



GREEN HORIZON

Magazine

..... AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL PUBLISHED BY THE GREEN HORIZON FOUNDATION



The Greening of Society

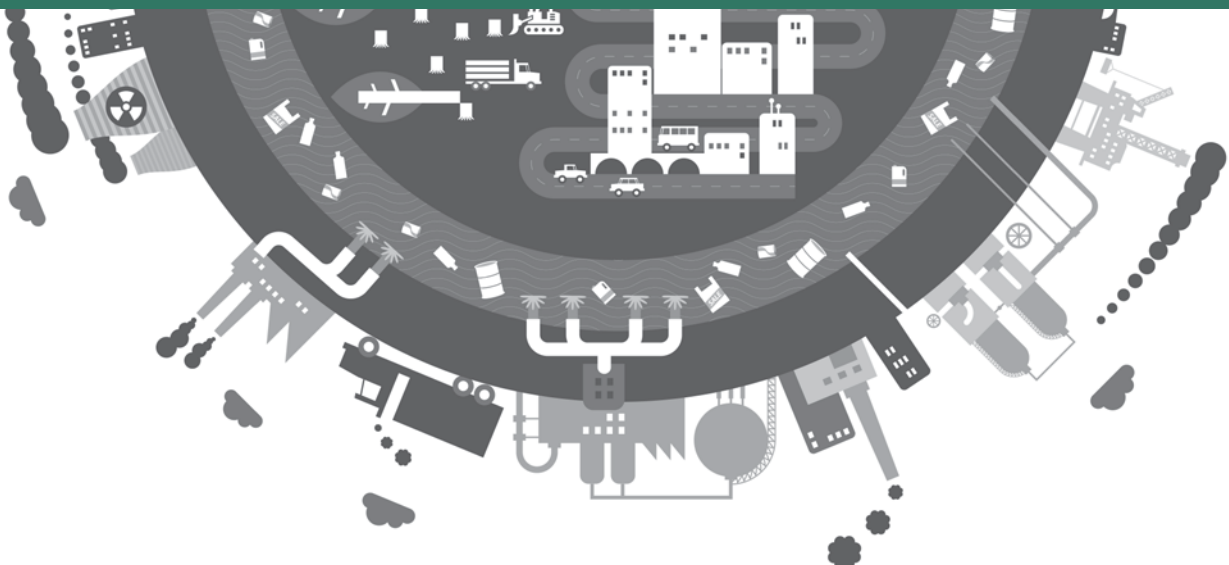


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Letter to the Editor

TO THE EDITOR:

Like all who know him, I have the deepest respect for John Rensenbrink and the monumental work he has done for peace and justice, and in helping found the Green Party. He has written an essay for the Summer/Fall 2020 edition of *Green Horizon* [issue No. 41] and there is one section with which I must take exception. I do so in a respectful manner, but intellectual honesty requires me to state my principled opposition. He initiates the discussion by making a non-controversial statement: "A person is not the property of an identity, but identity is the property of the person." So far so good. But he then goes on to say, "But no one at birth is definitely and inevitably male or female or transgendered. There is no determinism there." Later in the article, he makes the statement: "When you stop being male and you become female, does that mean you stop being a person?"

As one who has paid close attention to this kind of discussion for a year among Greens and having learned a great deal from those who knew more about the subject than I did, I now have some insights that bear on these statements.

The fundamental intellectual error in what was just quoted is that of conflating a person's sex, which IS determined and fixed at birth as a matter of biology (with the very rare exceptions of those born with both genitalia) with a person's gender identity, which is malleable later in life. We recognize that some men, for psychological reasons unique to them, choose to engage as females, that is to act the role of such, and vice versa. As Greens, we acknowledge their right to do so, and it is up to us to oppose harm to them due to such a choice. We affirm their human and civil rights not to be victimized.

However, men cannot become women (or vice versa) despite attempts to be so, including surgery and hormone therapy. A bull cannot become a cow; a hen cannot become a rooster. A neutered bull is referred to as an ox or steer, not a cow. An actor playing the role of Tarzan or Superman does not become Tarzan or Superman.

We recognize that in society at large, trans-identified people have been subject to harassment and physical violence, even murder, and of course this must be

...continued on page 33

THE TEAM

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The Greening of Society

Are we living through the best of times or the worst of times? We're bombarded with competing memes that can leave us feeling somewhat disoriented.

An ecosocialist manifesto published by Michael Löwy and Joel Kovel in 2001 [<http://environment-ecology.com/political-ecology/436-an-ecosocialist-manifesto.html>] noted: "The twenty-first century opens on a catastrophic note, with an unprecedented degree of ecological breakdown and a chaotic world order beset with terror and clusters of low-grade disintegrative warfare that spread like gangrene across great swathes of the planet." And a report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) this past August contained alarming forebodings of sooner-than-expected environmental crises and disruptions.

But if you've been reading progressivists like Steven Pinker or Nolan Dalla [<https://www.nolandalla.com/best-times-worst-times>], you might come away with the impression that "living conditions are constantly improving by leaps and bounds each and every year . . . human flourishing over the last several centuries has been enhanced in measure after measure in the wake of the Enlightenment" (Pinker). The progressivists say that, taking a birds-eye view, we've never had it so good.

Well, in his book, *Peak Everything*, Richard Heinberg attempts to resolve the apparent contradiction: He acknowledges that some sectors of humanity (in particular the elites who dominate the cultural discourse) are currently benefiting from longstanding civilizational trajectories associated with overall "development." Gross statistics show substantial increases in material living standards, literacy, and longevity; and the seemingly propitious trendlines have accelerated as the industrial revolution has advanced. But, Heinberg asserts, those trendlines are peaking now. They are unsustainable because they've been based on extractive processes that are ecologically malign.

THE "GREENING" REVOLUTION

Whether viscerally felt to be the best or the worst, we should recognize the potential for these to be viewed historically as the Most Significant of times. That's because we currently have an opportunity to initiate a momentous turning point. We are finally, if belatedly, becoming aware of how the growth trajectories of human population, production, and consumption have been leading to an "overshoot" crisis of pollution, depletion, and cultural exhaustion. That awareness could be the basis for a subtle but profound revolution.

Fifty years ago, a ubiquitous item of discussion in media, kitchens, and classrooms was *The Greening of America*. Written

by a previously obscure law professor, Charles Reich, it had been published late in 1970 and then hovered near the top of the bestseller lists during most of 1971. It said: *There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past.*

Revolutions of the past had rarely worked out well. The American "Revolution" was actually an anti-colonial uprising for national liberation. It was successful. But attempts to radically transform domestic society in a short period of time—like the French and Russian Revolutions, for example—proved discouraging. Typically, after a zealous vanguard attempted to institute sweeping changes, the majority of the populace reacted with resistances and restorations as soon as the revolutionary tide started to wane. Why? Because consciousness, culture, and lifeways just can't be expected to change overnight.

THE POLITICAL EXPRESSION OF THE MOVEMENT

So the "greening" revolution is manifesting slowly; advancing a little here and then there; two steps forward, one step back. And, as with consciousness, voting patterns don't tend to shift abruptly. In the United States, Green Party candidates for local offices sometimes get as much as 10% of the vote and occasionally even get elected, but not a single one has ever won office at a level above state legislature. This is the case in most countries (Wikipedia currently lists Green political parties in 98 countries worldwide [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_green_political_parties]).

The exception is to note that the pathbreaking European parties have been making some strides recently. US Greens have watched enviously as those parties, enjoying the advantages of multi-party systems and proportional representation, have advanced from garnering 2% of the vote to 4% to 8% and more. In the last national election Finland's Green Party was supported by 11%; Switzerland's by 13%; Austria's by 14%. Last summer the Green Party of Germany made headlines worldwide when they briefly led the pack in that country's parliamentary election. Throughout that campaign young people were in the streets exclaiming: "Our future is at stake. Significant change is needed *now*." Polling showed that almost half of the electorate under the age of 30 expressed a preference for the Green Party. Yet the final result left the old stale centrist establishment parties (one slightly liberal, one slightly conservative) still in control.

The German Greens received almost 15% and will be included in a new governing coalition. It appears that they're in the process of finally breaking out of the tier of small marginal parties. Such could be a bellwether for the future of the movement as a whole. Their relative success is the

We currently have an opportunity to initiate a momentous turning point.

culmination of decades of persistent engagement. It has involved much in the way of tactical compromises and reformist accommodations. In fact, detractors lament their vacillations and concessions; radicals disdain their pragmatism. But it might be that they're demonstrating how to go about holding in mind a profound ultimate transformation while at the same time effectively relating to the cautious sensibilities of the broad electorate.

I'm inclined toward the latter appraisal of the situation, and I think it argues for the idea that the gradualistic pace of change we're observing is appropriate. We just can't leap "from here to there," either in the electoral arena or in our movement activities. After all, what we're attempting to confront is quite awesome (in addition to being quite awful); it necessarily will take time to counter the inertia of the extant system, enmeshed as it is in the industrial-expansionist Leviathan.

And our presumptions are unfamiliar to modern ears. Whereas the socialist/communist movement, which swept the world circa 1850-1950, promulgated an idealistic message that was all about growth and development (historical advancement, higher stages), the greening movement more realistically acknowledges limits and the need for incipient downscaling. It's a very different, quite alternative message, one that's challenging to present programmatically.

WE ARE THE "TURN" AGENTS

Charles Reich's *The Greening of America* happened to be published just months after the inauguration of the Earth Day international celebration. In regard to the latter phenomenon, similar to the criticisms of the Green politics movement, we hear a lot from detractors. Earth Day is superficial, they say. It's

tepid and hasn't moved things significantly toward transformation. There is undoubtedly some truth in that, yet I believe history will recognize the global observance appreciating and honoring our planetary home as emblematic of the turning point that's so very needed in our time.

It's understandable that we feel impatient; we want to call for more dramatic strides, more radical measures. But a realistic perspective will help us to avoid discouragement and burn-out. We should take solace from and feel pride in what we have set in motion.

It should be a pride balanced by humility in the face of the challenges that our children and their children will be facing. David Watson: "When the Lakota medicine man Black Elk said, 'We should even be as water, which is lower than all things, yet stronger than the rocks,' he wasn't counseling serenity. He was telling us something valuable about strength, not as force but as endurance, about radiating power rather than possessing or controlling it, about listening to nature instead of fantasizing about mastering it—all evocative of the kind of character change that will be necessary to sustain us." Deep transformation of character and culture are key fundamentals of the greening process.

* * * *

It can't actually be the best of times if we are facing what James Howard Kunstler calls *A Long Emergency*. Reversing toxic trajectories will entail an unprecedentedly difficult and fraught revolution/devolution. But if we are, in fact, now proceeding to initiate that vitally necessary turning point and starting to forge pathways toward the redemptive green horizon . . . then our times will, at the least, be viewed as very special. — SW

Reversing toxic trajectories will entail an unprecedentedly
difficult and fraught revolution/devolution.

The Puerto Rican Government, Enemy of the Environment

BY JUAN CAMACHO

Puerto Rico is a Caribbean archipelago with an area of 111 miles by 39.5 miles. It is part of a group of islands known at the Greater Antilles: Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica. For centuries it has suffered a colonial system after invasions in 1493 and 1898 by Spain and the United States, respectively.

Our environmental struggles began during the 1960s with a victory against planned mine exploitation in the central area of the island. These efforts were initiated by already-existing political groups. The groups later grew and acquired purely environmental objectives. In the wake of that campaign we gained clear and documented environmental consciousness, plus the experience and knowledge to continue to defend our natural resources.

In Puerto Rico, environmental protection is a constitutionally protected right. Article VI, section 19 of our Constitution established: "The public policy of the Free Associated State [Commonwealth of Puerto Rico] upholds effective conservation of its natural resources as well as their utmost development and use for the benefit of the whole community" [unofficial translation]. Agencies with personnel and budget allocations have been created for the implementation of this mandate; however, the reality of the situation is *contrary* to this mandate. Not only has the government failed to fulfill its duty to conserve and defend the environment, it is now its principal obstructor.

Given this scenario, citizens have had to organize from the grassroots to demand our environmental rights. We are struggling on two fronts: On one hand, we resist the developers who construct with cement without regard to the harm this causes the environment and the quality of human life. On the other hand, we struggle against government agencies that are negligent in regard to their duty to defend our natural resources by implementing existing laws and regulations. The following demonstrate this reality:

In 1966 we contested the government's plan to construct two mega-resort projects in the northern ecological corridor. Approximately 3,000 acres of land constitute this corridor, which harbors diverse natural ecosystems such as coastal forests, wetlands, mangroves, coral reefs, fields of marine life, a bioluminescent lagoon and miles of virgin beaches that serve as habitat for more than 50 critical rare species under danger of extinction (some being species found only in Puerto Rico).

At present we struggle against other threats: government issue of permits for the construction of mega-hotels on land that has been designated a natural reserve in Rincón (a northwestern jurisdiction of Puerto Rico), ecologically sensitive land in Aguadilla (also in the northwest), and even in maritime land areas in Santa Isabel (south-central Puerto Rico) and Loíza (in the north).

Between 2007 and 2009 we struggled against the government to stop construction of two gas pipelines in the north and south. The pipelines were part of projects that would perpetuate the use of fossil fuels in total disregard of the demands of the population for clean and renewable energy. The gas pipelines would have been constructed on agricultural, residential, and flood and landslide prone land. We won that campaign, but the government wasted hundreds of millions of dollars on both projects.

Recently in Guayama, a southern jurisdiction, we have been challenging both the AES energy corporation and the government in order to have the disposal of toxic ashes produced by AES's incineration of carbon be declared illegal and criminal.

We also face the chaos created by poor solid waste management and lack of government alternatives to the problem. Of 29 waste dumps, 11 have been closed and 11 are under threat of closure. Given this reality the government has responded with plans to construct incineration plants which are totally contrary to environmental protection.

Although the government has at its disposal all mechanisms necessary to lead in the development and implementation of ecologically vigilant policies, for decades it has not availed itself of these. Rather than being the constitutional guarantor of evaluation and supervision, it has become the accomplice of all the environmental predators. Our environmental defense struggles will continue until justice is achieved.



JUAN CAMACHO

is a social activist and founder and spokesperson of "Toabajeros en Defensa del Ambiente" (Toa Baja Environmental Defenders), a community-based environmental organization which focuses on environmental struggles from the human rights perspective. (Toa Baja is a northeastern municipality of Puerto Rico.) Translation for this article was provided by Olga I. Sanabria Dávila.

Building the new society—directly, locally

THE PROCESS of “the greening of society” will require transformative policy initiatives at the national level such as the Green New Deal, Medicare for All, etc. But at the same time, at the grassroots level, the local citizenry will need to be “building the new society within the shell of the old.” Initiatives like Transition Towns, Cooperation Humboldt and Cooperation Jackson are responding to the overlapping challenges of climate change, social isolation, and economic instability by decarbonizing and relocating the economy through community-led models of change incorporating permaculture design principles. Rather than waiting for governments to lead, the activists and communities involved are embracing the power of local initiative. In doing so, these movements run counter to the dominant narrative of globalization and economic growth, and instead offer a positive vision of a post-carbon and post-growth future, as well as an evolving roadmap for getting there through grassroots activism. The following two articles give a sense of how groups in Phoenixville, PA and Humboldt County, CA are implementing the vision. — Eds.

Phoenixville Area Transition: What We Do and How We Do It

BY JANE DUGDALE

Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, is located 25 miles northwest of Philadelphia. I’m a resident, and I’ve been working with Phoenixville Area Transition (PAT) since its initiation in 2018.

PAT is inspired by the international Transition movement, which began in 2005 in Totnes, England, and has since spread to over 1,200 communities in 50 countries around the world. Transition is about communities stepping up to address the big challenges we face by starting at the local level. In Phoenixville we’ve noticed that more and more people have become convinced that the toxic global industrial growth system based on petroleum is not sustainable. Many agree with Transition that we need to encourage localization and work with, not against, nature.

Cooperation Humboldt: A Practical Response to the Current Historical Conjuncture

BY FARZAD FOROUHAR

As embodied in the Charging Bull statue near Wall Street, the capitalist system is a raging bull that requires a sophisticated praxis to stop it. To fight such an exploitative and hegemonic beast we need a discourse that can challenge and alter the hegemonic discourse of the system. And we need effective anti-capitalist organizations nationwide and worldwide.

One such organization is Cooperation Humboldt, a non-profit voluntary collective that provides an opportunity to create such an alternative discourse by building a solidarity economy on California’s North Coast. Founded in 2015, Cooperation Humboldt operates according to the following core fundamental beliefs:

We Transitioners feel that we're on a mission to build resilience in the local community by encouraging interdependence between people and groups and nature. Our own group has operated mostly on the philosophy that Rob Hopkins, the founder of International Transition Towns, articulated: "Whoever shows up are the right people." Rather than adhering to a pre-set agenda, we've done a lot of "going where the energy takes us" ...as long as a project seems to fit the overall mission.

We gradually arrived at our current operating structure of a Core Group made up of representatives from various Working Groups. The Films Working Group was the first. In December 2017, before we formally aligned with the Transition Network, they brought the documentary film *Tomorrow* to the local Colonial Theatre, the iconic center of our gentrifying former steel town. Seeing that film is what fired me up, personally, to get the Transition initiative underway. I then sat down with the organizers of the screening and we brainstormed a list of groups and people who might be interested. We were pleased to have 22 people show up at our first meeting in May 2018.

During the next couple of meetings we brainstormed a Vision Statement. After that we met monthly until the pandemic, with attendance holding at around 20. We established a web site

The international Transition movement began in 2005 in Totnes, England, and has since spread to over 1,200 communities in 50 countries around the world.

[<https://www.pat.community>] which highlights the activities of our Working Groups: Living Landscapes, Films, Inner Transition, Community-supported Food, and Reduce/Reuse/Recycle Plastics.

- Acknowledging the racist, sexist, and class-oppressive relations in our current institutions.
- Recognizing the exploitative foundations of the system that is devastating the planet and the necessity of shifting to a cooperative/sustainable economic system if we want to mitigate the devastation.
- Identifying and creating an alternative capable of fostering a better quality of life, based on institutions that incentivize cooperation, compassion, and kindness.
- Valuing, supporting, and willing to work with other groups engaged in similar grassroots organizing of working-class people and people of color; groups that are training organizers, building long-term strategies, and creating new models for a collaborative future reality.

Cooperation Humboldt has a well-articulated theory of change. But theory without action is mere contemplation. So at Cooperation Humboldt we are intentional about developing both a shared theory of how the world currently operates and concrete actions to "build the new within the shell of the old."

RESIST, BUILD, EMPOWER, INSPIRE

Cooperation Humboldt's theory of change is based on four

concepts: resist, build, empower, and inspire. We must resist all forms of exploitation and oppression, build new systems that meet our needs, empower ourselves by learning the skills to succeed, and inspire others to join us in creating a new society. Each of these approaches augments and strengthens the others.

Cooperation Humboldt's core beliefs have been embodied in a vision that emphasizes the possibility of people meeting their

Cooperation Humboldt strives to be of service while promoting a post-capitalist ethos. Our work is premised on the notion that decision-making should be as local as possible in order to empower people and their communities.

We recognized that Phoenixville already has numerous disparate groups accomplishing goals congruent with our own vision. We decided that our mission could include educating about the interconnectedness of all their activities.

BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE

An example of an early successful initiative was our Community Supported Lunches at Sol Kitchen. Until the pandemic intervened, this tiny restaurant had become a magnet for all sectors of the community, from the mayor to the unhoused,

to stop by for home-cooked lunches twice a week paid for by in-kind donations.

We soon realized we needed an Inner Transition Working Group in order to animate the Gandhian directive to “be the change you wish to see in the world.” Some members put together a series of monthly *Reflections of the Spirit* community gatherings. The same group offers free qigong classes, organized a pre-pandemic Summer Solstice event (in a local park, with music, dancing, displays, yoga, bubbles, and kombucha), a Winter Solstice celebration, and vigils in support of Black Lives Matter.

Meanwhile, we recognized that Phoenixville already has numerous groups accomplishing goals congruent with our own vision: legacy environmental and diversity groups (the Green Team and Diversity In Action); an existing community garden; social service non-profits; a beloved community cinema; and a well-established Time Bank. Our sense was that the various groups didn't necessarily know about each other and may not have been aware of the potential for synergistic efforts. We realized that our mission could include educating about the interconnectedness of all their activities. So we decided to proactively but informally

Phoenixville Area Transition ↑

Cooperation Humboldt ↓

needs without exploiting others or being exploited—and in a manner that does not merely sustain the existing natural world but helps to regenerate it. It's not enough to merely survive; we want and deserve to thrive. To do so, it is vital to acknowledge and dismantle power-laden interconnected dominator systems of hetero-patriarchy, settler-colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy. But that is just the first step! We must also proactively create new cooperative systems valuing gender inclusivity, decolonization, and anti-racism as a basis for a Solidarity Economy. Referencing the latter, Emily Kawano, the co-founder of the US Solidarity Economy Network, calls it “an economy for people

and the planet.” The concept embodies five principles: pluralism, solidarity, equity, sustainability, and participatory democracy.

The Solidarity Economy framework acknowledges that there are multiple paths to the same goal. It includes a broad range of social interactions grounded in the collective practices of cooperation, mutualism, sharing, reciprocity, caring, and gifting. It opposes all forms of oppression and discrimination. Ecological responsibility is a priority. Beyond that, it draws heavily upon Indigenous perspectives of living in harmony with nature and with each other. Finally, the Solidarity Economy framework is premised on the notion that decision-making should be as local as possible in order to empower people and their communities. If a decision affects an individual, then that person should be allowed to participate in making that decision.

Cooperation Humboldt puts its vision, core beliefs, and objectives into practice by creating program areas that each administer multiple specific projects. The program areas include arts & culture, care & wellness, community resilience, economic democracy, education, food, and housing.

We're intentional about developing both a shared theory of how the world currently operates and concrete actions to “build the new within the shell of the old.”

ARTS & CULTURE

Systematic culture shift manifests itself through artistic expression across a variety of mediums. One way you know that

work with these groups in order to establish channels for getting to know one another. Some of our more successful collaborations with other community organizations have been:

- Reservoir Community Garden: Transitioners formed a team for one of the beds called the “Giving Garden,” which delivered more than 120 pounds of produce to food pantries in 2020 and more in 2021. Local students helped clean and plant. They enhanced the whole community garden by painting the water barrels. This work inspired us to create our Living Landscapes Working Group, whose purpose is to expand gardening all around the town. An herbalist-knowledgeable professor taught Living Landscapes volunteers how to make tea bags of dried Tulsi she had harvested from the herb garden. The tea bags went to food pantries. Another project was the result of our learning that there had been an effort to build a “Wellness Garden” at the low-income retirement home; Living Landscapes volunteers swooped in and made it happen! We also helped renew the community garden of Steel Town Village, an affordable

PAT is an organizational member of Phoenixville Area Time Bank, and we can give “time dollars” to Time Bank members who work on our projects.

housing complex. Early in the pandemic one of our members had the idea to promote sales of “Victory Gardening in a pot,” with help from a local farmer and nursery; we sold 30 pots! This season we’ve started promoting neighborhood gardening, or “Block Gardens.”

you have an actual movement is that the principles, values, and ideas of the movement begin appearing in songs, dance, music, poetry, theater, paintings, sculpture, etc. One of this program area’s projects is the annual “Artists Dismantling Capitalism Symposium,” where we bring together artists, culture workers, organizers, and scholars to explore the use of creative praxis in imagining and creating a society based on a solidarity economy. Cooperation Humboldt also facilitates ongoing sessions of “The Whiteness Within: Challenging White Supremacy Culture,” a workshop that uses story sharing, reflection, and physical expression to give participants the opportunity to recognize and shift away from racism.

CARE & WELLNESS

Health, wellness, and care are fundamental human rights. Cooperation Humboldt creates education, services, and community partnerships to remove the profit motive from healthcare. It empowers people to care for others and actively participate in their own well-being. Some specific projects and activities in this area including Peer Community Health Workers (a worker-owned cooperative in collaboration with Open Door Community Health Centers), Care Line (support for people in recovery from opioid addiction) and Keeping Physicians in Humboldt County.

DISASTER RESPONSE & COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

This program area builds community power through disaster relief and also focuses on creating long-term resilience. The goal is to restructure the local economy to guarantee that everyone’s basic needs are met, both during and after emergency situations. The work of this team includes disaster mitigation/preparedness, disaster response, immediate recovery, and resilience. When the pandemic first hit, Cooperation Humboldt prioritized coordinating a community-wide response, including mask-making, sanitation supply procurement and delivery, grocery shopping and delivery, and hot meal distribution. We also were instrumental in creating a Community COVID

The Solidarity Economy framework draws upon Indigenous perspectives of living in harmony with nature and with each other.

Several of our core members have served on a Borough commission; being in an official capacity has helped us figure out how the Borough process works in order to promote projects we most care about.

- Educational initiatives via Communities That Care (CTC), the library, and colleges: At the suggestion of our local library director, who is on the CTC Board, Transitioners helped produce a ten-month series called “Gardening

Around the Village” for the Library’s Online Adult series. The library has said this series and its recordings are its most popular viewings. Collaboration with the library has raised our profile and sparked new ideas for educational ventures. One was a program called “The Paradox of Plastics.” Other educational outreach is done through our quasi-fortnight newsletter, *Resilience Report*. Additionally, we’ve addressed college classes and collaborated with the local Penn State University branch to produce a “Northern Chester County Earth Day Events” flyer.

- Diversity in Action (DIA): One of our town’s legacy groups, DIA stepped up during the Summer of George Floyd and now produces, in partnership with the African American led Black Light Projects, ongoing twice-monthly vigils supporting Black Lives Matter, one virtual and one live. Our Inner Transition group produced two of the virtual vigils. In addition, one of our members is on the DIA task force to renew the town’s Civil War Centennial Memorial, with the intention of re-envisioning its mural to celebrate our multicultural history.

Phoenixville Area Transition ↑

Cooperation Humboldt ↓

Response Coalition that coordinated mutual aid across 18 different local organizations. In response to the California wildfires, we’ve worked closely with the American Red Cross, the Office of Emergency Services, and other local government agencies and social change organizations to support hundreds of fire evacuees.

A current project of this program area is the creation of local “resilience hubs,” which are sites that aim to be “ready for anything” and well-prepared for natural disasters, climate change, and other stresses in our community. During non-disaster times, these sites will serve as gathering and learning spaces, providing inspiration and knowledge to empower the community to adopt more sustainable ways of living.

ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

Cooperation Humboldt believes that ordinary people must be in control of the fundamental decisions regarding how their society is structured and how it operates. This requires democratization of all aspects of the economy. Our two main Economic Democracy projects are advancing Public Banking and nurturing and supporting worker-owned cooperative businesses through our Worker-Owned Humboldt (WOH) initiative. WOH collaborates with the North

Coast Small Business Development Center to provide essential business training for new worker-owned businesses.

We are a leader in the California Public Banking Alliance. A public bank is a bank that is owned and governed by a city or county with the idea of being operated in the public interest, investing in Main Street rather than Wall Street. By promoting a transparent, publicly-governed finance system, costs of infrastructure projects could be greatly reduced, saving taxpayer money and increasing community investment power. In 2020, Cooperation Humboldt helped to draft, lobby and pass California Assembly Bill 857, a historic law that created a state-level public bank charter for which local jurisdictions (e.g., cities and counties) may apply. Now we’re working with the California Department of Financial Protection and Innovation to promulgate the rules for creating and overseeing local public banks.

EDUCATION

We are all both teachers and learners! Collective education empowers us as organizers and is critical to our success. Education is a central component of everything undertaken by Cooperation Humboldt. For example, we host free 12-week study group cohorts to explore Solidarity Economy theory and

- **Time Bank:** PAT is an organizational member of Phoenixville Area Time Bank, and we can give “time dollars” to Time Bank members who work on our projects. One of the connections we made through Time Bank was to help the local Repair Café find a home.
- **Green Team:** A key legacy group from the town, Green Team is now a partner with PAT in a joint working group on Plastics. As part of Green Team’s 2021 Green Earth Festival, we brought the film *The Story of Plastic* to the local cinema followed by a panel of leaders of successful plastic bans to tell us how they did it.
- **Phoenixville Borough:** Several of our core members have served on the Borough’s Beautification Advisory Commission. Being in an official capacity has helped us figure out how the Borough process works in order to promote projects we most care about.

WE ARE IN IT TOGETHER

If this all sounds improvisational, that’s the right image. Rather than going through the hassles of becoming a non-profit, rather

than stressing about Boards and By-Laws, we’ve been able to pour our energy into projects that need doing. Funding, of course, is an issue. We’ll be looking for grant money for the Civil War Centennial Memorial renewal. DIA is a nonprofit and we can apply through them. The community garden needs a grant for a redesign and a deer fence. That was applied for through the Borough. The point is that a small group of local activists can get going without feeling intimidated by the prospect of facing legalities and formalities at the outset. If the future calls for us to become an incorporated nonprofit, we’ll cross that bridge when we get to it!

Here’s how one of our members, Maria Galarza, has described her ongoing commitment to our initiative:

When I heard about Transition it intrigued me enough to look at its presence in Phoenixville. Transition from fossil fuel to sustainable energy—got it! Transition from a global economy based on corporations and stripping the earth of its natural resources for wealth—got it! Transition from mass produced food to locally grown and pesticide-free produce—got it! Transition back to working together in neighborhoods and getting to know and help each other—got it, know it, let’s do it!

practice, white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, and local history of settler-colonialism. These sessions not only increase participants’ individual understanding of the topics discussed, they also build social solidarity and a shared analysis of where we are, where we want to go, and how we can get there.

FOOD ISSUES

Access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food is a fundamental human right that should never be dependent on wealth or income. As the climate crisis worsens, connecting with and learning traditional food cultivation skills will be critical—not only to our happiness and well-being, but to our very survival. The food team’s activities in 2020 focused on empowering new gardeners and on strengthening neighborhood-scale sharing networks.

Cooperation Humboldt is intentionally, deliberately, and strategically attempting to recreate the non-commodified Food Forest that existed here before European settler-colonists arrived. Over the last few years we’ve helped to plant over 150 fruit trees in public places and installed 25 Little Free Pantries in the community where people can donate non-perishable foods or personal care items and anyone can take what they need. In addition, when the pandemic situation started to become acute Cooperation Humboldt helped in the effort to get food resources

to the most vulnerable people in the community. Volunteers delivered and installed over 250 free mini-gardens for our low-income neighbors. The food team provides simple educational resources to empower the recipients of these gardens to make the most of their new setup and provides ongoing support as needed. Also, it has agreed to take on the production of an annual Local Food Guide. The first one was published in Spring 2021.

HOUSING

No one should ever be without a home, and yet statistics indicate that there are approximately 29 empty properties

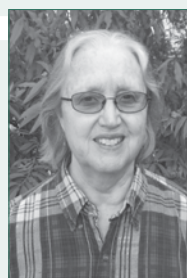
In a historical moment of interconnecting ecological, political, and economic crises, the programs, projects, and strategies of Cooperation Humboldt are designed to “live into” a new world.

We've demonstrated that a small group of local activists can get going without feeling intimidated by the prospect of facing the legalities and formalities of incorporation at the outset.

I liked the idea of having working groups and so I joined the Living Landscapes Working Group and engaged with others who understand we must value our earth. I connected to sources of information in areas I knew little about, learned more about what I already had some knowledge of, enjoyed watching movies that I would not have seen on my own, and attended workshops

to further my knowledge about gardening, recycling, reusing, repurposing and repairing. Now I'm teaching my grandchildren and their friends. There is so much to learn!

I am now on the Core Group and engaging in connecting others to our work and our experiences, especially within the Latino/a community. What excites me is the opportunity to get others involved and see what arises from their involvement. What I love about Transition is that any person can find what they are passionate about and start a constructive working group. We truly are in it together.



JANE DUGDALE

A resident of Phoenixville, PA, Jane was a co-founder of Phoenixville Area Transition and currently serves on its Core group. She's also active with the Phoenixville Area Time Bank, Green Team, Diversity in Action, and the Altair EcoVillage project in nearby Kimberton. Jane served in the Peace Corps in Chile during the 1960s and then had a long career as a public school teacher of English as a Second Language.

Phoenixville Area Transition ↑

Cooperation Humboldt ↓

per homeless person across the US. This is a direct function of the dictates of capitalism and what happens when housing is a commodity. Cooperation Humboldt has explored several cooperative housing projects. It currently provides staff support to a local group interested in developing and living in a multi-generational ecovillage of 10 to 25 people comprised of tiny homes and shared common facilities, gardens, and an arts and media production center.

Over time, Cooperation Humboldt hopes to nurture a network of ecovillages across our region, each with its own unique resident-generated design and culture. We're exploring the development of housing cooperatives in which property is collectively owned and/or managed. And we've created a Community Land Trust with the Wiyot Tribe, under their direct control. The latter has been the result of an intentional, collaborative process of reimagining what regenerative development means. The intention is to attract capital from "impact investors" and solicit money for the Gouts Lakawouh Hiwechk Fund (meaning "money that makes us well" in the Wiyot language). This will be the entity through which investments flow. The Wiyot tribe will have the ability to approve or reject any of the projects in which the fund invests.

CONCLUSION

In a historical moment of interconnecting ecological, political, and economic crises, the programs, projects, and strategies described above are designed to "live into" a new world. Cooperation Humboldt strives to be of service while promoting a post-capitalist ethos. We're attempting to foster a transformational "liberated zone" in the local community. Networks of such could be the beginning of creating new social, political, and economic systems. Our activists are attempting to teach as they fight and to learn as they lead! To survive the struggle with the charging bull of capitalism, we need to create a united front, an inclusive, pluralist union in solidarity. Cooperation Humboldt endeavors to make connections, build alternatives, and inspire others to join the march toward the future we all deserve.



FARZAD FOROUHAR

is a core team member at Cooperation Humboldt and works for the Wiyot Tribe in Eureka, California. Farzad moved from Iran to the United States in 2014 and since then has been residing in Eureka. He holds a B.A. degree in Political Science with an emphasis on Global Politics and Environmental Politics and a minor in Journalism from Humboldt State University.

Who Founded the Green Party in the United States?

BY JOHN RENSENBRINK

For a period of time, about a year ago, when you did a Google search for “U.S. Green Party” you would have noticed in Google’s knowledge panel, on the right, that Howie Hawkins was named as the founder. This was misleading, so herewith is my effort—together with statements by key individuals—to provide a sense of some of the most significant people who actually did found the Green Party of the United States (GPUS). There may have been others, and they should get in touch with me, but the following eight did essential founding work that eventually resulted in the establishment of a national party.

Initiators of the Green Party of Maine were the first Greens in this country. The Maine party was launched in January 1984. Two months later the book *Green Politics* (written mostly by Charlene Spretnak, with input from Fritjof Capra) was published in New York; it was reviewed in many newspapers and excerpted in *The Nation*. The momentum created by that book led to a conference in August of that year in St. Paul, Minnesota, to begin to form a Green Party. With each of the key founders building on the previous work of others, the founding activity extended from 1984 to 2001. That year the GPUS received formal, legal standing from the Federal Election Commission (FEC) as a bona fide national political party.

During the early period Howie Hawkins resisted the course and development of a national, electorally-oriented Green Party of the United States. He and his associates expounded the anarchist belief that there should be “Nothing above the local level.” Throughout the 1980s, as he publicly admitted at a conference in 2002, he acted as an “agent blockateur” to impede efforts within the proto-party national Green politics organization (at that time called the Green Committees of Correspondence, GCoC) to transition to a primarily electoral party. Instead, he argued for a non-party, dues-paying mass movement, and within GCoC he formed the oppositional Left Green Network (LGN) in 1987 to, in his words, “Left the Greens.” With Howie as the driving force in the LGN, it finally succeeded in taking over GCoC at its annual meeting in 1991 in Elkins, West Virginia (a conference that included, by the way, a workshop naming all the Green women leaders who had been driven out of GCoC over the years by the LGN). In the wake of that conference, large numbers of GCoC members nationwide moved quickly into the work of building Green state parties, shifting their focus away from the LGN-dominated GCoC, which soon changed its name to the Greens/Green Party USA (G/GPUSA).

In the following months, I and others formed the Green Politics Network (GPN) for the major purpose of providing a home for the emergent state parties. As recalled by those cited below, G/GPUSA opposed and tried to prevent a state-based national party, but it could not be stopped. In 1996 the state parties united to form the Association of State Green Parties (ASGP). That same year Howie and his associates filed an application with the Federal Election Commission claiming that G/GPUSA was the official Green Party; that application was rejected.

With each of the key founders building on the previous work of others, the founding activity extended from 1984 until GPUS received formal, legal standing from the FEC in 2001.

By 2000 G/GPUSA had dwindled to a small number of members, who voted to reject a proposed merger with the ASGP, even though the ASGP had voted to take them in. No merger took place, and no G/GPUSA materials were consulted when GPUS wrote its foundational 2000 platform, which was part of its successful application to the FEC. As G/GPUSA was fading away, Howie Hawkins participated as an individual in the Nader campaign of 2000 and then joined the Green Party of New York State, running for different offices many times, including governor and, last year, President of the United States. When his electoral campaigns were effective they helped build the party. But it remains somewhat unclear whether or not he has full commitment to that growth. Howie recently launched an initiative called the Green Socialist Organizing Project [<https://greensocialist.net>] which states: “To advance our program, we need to build a political party that brings issues and constituencies around a common program and mutual support. Building that party must become a common effort of Green and other independent socialist and progressive parties and groups who want a united mass party of the working people... We must organize into that party the people who now vote in low numbers because they feel the two corporate parties don’t represent them. These people are disproportionately working class, people of color, and young. They are the future mass base of an independent party of the green and socialist left.”

Does the latter refer to the Green Party or some new organization that would compete with GPUS? The literature associated with the Green Socialist Organizing Project (like: “The Case for an Independent Left Party” [<https://greensocialist.net/ebook/>]) is ambivalent. It’s a concern to some Greens and a reason to detail the heritage of what has been built up over the years, with much hard work, into the principal vehicle of Green electoral activity in the United States. The Founders of GPUS, noted below, deserve recognition and acknowledgment.



CHARLENE SPRETNAK

In 1983 Charlene made a solo trip around West Germany interviewing 60 of the 66 German Green Party members who were then featured in the book *Green Politics*, of which she was the principal coauthor (published March 1984). The book introduced the new political orientation

and called for a Green Party to form in the United States. During the six months after publication, the book was widely reviewed, and the momentum for a Green Party here began to

The momentum created by Charlene Spretnak’s book, *Green Politics*, led to a founding conference in August of 1984 in St. Paul, Minnesota.

build. Charlene encountered a pocket of opposition, though, when she was invited to give a plenary talk at the First North American Bioregional Congress, near Kansas City in May: One of their leaders railed against a Green Party, to enthusiastic applause, on the grounds that it might seek to crowd out and dominate the bioregional movement. Charlene’s follow-up presentation at the end of the conference, along with a bridge-building statement by the small Green Politics working group, had the effect of dissolving the opposition. In August Charlene and four others convened a founding conference for a Green Party in St. Paul, MN. The invitation letter stated that each of 62 organizations were invited to send two representatives. However, the conference was attended by Howie Hawkins and *nine other members* of Murray Bookchin’s Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont. As anarchists, they were aggressively opposed to the formation of any party, especially above the local level, and they dominated the discussions, eventually derailing the efforts to form a party at that conference. Finally, most of the participants agreed to postpone the formal establishment of a party, not because of anarchist ideology but because it was decided that a few years should first be spent seeding the Green analysis and vision at the local level. In the aftermath of the founding conference, local Green Politics groups formed all over the country and sent regional representatives to a steering committee for many years. This was the initial network of grassroots Greens that eventually grew into state parties and then the GPUS. The Green Politics organization formed at the conference was named for a network active during the American Revolution, the Committees of Correspondence [CoC, later the Green CoC]. A committee (Charlene, Eleanor LeCain, and Mark Satin) was charged with writing a Green values statement, which they called the Ten Key Values and which became a

fundamental organizing tool for the Green Party even into the present time. Charlene also spread the word about Green Politics via her many talks at universities and conferences nationwide during the 1980s.



JOHN RENSENBRINK

In January 1984, John and Alan Philbrook called a meeting in Augusta, Maine of likely Green Party-minded people in that state. They took a big initiative and formed the Green Party/Movement of Maine. It was the first, and for a time the only, state Green Party. It faced opposition

from Maine Bioregionalists and from Murray Bookchin's Social Ecology group in Vermont. Consequently, they only learned later about the St. Paul founding meeting, the birth of the Ten Key Values, and the formation of the Committees of Correspondence. John then became a Maine representative to the CoC and played a pivotal role piloting the creation of a "Strategy and Policy Approaches in Key Areas" (SPAKA) document which during the next several years was recognized as the Program for the Committees of Correspondence. SPAKA in turn became the basis for the first Platform of the Green Party of the United States. In early 1992, John proposed a new political group that adopted the name Green Politics Network, GPN. He was immediately joined by Mindy Lorenz, Dee Berry, Barbara Rodgers-Hendricks, Sue Conti, Hank Chapot, Linda Martin, Greg Gerritt and Tony Affigne. GPN created a home for the state Green Parties that were forming around the country. It also pledged to be a place of safety for women who were being muzzled and insulted by male Green leftists. In 1996, John and Linda Martin called for a meeting of State Green Parties to gather in Alexandria, Virginia. The historic meeting established the Association of State Green Parties. ASGP subsequently led to the establishment of the Green Party of the United States in Santa Barbara and Santa Monica in 2001.



DEE BERRY

In December 1984, Dee volunteered—together with Ben Kjelshus and others in her Kansas City, Missouri group of Greens—to run the newly created Clearing House for the Committees of Correspondence. The Clearing House had been started in Minneapolis but faltered due to ineffective leadership.

Under Dee's and Ben's guidance, the Clearing House got in touch with the many local groups of Greens in the United States, most of which had sprung up since the founding conference. The groups soon numbered over 350! Dee started a newsletter, *The IC Bulletin*, so named because it reported on the work of the Interregional Committee, but it also provided a round table or forum of news and opinion for the many groups and individual Greens. It proved to be a very effective building tool. Dee and Ben's Clearing House also organized Annual National Meetings of the Committees of Correspondence. Such meetings are now a Green tradition. Following from the ANM in Colorado in 1990, Dee hosted a meeting in a convention center near Kansas City for both the pro-party/electoral-first Greens and the anti-party/movement-first Greens (Howie and others). These opposing groups arrived at a bicameral solution: each would have a body, or branch of their own, within the broad Green Politics movement. Further, the two bodies would establish ways and procedures for discussion, negotiation, and mutual decision-making. This proposal was forwarded to the Green Committees of Correspondence for approval; two-thirds approval was needed. But in the weeks that followed and into early 1991, Howie Hawkins and the Left Green Network objected to the proposal and pushed for a NO vote. The proposal then fell just short of the two-thirds requirement for passage. It was a missed chance at unity, one that did not occur again. The movement branch was taken over by the Left Green Network. The LGN gained governing control of the GCoc at the Annual National Meeting in Elkins, WV in 1991, after which an exodus of members followed. In the spring of 1992, Dee and Ben joined the creation of the Green Politics Network to further development of the state-level Green Parties.

In January 1984, John Rensenbrink and Alan Philbrook formed the Green Party/Movement of Maine.

It was the first, and for a time the only, state Green Party in the US.



GREG GERRITT

Greg joined the newly formed Maine Green Party/Movement at its second meeting in February 1984. Living in the Western Mountains of Maine, he twice ran for State House as a Green. In three-way races, he received 16% and 20% respectively. He was the first Green to run for partisan

office in the U.S. and the only one to do so for several years. Greg became very influential in the Maine Party, serving as Secretary and later managing the office. Following the 1996 campaign season he and his wife, Kathy Rourke, moved to Providence, Rhode Island, and became active in the Green Party there, serving on its Steering Committee. Greg ran for Mayor of Providence in 2002. He became very involved in the evolution of the U.S. Green Party from 1988 on, undertaking leading roles in the GCoC and its Annual National Meetings. As part of the Elkins ANM in 1991, he took on the leadership of a committee to work out a modus vivendi for electoral organizing, a challenging endeavor. He sent reports to the leaders of GPUSA. These reports included recommendations for a federation of Green State Parties. They were rejected. Along with the rejection, he received a letter of censure from the GPUSA! So in the spring of 1992, Greg joined the newly forming Green Politics Network. He later participated in its creation of the Association of State Green Parties and drafted that organization's first set of bylaws. After several years, during which ASGP prepared the way for a fully-fledged United States Green Party recognized by the FEC, Greg's bylaws were grafted into the guiding foundational document of the Green Party of the United States in 2001.

Greg Gerritt was the first Green to run for partisan office in the United States. Later he drafted the ASGP's first set of bylaws.

Tony Affigne's independent campaign for Providence City Council in 1982 made him the first-ever Latino candidate in Rhode Island history.



TONY AFFIGNE

Tony began three decades of Green Party work at a 1990 meeting of the Green Party Organizing Committee. Then, in 1992, he helped draft founding documents for the Green Politics Network, joining John Rensenbrink, Betty Zisk, Dee Berry, Ben Kjelshus, Barbara Rodgers-Hendricks, and others. Tony

spoke before the national convention of the Green Party of Canada, in Ottawa in 2000. That same year he co-convened the first meeting of the Green Party of Rhode Island. He later served as chair of its state committee and as its delegate to the Green National Committee. Tony had previously run for Governor of Rhode Island in 1986 as candidate of the Citizens Party, the forerunner of the Greens, and his 1982 independent campaign for Providence City Council had made him the first-ever Latino candidate in Rhode Island history. He helped found the Association of State Green Parties (ASGP) in 1996 and was an ASGP representative and signatory to the "Boston Agreement" in 2000. As chair of ASGP's Accreditation Committee, Tony helped shepherd the party from its original 12 states in 1996 to the 29 state parties which came together in 2001 to form the Green Party of the United States. That same year he had participated in the U.S. delegation to the Global Greens Congress in Australia, where the Global Green Charter was adopted. He later served as co-chair of the GPUS International Committee along with Julia Willebrand. A long-time activist in Rhode Island's Latinx communities, in 2010 Tony helped found GPUS's Latinx Caucus, later serving on the Caucus steering committee and as its delegate to the Green National Committee (GNC).

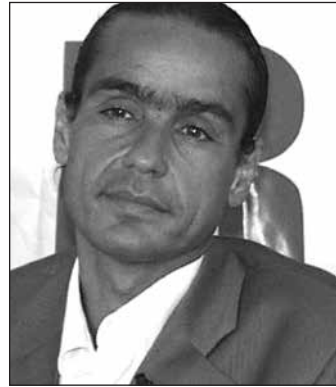


STEVEN SCHMIDT

Steve promoted and ably defended the creation of the Association of Green State Parties in the early days of the nascent U.S. Green Party. In 1995 at a national gathering of Greens in New Mexico, he presented the “40-State Green Organizing Effort,” a strategic plan that included a presidential campaign by

state parties with a convention to be held in Los Angeles. The proposal was accepted and state parties moved forward with national organizing based on his plan. Steve chaired a new Platform committee from 1995 to 2001, during which time he structured and drafted a significant amount of the founding platform [which can be found at https://www.greenpolicy360.net/w/Category:Green_Platform]. The official, founding U.S. Green Party Platform was an integral part of the subsequent, successful submission to the FEC for national committee/ party status.

In 1992 Mike Feinstein worked with Mindy Lorenz to obtain the voter registrations necessary to qualify the Green Party for the California ballot.



MIKE FEINSTEIN

As a young Green, Mike got around at our early meetings on rollerblades! Later, in 1992, he worked with Mindy Lorenz, a vibrant force in Southern California and national Green politics, to obtain the voter registrations necessary to qualify the Green Party for the California ballot. This was a dramatic

breakthrough that put the Green Party of California on the map as a fully-fledged State Party. It was a major boost forward nationally for other emerging state parties. Mike was the main organizer of the Green Parties of the West Conference in Santa Monica in February 1993, a gathering that featured many of the then-record number of Greens that had just run in the November 1992 elections. Later Mike ran for and was elected to the Santa Monica City Council, with four-year terms in 1996 and 2000; he then was appointed Mayor by his colleagues for the period 2000-2002. Nationally, among U.S. Greens, Mike was a bridge force in his efforts to bring together the Left Greens and the Petra Kelly Greens at ANM’s; and in 1996, together with Lynne Serpe, he co-organized the first Green Party presidential nomination convention, held at UCLA in Los Angeles. Together with John Rensenbrink, Mike has written an account of the early history of the U.S. Green Party. He also is the founder of the GPUS Elections Database and an invaluable source of information about U.S. Green electoral history, as well as about the party’s rules and bylaws.



NANCY ALLEN

Nancy gave the newly born Maine Green Party/ Movement a huge boost in 1991. The *Bangor News* carried the story full on. She was a leading Democrat and announced her shift to the Green Party. It stunned many Democrats and others, too. It put the Maine Green Party on the map. Nancy

followed this decisive change with a campaign against a coal fired plant in Bucksport that would have burned 500 tons of coal a day. This would have affected Acadia National Park and all of midcoast Maine. Thanks to the Green Party the plant was defeated. In 2000 at the historic annual meeting of the Association of State Green Parties in Denver—the Ralph Nader nomination for President convention—Nancy took charge of the Green Party’s media outreach. She built it to give the Green Party a much-needed voice at this crucial time as legions of press reporters from the U.S. and foreign countries eager for news found in Nancy a clear and reliable source. She has served as a media specialist for the U.S. Green Party ever since, as a member of the Media Committee.



JOHN RENSENBRINK

A co-founder of the Green Party of Maine, the Green Politics Network, the Association of State Green Parties, and the Green Party of the United States, as well as a co-editor of this magazine, John is Professor Emeritus, Department of Government and Legal Studies, at Bowdoin College.

On Howie Hawkins

BY STEVE WELZER

I believe the party's
visibility is advanced
by Howie's energetic
campaigns.

His efforts have helped
to motivate the Greens
to go on record as being
explicitly anti-capitalist.
For that I'm glad.

But his ideological
orientation does not
contribute to the
important objective of
transitioning the left
"from Red to Green."

First, let me put in a good word for this hard-working lifelong activist: He's been a consistently effective Green Party candidate.

SEEN BEING GREEN

Sometimes we have to step back and notice "the gestalt of it all." People generally don't pay all so much detailed attention to most phenomena that pass by on the cultural news feed. For example: The Greens go to great lengths to try to communicate that their program and their praxis encompass justice, economic, diversity and many more issues, yet most of the populace and press continue to think of them as predominantly environmentalist. Another example: The book, *The Greening of America*, happened to contain many questionable propositions—like the somewhat whimsical "Consciousness III." Wikipedia says: "It mixed sociological analysis with panegyrics to rock music, cannabis, and blue jeans, arguing that these fashions embodied a fundamental social shift." So there was lots of screwball stuff in there. Nonetheless, what probably mattered more than anything else about the book is the fact that it got the "greening" idea into the popular consciousness. That idea was, no doubt, interpreted in all kinds of ways, but one way was a valid and significant ecological orientation to the problems of our times. "Greening" became a positive notion that helped prepare the ground for our own movement.

Similarly, many voters, if asked, could not describe much detail about Howie Hawkins' political perspective. Of those who even noticed his alternative and somewhat marginal presidential campaign last year, most probably just absorbed that: (a) he's been a regular Green Party candidate, and (b) he espouses a left-wing critique of the current system. Likely few studied the campaign's literature or web site to a degree that they could relate the difference between Howie's ecosocialist Green New Deal and AOC's liberal version.

Howie works hard to try to convey that difference. And to be visible. To the extent that he's successful at the latter objective what does it amount to? Voters might notice him on the ballot as a Green, might see his campaign lawn signs with the Green logo, might hear him on the radio saying something-or-other about the Green Party. My point is that the overarching memes of "Green Party," "Green politics," "environmental issues," and "independent politics" tend to be the take-aways for most voters. On that basis I believe the party's visibility is advanced by Howie's energetic campaigns.

Readers of this magazine might have nits to pick about the details of his orientation (as I will, myself, below), but we should keep in mind that the fine points of such discussions rarely register for most of the public-at-large. Only a tiny segment of the broad electorate gives his campaigns enough attention to formulate a consideration on more than a superficial level. The same holds for most Green campaigns. That's why excessive vetting of candidates can be counterproductive for alternative parties. They shouldn't worry all so much about ideological and programmatic purity. Wherever there's general agreement and enthusiasm for party building, encourage members to run for office! "Being seen being Green" is something Howie Hawkins has understood. The result is that—to his credit and to our benefit—Howie has, over many years, relatively speaking, run some of the most successful Green Party campaigns.

We should be talking about a different kind of post-capitalist vision.

My hope is that his thinking will evolve in that direction. My concern is that it won't.

NOW MY COMPLAINT

Those of us with a commitment to social change movement building do pay close attention to the details. And when it comes to a specific “issue” that I, personally, care about a great deal, the orientation of HH’s campaigns is concerning. That orientation does *not* advance what I consider to be, from an activist standpoint, one of the most important objectives of the times we live in: to transition the left “from Red to Green.”

I came in to the Green politics movement over thirty years ago after reading Howie’s tract: “Toward a New Politics.” As I’ve followed his self-produced movement and campaign literature through the years, I’ve noticed what I consider to be a retrograde shift. His 1989 document asserted: “Greens seek to build an independent political movement of the people.” Now he says what we need to do is “build a working-class party.”

When I challenged him about the “working-class” orientation, he responded: “That’s where the votes are”—as if to say: “Well, that sociological strata is numerous.” But the truth is that he frames it in the way that the Socialist Party does: “The working class is in a key and central position to fight back against the ruling capitalist class and its power. The working class is the major force worldwide that can lead the way to a socialist future” [<https://www.socialistpartyusa.net/principles-points-of-agreement>]. This is an expression of Marx’s formulation of the “class-for-itself” as the primary agency of “next-higher-stage-of-history” social change. I think it’s mythological.

I think Howie should have kept in mind what his 1980s mentor, Murray Bookchin, pointed out in a booklet titled *Listen, Marxist!*: “. . . to infect the movement of our time with ‘workerism’ is reactionary to the core . . . to barge in with the worn recipes of Marxism, to babble about the ‘role of the working class,’ amounts to a subversion of the present and the future by the past.”

And, anyway, that’s *not* “where the votes are.”

WAGE EARNERS ARE OPPRESSED AND PREOCCUPIED

Oppression, such as generally is the experience of wage-labor, doesn’t usually engender enlightenment; it more often breeds despair, resignation, passivity, or pathology. Despite that, the left has tended to suffer from the delusion that the forces of history will galvanize the working class into “gaining consciousness.” That paradigm of social change just doesn’t correspond to reality. Creative advocates of change—who can emanate from any class, *vide* Edward Goldsmith—want to *liberate us all* from a society which fosters inequality, class division, exploitation, and oppressions like wage labor. The workers themselves, of our time, under capitalism, generally are preoccupied with getting by.

When you can’t see a viable pathway toward alleviation of your hardship, the dissatisfaction tends to turn inward

resulting in depression or numbing-type assuagements and distractions. When it turns outward it may not be highly conscious or discerning. For example: After reunification of the country in 1990 the populace of the former East Germany was subordinate and resentful. At first they clung to their identification with the former Communist Party (which had been renamed the Party of Democratic Socialism). That seemed to indicate a leftist inclination, but it actually reflected an obstinate recalcitrance. Recently their recalcitrance and resentment has been expressed via support for the far-right party called Alternative for Germany. This is similar to the pathological support for Trumpism among some American “salt of the earth” workers who—understandably, in a similar way—have felt alienated, subordinate and resentful.

The Marxist left tries hard not to see this. With a different kind of “woke” they would remove their rose-colored (Red paradigm) glasses and acknowledge how misguided their theory has been in regard to the “historic mission of the working class.”

Liberating us all from the industrial wage-labor system makes sense as an aspirational element of the project to green our society. That’s one among many arguments for transitioning the left from Red to Green.

TOWARD A REALLY NEW POLITICS

Approaching 70, Howie Hawkins can take satisfaction from the fact that his efforts, along with those of his co-thinkers, have helped to motivate the Greens to go on record as being explicitly anti-capitalist. For that I’m glad. However, he and they seem almost clueless about the reconsiderations that have taken place among neo-leftists over the last several decades concluding that we should be talking about a *different kind of post-capitalist vision*. For that I’m not glad. So my support for Howie Hawkins only goes half-way.

The guy is intelligent and talented. But, like his SPUSA comrades, he continues to be mesmerized by dreams of the working class in motion and the proletariat rising up. My hope is that his thinking will finally evolve. My concern is that it won’t—and so his influence, ultimately, could drag us backward.



STEVE WELZER

a co-editor of this magazine, has been a Green movement activist for over thirty years. He was a founding member of the Green Party of New Jersey in 1997 and formerly served on the Steering Committee of the Green Party of the United States. Steve holds a master’s degree in Economics from Rutgers University. He lives in East Windsor, New Jersey, and has been active with the Altair Ecovillage project in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Political Polarization, War, and the Rise of the Violent Far Right

BY DENISE BRUSH

Ezra Klein identified the movement of white supremacist Southern politicians from the Democratic to the Republican party in the 1970s as a key factor in creating identifiable ideological differences between the major parties for the first time.

The United States has had opposing political parties since its founding, and fought a Civil War from 1861-1865, but political polarization has increased dramatically in the past few decades. Why? In *Why We're Polarized*, American journalist Ezra Klein identified the movement of white supremacist Southern politicians from the Democratic to the Republican party in the 1970s as a key factor in creating identifiable ideological differences between the major parties for the first time.¹ Prior to that, internal differences were often greater than differences across party lines—there were liberals and conservatives in each party. Voters chose candidates based on their individual characteristics, not their party identity.

Over time additional factors have compounded the problem, like the Federal Communications Commission's elimination of the broadcast Fairness Doctrine in 1987, the rise of television and radio stations (and then Internet and social media sites) that clearly signal their place on the political spectrum, and the intentional sorting of Americans into geographic locations (often labelled "red states" and "blue states") where they can live with like-minded neighbors.²

Since the rise of the alt-right in the early 2010s the battle between the left and right has become personal and violent, leading to today's fraught environment where a large segment of the country believes the 2020 presidential election was illegitimate. This situation is inherently unstable and unsustainable for our democracy in the long run. An unfortunate consequence of this extreme polarization is that third parties like the Green Party have become anathema to both sides.

In this essay I would like to suggest another major factor that I believe has pushed the left and right sides of the political spectrum farther apart—the "endless war" in the Middle East that the United States has been embroiled in since 1991.

ENDLESS WAR

The United States has fought in wars throughout its history, but until the 21st century wars were usually authorized by Congress, declared, and fought against specific nations for identified reasons. The 9/11 terrorist attacks were taken by the Bush administration as implicit permission to dispense with all those legal niceties. Now the federal government just sends troops wherever and whenever they feel like, accompanied by high tech weapons like drones. They also keep hundreds of thousands of troops waiting for action in bases located inside the borders of our "allies"—some of which are authoritarian states in the Middle East. No one asks the American people if that's what we want.

The Republicans and the Democrats have wildly different domestic policies but virtually the same foreign policy, which can be summarized as "do anything necessary to allow American corporations to operate at a profit in foreign countries, especially if those countries have oil." All the U.S. presidents of the last thirty years were thus in some way responsible for creating the far right ideologues who would eventually vote for Trump in 2020 and attack the Capitol on January 6, 2021. Watching the insurrection on television that day in real-time really brought home how different those people are from my friends and family.

CNN reported a month after January 6 that “of the first 150 suspects charged, 21 suspects, 14% of them, were current or former members of the U.S. military.”³ Nineteen of them were veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan. That is double the proportion of servicemen and women and veterans in the adult U.S. population, calculated from federal statistics. From Pentagon and court records CNN identified “1.3 million active-duty members of the services and 18 million veterans” in 2018. “Together, they comprised just 5.9% of the overall 327 million United States population at the end of 2018.”³

The United States has nearly 800 military bases and installations all over the world.⁴ Many countries host dozens of American bases, left over from the Cold War or even from World War II. Some of the largest bases are in European countries that could protect themselves, like Germany and Italy; many remain in Iraq and Kuwait and various oil-rich Arab states; and there is a huge U.S. presence in both Japan and South Korea. Still other bases occupy island nations and U.S. territories in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans that bitterly resent our presence. But no foreign countries have military bases in the United States—that is unthinkable to us. Imagine what it feels like to them.

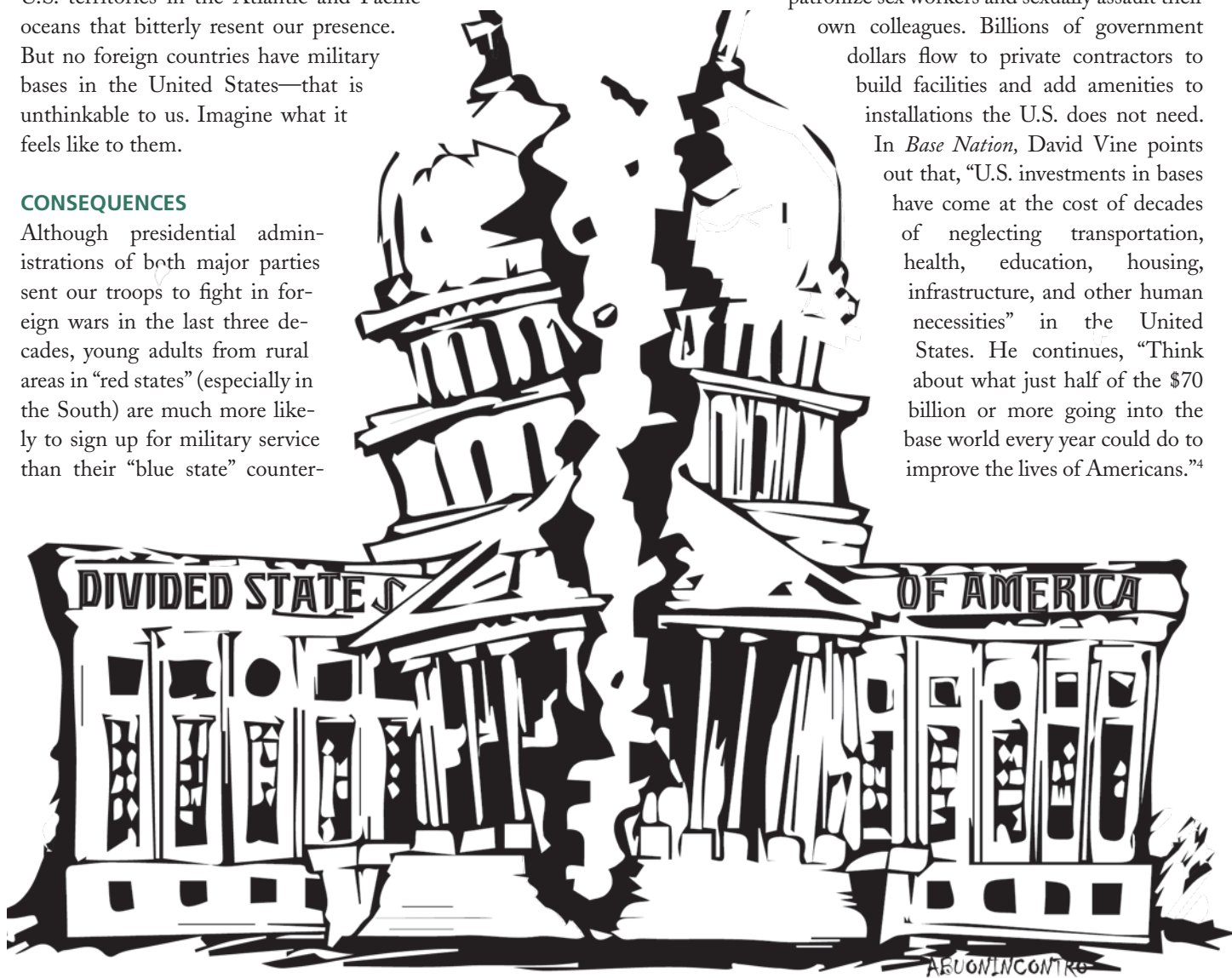
CONSEQUENCES

Although presidential administrations of both major parties sent our troops to fight in foreign wars in the last three decades, young adults from rural areas in “red states” (especially in the South) are much more likely to sign up for military service than their “blue state” counter-

parts. This is partly about lack of economic opportunity at home but also about a local culture that looks favorably on military service. Self-selection is very much a factor in the right-wing culture of today’s military.

There is a big difference in outlook between Americans who have served in the U.S. military services overseas and those who have not. After living in places where violence and the use of guns is an everyday occurrence required to stay alive, soldiers become accustomed to expecting deadly violence and reacting quickly with force. Those who do not adjust well to this violent mindset come home with PTSD and suicidal intentions. All of them have trouble resuming life in a peaceful democratic society. And we have been at war, somewhere in the world, for the last thirty years. People who fought in the Gulf War in their twenties are now in their fifties.

While not all Americans serving in the military come from conservative backgrounds, the culture of overseas military bases is overwhelming conservative in many ways. Even today, officers look the other way when soldiers patronize sex workers and sexually assault their own colleagues. Billions of government dollars flow to private contractors to build facilities and add amenities to installations the U.S. does not need. In *Base Nation*, David Vine points out that, “U.S. investments in bases have come at the cost of decades of neglecting transportation, health, education, housing, infrastructure, and other human necessities” in the United States. He continues, “Think about what just half of the \$70 billion or more going into the base world every year could do to improve the lives of Americans.”⁴



Instead of keeping all those soldiers ready for action with their guns and drones, which makes it more likely the U.S. will seek out action to keep them occupied, the focus of our military resources should be moved to cybersecurity. While we are busy occupying other countries with troops and bases, and killing civilians with drones, we are losing in the increasingly serious online battleground. Every week we hear about major cyberattacks against targets inside the United States that show that nations and individuals that hate us have ways to do us damage that we do not have the capability to prevent.

There are serious consequences to the United States of having so many ex-service members rejoining life in a peaceful democratic society every year. Many believe that they need to own a gun and should be able to carry and use it. Some think that everyone around them is dangerous and since legal justice takes too long it is all right to take matters into their own hands. Since many veterans only have skills in combat and security, they often take jobs in police work or as security or prison guards. There they overreact to situations with deadly violence, especially when those

Factors of polarization: the FEC's elimination of the broadcast Fairness Doctrine, the rise of media sites that signal their place on the political spectrum, the sorting of Americans geographically, the "endless war" in the Middle East.

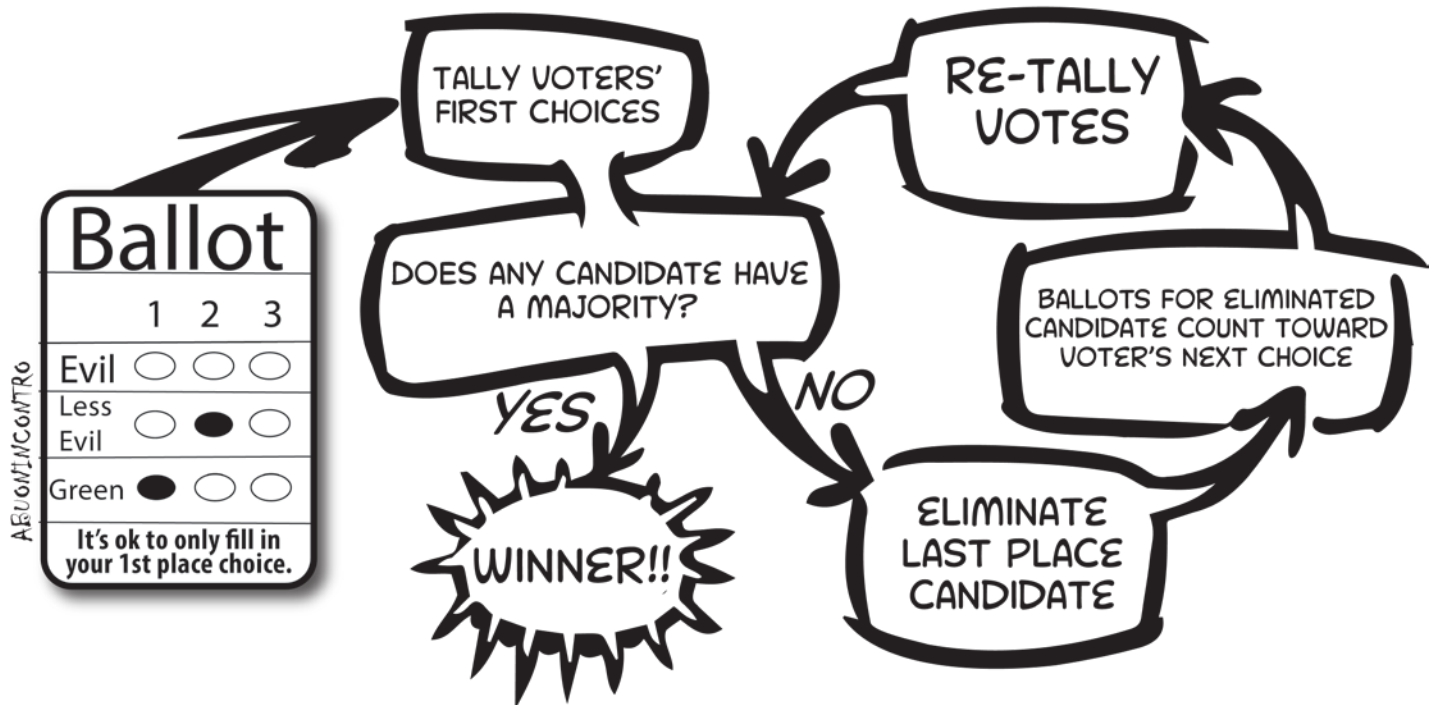
situations involve people of color they may unconsciously think of as "the enemy."

Clearly many American police officers think of themselves more as soldiers than "keepers of the peace." Today's American police officers believe they have absolute power over life and death, as if they worked in an authoritarian state. They expect members of the public to immediately obey their orders even when wrongly targeted and believe that they are entitled to kill those who do not obey. Police used to respect our Miranda rights, including a lawyer, a fair trial, and an assumption of "innocent until proven guilty." But today's police officers, many of whom are former soldiers, seem to forget what country they live in.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

A major flaw of America's presidential democracy is that it allows the legislative and executive branches to be controlled by opposing parties, which frequently leads to gridlock. In the parliamentary system used by other stable democracies worldwide, whichever political coalition wins controls the government. These coalitions usually involve two or more

RANKED CHOICE VOTING (RCV)



parties representing a much larger range of the political spectrum. Forcing all political discourse into only two camps is a sure route to polarization, almost by definition. Unless third parties like the Socialists and the Greens are allowed to participate fully and open up the conversation substantially, we will stay dangerously polarized.

Like many Greens, I believe a more feasible solution than switching to a parliamentary form of government is implementing Ranked Choice Voting broadly. Ranked Choice Voting allows people to consider multiple options for representation rather than just voting the party line blindly, which helps ameliorate polarization. It also allows people to vote for candidates they like rather than just voting against those they hate. It is widely used around the world. According to Fairvote.org, “ranked choice voting is used by every voter in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, Malta, Northern Ireland, and Scotland.”⁵

In the United States, Ranked Choice Voting has been rapidly increasing in popularity in the past few years. It has already been used statewide in Maine and for local elections in 22 cities and towns nationwide, including Minneapolis, San Francisco, and most recently New York City, and will be implemented in the state of Alaska and 23 additional jurisdictions around the country this year. Ranked Choice Voting is also used for party primaries and conventions (for Democrats as well as third parties) in many locations.⁵

If enough states adopt Ranked Choice Voting, it will build pressure to get rid of the archaic electoral college and implement a true popular vote for presidential elections, which will provide more opportunity to third parties and progressive candidates. But the pace of adoption needs to pick up, because the level of political polarization in the United States has already reached the boiling point.

Unless alternative parties are allowed to participate fully and open up the political conversation substantially, we will stay dangerously polarized.

If we do not bring the heat down quickly, there is a danger that in the next few years the Republicans may take over permanently and make the U.S. a right-wing authoritarian state. That is clearly Donald Trump’s desired outcome, and he has a lot of supporters. As we saw on January 6, there are far-right conspiracy believers with weapons ready to wipe out our democratic republic as soon as their cult leader says the word.

Sadly, an authoritarian coup will not feel as scary to the right as it will to the rest of us because some of them have already participated in one in another country. Former soldiers are used to living in countries without democratic governments, and their oligarch leaders like Trump are used to making business deals with autocratic governments like Saudi Arabia, Russia, and China.

The recently enacted voter suppression laws in many states, combined with the January 6 attack on the counting of electoral votes, suggests that the right wing is deadly serious about ending democracy because it no longer serves their interests. Their investigations into supposed voting irregularities and promotion of the “stolen 2020 election” narrative make it clear that preserving democracy is not a priority. Keeping our bases and wars going on all over the world *is* a priority, because American companies are making profits hand over fist supporting those wars and bases.

If the endless wars overseas continue, young Americans will continue to be radicalized to the far right, and the United States will look more and more like the non-democratic countries we occupy. In the end, many mainstream politicians only care about preserving capitalism, not democracy. If we keep on the way we are going without doing anything to prevent accelerating polarization, they may get their wish.

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DENISE BRUSH

is the founder of Transition Town Glassboro, an affiliate of the international Transition Towns movement. She serves on the Borough of Glassboro Green Team and is an active New Jersey volunteer with the Sierra Club and Food and Water Action. Denise is the Engineering & Earth Sciences Librarian at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey.

Interview with Carla Denyer, a Co-Leader of the UK Green Party

Green Party city council members have, for decades, been proposing motions advocating that cities reduce their carbon footprint.

After existing Green Party councilors heard about my motion, many of them literally copy-pasted it, changed the town name and submitted it. I was very happy for them to do that!

In September Carla Denyer was elected a Co-Leader of the Green Party of England and Wales along with Adrian Ramsay. Three years ago the Big Green Politics Podcast made Carla, at the time a city councilor in Bristol, their Politician of the Year after she proposed the UK's first climate emergency motion. The motion passed and motivated no fewer than 822 cities, councils and jurisdictions to do the same, catching a public mood as environmental groups like Extinction Rebellion were taking to the streets. In the wake of that success, the podcast's interviewer, Julia Lagoutte, met up with Carla to talk about next steps and how others around the world can follow suit.

JULIA: What inspired you to propose the climate emergency motion?

CARLA: There were three climate emergency motions in the world before mine—the first was in Darebin, Australia, and then there were two in the US—Hoboken in New Jersey and Berkeley in California. I heard about those three from environmental activists in Bristol, right at the beginning of the Extinction Rebellion movement, when it was just getting going.

I saw that the concept had promise because it was very simple, and I thought that that simplicity might help me to get other parties on board and appeal to the widest possible set of people when proposing our motion.

Green Party councilors have been proposing similar motions saying cities should be reducing their carbon footprint for decades. Why exactly my motion on this passed when other similar ones in the past had not, I'm not exactly sure. I think there was an element of zeitgeist. We'd just had that alarmingly hot summer in 2018, the IPCC report about the impact of 1.5 degrees of global warming had just come out and, as I mentioned, the early actions of the Extinction Rebellion movement had just got going.

JULIA: So, what exactly is a climate emergency motion?

CARLA: The principle of declaring a climate emergency is that it's a first step. Some of the criticism is that it's just symbolic, it's just words. But the principle is that a declaration can motivate bold action.

The way I think of it is actually similar to the 12-step program that's used by organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous, in that the first step is acknowledging that you have a problem and that you can't deal with it on your own. I think humanity's relationship with carbon is a bit like an addiction, so it does apply quite well. The first

My motion called for four things from the mayor of Bristol: to declare a climate emergency, to commit to the city going carbon-neutral by 2030, to lobby the national government for the powers and funding necessary to achieve that, and to report back within six months with a plan.



stage is saying we are in a crisis, we need to change something in our lives, and then once you've made that declaration, all of your other decisions have to flow from that.

My motion called for four main things from the mayor of Bristol: to declare a climate emergency, to commit to the city going carbon-neutral by 2030, to lobby the national government for the powers and funding necessary to achieve that, and, finally, to report back within six months with a plan for how to decarbonize. Those deadlines—of the 2030 decarbonization and the immediate-term reporting back—were quite important to me because they were what helped make the motion not just nice words, but assurance that it would result in action.

JULIA: Many councils around the UK have declared a climate emergency, because at this stage they kind of have to—but the motions often are very watered down and often are followed by total unashamed business-as-usual. The question is, how do we stop these declarations from staying just “nice words,” a means for politicians to simply look good?

CARLA: I agree there is definitely a risk of politicians jumping on this bandwagon just because they are being embarrassed into it by the Greens and by environmental campaigners outside of party politics. When I was writing my motion, it didn't even cross my mind to think: “what do we do if hundreds of Tory-run councils declare climate emergencies and then don't act on it?” Green Party councilors have a big role to play in keeping up the

pressure where they're not in the administration—they can still help hold the administration's feet to the fire on what they've said. If nothing else, the climate emergency declarations are a lever that Greens in the councils and activists outside can use to say: “you said *this*, why are you doing *that*?”

JULIA: What did you think of the Bristol mayor's report on how to reach the carbon neutral 2030 target?

CARLA: My view on the Bristol mayor's plan is mixed, to be honest. The Green councilors produced our own report about two months after my motion came out, and we were pleased to see that some of our suggestions made it into the mayor's plan. For example, we borrowed an idea we really liked from Oslo, which is run jointly by Labour and Greens. They have a carbon

I think humanity's relationship with carbon is a bit like an addiction.

budget, which means that any major decision that the city council makes has to either reduce carbon emissions or at least not add to them, otherwise the proposal has to go back to the drawing board. And that would be completely transformational.

I'm afraid, ultimately, the Bristol plan just isn't a sufficiently emergency-oriented response. It doesn't go far enough, and it doesn't go fast enough. It isn't a decarbonization plan, it's a *plan to produce* a decarbonization plan! It talks about setting up boards that will meet next year, and commissioning strategies for decarbonization next year. When my motion passed I reiterated the warning from the IPCC that we had *just 12 years left* to take bold action.

Unfortunately, the worldview of most other politicians is still so substantially different from that of Green politicians that sometimes we talk past each other. It's hard to get across that acknowledging the climate emergency isn't an extra thing that you add on top of your pile of priorities, rather, it's completely changing the lens.

JULIA: Exactly—once you know and you face the challenge, it does change everything, you have to re-assess everything you're doing.

CARLA: Putting pressure on your politicians is the first obvious step. So, if you live in an area that has already declared a climate emergency or is on the brink of doing so, please write to your elected representatives and let them know how strongly you feel about it. You'd be surprised at how much impact it has. And if you're in an area that hasn't yet declared a climate emergency, then try to study and learn from what's happened elsewhere.

After my motion passed, there were basically two mechanisms for how it passed elsewhere across the UK: One was existing Green Party councilors heard about my motion through the press and social media, and many of them literally copy-pasted my motion, changed the town name and submitted it. I was very happy for them to do that! The other mechanism, where there aren't Greens on the council but there are campaigners working from outside, they would try to identify councilors, from whichever party, who they thought were most likely to be sympathetic; they'd encourage them to put something forward and then provide support for lobbying the other councilors toward obtaining a majority.

JULIA: It seems to me that this level of politics is very important for the Greens. We espouse this "think global, act local" view, though we bind it to acting nationally and internationally, too. Personally, I think that change ultimately is effectuated locally—and that's when you get people on board. It serves to counter the

apathy and hopelessness that most people tend to feel when they think about climate change—a paralyzing disempowering feeling that doesn't lead to action. Having said that, at the end of the day, as your motion states, the problems are so vast and systemic—can one city, like Bristol, really make a difference?

CARLA: The advantage that starting the climate action at the local level has is that, although local government sometimes has the reputation for being a little backward compared to national government, the truth is that the locality sometimes can be more fleet of foot and can have more opportunities for innovation. Because it's smaller and more closely connected to the people it serves, it's sometimes more possible for municipal government to run interesting pilot programs. If it works at a local level, then other councils can follow suit—and then sometimes higher-level government will follow suit a while later.

If enough local councils declare a climate emergency, it puts pressure on the national government. That's what it has done here in the UK. So it is both a symbolic lobbying action and a concrete "let's change things here and now" action at the same time.

JULIA: What would you advise anyone interested in replicating this?

CARLA: If you're in the UK, the Association of Green Councilors (AGC) has put together a really useful resource pack with my motion and some of the other, similar, motions that might be more applicable to a town or borough [...] plus example speeches and decarbonization plans. Or feel free to check out my web site [<https://carladyner.co.uk>] where you'll find many of the relevant articles and press releases, including the full wording of my motion. The AGC has produced a short report called "Change Starts Now," which collates a couple of dozen ideas that we've seen elsewhere; for example, reports by great organizations like the Centre for Alternative Technology and Zero Carbon Britain, in addition to what other cities have done. We think this is a great starting point.

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If nothing else, the climate emergency declarations are a lever that Greens in the councils and activists outside can use to say to administrations: "You said *this*, why are you doing *that*?"

A Key Book, a Challenge to Read

PAULA FISCHER REVIEW OF:

Against His-story, Against Leviathan! by Fredy Perlman.
Detroit: Black & Red, 1983, 302 pages.

THIS IS A VITAL BOOK in one of the most important movements of our time. Yet I'm a little hesitant to recommend it to you. The transitional movement I refer to is the greening of the left. My hesitancy stems from a concern that you'll miss a lot of allusions if you haven't, yourself, been a participant in that transition.

Fredy Perlman, like so many of us who got radicalized during the ferment of "the Sixties," had at first embraced Marxism as the best theory and praxis for changing society. During the 1970s he started to question that assumption. By the time he wrote *Against His-story* in 1983 he fully understood how misguided the Marxist ideology is, owing to Marx's nineteenth century illusions regarding modernism, industrialism, progress, and historical development.

Fredy set out to debunk and re-conceptualize. But he wrote for those on the same pathway that he was traversing. And he specifically wanted to avoid giving the impression that he was attempting to define a new ideology to replace the old. So, rather than the sociologically "scientific" explications that characterized the Marxist literature, Fredy wrote in an inspiring, but very different (very distinctive), mytho-poetic kind of way. He wasn't interested in debates about detailed historical this and that.

Against His-story, Against Leviathan! was fully appreciated by a small but influential post-Marxist neo-anarchist milieu when it appeared almost forty years ago. But Fredy died prematurely in 1985 before becoming more widely read within the broad social change movement. I tried to familiarize colleagues in the Left Green Network with his stuff, but to no avail. His corpus was too "off the spectrum," and thus somewhat indecipherable, to those adhering to a traditional leftist worldview.

There have tended to be misconceptions about the book. For example, from the Wikipedia entry: "It is a personal critical perspective on contemporary civilization and society." Well, it's more a critical review of what got us to this point. "The work defined anarcho-primitivism for the first time." Not really. The latter had been percolating for almost a decade; and Fredy would have been aghast to hear that his ideas 'defined' any kind of ideology. "It was a major source of inspiration for anti-civilization perspectives in contemporary anarchism, most notably on the thought of philosopher John Zerzan." Zerzan had already been announcing his somewhat different ideas prior to 1983. Fredy's books and articles were more a source of inspiration for the Fifth Estate collective than for Zerzan.

WHAT FREDY PERLMAN TAUGHT US

"Leviathan" refers to a kind of socio-economic formation that emerged about five thousand years ago in the wake of the Neolithic Revolution. The big issue about it is the fact that

our civilization has generally viewed the emergence of such as "advanced" and "progressive" (positive). Fredy promulgated a wholly different perspective, based on a critical re-thinking of the full trajectory of human history.

Prior to that momentous inflection point represented by the cultural passage into what Gary Snyder called the "New Ways," all people had lived in localist, stateless, communitarian, mostly egalitarian bands, tribes, or villages. The New Ways were characterized by proto-urbanism and statism; development and employment of technology in service of production, growth, and expansionism; complex division of labor, wealth accumulation, power-elitism, patriarchy, and class division of society. These characteristics and associated values were anti-ecological—and aberrant in relation to all preceding human experience.

In *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!* Fredy conjectures about why and how these formations arose. But he conveys that the most important thing to understand is this: After they emerged they started to overrun aboriginal communities in place after place and eventually came to dominate the human social landscape; leading, after hundreds of generations, to our full-blown modern crisis.

He says that our task now is to deconstruct the monster. Our praxis toward that end must be based on a realistic perspective regarding its genesis and development. If we understand how ingrained by now are its lifeways and values, how dependent we've become on its systems, institutions, and technologies, we can appreciate that the process of "the greening of society" (re-greening) will figure to be incremental, tenuous, and of long duration. The hope is that we'll be able to forge pathways toward our liberation, as we once were: dwellers in the land and good citizens of the planetary biotic community.

* * * *

Fredy Perlman died at age 50 in 1985 and didn't leave us much in the way of *specific* ideas regarding What To Do. He may or may not have been aware of the then-nascent movements for Green politics and bioregionalism.

The latter, in particular, had already set out to present a vision for "deconstructing the monster." From our vantage point almost forty years later it shouldn't surprise us to observe that the movement is growing very slowly. The concept implies a very radical change of lifeways relative to the current state of our society and, indeed, of our civilization.

Bioregionalism comprises deep green ideas about an alternative direction to go in, but how to carry through such a transformation is quite a challenge. The scope of its "project" is macro-scale, long-range, and unprecedented. Nonetheless, it heralds the road back to sanity. It obliges us to make the assumption that the human race is capable of negotiating the crucible that we're now facing, having arrived at a point of crisis characterized by egregious overshoot and hypertrophy in all aspects of life. The more we can effectuate this transition consciously and deliberately the better off we'll be. Fredy Perlman's work helped to raise our consciousness and prepare us for the trials ahead.

Socialism and the Green Party

BY B. SIDNEY SMITH

*This is condensed from a full treatment of the subject that can be viewed at:
<https://bsidneysmith.com/writings/essay/socialism-and-the-green-party>*

The Green Party partakes of the same spirit of democratic idealism as does socialism. The democratic principle must be extended to economic decision making, for otherwise there can be no political democracy.

In the summer of 2016 the Green Party of the United States (GPUS) adopted a platform plank that committed the party to a rejection of both capitalism and “state socialism,” and to embracing instead an economics “based on ecology and decentralization of power” that was characterized as “eco-socialist.” Subsequently, the Youth Caucus of GPUS changed its name to the Young EcoSocialists (YES) caucus. And last year the party’s presidential candidate, Howie Hawkins, was a professed socialist who also received the nomination of the Socialist Party USA. Hawkins took another member of SP-USA, Angela Walker, as his running mate. His success in winning the Green Party nomination was a testament to the comfort with identifying as socialist among a large segment—perhaps the majority—of the Green Party membership.

While some members declare that the Green Party now simply is a socialist party, many others are more reticent, noting that the United States already has a multitude of socialist parties and asserting that the Green Party’s roots and fundamental principles are essentially different from those of traditional socialism, even if they are not necessarily incompatible with socialism. In light of the developments outlined above, it is clear that the tension over just how socialist the Green Party can or should be is mounting and must reach a resolution sooner rather than later.

The purpose of this essay is to answer the question, “Ought the Green Party to be (or be considered to be) a socialist party?” Any answer to this question, to be compelling, must take into account not only the tenets of both the Green and the Socialist movements, but also the present political, social, historical, and ecological context in which they exist.

Before I begin, I need to anticipate certain presumptions. First, I am neither a capitalist nor a socialist, not, at least, in the common senses in which each of these terms is used. It bears emphasis that it really is possible to reject both. After a century and more of relentless propaganda, most people on both the political left and the political right have internalized a false dichotomy that places socialism and capitalism as the only and necessary poles of economic analysis. Indeed, one of the main impediments to useful political dialectic is that we can scarcely talk about contemporary politics without using the language of a left/right, socialist/capitalist paradigm. My own political and economic convictions do not fall neatly anywhere on that spectrum.

Second, I will not treat socialism as a monolith that must be embraced or rejected in toto. “Socialism” is a word that can readily connote more than a person usually intends when they use it. For this reason, if the Green Party is to be in any sense a socialist party, the exact sense(s) in which the word applies to it must be thoughtfully, explicitly defined.

Finally, for purposes of this essay “capitalism” should be understood to be a system of economics based on the issuance of investment capital, either as credit to be repaid with interest or as shares earning dividends, such that legal ownership of enterprises is always retained by the owners of the investment capital who derive income from the interest or dividends. This system came into being after the development of investment banking in the fourteenth century in Europe and has been the dominant economic system for several centuries. Because capitalism by design requires an unending expansion of

While some members declare that the Green Party now is a socialist party, many others are more reticent, noting that the GP's roots and fundamental principles are essentially different from those of traditional socialism.

monetized value, in which money is created as interest-bearing debt, that is, as a claim on future growth in economic activity, it is fundamentally unsustainable.

THE GREEN PARTY AND ECONOMICS

The Four Pillars of the Green Party—Peace, Democracy, Social Justice, and Ecological Wisdom—do not in themselves point to any particular economic system, although of course they preclude systems based on conquest, slavery, or ecosystem destruction. Capitalism is insupportable because of its demand for endless growth, which violates the principle of Ecological Wisdom. In contrast, the principle of economic democracy, the “socialist idea” that the person doing the work should be vested in both the means and the products of their labor, is not only compatible with the Four Pillars but arguably demanded by them.

Moving to the Ten Key Values we find an explicit statement about economics: that it be “community-based.” This value does not so much specify the nature of economic relations as their scale. It suggests that economic institutions should be of a size and type that fits the communities within which economic activity occurs. The intent is that economic activity be constrained to the smallest scale that makes sense in any given case; that food, for instance, should be locally or at least bioregionally cultivated and consumed; that in general economic activity should be diverse and decentralized.

The platform of the Green Party expands on this in planks that were adopted at various times and which are not, in consequence, completely internally consistent. However, taken together they sketch many features of a Green economy. That economy must be sustainable; must be in harmony with the natural world; must be just and democratic. Enterprises should support and be accountable to a healthy community. Consumption should be restrained. Workplaces should be democratically organized. There is an emphasis throughout on situating economic activity within the ecosystem, with calls for closed-loop production, 100% recycling, minimizing toxins, and so on.

As regards an actual economic *system*, the platform suggests a flexible, localized mix of institutional types, including privately owned businesses, public works, communal enterprises, and “alternative economic structures.” The plank adopted in 2016 calls for enterprises to be “democratically owned and operated by those who do the work,” a phrase held to be definitive of Green economics by those lifting the eco-socialism banner.

Clearly, however, the platform planks on economics remain more a collection of progressive desiderata than the components of a single vision. So the Green Party remains without a unified economic theory to explain how, or why, the economic system it outlines will work. It is this vacuum that the Green-Marxist sensibility is beginning to fill, with its materialism, historicism, and class analysis in tow.

The *political* foundations of the Green Party are perhaps best explicated by John Rensenbrink, one of the founders of the Green movement in the United States. In his 2017 masterwork, *Ecological Politics*, John traces the historical developments that led to the present political, social, and environmental crises, and lays out a compelling case for a new kind of politics based on communalism and ecological wisdom rather than on competition and economic exploitation. Concerningly, however, out of 250 pages, the book's chapter on “Economy” is a mere 10 pages. Rensenbrink condemns the modern tyranny of giant corporations, and then turns to the question of whether socialism is “the answer.” He gives a short critique of it and ends the brief excursion into economics with the conclusion that the ecological economy will be “mixed.”

SOCIALISM'S BAGGAGE

Socialism in our day still bears the indelible stamp of Karl Marx's ideological framework: that history is a story of progress; that industrialization, urbanization, rationalism, scientific and technological advances, and increasing efficiency and rates of production are all signs of such progress; that the final step in history's progress will be a classless society; that thereafter all people will live freely and in comparative leisure and plenitude in a worldwide worker's utopia characterized by democracy, common ownership, and the fruits of a rationally designed, technologically advanced, industrial system of production.

Although it is fundamental to socialist thought that the end of capitalism and of class conflict are inevitable, it is nonetheless a universal belief that history needs a little push from revolutionaries to get over the finish line. The devil is in the details. Should the revolution work from within existing political structures, or should it overthrow them? Should the socialist economy be organic and localized, or should it be rational and planned? If the economy is to be planned, should the planning be minute and detailed, or only indicate the general direction of macro-economic sectors? Should there be a central government?

How strong should it be? What institutions are needed, and how should they be designed, to ensure democratic decision-making is realized at all levels of the economy?

More than a century of real-world political experiments in socialism have shown that none of these questions has an easy answer. Virtually every predominantly socialist state became authoritarian, at least, and some, like the historically most significant case of the USSR, were totalitarian. Most have failed to realize the goal of economic prosperity or equality. On the other hand, socialist reforms in countries that are not purely socialist can be credited with greatly improving the lives of the working class, and with increasing social equity. But the fact remains that socialism is now something of a hard sell. Even laying aside a century of demonizing propaganda, it has few real-world successes to point to in trying to convince today's working class of its promise. Despite its growing appeal among the anti-capitalist young—and among the swelling numbers of the economically disenfranchised—even the watered-down “democratic socialism” (social democracy) of Bernie Sanders wasn't popular enough to overcome broad skepticism, much less entrenched political opposition.

Given its very considerable historical and ideological baggage, it is not unreasonable to suspect that the present revival of socialism may have more to do with the lack of other, more attractive alternatives to the evident calamity of capitalism than with its intrinsic appeal.

THE TRAGEDY OF OUR SUCCESS

Classical economics, including Marxism, treats energy as a mere factor of production. However, the social and financial systems that we think of as “the economy” are structures that can only be built on a ready supply of useful energy. As the ecological economist Steve Keen put it, “labor without energy is a corpse, and capital without energy is a sculpture.” Therefore, every economy depends fundamentally on the size and density of the energy sources that feed it. Moreover, once energy is made available to a civilization, it will inevitably be used.

The energy made available by the discovery of how to exploit fossil fuels was many orders of magnitude greater than in any previous human era. It is this fact, and not any ideology, technology, or political framework, that explains the

extraordinary trajectory of industrial civilization; it is for this reason that humanity has gone into an ecological overshoot such as life on our planet has never seen, and we are left to manage the increasingly dire consequences. Like any species in overshoot, we are the final victims of our own success. An ecological correction is underway and accelerating rapidly.

At the same time, industrial civilization is caught in an energy trap because our supply of fossil fuel is in decline, and our capacity to make use of it is declining even faster. For the first time in more than a thousand years, humanity faces a general, civilization-wide complexity collapse. Decline and disruption—rather than growth and progress—will define human economic systems and social institutions going forward.

LOOKING AHEAD

The collapse of industrial civilization is certain, but that is not in itself something to mourn. The collapse of society into chaos, however, is worth every effort to try to prevent. When anyone asks, “why are you a Green?” my answer is always some version of “to prevent the looming catastrophe.” The reason the Green Party came into existence when it did was to found a political movement in opposition to the systems of violence, oppression, exploitation, and ecological destruction that are the hallmarks of industrial civilization. The four Green Party pillars of Peace, Social Justice, Democracy, and Ecological Wisdom were formulated as deliberate counterpoints to those of the dominant political and economic culture.

In contradistinction to socialism, a “new paradigm” element of Green economics is the understanding that the economy is an emergent property of human society, irreducibly complex, and cannot therefore be scripted. Further, as a living system, the economy will tend to ebb and flow, producing new patterns and dropping old ones, reflecting shifting social trends as well as external variables like the climate. Controls intended to optimize the economy with respect to any standard, whether of efficiency, or of fairness, or of some other standard, must be light and responsive or else positive feedbacks will quickly defeat the effort and lead to unpredictable economic disruptions.

Greens recognize that, owing to our ecological overshoot and shrinking energy supply, relentless and sometimes rapid degrowth will characterize the human economy for the foreseeable

Capitalism is insupportable because of its demand for endless growth,
which violates the principle of Ecological Wisdom.

But it is possible to reject both capitalism and socialism.

future. Population and economic activity alike will be on the decline until a new equilibrium is reached. The economic challenge of the future is no longer managing growth but de-growth, in such a way as to ensure economic and social justice, and to preserve a viable future for humanity.

The Green New Deal should remain a core project, but it must not be understood, characterized, or sold as a panacea to replace fossil energy or preserve the present economy. It should be understood, rather, as a project to soften our landing from the crash of industrial civilization, and to provide a means of working toward sustainable ways to live with a greatly reduced use of energy overall. Such technologies as electronics, advanced medicine, communications, and others that promote physical and social well-being may perhaps be preserved with sufficient capture of energy from the Sun, but this will only be possible if the transition is pursued diligently and sagaciously.

MARXISM IS NOT TENABLE, BUT SOCIALIST IDEALS ARE RELEVANT

Socialists need to recognize that humanity's future looks nothing like the one Marx envisioned. This is not Marx's fault; the framework he had for understanding how the world works was a mechanistic paradigm which the disrupting discoveries of thermodynamics, mathematical complexity, and ecological succession had not yet shattered. But the fact remains that Marxism as such is no longer tenable, either as an economic theory or as a political program. Labor is not the source of economic value. Capitalism is dying. And, at the macro level, neither society nor the human economy can be planned or prescribed.

Most importantly, the human story is not one of steady progress characterized by technological advance or scientific/industrial achievement. Instead, human civilization is a naturally-occurring dissipative system, and like all such systems it experiences succession; civilizations rise out of the ruins of previous civilizations, achieve their climax state, and then undergo collapse and eventual renewal in their turn. While not all civilizations undergo a dramatic, fall-of-Rome-style collapse, all undergo succession one way or another. Our civilization, having burned many times hotter and brighter than any before it, is due for the most dramatic burn-out in history.

Nonetheless, the socialist ideal of the democratic workplace is not only still relevant but will become more so. In contrast to the last two centuries, the economy of the future will increasingly favor localized, community-scale enterprises. Although there will still be those who aspire to the owner-class, and to businesses so massive they can bully governments, their programs will cease to be viable because they depend on capitalism in order to establish and maintain themselves. The diseased fantasy of the capitalist era, that great wealth is naturally owing to anyone capable of "creating" it, is already exploded and will soon be a curiosity of history

like the divine right of kings. In an era of de-growth, the only path to privilege is by hoarding diminishing resources. If we can preserve democratic institutions, such behaviors can easily be dealt with.

A note of caution should be sounded here, however. Most of the progressive reforms we presently celebrate, such as the abolition of slavery, the emancipation of women, the protection of workers and of children from exploitation, and many other social liberties, all occurred well after the advent of the industrial age, during a period of quickly rising material wealth. An era of economic decline, and therefore of declining material wealth, will likely be an era of social decline as well if history, and present trends, are any guide. It is in such times as these that social stresses will boil into civil conflict, with authoritarianism tending to rise in response. Now more than ever do the political culture and the popular zeitgeist need the leadership and values of the Green Party.

CODA

So: is the Green Party a socialist party? It partakes of the same spirit of democratic idealism, and always has. The democratic principle must be extended to economic decision making, for otherwise, ultimately, there can be no political democracy. The United States' present damnable condition illustrates just how egregiously democracy fails when the real levers of power are held by an unaccountable owner-class rather than by the people. Our existing economic planks were written with this understanding. Workplace and production decisions must be made democratically by the real stakeholders, including the workers and the communities affected. The government's own spending priorities and regulatory regimes must support this. All financial institutions must be publicly owned, along with all other municipal-scale or larger institutions providing essential services, not least because they can no longer be run for profit.

Beyond this, however, we must admit that the Green Party is not a socialist party, not in the sense in which that term has historically been understood. The world we are headed toward is a new one, de-industrialized, de-globalized, as wonderfully diverse both culturally and politically as present-day global commercial society is depressingly uniform. A fire is sweeping the garden, and afterward new things will grow. No one will tell them how.



B. SIDNEY SMITH

is a mathematician and writer in central Virginia. He is a former co-chair and present secretary of the Green Party of Virginia, and a past delegate to the National Committee of the Green Party of the United States. Sid has a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Colorado. His book *The Good American* was published by the Institute of Economic Democracy in 2012. He's a contributor to *CounterPunch* and other online publications.

Toward a “1491 Movement”

“...when White persons of either sex have been taken prisoners young by the Indians, and lived awhile among them, tho’ later ransomed by their friends and then treated with all imaginable tenderness to prevail with them to stay among the English, yet within a short time they become disgusted with our manner of life, and the care and pains that are necessary to support it; and they take the first good opportunity of escaping back into the woods [to live again with the Indians] -- from whence there is no reclaiming them.”

— Benjamin Franklin, 1753

Prior to 1492 the vast majority of the indigenous communities of “the Americas” were doing just fine. Across the two continents the various tribes exhibited lifeways that were diverse. On that basis some were fully flourishing, some less so, but in general they were thriving. In regard to quality of life, what if we conjecture that theirs was, on average, no worse than our own? Is it possible that the Europeans of the 18th century—and us moderns of the 21st century—were/are no happier? Then: If our touted “progress and development” has engendered ecological imbalances and we’ve gained little in the way of a better quality of life . . . what have we accomplished? Or: What have we wrought?

The production, consumption, and technology of the native peoples was much simpler. But it was adequate for them to enjoy a vibrant extent of cultural enrichment. They had been living for millennia in a generally stable and sustainable way. The European invasion which began in 1492 was an enormous historical tragedy. Over the course of just a few centuries the natives were subjected to the biological pathogens bred within the afflicted context of European civilization, as well as the exterminist assault of *conquistadores* driven by need and greed. Overpopulated, discontented, repressive Europe craved acquisition and expansion. The flora, fauna, and tribes of Turtle Island suffered terribly as a result.

A “1491 Movement” would seek to un-do the damage to this land and deconstruct the Leviathan that has been built up since the Columbian climacteric.

Comparing the lifeways of the European invaders and the native inhabitants, we could conclude that life is better when it is lived:

- closer to nature;
- in stable, local community;
- more outside than inside;
- more in the body than in the head;
- more in immediate reality than in abstractions;
- in responsible relation to a particular place-on-earth;
- cultivating a basic, direct, natural health and vigor.

Moderns need to regain a sense of perspective regarding what’s important for living a satisfying life. Relatedly, Americans should recognize that what existed here—in this place but another time, some 500+ years ago—was sane and healthy. How the people lived and what the landscape looked like in 1491 is indicative of the path we should take for our own liberation from the eco-ruinous industrial-capitalist-statist aberration.

If our touted “progress and development” has engendered ecological imbalances
and we’ve gained little in the way of a better quality of life...
what have we accomplished?

...continued from page 2

rigorously opposed. But within Green circles, the shoe has often been on the other foot, with aggressive trans people insisting to be accepted by women, historically the oppressed sex, into the most private spaces needed to feel safe. Green women have been excluded from women's committees simply on the basis of raising these kinds of questions.

To take an extreme example for the purpose of illustration, imagine a man the size of Shaquille O'Neal, seven feet tall and near 300 pounds, putting on a dress and claiming to be a woman and insisting on being accepted for a college women's basketball team. No one in their right mind would call this fair, either to potential teammates or an opposing team. Further, suppose that the same person was attacked by a group of macho-minded men. Injured, angry, and humiliated, he then asks to be admitted to a shelter for battered women. How do you think the women already in that shelter, having been traumatized by their own experiences, would feel about having to share intimate spaces with this person?

Jon Olsen
Jefferson, Maine

JOHN RENSENBRINK RESPONDS:

I appreciate very much your agreement with my statement, "A person is not the property of an identity, but identity is the property of the person."

But your agreement does not accord with your argument that "a person's sex, as a matter of biology is determined and fixed at birth." It seems to me that a person who wants to change from a male identity to a female identity finds the means to do so, including biological means. The person is the mover and shaker, biology is their support.

John Rensenbrink
Topsham, Maine

Consider them all

Do the birds feel sad
When they learn that some are sick?
Is the bluebird sad when its eggs are pierced?

Are the monarchs sad when they can't find milkweed?
Is the earthworm sad when it finds plastic underground?

I know I've seen dogs that were very sad
I've seen photos of elephants mourning a dead calf
And also a whale nuzzling a dead calf.

But what about the birds and the insects? What about the plants?
Are there times when the whole world is wrapped in sorrow?

—Jane Dugdale

Cops and Mongoose

Society has a crime problem
like Hawai'i had a rat problem.
Hawai'i brought in mongoose to solve the rat problem.
Now Hawai'i has a mongoose problem.
Society brought in cops to solve the crime problem and
gave them qualified immunity. Now society has a cops problem.
The mongoose killed the rats.
They also killed chickens and cats and small dogs.
The cops took a bite out of crime.
They also took a bite out of minorities
and chewed up any 'undesirable' not meeting
the standards set by those in power.
Hawai'i has not rid itself of the mongoose problem, it just
controls them with traps and by people sending an alert
whenever a mongoose is spotted.
Society has not rid itself of the cops problem,
but it can be controlled with cameras, cell phones
and citizen review panels . . .
to keep the cops from biting us undesirables.

—Gil Harris

Reclaiming our Species' Being: *Homo Ludens collaborans*

ARTICLE I OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

TOWARD RECLAIMING REASON AND CONSCIENCE, WE NEED TO TRANSITION:

- from war to peace (Buddha, Diogenes, Christ, H. Thoreau, M. Gandhi, M. L. King)
 - from too-big-to-fail back to Small is Beautiful (William James, Leopold Kohr, E. F. Schumacher)
 - from spend and consume back to save and conserve (Wendell Berry)
 - from national energy and dominance values to local energy and resilience values (Rob Hopkins)
 - from global and regional famines back to local foods (Frances Moore Lappé)
 - from dominator values back to partnership values (Riane Eisler)
 - from work back to play (Johan Huizinga, David Graeber)
 - from commodified music back to community musicking (Lee Higgins)
 - from alienation back to participation (Owen Barfield)
 - from linear discursive back to cyclical recursive (Gregory Bateson)
 - from class and hierarchy back to classlessness and equality (Karl Marx)
 - from addiction-to-perfection back to participatory discrepancies (Charles Keil)
 - from exclusionary thinking back to incorporative thinking (Catherine Ellis)
 - from spurious civilization to genuine prime cultures (Edward Sapir)
 - from products back to processes (Raymond Williams)
 - from legal world back to Natural world (the Haudenosaunee via John Mohawk)
 - from land-belongs-to-us back to we-belong-to-the-land (aboriginal peoples)
 - from transcendence back to immanence (Simone de Beauvoir)
- (and then from immanence to trance-in-dance!)

—Charlie Keil

Two Haiku

A traditional Japanese haiku is a three-line poem with seventeen syllables, written in a 5/7/5 syllable count. Haikus tend to emphasize simplicity, intensity, and directness of expression. Ted Becker and Patricia Lantz have compiled over a hundred into “The Haiku Blues” (Wipf & Stock; Eugene, OR; 2017). They’ve graciously given us permission to share these with you:

*Lately I find much
fewer eyes to meet, with these
cell phones now replete.*

*Life self-realized
and with no regrets, is as
lucky as it gets.*



GREEN HORIZON

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