

BEYOND
RIGHT & LEFT
GREENS:
- VALUES & STRATEGIES FOR A FUTURE THAT WORKS -

The appearance of "Left Greens" within the U.S. Green Committees of Correspondence poses a challenge to Greens not solely identified with the Left: we must clarify, and give meaning to, the motto -
NEITHER RIGHT NOR LEFT, BUT IN FRONT!

Now is also a time to rethink the Green Movement's values & purposes; and for reflecting upon strategies to adopt, in political organizing & in multi-cultural alliance building.

A clear and proven Green (WHOLE, ORGANIC, INTER-RELATED, & ECOLOGICAL) Alternative to conventional political economic dogmas, of both the Right & Left, endures in the "third way" of traditional Native American (& other) land-based cultures. Lettered models of this outlook are present in the works of thinkers like Tom Paine, Henry George, & Leopold Kohr.

Such inclusive world-views chart a course for humanity that encompasses powerful symmetries: CONSERVATIVE values of individual freedom, self-reliance, & economic efficiency, balance - LIBERAL concerns for social justice, cooperation, & fairness in the distribution of wealth. These currently polarized systems integrate, & are transformed into the foundation of A CARE GIVING SOCIETY: where people can tread lightly on the planet; take what is needed, but give back more - and THRIVE in kinship with the rest of Nature.

FREEDOM OR COERCION

If, however, demands by Social Ecologists and other Left Greens are met; for the Green CoCs to take up an expressly "anti-capitalist" orientation, the public would probably connect all Greens with SOCIALISM; which, along with Communism (WEBSTER'S), entails "governmental ownership of the means of production".

POWER OVER OTHERS CORRUPTS... Libertarian, Georgean, Decentralist, & some Anarchist, Greens champion a DIFFERENT conception of Community: a society wherein people are FREE to satisfy their needs; without excessively relying upon, and being subjugated to, GOVERNMENTS; & the class interests that they always represent.

We believe in VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION IN EQUALITY: that, singly & communally, people best make their OWN political & economic decisions - within the framework of ECOLOGY. This, for freedom-seeking Greens, is the essence of human liberty and self-determination. Mandatory social control over the means of production (Land, Labor, & Capital) is, even in a Bookchinite "radical municipality", contrary to such FREEDOM OF CHOICE.

People seek their self-interest, and it's natural; if not desirable. Self-interest, even though leavened in many folks with healthy dollops of altruism, cannot be simply wished away in speculative philosophies; nor legislated out of existence by (perhaps well-intended) vanguards & bureaucracies. The SHADOW part of human nature must satisfy itself, or else - (Gurdjieff teaches) "the wolf [instincts] will eat the [spiritual] lamb"!

Leopold Kohr in THE BREAKDOWN OF NATIONS, & Henry George in PROGRESS & POVERTY, spell out the DECENTRALIST resolution of a paradox - how to work toward an ecologically viable, & Just, society while accomodating human selfhood? DIFFUSE POWER UNIVERSALLY; so that no special interest can gain unfair advantage over others, and predominate. Broaden not only POLITICAL power, the vote, but ECONOMIC power - through widespread ownership of the means of production!

LAND, LABOR, & CAPITAL

"The great cause of inequality in the ownership of wealth is" Henry George observed, during the Robber Baron/Gilded Age aftermath of the Civil War, "inequality in the ownership of land".

Contrary to the prevailing puzzlements of Monetarists, Marxists, & Keynesians alike - LAND IS NOT CAPITAL! Behaving toward Nature as if it were simply another product of human labor is unjustifiable. The only moral, & NECESSARY, reason for PRIVATE PROPERTY results from the value added to raw Nature by human work; & mirrors the right that individuals have to a full reward for their labors.

Natural "resources", and locations for human activity, conversely, are GIVEN by Society & Nature. They gain economic value because people need access to land - & from a community's sheer presence; along with its investment in infrastucture. If anything, such socially-created values should become PUBLIC PROPERTY.

Claim the marketable rental value of land, annually as public revenue. Then the political economic PRIVILEGES of land ownership would be no longer conferred by possession - but shared by all. This is an ULTIMATE LAND REFORM: easy to administer, politically non-coercive, and economically efficient.

The policy (George's "Single Tax"), fully implemented, drives down inflation - & the cost of land and housing. Jobs are created; and market forces are, within the demarcations of ECOLOGICAL ZONING, yoked; to promote conservation & the enhancement of life on Earth.

The thoroughgoing impact of Land Value Taxation on the "boom & bust" BUSINESS CYCLE is also significant; as the enigma of Marx's "fatal flaw of Capitalism" (workers, as a class - unable to afford the products of their own labor) is resolved:

Workers (LABOR) are able to keep the CAPITAL ("surplus value") they produce on the LAND, in this new system; and are thus liberated from having their wealth EXPROPRIATED:

- * by Landowners, through high rents & land speculation;
- * by Capitalists, via monopolistic & inflationary pricing for goods & services; and,
- * by Governments, in punishing taxes on work & savings.

Vital reform of the world's land tenure, taxation, & monetary systems eradicates class distinctions; between WORKERS as producers of wealth; & CAPITALISTS as accumulators of wealth for investment; & with that, the troublous Left versus Right dilemma evaporates.

Let's not continue to confound the social & environmental ravages of Monopoly Capitalism - with the potentially beneficial effects of Free Enterprise in an egalitarian society!

INDUSTRIALISM V. ECOLOGY

The symptomatic ills that beset the Planet are (as Jon Porritt, Charlene Spretnak, & Lorna Salzman recognize) the oozing sores of INDUSTRIALISM. It is truly an evil ideology; perpetrated by tiny but powerful class, corporate, & bureaucratic elites; who, with little regard for the future - treat the Earth and its creatures as mere RESOURCES, to exploit for immediate gain.

The Industrial mindset, with its deficiencies, is not confined to the "first world" of Capitalism. The Socialist "second world" (what's LEFT of it!) and the ostensibly non-aligned, DEVELOPING "third world" of people of color; are, almost without exemption, together with #1 - guilty of worship at the demon altar of Production, Consumption, & Waste devouring Earth.

To single out Capitalism as THE offender, denies the complete reality. Greens shouldn't be anti-Capitalist (picking at merely part of the problem), but pro-Ecology (urging the whole solution).

There is a window of opportunity opening before us; within which to EXHIBIT A VIBRANT ALTERNATIVE to the Business-As-Usual crowd; AND to the naive, worn out, & marginal OPPOSITION politics of the Left. A genuinely MAINSTREAM position can be ours; if we speak to the heart, THE RADICAL CENTER, of ordinary people's concerns - for survival and their children's future.

Greens should directly challenge, the conventional wisdom & prevalent materialist assumptions about, "The Good Life". Fear, greed, corruption, waste, pollution, injustice, alienation, & insecurity are not GOOD. What IS good is a society living in BALANCE - people with each other, and society with Nature. It's the SIMPLE TRUTH; & thoughtful, concerned citizens will respond accordingly. Let's take a positive approach, and be FOR - not against!

ART, BEAUTY, & FUN

Friedrich Schiller, conveyed to a patron (in THE AESTHETIC LETTERS...) his understanding of what went wrong with the French Revolution. He, in light of that Great Hope's collapse into Robespierre's "Reign of Terror", and the subsequent rise of Napoleon, assigned blame to the Revolutionaries. They believed (as revolutionaries still do) that oppressed people will suddenly rise up, once their chains drop - & be transformed, miraculously, into a society of wise and just Beings. It didn't happen in France!

What was missing and needs to occur, Schiller believed, is the AESTHETIC EDUCATION of humanity. Although that still hasn't happened, humor & Art do figure prominently in The Greens' worldwide winning of hearts & minds: Stunning graphics, fun-loving spirit, and political satire are "disarming". They enchant cynical, dispirited populaces turned off by dire (even if true) predictions of catastrophe.

Beauty is politically potent. Rulers have always relied (more effectively than by force) on pomp, ceremony, & refinement; to keep their subjects in awe of, and willing to obey, "obvious superiors"; they still do - & it still works! PROTESTERS, from Martin Luther on, unfortunately overreact to popular fascination with the glamorous, Machiavellian, face of beauty; and tend to "throw out the baby with the bath water". A dour FUNDAMENTALISM pervades movement politics; and is perhaps a reason why the "no nonsense" dogmas of the Left, demonstrate so little enduring appeal to simple, hardworking people; who, after all, do deserve a bit of fun - & need escape, if only in fantasy!

In any case, Schiller realized: awakening aesthetic sensibilities through the practice of Art & Craft (and Greens can add - by appreciating the beauty & rhythms of Nature), provides humanity with a bridge; between sheer material existence - and the ideals of mind & spirit. People acculturated this way could handle opposing forces; sustain paradoxes; and think cyclically IN HARMONY WITH NATURE. Citizenries possessing such qualities - combined with leisure & economic well being - might ably fulfill the fondest hopes that Greens have for the future.

PERENNIAL WISDOM

For traditional Native Americans, & other indigenous peoples subsisting on their own land base (the FOURTH WORLD), perfecting human society is not - as Social Ecologists dictate - the first step toward resolving the planetary crisis. Their Original Instructions, given to the peoples of this Land ask us to:

ABIDE IN THE ORIGINAL CONDITION OF STANDING ALONE, AN EQUAL AMONG EQUALS, SUBJECT TO NO MASTER - & CAUSE NO HARM TO THE PLANET, UNTO THE SEVENTH GENERATION YET UNBORN.

This age-old appreciation of (what Buddhists might call) "right relationship" between Individuals, Society, & the Earth - is a reflection of many ancient cultures' Perennial Wisdom; which our scientific, rational minds have ignored to life's peril.

The 20th century's foremost philosopher of Science, Alfred North Whitehead, hit the nail on the head in his FUNCTION OF REASON:

"We have to discriminate between the weight to be given to scientific opinion in the selection of its methods, and its trustworthiness in formulating judgments of the understanding... The man [sic] with a method good for the purpose of his dominant interests, is a pathological case in respect to his wider judgment on the coordination of this method with a more complete experience... Some of the major disasters of mankind have been produced by the narrowness of men with a good methodology".

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

At this pivotal juncture in our evolution, to MOVE FORWARD & BE "IN FRONT", Greens need to CHOOSE: common sense & a vivid, tactical involvement with THE WORLD AS IT IS; or become enmeshed in the sterile, sectarian snares - & with the restrictive (yet extravagant) dogmas - of "oh so pure & politically correct" Leftist cadres.

Alert & compassionate COMMON SENSE is the path for Greens to take; if we are to forge meaningful alliances, with people of color & mainstream folk of all kinds. And let's be clear: if we don't reach out & become RELEVANT to ordinary people, by working on their issues - there can be no significant development of the Green Movement in the United States.

The challenge, although formidable, can be met - IF we unite the Green environmental agenda with our dedication to resolve, timely & pervasive, poverty-based social problems. The lack of Jobs & Affordable Housing; and Crime & Drugs, are some of the social problems Greens can tackle; that, along with cleaning up the Environment, are in the forefront of public concern.

Organize to IMPLEMENT the following Green policies (they're just good thoughts on paper for most of us now); and our worth will be PROVEN to other activists & to the disenfranchised:

CRIME & DRUGS - Take the PROFIT out of dealing drugs and most of the crime will disappear. Use scarce tax dollars to educate against drug ABUSE. Rehabilitate & treat addicts' SICKNESS, instead of punishing them. Legislated morality & incarceration, actually make this problem worse - & are FAILED POLICIES (NEW OPTIONS #62)!

Grapple with Drugs & Crime by advocating, as the German Green Party does, the DECRIMINALIZATION OF ALL VICTIMLESS CRIMES (consenting sex, drug use, gambling, etc.).

Identify POLICE STATE repressions of popular morality as social control by political economic hierarchies.

And then there's poverty...

JOBS, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, & LIVABLE COMMUNITIES -
Greens are ALL FOR, of course, clean air and water; recycling, & safe, renewable energy. Make a Commitment, however, to ERADICATE INVOLUNTARY POVERTY; & allow for the satisfaction of people's authentic needs. Then Greens will demonstrate their concerns with more than environmental issues.

LAND VALUE TAXATION - it's in the British, Finnish, & New Zealand Green Party platforms - is a dynamic policy; that Green "spiritual warriors", borrowing Walt Bresette's phrase, can use - like Alexander's Sword - to sever the Gordian Knot of social & environmental degradation. Create jobs, affordable housing, & more open space WITHOUT GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES - through LVT (NEW OPTIONS #56).

This is A POWER TOOL FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION. The ideal of COMMUNITY becomes real with political & economic SELF-RELIANCE.

Once more: If Greens organize around these bold & controversial, but relevant & effective, policies - CREDIBILITY will be earned; with activists and just plain folks; all of whose lives we can help improve immensely. Greens might then REALIZE the true potential of this Movement; to pull together solid, broadly based, & multi-cultural, alliances for GREEN POLITY - ALL OVER THIS LAND.

Mitchell Chanelis

* Eastern Massachusetts Greens,
21 Unity Court
Boston, MA 02113

(617) 367-6137

* i.d. only

11/90