'Federation of Earth'

Lakewood visionary working for Utopia

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Every kid who has ever watched Star Trek knows that the crew of the Star Ship Enterprise is mostly made up of a diverse crowd of citizens from many corners of the planet Earth — all sailing under a common flag.

A fantasy, of course. Switch off the TV set, turn to your friends and ask them if they expect to be alive when a single "Federation of Earth" unites the peoples of the globe. Then wait for snickers and guffaws.

Philip Isely doesn't snicker when the subject is raised. He is working on the project right now.

To the 61-year-old resident of Lookout Mountain — and to his several hundred associates around the world — the idea of setting up a world government is a high priority item. They see it as the last, best hope for man to survive the 20th century.

ONE MAY HAVE guessed by now that Isely is an idealist. His quest might be likened to that of Don Quixote — and dismissed just as lightly — were it not for the impressive list of names he has gathered in its support over the past two decades.

Names such as Bertrand Russell, and Clement Attlee, the onetime British prime minister. Martin Luther King and Dr. Linus Pauling. Cabinet ministers, heads of state, members of parliaments and justices from various supreme courts. Nobel Prize winners.

All of them share his notion that world government — as farfetched as it may sound to the man on the street in Berlin or Melbourne or Dallas or Denver — is worth pursuing.

All of which helps explain why it is possible to find a name as grandiose as the World Constitution and Parliament Association on the door of a tiny, nondescript office in Lakewood. The place doesn't look like much, and Isely's soft-spoken manner is hardly more impressive.

BUT SUCH IMPRESSIONS are misleading. Given a chance to talk, Isely reveals himself as a visionary with a full-blown and well thought-out scheme to bring peace to the world.

Its aim would be to gather the 'founding fathers' of a world federation.

Reared in Kansas by homesteading Swiss immigrants, he decided early in life that this would be his calling. His high-school yearbook predicted he would speak out for peace in Geneva — and he did.

Marching steadily to the beat of his own drummer, Isely refused to fight in World War II, and spent two years in a federal prison as a consequence. But he was undaunted.

His college days in Oregon and Ohio never earned him a degree, but helped him come in contact with others who shared his idealism. On their honeymoon in 1949, he and his wife, Margaret, drove across the western half of the country, trying to get people to sign a world government petition.

MOVING TO COLORADO in the early 1950s, the Iselys scraped up $200 and started peddling vitamins door to door. It wasn't a popular line in those days — but it made sense to them.

Twenty-two years later, the couple owns a pair of health food stores, the Vitamin Cottages, which net $60,000 a year. It was simply a matter of working hard and waiting patiently for the rest of the world to catch up.

Not long after starting that venture, Isely, his wife and two friends from other parts of the country met and agreed to begin working in earnest on a plan to bring about a world constitutional convention. Its aim would be to gather the "founding fathers" of a world federation, then write the document that would glue it together.

Once again, the idea was to work hard, spread the word and wait for the world to catch up. Borrowing from H.G. Welles, Isely and his friends decided to carry out an "open conspiracy" — meaning they would draft a utopian plan, make its details available to anyone who wanted to hear about them, then set out to accomplish it.

Isely and a co-conspirator, Thane Read of Tempe, Ariz., set out for the capitals of Europe

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NEWS PHOTO

Philip Isely
A vitamin pill for a suffering world

Lakewood visionary working for world government

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and South America, seeking signatures on a petition.

SOME SCOFFED. India's Jawaharlal Nehru refused to sign, saying peace had to be achieved by powerful men in Washington and Moscow. But others were challenged by Isely's reply to such skepticism.

"You," he told Nehru, "must take the initiative."

Armed with hundreds of signatures from diplomats, philosophers, legislators, judges and scientists, the "open conspirators" brought about a preparatory congress in Denver in 1963. Its keynote speaker — late Brazilian diplomat Josue de Castro — set the tone when he declared:

"Peace today is an historical imperative which no one can escape. War has become unrealistic and the sole reality is peace."

As the tool to bring it about, the conferees agreed there must be a system of world law, based on a constitution which would — among other things — require that each nation lay down its arms and coexist without fear of one another.

In the years which followed, other sessions took place in Milan, Geneva (it was there that the high-school yearbook prediction was fulfilled) and elsewhere in Europe. Smaller gatherings in Santa Barbara and Denver moved ahead with the task of writing a world constitution.

NEXT JUNE, THE WORLD Constituent Assembly, aimed at refining the document still further, will convene for two weeks in Innsbruck, Austria, with related meetings in Paris. The association's timetable calls for further meetings next year — and the first gathering of a "provisional world parliament" in 1979.

From there, the plan moves ever further into a realm of idealism which would, from some skeptics, inspire more snickers. It calls for the association to seek millions of signatures, worldwide, and to sell the plan to opinion-makers of the world through a massive education program.

Counting on a rapid and widespread turnabout in public attitudes of many countries, it calls for the federation to set up a parliament, select a capital city and begin adopting laws to deal with global problems — all within the next decade.

Could any of this happen?

Isely's response is that the scheme "is idealistic and practical at the same time." He contends that the problems facing the world are so acute that something utopian has to happen, soon, or it will be too late.

"If this isn't practical," he explains, "it is not practical to say we can go on living on earth."

All this may seem overly pessimistic. But one must understand that Isely subscribes to 50 magazines, studies them all and prides himself on maintaining an encyclopedic knowledge of all the problems: pollution of the air, the earth and the sea; hunger, overpopulation, disease, poverty — and the ever-present danger of a nuclear holocaust.

CHIDING THOSE WHO focus on local problems, shrugging their shoulders at global dilemmas, Isely complains that the world is on the brink of self-destruction while citizens are cleaning up the trash in their own backyards.

"I wish it were possible to dramatize the need for a world solution in the same way we publicized the need to save Colorado Women's College," he says. "There was nothing wrong with saving CWC. In fact, I gave a little money to help keep it open. But people have got to realize that human society on earth is on the verge of closing its doors."

Seeing things in this light, then, what odds can he give for the survival of mankind?

"The odds are infinitesimally small. By straight rational odds, they're less than one in 100 of survival to the end of this century."

But he sees some mitigating factors, even at that. One of them is that — like the vitamins his wife and sons sell in their stores — a few milligrams of idealism can be injected into the body of the planet in time to save it from a fatal dose of insanity.

ANOTHER IS THE HOPE "that there is a creative spirit in the universe that wouldn't want to see this world destroyed, and would be on the side of those wanting to do something to prevent that. That's not rational odds.

"It would have to be a spiritual odds that would be put on to the small chance that we otherwise have."

In more down-to-earth terms, Isely believes his organization needs $5 million to do the job. Much of that would be spent on a saturation campaign of full-page ads in the opinion-making journals of various countries. The target of such ads would be the thinkers and the doers of the world.

"It's not like selling Coca-Cola," he adds. "It's not an elitist thing, but it cannot be promoted or developed that way. Such popular support would not be sufficient to sustain it."

Where the money will come from remains an unanswered question. The association, in its best times, has accumulated as much as $40,000 in donations. But the work goes on, while Isely and his associates around the world continue to hope for a little help from the creative forces that might choose to keep man alive in the 21st century.