

## Jerry Lieberman's Opening Remarks in Norway

There has been extensive preparation for the workshop. This includes benefits that have accrued from previous workshops on the campus of the University of Memphis, focused on Quality of Life, and one at Stanford University that pertained to nation-building and failed states. Most assuredly Norway is an excellent example of a very high quality country with exemplary evolutionary nation-building capacity. It exemplifies the existence of a real case of high QoL and an opportunity to learn why and how this has happened.

Norwegians have achieved large group cooperation. Although there are different paths to achieve it, the Evolution Institute selected this case because of international, verifiable data that the nation is tops in the world and has held this position for a number of consecutive years. However, we are not here to achieve consensus on being number one or agree as to why this is the case and how. We are explorers in this regard, but accept this task through an unprecedented collaborative that includes American and Norwegian scientists with profound knowledge on Norway and/or the collective background to contribute to the workshop's goals.

We are also cognizant and sensitive in the matter of how evolutionary science is perceived by some to have serious limitations, and how evolutionary scientists may risk being seen as tampering or conducting social engineering. We are here to understand and share ideas, not to dabble and subvert the culture and its people.

We have concluded from our conversations and exchanges prior to the workshop over a period of two years that Norway is culturally innovative in some very substantive ways. Whether this accounts for its high QoL, and if it can be sustained, is of great interest to all of us. We seek to learn how Norway is adopting to changes in its population and influences, domestically and internationally. We are well aware of the "2005 Power and Democracy Report" and its findings. This cannot be overlooked as we proceed because what is reported by the majority in the report is critical of what is happening in the country, and the pushback response must be reviewed along with the report in an objective manner.

Will the significant innovations we believe characterize Norway – and likely account for its QoL – be jeopardized, or are there practices and institutions in place that can be nurtured and may inoculate Norway from some dire predictions or simply changing values stemming from external influences without due consideration and proper vetting? We include in our inquiry here consideration of globalization, the history and relatedness with the European Union, and the international trend toward neo-liberalism, unfettered free markets, and greater interest in individual growth, commercialism, materialism, and growing inequality.

We believe there are good lessons for Norway to learn from what has happened in the United States and other nations that have seen the rapid growth of inequality and the

lowering of QoL. Is Norway to follow this path or decide to lead others in a direction that leads to higher QoL and reduced inequality?

We believe that evolutionary science has much to offer in this regard, as well as in providing a different and hopefully clearer lens to view human adaptation and cultural evolution. Is there not a larger role, too, for Norway in promoting science that advances equality and planet sustainability? We believe there is, and that it and the world will benefit. This is why we are here and ready to begin our challenging workshop.