution (statutes), laws of governments within the Russian Federation, other regulatory legal acts concerning elections and (or) referenda, conflict with this proposed legislation, provisions of this proposed legislation shall prevail.

7. This legislation on the voting rights of minor citizens of the Russian Federation shall supplement the Federal Law of June 12, 2002: "On essential guarantees of the right of citizens of the Russian Federation to vote in elections and referendums," and shall retain all of its provisions except where they conflict with the provisions of this proposal, which shall be further specified.

8) Adoption of this legislation on children's suffrage in the Russian Federation shall be proposed in a national referendum, in compliance with the Law of the Russian Federation on referenda. March 26, 2004

Submitted to Member of Parliament of the Russian Federation, May, 2004

5. Lecture Series: Children's Suffrage: Necessity and Consequences.

Course for students and post-graduate students. 12 lectures, 24 hours

Theme 1. Place and role of children in society and the state. Problems of childhood

Children as a major part of the social sphere responsible for reproduction and socialization of new generations. Meaning of children's employment on self-development and socialization for life of a society. Change in number and quality of children at different stages of historical development. A place and role of children in different societies. Care of children by the parents, family, society and state. The role of children in the state, and political reflection of their interests. Politics in consciousness of children, and children's political socialization. Modern problems of childhood: system character, classification, tendencies and estimation of their acuteness. UNO and UNICEF regarding the situation and well-being of children in the world. Ways in which states address childhood problems.

Theme 2. History of suffrage

Suffrage as the initial institution of democracy and one of the basic rights of man. Formation of modern suffrage during the epoch of industrial society. Genesis of suffrage: expansion of its scale and simultaneous narrowing of the number of various qualifications. Regulation of suffrage in the Constitutions and legislations of different countries.

Theme 3. The age qualification as a rudiment of industrial society and racism

The voting qualifications as a form of discrimination and racism. Specificity of the age qualification as a rudiment of industrial society. The psychological and social - political reasons for survivability of the age qualification. The age qualification as a kind psychological, cultural and political racism. Disparity of the age qualification to institutes of citizenship and democracy. The age qualification as a political reason for "poverty, discrimination and society's neglect of children" in modern democracies. Necessity of a cancellation of the age qualification for an information society in the age of globalization. D.I.Mendeleyev's "children's qualification" as the first attempt to overcome the age qualification. Other attempts of political representation of children's interests.

Theme 4. Children's suffrage: social, political and moral necessity

General definition of children's suffrage and its features. Suffrage of child as a right to elect, but not to be elected. Social and legal essence of children's suffrage. Division of the right and its exercise. Children's suffrage as a way to cancel and overcome the age qualification. Social, moral and political necessity for children's suffrage in a new epoch. Children's suffrage as a requirement for a just globalization. The rights of the child have been written down in the UN Convention on children's suffrage.

Theme 5. Legal mechanism for implementing children's suffrage

The basic principles and concepts of legislation for children's suffrage. The child's right of an electoral vote, and exercising this right by the parents or guardians. A child as dependent voter. Ways of dividing children's votes between the parents (father and mother). Limits of parents in number of children's votes, in different countries. Inclusion of children in the electoral registers (lists). Restrictions in exercise of children's suffrage by parents who are dipsomaniacs, drug addicts, etc. Permission for emancipated youth younger than 18 to exercise the right to vote. Exercising children's suffrage as a duty for parents and guardians. Administrative sanctions for infringement of this duty. Encouragement of parents to exercise this duty. Sanctions for abuses of children's suffrage. National referenda as way to accept Children's Suffrage Law in each country. Revising legislation to include a Children's Suffrage Law.

Theme 6. Political meaning and consequences of children's suffrage

Political meaning of children's suffrage as a full, political calculation and expression of vital interests of children in all territories of a country. Political destination of children's suffrage - creation of a voting majority in legislative bodies at all levels of government, from local self-management up to federal, comprising the votes of parents and children. Parents and children as the social base of a voting majority. Deputies elected by votes of children and their parents - "children's (or youth)" deputies. Statement of problems of childhood by "youth" deputies. Creation, by a voting majority in the legislative and executive government, of mechanisms for effective and systemic decisions regarding childhood problems. Priority allocation of budgets, at different levels, for programs that address childhood problems. Increase political activity of youth. Increase political role of children and youth in society. Increase electoral participation. Increase quality of democracy. Transform the state to become truly social. Reduce levels of child and adult criminality. Exercise fully the rights of children. Maintain for children a policy of "special care" from the state. Increase the social value and humane importance of suffrage. Clean up the political system. Provide new energy in struggles with terrorism, corruption, and criminality. Establish the political mechanism to institute children's suffrage.

Theme 7. Social consequences of children's suffrage

Children's suffrage as a priority of the social sphere and social politics, to improve children's well-being, increase quality of education, public health services, leisure, sports of children, strengthen family, increase the role and authority of parents, including especially mothers, create mechanisms to address demographic problems, strengthen connections and mutual responsibility of generations, form powerful antiterrorist forces, among other social consequences.

Theme 8. Moral - psychological and cultural consequences of children's suffrage

Children's suffrage will improve the moral - psychological climate in family and society, increase political consciousness and cultures of youth, strengthen mutual aid and trust between generations, between parents and their children, improve the mass media, clearing them from propagation of violence and pornography, qualitatively improve the information provided for children, and the special care of children, as national ideals for society among other consequences.

Theme 9. Possible arguments against children's suffrage

Social forces of support and counteraction to children's suffrage. The reasons and subjects of social and psychological resistance to children's suffrage. Collision innovations and traditions in politics and suffrage. Religious and moral motives of resistance to children's suffrage. Arguments of a formal equality of the voters. Arguments of abusing by children's suffrage. Arguments of misunderstanding of children's suffrage. Arguments of the irresponsible and indifferent attitude to children. Arguments from disbelief in the state and politics. Racial and nationalistic arguments. Arguments of pseudo-danger for children. Arguments from a priority of economy. Other arguments.

Theme 10. Theoretical origins of the idea of children's suffrage

Pedagogical and axiological idea of equality, public and political value of children by J. Korczak, D.Mendeleev, J.Piaget, S.Gessen, E.Cokolov and many others. Tetrasociology as a theoretical sociological source of the children's suffrage idea. Reproductive employment and sphere classes of the population as a basis for social equality of children and adults, as a source of the children's suffrage idea. Children's suffrage as way of social harmony for sphere classes and between

generations. Branch reasons for the extended reproduction of problems of childhood, and sphere ways of overcoming them. Sphere nature of children's suffrage. Sociological research of the attitudes of parents, and of the population at large, to children's suffrage.

Theme 11. Children's suffrage as a new value, right, freedom and responsibility of the globalization age

Expansion of the rights, freedoms and values in a social history. Qualitative development of values of love, freedom, equality and brotherhood under influence of children's suffrage. Humanization of understanding and application of traditional values, rights and freedoms of the man in connection with children's suffrage. Children's suffrage as a universal and harmonious attitude toward children. Children's suffrage - new value, right, freedom and responsibility of the globalization age and information society. Children's suffrage as an addition to the General Declaration of the rights of man and UN Convention about the rights of the child in the new age.

Theme 12. Children's suffrage – as a way to accelerate the development of nations

Children – the main, human capital and resource of countries of the world. The greatest efficiency of investment in human capital. Investment in children as a way to accelerate and harmoniously develop countries, as the basis for a systemic political strategy in the 21st century. Children's suffrage as a social break for developing countries.

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Notes:

1. If necessary the number by themes and hours of lecture series can be or is reduced or increased twice.
2. On each theme the seminar occupations for 2 hours is possible.
3. The reading of the course is possible on any following faculty/department: sociology, political sciences, philosophy, culture, anthropology, political psychology, pedagogics, family and childhood, social work etc.

6. Suggestions for a Future International Conference on “Children’s Suffrage”

Facts and theoretical reflections presented in this brochure form the basis for a proposal to hold an international conference in 2005 or 2006. Possible topics for the conference include:

- Place and role of children in society, and policy in the globalization age
- Problems of childhood: political and legal decisions
- History of suffrage: from exception before inclusion of children
- Age qualification as a rudiment of industrial society, and as a kind of racism
- Children’s suffrage: social, political and moral necessity, requirement of an information society and globalization
- Children’s suffrage, Constitution and Electoral law in different countries
- Legal mechanism of realization of children’s suffrage
- Political meaning and social consequences of children’s suffrage

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- Children's suffrage as a top-priority for budgetary financing of the children's sphere
 - Children's suffrage as a response to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Child as a tool of the system decisions on problems of childhood
 - Children's suffrage: new quality of the children's sphere, education, public health services, and ways to improve situations of teachers and doctors
 - Children's suffrage: new political culture of youth and women
 - Work on education of children in the family, as paid work: a consequence of children's suffrage
 - Possible arguments against children's suffrage
 - Theoretical origins of the idea of children's suffrage
 - Children's suffrage - new value, right, freedom and responsibility of globalization
 - Democracy and children's suffrage
 - Sociological, psychological and legal research on children's suffrage, and attitudes to it of the population and of the centers of power
 - Children's suffrage as a way to accelerate harmonious development of nations of the world, and their human capital, and as the foundation for a systemic political strategy in the 21st century.

7. Dialogue with UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund

Three United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
www.unicef.org

19 May 2004

Leo Semashko, Ph.D., and
Martha Ross DeWitt, Ph.D.
International Sociological Association

Dear Mr. Semashko and Ms. Ross DeWitt,

Thank you for your message to Carol Bellamy which was referred to me for response. Although UNICEF encourages all initiatives that may bring about a positive impact on the promotion of children's rights, me regret to inform you that me unable to support your project.

As you know, UNICEF supported the Convention on the Rights of the Child from its initial drafting phase through to the campaign, enabling the achievement of quasi-universal ratification. The Convention has also changed the way UNICEF works, making possible the expansion of the scope in organisation's interventions. These changes are reconfirmed in UNICEF's Mission Statement of 1996 which reads, "*UNICEF is mandated to advocate for the protection of children's rights and strives to establish children's rights as enduring principles and international standards of behaviours towards children*".

Over the last decade, UNICEF has been providing assistance to Governments in their efforts to implement the principles and provisions of the Convention. A children's right to express his/her views, and have them taken unto account in matters affecting her/him is one of the four guiding principles of the Convention. This principle, along with the principles of non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, and the right to survival and development, are based on the notion that children are subject of rights with the same value as adults. UNICEF believes that the participation of children in the decision-marking process is crucial to improving and realizing children's rights. In this context, and in many countries, UNICEF has encouraged activities aimed at ensuring the realization of a child's right to express his/her opinions. For example, in Mexico UNICEF assisted the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico in the organization of a National Survey of Children and Adolescents. The survey provided a space for children to express their opinions on key issues, and for society to respond to children's

concerns. In Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Jamaica, UNICEF supported initiatives such as consultations, elections, and children's parliaments, where thousands of children actively participated and expressed their opinions in matters relating to their countries, schools, and families.

UNICEF's work in this area is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Thus, while the Convention emphasizes the importance of parents and legal guardians' involvement for the guidance they can offer to children, the Convention stress the importance of allowing children the opportunity to learn to participate and formulate their own decisions in matters that directly affect their lives. The Convention also acknowledges the special status of children by referring to their "age and maturity"* in the difficult area of involving children in decisions made on their behalf, and in the political process. The Convention asks States to ensure that parents and legal guardians gradually prepare children "in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities"** to exercise their rights independently. As Roger A. Hart*** reveals in his book, Children's Participation, "it is unrealistic to expect that children could suddenly become responsible, participating citizens without prior exposure to the skills and responsibilities involved". It is through frequent experiences with direct democratic participation in institutional settings, that children can gradually come to participate in the decision-marking processes.

UNICEF has drawn upon valuable lessons from its experience working for, and with young people. The most important being, that the competence of children to express their views should not be underestimated. Consequently, it is for children themselves to decide whether they are willing to participate in the democratic, political processes. In order to ensure that children's participation in decision making is effective, particular attention should be paid to the context in which they participate. UNICEF believes that the most important aspect (with regard to a child's right to vote) is not the strategy used to ensure their participation, but rather safeguard against the manipulation of children and assure that their recommendations are taken into account in the decision-making process. Children should be able to participate voluntarily, without being coerced to do so. They have the right to be fully unformed about the different parameters of the activity, and the context in which they participate (or in which adults are involved to participate on their behalf).

UNICEF also believes that all children should be given the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting them. This is especially true for children living in situations that hamper their ability to exercise their rights. These are children that deprived of family care, caught in armed conflict, orphaned due to HIV/AIDS, refugee children, and children living in the streets. It is important that all children's voices are listened to, and that they are heard.

UNICEF thanks you for your interest in children's participation, and wishes you good luck in your endeavors.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Gibbons
Chief
Global Policy Section
Division of Policy and Planning

* Article 12 of the CRC

** Article 5 of the CRC

*** Hart, Roger. Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship, UNICEF Innocent Essays no. 4, 1992

Reply to UNICEF

June 3, 2004

Elizabeth Gibbons
Chief
Global Policy Section
Division of Policy and Planning
UNICEF

Dear Ms. Gibbons,

Thank you for your detailed reply, in which you describe the active efforts by UNICEF to uphold and implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The colossal work of UNICEF truly deserves approval and admiration. You talk persuasively about children's right to express their opinions. You talk in detail about "the participation of children in the decision-making process" of their problems, about "the importance of allowing children the opportunity to learn to participate and formulate their own decisions in matters that directly affect their lives", about "gradually prepare children 'in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities' (CRC, Article 5) to exercise their rights independently". You correctly emphasize that "the competence of children to express their views should not be underestimated," that "children themselves to decide whether they are willing to participate in the democratic, political processes." We share your opinion that the "most important aspect (with regard to a child's right to vote) is (to) safeguard against the manipulation of children" and that "children should be able to participate voluntarily, without being coerced to do so."

Our idea of children's suffrage exercised by parents and legal guardians does not at all block, but rather, encourages the participation of children in the solution-making with regard to children's problems. However, children's suffrage concerns an altogether different aspect. We assume that 'in a

manner consistent with their (children) evolving capacities,' especially younger than age 14, it is altogether insufficient for a competent and independent evaluation of the disposition of political forces at elections, on which disposition the make-up of governing bodies at all levels depends, which, in turn, determines to the benefit of what population groups the federal monies shall be distributed. These are the kinds of choice that children are unable to handle; however, the implementation of children's key rights depends, above all, on federal financing. So, what children's suffrage envisions is that the child be granted a vote and entered into voters records, BUT (and this BUT is very important) ONLY children's parents or legal guardians may EXERCISE this right, i.e. receive the child's election ballot and vote with it.

We are led to believe that you have missed this cardinal feature of our children's suffrage concept. It would appear that you think that it calls for children's independent participation in elections, which is not the case. The right is the child's, *but only his/her parents or guardians may exercise it*. This is the essence and distinctive feature of children's suffrage as we have conceived it. Thus, it is parents/guardians, and not children, who exercise the voting rights of children, which eliminates any chance of "manipulation of children." Voting is done by parents/guardians on their children's behalf, not by the children themselves. However, through awareness of this voting right, children's suffrage promotes and enriches the participation of older children in the democratic process, and in exceptional circumstances allows mature, older children to independently participate in elections. But these are separate, albeit interlinked, aspects of the implementation of children's rights. Children's suffrage does not contradict the Convention, nor does it limit or violate any right of the child. Rather, children's suffrage complements the Convention, with a right that helps to ensure the implementation of all the other rights of the child. Children's suffrage provides an additional bulwark, an effective tool, and a fresh air of hope. Children's suffrage rejuvenates, strengthens and unites civilizations of the world in their ultimate purpose: to guarantee their future - through their children. Children's suffrage ensures top-priority investment in the principal strategic resource of any civilization - its people, whose moral and ethical foundations are instilled in childhood. The ultimate goal of children's suffrage is to create a will in future generations to discover new, more efficient and more humane means for solving the problems of humankind and of each nation. Through parents and their minor children, who constitute a majority of the population, children's suffrage will "*help build a world fit for children*". It will become an invincible, motive force for all nations to join that global movement to which the 2002 UN Special Session has called 'all members of society.'

Why is a law of children's suffrage necessary? It is necessary to achieve one all-encompassing goal - efficient implementation of the rights of the child, a goal that has not been achieved to date. Children's suffrage joins the power that parents/guardians of young children have with the power of the state, to create an efficient mechanism to uphold the rights of the child, a mechanism that is presently lacking. It needs to be stressed, and you will hopefully agree, that the responsibility and the duty to uphold children's rights rests primarily with parents and the state, rather than with children themselves. Only children's suffrage, exercised by parents and guardians, spells out this responsibility and duty for parents and the state. Apart from children's suffrage, there exists no other instrument for the efficient implementation of children's rights. Such a mechanism cannot be forced upon nations: in any given country, such a mechanism can be created only from within, by a plan for children's suffrage designed in accordance with the country's traditions and mentality, and legitimated through an appropriate federal law.

The 2002 UN Special Session recognized that nations, in fact, have been failing to implement the Convention, and that an efficient mechanism for upholding children's rights, impressively set forth by the Convention, is non-existent. The Convention has not helped to stop the deterioration of children's situations around the world. The nations party to the Convention violate its pivotal Articles 3 and 4, where the major principles are summarized. Article 3 demands from the governments that "*the best interests* of the child shall be a *primary* consideration," and Article 4 requires them to implement the economic, social and cultural rights of the child "to the *maximum* extent of their available resources" (italics added). There is no government today, *not a single one*, that can rightfully say that it gives "*primary*" consideration to children, "*uses its best efforts*" to uphold children's rights, or implements children's rights "*to the maximum* extent of their available resources." In reality, all countries allocate minimum resources and spend minimum efforts to try to implement children's rights. Children's suffrage is the only legal act and mechanism designed to ensure that nations comply with Articles 3 and 4 of the Convention, to implement children's rights on a top-priority basis, using their best efforts, to the maximum extent of their available resources.

Considering this, we have a major question to ask UNICEF. If children's suffrage is the only instrument to ensure the efficient implementation of the Convention through top-priority federal financing of children's sphere in each country, then why does UNICEF refuse to give it a consideration and have it discussed? The best response UNICEF can provide would be to support a research into and a debate on children's suffrage.

We wish to thank you for your detailed reply, but we are disappointed with your response to our request. In your letter you state "we are unable to support your project," without discussion of the proposal, itself. Perhaps the essence of our request was unclear. What we presently ask is that UNICEF help us conduct a STUDY of attitudes (of parents of minor children, primarily) regarding the idea of children's suffrage, rather than support children's suffrage as such. Before the issues of legitimizing and implementing children's suffrage can be raised, popular sentiment, first of all among parents and guardians of young children, needs to be assessed. We assume that, as a first stage, the idea of children's suffrage calls for a comprehensive examination, exploration, and extensive discussion by scholars and the general public. If the results are positive, only then can we begin to raise the issue of legitimizing children's suffrage, proposing appropriate legislative initiatives, etc. That would be the next, second stage. In our letter to UNICEF we speak about the first stage, ONLY. Presently, we are asking, minimally, for moral support for the research, if UNICEF cannot support it financially. If UNICEF, indeed, "encourages all initiatives that may bring about a positive impact on the promotion of children's rights," as you write in your letter, then, is there reason to hope that UNICEF might reconsider, and lend its support to research into, and discussion of, children's suffrage, as an instrument to help promote and implement children's rights, as called for by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Children's suffrage exercised by parents and guardians is a complex, systemic social-political-legal mechanism with wide ranging, positive social implications, as well as prospects for initial, ambivalent reactions. This mechanism requires an earnest, scholarly analysis and discussion. With this in mind, we suggest that UNICEF organize, in 2005, a small-scale international conference of 50-60 experts on children's rights (lawyers, politicians, sociologists, political psychologists, teachers, etc.) for discussing the concept of children's suffrage. This proposal is put forward in our brochure (2004, 72 pages). We are enclosing a copy of the brochure, in the hope that UNICEF will make amendments (you can something exclude or add in it), after discussing them with us, and re-publish it. Also, we suggest that UNICEF lend its support, at least morally, to an international, comparative sociological research project into parent/guardian attitudes toward children's suffrage. When UNICEF will have the study results and expert opinions, then it will receive a solid foundation for an informed opinion about the idea of children's suffrage and its future prospects for adoption. We believe that this will be the best tack for UNICEF to take, and one that will demonstrate UNICEF's right to say that, indeed, it does not ignore a single "initiative that may bring about a positive impact on the promotion of children's rights."

Respectfully,

Leo Semashko, Ph D, St. Petersburg, Russia
 Martha Ross DeWitt, Ph D, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

Back cover

“It is necessary to re-build society so that the *interests of children receive priority.*”

-Elmar Sokolov, Professor, PhD, St.-Petersburg University of Culture

“The main idea is that a *child is a person like us* -- a valuable person. There is *no age hierarchy.*”

“The cruel laws in Ancient Greece and Rome permitted the killing of a child. In the middle ages, fishermen used to catch in their nets the bodies of drowned infants. In 17th century Paris, older children were sold to beggars, younger were given away in front of Notre Dame. Not so long ago... The number of illegitimate, deserted, neglected, exploited, depraved, maltreated children increases steadily. They are protected by law, but is their protection adequate? Much has changed. *Old laws require revision.*

“We have become rich. We are heirs to great fortune, shareholders, co-proprietors. Cities, large buildings, factories, mines, hotels, theaters - all ours. Let us strike a balance and calculate *how much* of the grand total is due to the child, determine his share... Let us examine honestly *how much* we allocate to the child population, the underage nation, the *subjugated class*. What does the inheritance amount to, how should it be divided? Have we not - the unjust stewards - by any chance disinherited, expropriated?.. Because of the child's poverty and his financial dependence, the parents treat the child *amorally*... Create *conditions* for children to grow up into better kinds of person.

“We do not allow children *to organize themselves*; neglecting, mistrusting, disliking children, we are *not taking care* of them. From an early age we know that the big is more important than the small. We teach by our personal example to push around that which is weaker... Small is the *market* value of the unripe... *He is nothing, and we are everything*... Our children are our property... *Not a voter*, his opinion need not to be taken into account... Weak, small, poor, dependent... Milksop, still a child -- not yet fully human... But never mind. We love children. No matter what, they are our delight, our inspiration, hope, joy, respite, the light of our life... But why are they *a kind of burden*, hindrance, an awkward appendage? *Whence this distaste* for one's own beloved child?” (Italics added)

-Janusz Korczak, great Polish teacher and writer

Sphere democracy is a natural form of pluralistic, social democracy that seeks social harmony and justice. It is built on foundations of equal power sharing among sphere classes, including all the population, and on the mechanism of children's suffrage, exercised by parents, which leads to top-priority investment in the well-being of children as society's primary human capital. Children's suffrage, which recognizes their importance in reproducing society, is an essential part of sphere democracy and the first step to it.

Neglect by children, their second-class place and refusal to him in priority are a sign of immaturity of society. Children's suffrage does society mature.

Children's suffrage subordinates financial investment to the priority development of human capital and social sphere.

Children's suffrage is new, more effective way to improve the quality of a population and human.

Children's suffrage is a global strategic project, most necessary for social harmony of the world and each country.

Awareness of a global priority of children, created by children's suffrage, will reconcile and unite the nations, religions, and ethnic civilizations of the world. **-Author**