



GREEN HORIZON

Magazine

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL PUBLISHED BY THE GREEN HORIZON FOUNDATION



ELIZABETH MAY PAGE 6



CAROLINE LUCAS PAGE 9

GREEN WOMEN WARRIORS *in* PARLIAMENT

UPSETTING THE APPLE CART IN ENGLAND AND CANADA

ALSO LOOK FOR ARTICLES ABOUT:

U.S. Green Party prospects

John Rensenbrink, Virginia Rasmussen, Barbara Rodgers-Hendricks, and Linda Cree & Aimee Cree Dunn

Charlene Spretnak and Richard Evanoff (their books)

Reviewed by Barclay Palmer and Greg Gerritt respectively

Democracy, re-learning nature's ways, and direct experience

Romi Elnagar, Ellen La Conte, Steve Welzer, and Richard Csege

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TO THE EDITOR:

I could get no further in your wonderful magazine, *Green Horizon* (Spring/Summer 2011), than the brilliant opening “Thought Essay” by Robert Shetterly with the help of poems by Wendell Berry, Mary Oliver and Alice Walker. A brilliant, deep piece it is, profound in its understanding of the human being in relation to the earth and nature and the ways in which those subjects trump and yet embrace good politics.

Anne B. Zill

Fund for Constitutional Government
Center for Ethics in Action
University of New England Art Gallery
Portland, ME

Ranked choice voting, the instant runoff system that promises forever to dismiss the term “spoiler” from our politics, is having a big fall: it’s first-ever use in open seat mayoral elections this November in San Francisco (CA) and Portland (ME) and in city council elections in St. Paul (MN). Those elections follow on the heels of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) having a huge impact in upset wins of big money candidates in mayoral races in Oakland (CA) and San Leandro (CA). Greens are running in all these RCV races. Next issue we’ll report on these elections and how you can get involved in efforts to advance ranked choice voting, proportional representation and the National Popular Vote plan.

Rob Richie
Fairvote

TO THE EDITOR:

Green Horizon Magazine regularly reports on election reforms that promise to open our politics to new voices and real choices. This year the National Popular Vote plan won in California, bringing the historic effort to reform the Electoral College halfway to the number of wins to enact the proposal in time for the 2016 elections. In Germany, the Green Party’s rise due to proportional representation was marked by winning the right to lead the state government of Baden-Württemberg.

Editor’s note: In the next issue (Spring/Summer 2012) Rob Richie, a regular contributor to *Green Horizon Magazine*, will answer this question: *Will last Fall’s Ranked Choice Voting Elections Inspire Fundamental Voting Change?*

THE TEAM

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BATTLING THE ODDS:

Canada, Britain, the United States

OUR COVER THIS ISSUE IS worth a thousand words. And more! The seating in the parliaments of the United Kingdom and Canada by two remarkable female leaders of their respective Green Parties is cause for rejoicing and wonder. Read about the amazing success in overcoming impossible odds of Elizabeth May and Caroline Lucas in the two articles that follow.

Not only is it not easy being Green if you are serious about building a strong Green Party, it is doubly difficult in the skewed electoral systems of Britain and Canada...and the United States. In each one, you must compete in winner-take-all elections, also called first-past-the-post electoral systems. If you are not a member of dominant parties, and if as a candidate for a new party you don't poll more than everyone else in the voting district in which you live, then you and the people who vote for you are left out in the cold. And that's not just for one election but in election after election to a point of extreme frustration.

In almost all other countries you get to compete with other candidates in other parties on the basis of the percentage of votes you can persuade citizens to give you. If you get beyond a minimal threshold, usually pegged at 5%, you and your party receive parliamentary seats in accordance with that percentage. European continental parties, for example, enter parliament in their countries on the strength of between 5% and 15% of the vote – and sometimes more than that. In many countries, they are invited to become part of the government. And sometimes, given an especially strong showing in an election, they are able to form the government itself, as happened earlier this year in one of the states in Germany, Baden-Wuerttemberg. They therefore have an influential say in policy making and the people who vote for them are represented.

Not so in UK, Canada, and the US. In the US for example, Green Party candidates for office — local, state, and national — regularly poll far better than 5%. Often for state legislature, for example, Green candidates will poll upwards of 20% and often as high as 35% and more. But they are permanently shut out and their voters are never represented. It's a clear and chronic case of taxation without representation. The contrast between political participation and representation in countries that have proportional representation (which is most of the world) and the harsh barriers facing voters in the few countries that have first-past-the-post systems is enormous.

All the more to be awed by the accomplishment of Elizabeth May in Canada and Caroline Lucas in Britain. Read their stories that follow this article.

HISTORIC LESSON FOR THE U.S. GREEN PARTY?

Will U.S. Greens get a seat in Congress? If the history of the past 27 years since the founding of the party in 1984 is any indication, that is not very likely. Could it be that the national party is just not sufficiently focused or sharply tuned enough to help make that happen? The fact that it persists in having seven co-chairs may indicate an absence of concentration on what should be a central thing, if not the key thing, a political party should be doing, which is getting its people elected. Seven co-chairs, no matter how skilled and committed to Green values, are inevitably hampered both in concentration and timing. A big factor as well is that the media has trouble locating a reliable and durable spokesperson.

JOHN RENSENBRINK

*Cheri Honkala is running
for Philadelphia Sheriff
...on a platform of
zero evictions!*

Contrast what the Canadian and British Green Parties do. In Britain, it was also the case that there were several people heading the party. They seemed an amorphous body, and they changed frequently. Caroline Lucas led a successful internal party campaign for a single Leader. This immediately improved media attention. Caroline became the first occupant in this new role. She then stood for office in the Brighton District in the spring of 2010. And she won. An important factor in her victory was the greater attention she was able to garner for herself and for the Green Party. In Canada, Elizabeth May won the party Leadership post several years ago — soon became a well known, approachable, and articulate voice. People learned about her and the Green Party. She won. Both of these women are charismatic and are able to distill and promote the Green message to millions of people. But it was also their positions as Leader of the Party that gave them the push and the opportunity to shine.

Whether the U.S. Green Party can re-structure itself so as to bring one leader to the fore (or two co-chairs); whether, if they do, this will give their message greater strength and media attention; and whether this will make a bid for Congressional office more likely of success is of course not a foregone conclusion. But it is something that could be tried. A rising number of voices are saying it should be tried.

BUT MORE IS GOING ON THAN MEETS THE EYE

In the meantime, the U.S. Greens at the level of their state parties are running many candidates for non-partisan local offices and partisan state legislative offices. And in some states backed by their state parties Greens are planning to run for Congress in 2012 and for Governor.

Several candidacies in this off-year election of 2011 may be highlighted. A full list is available on Green Party Watch [www.greenpartywatch.org].

It's pretty clear that the U.S. Greens are building their party and that they are building from the bottom up.

Cheri Honkala is running for Philadelphia Sheriff. She is the first and only sheriff candidate in the country running on a platform of zero evictions! Imagine the courage it takes to do that — something that should be a top priority for all sheriffs everywhere in the wake of the unconscionable dispossession of the homes of 11 million people in the past few years. Her running for sheriff also symbolizes the determination of Greens to stand up for real neighborhood safety — giving the raised eyebrow to critics who airily assume that Greens look down their noses at the raw basics of protecting the everyday lives of the people. Cheri Honkala is drawing on 25 years of experience of working with low income and homeless families, fighting foreclosures, and standing up to predatory banking. [www.cherihonkala.com]

Mark Miller is running for Massachusetts State Representative. He took an astonishing 45% of the vote for the same seat in western Massachusetts in 2010, just a year ago. During this past year, the incumbent Democrat resigned to take a lifetime appointment as a judge. Mark is a man of many parts. He has done everything from running a newspaper to starting cooperatives and worker-owned businesses, to teaching college courses on climate change and peak oil. The special election to replace the incumbent takes place on October 18, 2011. This issue of our magazine will not be in the reader's hands until after that date — on or about November 1. Please check out Mark's website to catch up on the results of his race. [mark@markmiller2010.org].

Howie Hawkins is a candidate for Common Council of Syracuse. He is a strong advocate for working people and a vigorous force in Green politics not only in New York but throughout the United States, hearkening back to the beginnings of the U.S. Green Party in 1984 which he helped found. His inspiring run for Governor of New York in 2010 put the New York Green Party back on the ballot. In his previous bid for Common Council in Syracuse in 2009 (the 4th District), he got 41% of the vote. Howie stomps for a living wage, public power, single payer health care, municipal banks, green jobs, a permanent ban on hydrofracking, and is currently helping to develop a community and worker-owned food cooperative in his inner city neighborhood of Syracuse where no groceries remain. For his daily living, Howie for the past decade has worked loading trucks at UPS. He is a member of the Teamsters Local 317. [www.howiehawkins.com]

David Marshall and John Eder are Green candidates for Mayor of Portland, Maine. The Mayor will be elected by all the people instead of being elected by the nine member Council. The November election is the first anywhere in Maine that will be filled via an Instant Run-off system. This is hopefully a beginning of the end of winner-take-all elections in Maine's largest city. Greens were instrumental in getting Portland voters to institute this change. Dave has served for five years as Portland City Councilor, as one of three Greens on the Council. John Eder is trying for a political comeback after his stint of

four years in the Maine State legislature in the middle of the last decade, he being the only Green Party state legislator in the nation at that time. Green Party absence from state legislatures in the nation persists. [David@marshallmajor.com] and [www.facebook.com/pages/John-Eder-for-Mayor-of-Portland/1336885002953sk=wall]

Greens across the country are vying for a variety of offices this year, including for County Board, Constable, Zoning Board, Board of Education, Water District, State General Assembly, Town Council, City Council, Common Council, Alderman, Mayor, Conservation Board, and Governor (West Virginia: Bob Henry Baber). Green Horizon Magazine's Co-Editor Steve Welzer is a candidate for the New Jersey National Assembly. It's pretty clear that Greens are building their party and that they are building from the bottom up.

FOR PRESIDENT IN 2012? ARGUMENTS AT THE GREEN'S ANNUAL MEETING

At the Annual Meeting of the Green Party, August 4 to 7, in Alfred, New York, the delegates debated the pros and cons of running a candidate for President in 2012. In the end, it seemed that almost everyone wanted the Green Party to field a candidate. But disagreements abounded as to just how much energy and time should be put into it. Many argued that putting a huge effort into running for an office that a Green Party candidate cannot win distracts from energy and time that should go into running candidates for local, state, and Congressional offices. But, according to many others, not running a candidate at all may simply result in the Green Party seeming to disappear from view, with negative consequences for party morale, for building the party in states that only a presidential candidate can help accomplish, and for the opportunity to push a message with the media that offers a sharp and convincing alternative to the two corporate parties. Others argued that a way to overcome the dilemma might well be fielding a home grown candidate who has emerged from within and because of the party. Still others expressed a hope and desire for a high profile candidate.

DAVID KORTEN'S TIMELY MESSAGE

Economist David Korten, co-founder of Yes! Magazine, and author of *When Corporations Rule the World* and of *Agenda for a New Economy* gave a major presentation at the Annual National Meeting of the Green Party this summer. His emphasis on building local Green economies and getting that message to millions of voters offers a way forward for a Green presidential campaign in 2012.

One or more of the above approaches favored by the Annual Meeting delegates could be coupled with a presidential campaign that, as a leading part of the message, focuses on the need and opportunity to build local Green economies for the people directly; and to foster political self-reliance for communities and neighborhoods throughout America. This can undercut the

His [Korten's] emphasis on building Green local economies and getting that message to millions of voters offers a way forward for a Green Presidential campaign in 2012.

Democratic affection for Big Government, the Republican affection for corporate trickle down ideology, and the entrenched commitment of both parties to billions for Pentagon and CIA imperialism and foreign wars. This kind of message nationally has not really been tried by the Greens. The timing for it has never been more propitious.

Either Jill Stein or Kent Mesplay could be the candidate to carry and promote this message in a presidential campaign. They are both mounting vigorous campaigns for the Green Party nomination for president in 2012. Jill Stein of the Massachusetts Green Party ran a strong and credible campaign for Governor of Massachusetts in 2010. Kent Mesplay of the California Green Party in his two previous tries for Green Party nomination for President has become a well known and respected person and campaigner among Greens throughout the country.



JOHN RENSENBRINK

is Professor Emeritus of Government and Legal Studies at Bowdoin College. He is a principal founder of the United States Green Party and of the Maine Green Party. He is Co-Editor of Green Horizon Magazine, former President of the International Society for Universal Dialogue, and Co-Founder of the Cathance River Education Alliance, an ecological education project in Topsham, Maine where he lives with his wife Carla Rensenbrink. He serves as one of three representatives of the U.S. Green Party to the Global Green Network.

Strong BREAKTHROUGH IN CANADA

ELIZABETH MAY

*With our historic win,
I have joined UK Green
Leader Caroline Lucas in
breaking through the perverse
“first-past-the-post” voting
system.*

ON MAY 30, 2011, I was officially sworn in as the first Green Party Member of Parliament in Canada. The election on May 2, 2011 was bittersweet for Canadian Greens. After a difficult campaign in which we were kept out of the national leaders debate and received far less media than in 2008 (when I had been included in the live televised debates) our popular vote fell. We held on to half a million votes, but many very strong local campaigns were deprived of the increase in popular vote that we had legitimately anticipated. On the other hand, the sweet part, was winning our first seat in the British Columbia seaside riding of Saanich Gulf Islands. In SGI a very high voter turnout of 76% elected me as their MP by a healthy margin (46% of the vote to the incumbent Conservative's 35%).

As U.S. Greens will know well, I became the first elected federal Green in Canada or the U.S. (we cannot say North America, as the Mexican Greens have long been elected). With our historic win, I have joined UK Green Leader Caroline Lucas in breaking through the perverse “first-past-the-post” voting system.

Despite the similarity that both Caroline Lucas and I are on our own in our respective House of Commons, there are significant differences in our situations. There are 650 Members of Parliament in the UK. In Canada there are 308. In terms of impact, just on the numbers, I start out with a significant advantage over the UK Greens.

Where Canadian Greens are at a disadvantage compared to the UK Greens is that the Conservative Party under Stephen Harper just won its first majority government (more of the bitter in the bittersweet results). Again, thanks to first-past-the-post, with a voter turnout of 61% Conservative candidates garnered just 39% of the vote, yet a significant majority of the actual seats (166 of 308). In the UK the current government is a coalition, and the situation is therefore more unstable politically. There are, at least, the possibilities of political changes in the UK. Even though the Greens do not have anything like the strategic position of the Australian Greens in holding a position of influence, that could change. In Canada the current majority, barring completely unforeseen upheavals, means that no election will take place until 2015. It also means that the Conservative Party has the votes to pass any bill Mr. Harper wants. And, due to his powers of appointment since he first formed a government in minority in 2006, Harper has stacked the Senate with Conservative partisans, so he has the votes he needs in the Senate as well.

During the campaign few pundits had entertained the thought that the election outcome would be a Conservative majority. Fewer still imagined that the New Democratic Party (NDP) could displace the Liberals and become the official opposition. And even fewer thought that the Green Party would make our breakthrough! The election results were, to say the least, a surprise to many. Just days before the election, I did an interview with a popular radio station in Vancouver in which the host said to me, “With all due respect, you couldn't get elected dog catcher.”

The House of Commons also had an amazing level of turnover. While some MPs chose not to run again, adding to the number of new faces, many more were confident

I was the only MP to vote against extending bombing in Libya.

of re-election and found themselves turfed. Canada went into the 2011 campaign with five leaders of federal political parties vying for seats. Two of those five, Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff and Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe, lost their own seats. So I entered the House as one of a bumper crop of new MPs. One hundred and ten of the 308 members were newly elected in 2011. (Two of those elected were not actually elected for the first time, but they had not been sitting in the 40th Parliament.)

The 41st Parliament has a number of changes, beyond those mentioned above. There are more women in the House—25% (up from 22% in the previous House). The members' average age has never been as young, thanks to a whole group of very surprised new MPs who ran as students or recent graduates to help the NDP have names on the ballots in parts of Quebec where they thought they had no chance at all. Even the Conservatives brought in some younger members, and their majority contributed to electing a 32-year-old Conservative as the new Speaker of the House.

A NEW AND CHALLENGING EXPERIENCE

Fortunately for me, as the first Green MP, I have had a lot of experience on Parliament Hill without having been an MP. I worked for a federal Minister of Environment in the 1980s, and in 17 years as Executive Director of Sierra Club of Canada, based in Ottawa, I worked routinely in and out of Parliament Hill with friends and colleagues of all political stripes. One of my friends from law school joked that I was a “rookie MP with 20 years experience.”

Still, there is no doubt that actually being a Member of Parliament is a new and challenging experience. The work doing constituency business—helping local residents sort out all manner of difficulties in their lives, mostly due to problems with government—is a huge part of my work load.

Growing the Green Party and gaining more seats in the next election will, however, depend on how I conduct myself in the House of Commons. I pledged in my campaign to bring greater respect and decorum to the House. I promised to do politics differently and escape the hyper-partisanship which, I fear, is crushing democracy.

I have always loved our Parliament buildings. They are beautiful as architecture, and lofty goals breathe through the pores of old

granite and marble, carved Moose and brass wildlife that surround the ornate chamber where the House convenes. It is a spectacular room with high ceilings and stained glass and endless amounts of filigree carvings in wood and stone. I was looking forward to taking my seat there, but first I had to find it! There is a saying that there are no bad seats in the House, and I subscribe to that. Still, finding my seat in the House on the first day was amusing. I am in the back corner of the Opposition benches. There are 308 Members of Parliament. In some magical way, my seat is 309. Somehow it reminds me of Platform 9¾.

In order to advance decorum, I started out determining how to work with the rest of my fellow Parliamentarians across party lines. I am determined to avoid making assumptions about people who ran under different coloured banners. Greens began the session by hosting a “Non-party party.” I invited all 110 newly elected MPs and had a very good turnout. It was a social agenda, but the message was clear: We must be able to talk with each other and find ways to support each other.

The House sat from June 3-28 and is now in regular summer recess. In substantive terms, my presence in the House was far more effective than even I had imagined it could be.

STANDING UP, MAKING SOME WAVES

Due to a bizarre decision by the other parties to agree with the Conservatives on a wide range of measures, I was the only MP standing up on certain critical issues. For example, I was the only MP to vote against extending bombing in Libya. I do not understand why the NDP closed ranks with the Harper government on this issue. The Liberals and the Bloc also voted to extend the mission. The forced (whipped) vote meant that Members of Parliament who agreed with me were forced by the party bosses to vote to continue military action. Thus, the vote to continue the mission was 294-1!

I was the only MP to refuse unanimous consent for the rapid passage of a bill to deal with “mega-trials” (trials of multiple defendants, usually in organized crime or terrorist organizations). “Unanimous consent” does not require any vote. No bells ring to notify members of a call to vote. And it also does not require asking all MPs if they consent. The measures can be brought in when there are about 30 MPs in the House and if no one objects the government has unanimous consent. Luckily I found out

Despite widespread media speculation that I would never be heard from in the House, in the first three weeks I rose to speak on at least two dozen occasions and gave four substantive speeches.

about this and got in my objection. While I support the goal of streamlining process for these trials to reduce the lag-time to justice and reduce the costs, I could not in good conscience support a bill that had never had a single day of hearings nor consulted a single expert. So I denied my consent.

The initial reaction was to try to paint me as someone who had never read the bill or who supported Hells Angels! The minister of Justice from Quebec came to Ottawa to twist my arm. The release of 31 Hells Angels from jail in Quebec due to court delays had made this bill an urgent matter (not that passing it would have gotten the 31 Hells Angels back into jail). I told the Quebec Minister I would be happy with expedited hearings to get the bill passed. The federal Justice Minister agreed to hold hearings and I agreed as long as we could get amendments. By that point I had consulted leading criminal lawyer Clayton Ruby, who agreed the bill needed some changes. As well, former justice minister and Liberal MP, the brilliant Irwin Cotler, noticed the bill lacked a definition section and realized the complex mega-trial procedure could be applied to regular trials. So I felt pretty sure the hearings would allow for the few gaps to be filled and for unnecessary infringements on rights to be fixed.

The hearings forced by my vote took place on June 21. The Canadian Bar Association brief said the bill as drafted would not meet its goals. Even a Justice Department prosecutor showed up to point out that the bill needed a key amendment to clarify appeal rights.

As an MP, not a member of the committee, I had a right to sit at the table, but in order for me to ask a question or speak the chair had to ask for committee members to agree. The one Liberal on the committee consented, but the NDP and Conservative members said "no." The excuse was that they had to go through the bill clause by clause in a hurry. I kept trying to raise points, but the NDP and Conservatives would not allow me to utter a syllable. So the bill was rammed through, no changes allowed. They finished so fast (starting at 9 with witnesses, done by 10:30) there was time left and they then allowed me to speak. I urged them to return to this bill in the fall and pass the needed amendments. A Conservative MP interrupted me to say it was "egregious" that an observer should attack the committee's decisions and that he would not agree to me ever speaking in this committee again!

Additionally, I was the only MP to actually participate in almost all (all but three hours) of a 60 hour filibuster. In Canadian-style filibusters, the MPs from each party move to

rotation shift-work. Being the only Green there was no one for me to rotate with, so I stayed throughout the debate on back-to-work legislation for Canada Post. My marathon participation gained media attention! I felt it was my duty to be there; otherwise, there would be no Green voice or vote.

Despite widespread media speculation that I would never be heard from in the House, in the first three weeks I rose to speak on at least two dozen occasions and gave four substantive speeches. The first, albeit just a brief congratulations to the speaker, gained a round of laughter and a standing ovation when I promised that neither I nor my entire caucus would heckle! My most important speech was the explanation for why I would not be voting with all other MPs to extend Canada's mission in Libya. In Question Period I asked a question of the government each week, raising issues of offshore oil development, budget matters, and Canada's shameful position on asbestos. My first statement to the House was on the climate crisis, but I have raised questions in debate on everything from Big Pharma to labour rights to fiscal policy.

All in all, I think Canada's Greens are off to a bright start in the House. We will see what the fall session will bring.

It is important that U.S. readers not confuse the Canadian unelected Senate with the U.S. Senate; nor the Canadian Speaker of the House, with the U.S. Speaker of the House.



ELIZABETH MAY

is an environmentalist, writer, activist, lawyer, Leader of the Green Party of Canada, and Member of Parliament for Saanich-Gulf Islands. She became active in the environmental movement in the 1970s. Elizabeth is the author of seven books, including her most recent, *Losing Confidence: Power, Politics and the Crisis in Canadian Democracy*. She became an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2005, was elected Leader of the Green Party in 2006, and in May 2011 became the first Canadian Green Party candidate elected to Parliament. In November 2010 *Newsweek* magazine named her "one of the world's most influential women." Elizabeth's home is in Sidney, British Columbia.

A GREEN

in the Mother of Archaic Parliaments:

CAROLINE LUCAS, *Speaking truth to powdered wigs*

CAROLINE LUCAS WAS ELECTED to represent Brighton Pavilion constituency in March 2010, the first Green to beat the UK's clapped-out first-past-the-post Parliamentary electoral system. Several of my non-Green Party friends commented that Caroline Lucas' election was the only good thing to come out of it.

A dynamic married 50 year old mother of two, she has been Leader of the Green Party of England and Wales for three years – in fact, our first and only leader. Her doctorate is in Literature, and she was an Oxfam staff member for ten years. She was elected Member of the European Parliament (MEP) in 1999, and resigned from that post to take up her seat in the House of Commons.

The first thing that hits you when you meet Caroline is her smile. It is pretty impressive for someone to keep smiling when faced with all the challenges immortalised in song by Kermit the Frog. It isn't easy being Green, especially when you are the only Green in an archaic, dysfunctional House of Commons. On entry, she was immediately given the traditional piece of ribbon – to hang up her sword – but was not allocated an office for several days.

One of her first actions on entry into the House was to criticise the 18th century voting system. Fresh out of the European Parliament with its electronic voting, she was dismayed to find that MPs waste up to 250 hours in each Parliament (four or five years, dependent on the whim of the Prime Minister) queuing up to vote in either the Aye or the No lobby.

Her dismay increased when she discovered from personal experience that Mr. Speaker was able to delete from the agenda any amendment which was not to his liking.

This gives you a feeling for the institution that is pleased to call itself the Mother of Parliaments. Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast could have been modelled on the Houses of Commons and Lords.

In this unpromising setting Caroline plunged in with her boundless energy. What has she done there? The problem is to summarise her many interventions. In the sixteen months she has been an MP, she has written 55 letters to Ministers, and signed 568 Early Day Motions. These little beauties are motions from MPs that could become law if allowed to survive. Of the hundreds that get signed, one or two will be discussed in Parliament, proposed by an MP who is selected by lottery, but they rarely become law, as the Government nearly always finds a reason to knock them down. Government will have naught but what is beaten out on its own anvil, to paraphrase the King James Bible.

RICHARD LAWSON

The Green Party of England and Wales has been very fortunate to have Caroline around at the time...we finally decided to elect a party leader. The move was contentious at the time, but it certainly paid off in terms of improved media coverage. Never did we dream that she would beat the electoral system and get into Parliament.

The list of her activities in Parliament is enough to make you gasp for breath just thinking about it, let alone doing it.

LUCAS HELPED AUTHOR THE UK GREEN NEW DEAL PROPOSAL

Perhaps the single most important political matter in the present Parliament is the Government's programme of public spending cuts. Here Caroline has been pro-active. She was one of the authors of the UK Green New Deal proposal which aims to produce hundreds of thousands of new jobs by creating a "carbon army" of workers in energy conservation, insulating properties and so saving energy and taking poverty stricken householders out of fuel poverty. This translated into her being appointed Co-Chair of a new all-party group on Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency, where she strives to make Government actions go farther and faster.

In response to the Government's plans for devastating cuts in public services, Caroline produced, in collaboration with a tax expert, a document entitled "Cuts, the Callous Con Trick". (www.financeforthefuture.com/TaxBriefing.pdf) The proposal is for tax reforms as a response to the budget deficit, raising £40 billion by closing tax loopholes exploited by rich individuals and corporations, together with a transaction tax on financial markets.

This puts Green economics right at the heart of the economic debate, giving the lie direct to the media-promoted idea that greens are solely concerned about protecting wildlife.

Having said that, Caroline has not turned her back on non-economic matters. She has been very active in peace, nuclear weapons, human rights and animal welfare issues – all the core Green concerns.

SHE VOICES OPPOSITION TO NATO'S PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN

Standing in the honourable green tradition of non-violent direct action, as an MEP she was arrested for blocking access to the Trident submarine base in Faslane. She has opposed the continuing NATO presence in Afghanistan, and has been active in pointing out the absurdity of selling arms to dictatorial regimes with whom we later come into conflict as they use our arms to

Standing in the honourable green tradition of non-violent direct action, as an MEP she was arrested for blocking access to the Trident submarine base.

suppress democratic reforms. Britain provided Colonel Gaddafi's regime with £213 million worth of weapons in 2010.

As an MEP, Caroline visited Palestine, and has remained deeply committed to a peaceful solution of the problem posed by the Occupation. She pressed the Foreign Secretary to investigate the illegal Israeli attack on the Gaza flotilla.

Caroline is Vice President of the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and in Parliament is Vice Chair of the group on animal welfare. Countless NGOs and organisations have her on their list of patrons.

And so on. The list of her activities in Parliament is enough to make you gasp for breath just thinking about it, let alone doing it. I have not touched on her constituency work, to which she gives special attention, as the Conservative and Labour candidates she defeated in the General election will be doing their damndest to get rid of her at the next election.

Media appearances come thick and fast, and here Caroline projects energy and enthusiasm, her rapid delivery recalling Petra Kelly. It is as if the opportunities to speak out for green issues are so few and far between that she is desperate to get as many words in as possible. On topical debate programmes, it is normal for Caroline to pick up the lion's share of applause. She comes across as sincere, transparent and as one of the people, not as a career politician, and this pleasant personable manner is carried over into her personal life. Having said that, she is no pushover, and does not tolerate fools gladly.

Many awards have come her way, the most recent being Best UK Politician in the Green awards section for the Independent newspaper, and in November 2010 she was awarded "Newcomer of the Year" in *The Spectator* Parliamentarian of the Year awards – noteworthy because *The Spectator* is by no means a journal of the left.

The Green Party of England and Wales has been very fortunate to have Caroline around at the time we finally decided to bite the bullet and elect a leader. The move was contentious at the time, but it certainly paid off in terms of improved media coverage, which was the basic idea. Never did we dream that she would beat the electoral system and get into Parliament.

One MP is good, but we still have a way to go. There are some black political and economic thunderheads in the sky. Budget deficits, recession, cuts, the enormous failures of trust in banks, politicians, media and police all promise interesting times ahead for all of us. It is no small consolation that at least the Greens have someone in Parliament who can speak truth to the powdered wigs of power.



RICHARD LAWSON

is a retired physician, a past speaker of the Green Party England and Wales, and blogs at <http://greenerblog.blogspot.com>.

CAN WE FIND *for* OURSELVES *the* SPIRIT *of* AMERICAN INDIAN WAYS?

ROMI ELNAGAR

THOSE OF US NOW IN AMERICA whose roots lie in Europe, Africa or Asia are new arrivals to this American land. Our connections are to other places, other soils. Some of us may have some Indian blood, but only those who practice the time-tested ways of forefathers who came here so long ago that they have no ancestral memory of anywhere else can truly be said to belong to the land we all now live upon.

We have forgotten this. Or never knew it. In their pride and arrogance, most of our white ancestors ignored this tie to the land, a tie that native Americans have felt so deeply that it seems almost part of their physical being. Our grandfathers may have once felt this way about the lands from which they came—from County Cork or Manchester, from Senegal or Canton—but they had largely lost that connection even before they left those places for these shores. To be sure, they may have felt some respect or affection for the land, but nothing like what American Indians clearly feel for theirs. For among native Americans there is a mystical element that few Westerners can claim to experience, but it is present in the rituals, the teachings, the spirit of American Indian ways.

If we could recapture that spirit! For our latecomers' capitalist/industrial society is destroying the Earth that American Indians treasured and preserved for thousands of years. The survival of all life on the planet may indeed depend on our regaining it.

ECOLOGY

In his classic history of Indian law, *In the Courts of the Conqueror: The Ten Worst Indian Law Cases Ever Decided*, Walter Echo-Hawk discusses the modern struggle of Indians to preserve the sanctity of their ancient sacred sites. That the land was held sacred was true throughout the Americas. One scholar tells us, for example, about the highlands of central Mexico, where the most important sites had a spiritual meaning accumulated over centuries of occupation.

“...the hill named Huizachtlan, the great urban pyramid of Tenochtitlan, the ritual Hill of Tetzcotzingo, and the shrines upon the heights of Mt Tlaloc and at Pantitlan in Lake Tetzcocho were principal icons of Aztec sacred geography, designed to manifest the inherent power of things seen and unseen in the natural environment.”

~ Richard Townsend, *The Aztecs*

In the Old World, perhaps only Mecca with its holy rock, the Kaaba, is venerated as much. But, while it is true that some sites were sacred to Indians, they regarded all of the land with a respect that white Europeans failed to understand and emulate. The indigenous inhabitants of the New World did not, could not, see it divided and parceled out, much less abused and polluted. The Hopis of the Southwest refuse even now to sell their land to whites, unlike many other Indian tribes. Perhaps the experiences of other tribes have shown them how little trust they can put in the words of whites. When asked

*...among native Americans
there is a mystical element
[which] is present in the
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the spirit of American
Indian ways.*

The Spanish...retained the...the mita system, but exploited it to provide an unending stream of laborers, and literally millions died under their rule.

to sell or lease their land for oil development, they said, "This land is not for leasing or for sale. This is our sacred soil. Our true brother has not yet arrived." (Frank Waters, *The Book of the Hopi*)

"Indian religious beliefs are intrinsically ecological since they regard nature as sacred. The various tribes who inhabited North America [and all the Americas, in fact] before the European invasion had been here for tens of thousands of years where they developed economically sustainable hunting-and-gathering economies that were respectful of the environment. They did not consider themselves as ruling over nature, but as part of nature. Humanity was sacred, but so were the animals and vegetation that sustained it."

~ L. Proyect, "Ecology and the American Indian"

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

New research indicates that the Indians of the Amazon, as well as those of North America, practiced environmental management over thousands of years. In his history of pre-Columbian America, Charles Mann describes evidence that in many areas in the Amazon basin they planted orchards of peach palms, a highly nutritious fruit, and other ecologically important species. The evidence from human burials is unmistakable: thousands of people were engaged in this work.

But even more important are regions—perhaps as much as 10% of Amazonia—of *terra preta do Indio*, "Indian dark earth." Anthropologists believe these regions were created by human beings, who mixed charcoal, organic nutrients such as animal waste and excrement, and soil microorganisms to form them.

"The key to terra preta's long-term fertility... is charcoal... terra preta contains up to sixty-four times more of it than surrounding red earth. Organic matter sticks to charcoal, rather than being washed away..."

~ Charles C. Mann. 1491:
New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus

And in tropical soils, the leaching of organic matter is what renders the soil infertile.

There were many other ways in which American Indians preserved the land. Louis Proyect says their attitude was one of restraint: "When the Menominee of Wisconsin gathered wild rice, they made sure that some of the rice fell back into the water the next year so that there would be future crops... [and] Cherokee herb gatherers had to pass up the first three plants they found, but when they encountered a fourth, it was permissible to pluck it and any others." He says they also practiced a hunting-society variation of "fallowing," not hunting some areas each year so that the wild animal stock could replenish itself.

DEMOCRACY

The idea that the tribes were "ruled" by "chiefs" seems to have arisen from Europeans who misinterpreted the role of someone who may have been no more than a spokesman or the one person most fluent in English. Nonetheless, while some of the tribes were democratic, the social structures of the Indians were as diverse as those of the Old World. There were empires among the Aztecs, the theocratic Mayas and Incas, as well as among Indians in the US, particularly in the southeast.

In 1491, Charles Mann describes how the Inca treated their mummies, with each mummy attended by courtiers as if it were still alive. The burial of pre-Columbian peoples throughout the Americas shows evidence in many places of hierarchical social structures, as in the Old World. For example, in Florida, "It has been hypothesized that these individuals [two females and a child] held positions of authority sufficient to warrant burial with artifacts recognized as status markers..." (McEwan, ed., *Indians of the Greater Southeast*). Tribes in the Southeast, most notably, such as the Apalachee of Northwest Florida, had social and political structures that were hierarchical in nature. I will return to Indian social organization below.

At the other end of the spectrum from empires were the small bands of people living at subsistence level, such as those in the most arid parts of the American southwest. Throughout Indian societies there probably was never the kind of extreme hostility

Resolution of the ecological crisis [depends on our learning to] understand and adopt the beliefs and practices of the people who preceded us here, whose attitude toward nature was one of respect and gratitude.

or discrimination against women that existed in European cultures. On the issue of gender equality, while there was certainly separation of the roles of men and women in nearly all tribes, this does not seem to have been a function of misogynistic attitudes towards women. On the contrary, women seem to have been almost universally treated with respect and honor

Much is made of the idea that inspiration for the American Constitution came from native Americans, but looking at the Constitution of the Iroquois Federation of the great Mohawk Indian Degandawida, it seems clear that it had little in common with the American Constitution besides defining an orderly process of decision-making. It is interesting, though, to see how Indian “religious” traditions, including close association with the Earth and its creatures, are infused in this document to a degree not found in the white man’s American Constitution.

“The duty of the two head Seneca chiefs... is to watch and if they see any crawling creature entering in the session they will disallow to enter in the session; Crawling creature signifies [that] any case or proposition which brought before the session would be ruinous...”

~ Constitution of the Iroquois Federation
(Degandawida [Mohawk])

ECOLOGY AND INDIAN MOVEMENTS

As I indicated earlier, Indian societies were exceedingly diverse in pre-Columbian times. There is no doubt that environment played a huge role in this, but I will set aside the question of how environment influenced social structure and instead jump ahead to the European conquest.

In Latin America, as every schoolboy knows, the Spanish found three empires of note, the Aztec, Mayan and Incan. These empires, of course, had numerous class distinctions, although the Incan Empire in particular has sometimes been characterized as a kind of socialism because there were no markets: the state collected all food, clothing and other necessities and redistributed them to every member of society. But, like the

great riverine civilizations of the Old World—in Egypt, China, and India—American Indian empires had hierarchies of priests and rulers who controlled the society because their knowledge of astronomy enabled them to predict the seasons upon which their agricultural societies depended. It has been suggested that this hierarchical structure, and increasing distance between social classes may have been part of the reason the Mayan civilization collapsed. (Adams, *Prehistoric Mesoamerica*)

In any case, that system was destroyed by the Spanish, both intentionally through war and unintentionally with the introduction of European diseases, particularly smallpox. The Spanish, however, retained the system of communally conscripted labor, called the *mita* system, but instead of using it to provide useful infrastructure for the Indian communities at large, they exploited it to provide an unending stream of laborers, and literally millions died under their rule. (It is estimated that , in less than two centuries, some 8 million Indians died in the silver mines at Potosi’ alone.)

But not all Indians suffered forced labor. Throughout Latin America, class distinctions which had existed in pre-Columbian times were continued. As James Petras tells us, these distinctions have had consequences for both democracy and the environment.

“...There are two class struggles which are intertwined: one led by the petit bourgeois Indian professionals to consolidate a liberal democracy backed by the masses mystified by religious and cultural symbolism; and another led by independent, downwardly mobile, class conscious Indian workers and peasants against both the European ruling class and their own Indian petit bourgeois leaders.”

~ James Petras, “Ecology and Indian Movements:
“Diversity with Inequality is Not Social Justice.”

One thinks immediately of Evo Morales and movements today for social justice, particularly in the Andean regions. Is it any accident that so much of the struggle is in the very region which was organized by the Incas into a proto-socialist society?

I think not. While many Indian societies did, in fact, have a sense of democracy and social justice, this was not necessarily the case.

But Petras says that Evo Morales called for class collaboration by declaring his intention to interact with the upper class as ‘partners not bosses’.

This means, writes Petras, that “The real divergence of class interests between the property-less and impoverished Indian masses on the one hand and the upwardly mobile pro-capitalist Indian petit bourgeois professionals and leaders on the other, were subordinated to the common struggle against the racially exclusive fascist big capitalist regional power bloc”. He concludes that the liberal approach “...cannot create a sustainable environment and cannot provide the material basis for the social liberation of the poor and Indian majorities in Latin America.”

Time will tell whether Morales made a wise move, but Indians’ best hope for their culture and their land is to look to their traditions for the solutions to problems created by European capitalism. And we, too, must look to their traditions for these solutions. Throughout the Americas, there are traditions of social cohesion and communalism which can provide the basis for a social system of egalitarian distribution of wealth and shared responsibility, especially for the environment.

TO SUM UP

The ecological crisis we are in is intimately linked not only to the destruction of the American Indian’s land, but his very existence. White society decimated peoples whose ancestors had lived in harmony with the Earth and in relative harmony with each other. The native peoples preserved the land for tens of thousands of years. European—capitalist—ranching and farming, instead of living with Nature, sought to “subdue” the land and exterminate the people on it. Resolution of the ecological crisis can only come when those of us who now live on this continent understand and adopt the beliefs and practices of the people who preceded us here, whose attitude toward nature was one of respect and gratitude. And it will come when those people themselves achieve social democracy and economic justice.



ROMI ELNAGAR

During her history studies in Third World colonialism at U.C. Davis, Romi read Latin American history and has continued to do so since. She now lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and is a representative of the Louisiana Greens to the USGP International Committee. She may be contacted at bluesapphire48@yahoo.com.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

It is impossible to do justice to human activity that occurred on two continents over tens of thousands of years. I have tried in this short essay to suggest ways to think about the issues of ecology and democracy, and I hope that the interested reader will dig further.

For a good general background of American Indian history and archaeology, I used Jake Page’s *In the Hands of the Great Spirit: The 20,000-Year History of American Indians*. New York: Free Press, 2003. One of the best sources, though, is Charles C. Mann’s *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*. New York: Random House, 2006.

Two indispensable sources of all things American Indian are the great authors Vine Deloria, Jr., and Eduardo Galeano, especially the latter’s trilogy, *Memory of Fire* (trans. 1988 by Cedric Belfrage), and his well-known *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997.

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CYBERSPACE

is the New Heaven

GREENS OFTEN ADVOCATE decentralism and bioregionalism. This is rooted in their conviction that identification with a particular place on earth (a territory or a parcel of land) fosters ecological consciousness and good stewardship praxis.

Identification with a particular place was a fundamental aspect of Native American tribal existence. For example, Lenape identity encompassed a distinct group of people speaking dialects of the Munsee language, practicing characteristic Algonquian cultural lifeways within a territory they called Lenapehoking (around and between the Delaware and lower Hudson rivers). All of these elements were integral, and “who I am” was inseparable from “the land I call Home.”

The intimate aboriginal relationship with a territory involved a deep familiarity with the flora and fauna of that place. The idea of “community” extended to animal and plant “relatives” (“all my relations”).

The land and its creatures were felt to be enspirited. Most tribal peoples were animists, having an earth-based sensibility of sacredness. The trend toward monotheism following the “ascent into civilization” involved a radical transition during which earth-centered spirituality was displaced by the modern sky-god religions. People’s attention and concern shifted as the locus of sacredness was “elevated” to the heavens. The relationship with the land and the local was fundamentally altered.

ATTENTION HAS SHIFTED OUTWARD AND UPWARD

These trends have been viewed by Western civilization as part of the process of progressive development. The ideology of progress holds that “backward rural peoples” suffer from illiteracy, provincialism, and parochial-mindedness. Their “horizons are limited.” On the other hand, the domain of experience and attention of urban cosmopolitans is expansive. In the modern era the latter has, in fact, become global, enabled by expanding channels of transportation and communication.

Since its inception, civilized life has encroached upon and crowded out tribal life. Resources have been drawn away from villages toward the metropolis. Centralized states have fostered technological progress, recognizing it as an instrumental phenomenon in the service of power elites.

The building of roads opened up new areas for exploitation. The expansion of commerce yielded greater profits. But the increasingly sophisticated and powerful technologies of mobility and communication — while promoted by the commercial, statist and military elites in their own interest (the internet was birthed at the U.S. Department of Defense) — have served to take all of us “outward and upward.”

LESS AND LESS CONNECTION TO PLACE

The unfolding of this process throughout history has been accompanied by occasional expressions of skepticism and regard for consequences. In his essay “Life Without

STEVE WELZER

Identification with a particular place on earth fosters ecological consciousness.

Cyberspace is lately being referred to as “the cloud,” apropos of the fact that our attention and concern is orienting more and more toward this new Heaven.

The trend toward monotheism involved a radical transition during which earth-centered spirituality was displaced by the modern sky-god religions.

Principle" (1863) Thoreau writes: "In proportion as our inward life fails, we go more constantly and desperately to the post-office. You may depend on it, that the poor fellow who walks away with the greatest number of letters, proud of his extensive correspondence, has not heard from himself this long while."

Clearly the trend has accelerated over time. Where Thoreau's poor fellow might have received ten letters a day, the poor folks of our modern cyber-reality are overwhelmed by ten emails or text messages per hour. The busy-busy business executive (and the homework-avoiding high-schooler!) might be getting a hundred electronic messages in a day.

Our domain of experience is fast becoming "elevated" into the World Wide Web. Interestingly, cyberspace is now being referred to as "the cloud," apropos of the fact that our attention and concern is orienting more and more toward this new Heaven. A visitor from another planet might infer that our ubiquitous screens are our Portals to the Sacred, but in truth they are our most-modern source of distraction.

WE'VE GONE TOO FAR

There is a mystique about it all that is not likely to endure. We have access to boundless magnitudes of facts and information, while few of us are knowledgeable about where our water comes from when we turn on the faucet. We follow news from around the world, but most of our neighbors are unfamiliar to us. We have hundreds or thousands of cyber-friends, but few of them live close enough to spend face-to-face time with on a regular basis.

With so little connection to place and such facile ability to communicate at a distance, hypermobility has become the norm. Sustained daily-intimate relationships have become a rarity. Families "keep in touch" while widely scattered, but there is little real touch and no particular place is felt to be the stable and beloved familial home.

A case can be made that "progress" has taken us too far from our original localist community-and-place-based life orientation. We now live everywhere and nowhere. What cyberspace and the internet represent are just the latest next-step in the problematic process of losing our grounding. It follows that what we need is to bring our attention "back down" ... away from heaven-sacredness,

away from the global marketplace, away from the industrial mega-state, away from the cyberspace "cloud"...and back toward a particular place-on-earth where we can renew real community and recreate Home.

A Daoist parable gives a sense of the other end of the spectrum from where we find ourselves now:

A SMALL COUNTRY OF FEW PEOPLE

People do not travel far. They have boats and carriages but little use for them.

They have armor and weapons but do not display them. Their food is plain but good. Their clothes are simple but fit well. Their homes are secure.

Villagers in this country often live within earshot of a neighboring village, so close that they can hear each others' roosters crowing in the morning and dogs barking in the afternoon. Yet they rarely feel the need to visit; they are content where they are, satisfied in place.

By contrast, we are restless, bored and unsatisfied.

We try to solve our problems of attention deficit disorder and hyper-stimulation by adding on more stimulation (or taking pills). We are losing appreciation for simple equilibrium, peace and quiet, limits and balances.

Erich Fromm said that societies-as-a-whole can exhibit characteristics of insanity. If we don't get back to lifeways centered around the basics of land, soma, and community, we will be in danger of losing even more —ecological consciousness, personal health, and social sanity.

It's time to shatter the mystique of the cybernetic dystopia that is threatening to envelop us in an electronic daze. It's time to recognize that, rather than the "next higher stage" of technological development, it constitutes the next misguided milepost on the road to a pathological future.

Lewis Mumford, in his *Myth of the Machine* (1970), writes: "On the terms imposed by technocratic society, there is no hope ... except by 'going with' its plans for accelerated 'progress.' But for those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, the next move is ours: for the gates of the technocratic prison will open automatically...as soon as we choose to walk out."



STEVE WELZER

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FINDING DEMOCRACY

in UNEXPECTED and DEEPLY GREEN PLACES

“Our capacity for democracy grows from our connection with nature. As we lose that connection, isolation, fear, and the need to control grow—and democracy inevitably deteriorates. It’s easy to forget that a deep connection with nature provides the inspiration for genuine democratic thinking.” Peter Senge in *Presence: Exploring Profound Change in People, Organizations and Society*¹

ELLEN LACONTE

IN MY BOOK *LIFE RULES* (the implication being that we don’t) I make the case that the prognosis for global or even national-level solutions for the syndrome of economic, environmental and political/social crises we presently face is poor. I take the recent debt-ceiling fiasco as further proof of the pudding. Various inept, corrupt, craven, bought and paid for, ideologically intransigent, and ignorant of or unwilling to face and make the electorate face hard realities, our leaders are evidently incapable of comprehending or coping with the complexity of the issues before them. They fail to see, or at least fail to say that they see, the connections between and among these crises. They exhibit an almost pathological inability or refusal to recognize the seriousness of consequences of the convergence of these crises: economic and ecological breakdown and worldwide chaos. Tackling these crises, or at least seeming to, only one at a time is equivalent to treating AIDS-related cancers without treating the recurrent pneumonia and wasting disease that are also symptomatic of AIDS. Leaders of both major parties have chosen posturing and pandering as alternatives to governing and Greens haven’t yet the numbers, leverage or heft to challenge them. For the major media, posturing and pandering are meat, potatoes, trifle and a *raison d’être*. For the American people they’re disastrous. Waiting for politicians and politics as we’ve known them to cure themselves of this Life-threatening condition could prove fatal.

And whatever else may be said of the present political “process,” it’s not democracy. Genuinely democratic praxis is nowhere to be found in Washington. As a set of behaviors and relationships that can help people talk through and across their differences, integrate their interests and skills, work for the common good, and organize otherwise fractious and factional humans in common cause, democracy is missing in action. It has been co-opted by globalized capitalism much as the human body is co-opted by HIV.

I think, however, that it’s not that democracy has failed us but our way of thinking about it that has. We might say of democracy what Gandhi said when asked what he thought of civilization: “It would be a very good idea.”

WHAT DEMOCRACY’S NOT

So far we’ve gotten the idea wrong. We are accustomed to thinking of democracy as a noun. “A democracy” is a physical place, a nation with borders defined on a map such that if we are born within those borders we are somehow born into democracy too.

But what if “democracy” is not a noun? What if, as Frances Moore Lappé and I have proposed in our books Democracy’s Edge and Life Rules respectively, it’s more like a verb.

*Democracy, it turns out, is hardwired into the DNA of species from ants to zebras.
And it includes all of the hominids from the great apes to Homo sapiens.*

Democracy is a kind of protective covering “under” which we live, such that it will take care of us and keep us from harm. We treat it as if it were a possession. “Having it,” we are superior to those who don’t. We think of it as a right. Aside from being born within a particular nation’s borders and under the protection of that nation’s government, police and military, we don’t have to do anything to get democracy. In fact, we have very little to do with it. It’s just ours, by right. Nonetheless, we go to great lengths to “keep it,” including going to war for it or over it. And we’ve gotten into our minds and political discourse the notion that we ought to try to “give it” to others, as if it were a thing we could give like food or money or weapons.

But what if “democracy” is not a noun? What if, as Frances Moore Lappé and I have proposed in our books *Democracy’s Edge* and *Life Rules*, it’s more like a verb. What if it’s not something we have but something we do, together; how we organize ourselves and relate to and behave with each other? And what if, as MIT management innovator Peter Senge suggests, we’ve been looking for democracy in the wrong places. What if Nature—Life as we know it—rather than our own history provides “the inspiration for genuine democratic thinking”? And what if, as Hopi elders proposed some hundreds of years ago, what Life tells us is that we really are the one’s we’re waiting for.

DEMOCRACY ALL THE WAY UP . . .

It has long been assumed that most animal societies are organized as we are with Powers and cowerers, doers and done to, top dogs and underdogs, alpha males and dominance everywhere you look. That view is changing.

Larissa Conradt, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Sussex, UK, writes that “In social species many decisions need to be made jointly with other group members because the group will split apart unless a consensus is reached. Consider, for example, a group of primates deciding which direction to travel after a rest period, a flock of birds deciding when to leave a foraging patch, or a swarm of bees choosing a new nest site. Unless all members decide on the same action, some will be left behind and will forfeit the advantages of group living.”ⁱⁱ And if too many are left behind the group would fall apart leaving the

members in a state of chaos and confusion and at a survival disadvantage. Accordingly, “group decision-making is a commonplace occurrence in the lives of social animals.”ⁱⁱⁱ

In studies of red deer conducted with her colleague Tim Roper, Conradt found that when it comes to making decisions about moving on from a resting place, feeding ground or watering hole, it’s not the sexually dominant alpha male or even a group of sexually-dominant males that make the decision when to go or even necessarily where. Life has taught red deer the hard way that even the most experienced, strong, clever alpha might decide to move the herd based on nothing more than a sudden urge or misinterpreted sign of danger, even though many members of the herd are still thirsty, tired or hungry.

Barring clear and present danger, members of red deer herds, gorilla bands, African buffalo herds and other close-knit animal societies vote their readiness to move by standing up and pointing themselves in the direction they want to go. When a significant majority have stood and/or pointed themselves in the chosen direction, the group moves on together in the direction they’ve chosen together. In a statement that until recently the scientific community would have considered unorthodox or heretical, Roper and Conradt concluded that “democratic behavior is not unique to humans.”^{iv}

Anna Dornhaus of the University of Arizona and Nigel R. Franks at the University of Bristol in the UK have found that some varieties of bees and ants engage in information pooling and consensus decision making. “Democracy is not something that humanity invented,” Dornhaus concludes.

Radio personality and author Thom Hartmann writes of this new understanding of animal behavior that “Without exception the natural state of group-living animals is to cooperate, not dominate. Democracy, it turns out, is hardwired into the DNA of species from ants to zebras. And it includes all of the hominids from the great apes to Homo sapiens.”^v

...AND ALL THE WAY DOWN

Examples of democratic activity can be found at levels as far down Life’s food chain as microbes. “In recent years,” Werner Krieglstein wrote in an earlier issue of this magazine, “scientists

Facing a life-threatening famine, some amoeba group together, forming a community, to achieve goals they could not achieve by themselves.

have documented a remarkable sequence of behavior that might well be suited to serve as a metaphor if not as a lived example for how we human beings can and should behave in times of need...Scientists observed this single cell organism cooperating in a quite extraordinary fashion when the food supply was running short.”

Facing a life threatening famine, hordes of single-celled amoeba called dictyostelium gather from every direction and every part of famine territory and turn themselves collectively into a new creature: slime mold. “They group together, forming a community, to achieve goals they could not achieve by themselves.”^{vi}

Microbiologist Mahlon Hoagland explains how this works: Recognizing pending catastrophe, “a single amoeba, apparently self-appointed, begins to emit a chemical signal. Near-by neighbors, irresistibly drawn to the signal ‘ooze’ over and attach themselves to the signaler. Each new member of the cluster amplifies the signal by releasing its own signal. More amoeba arrive.” It’s sort of like a grassroots flash mob at this point. “Then a startling transformation occurs: The aggregate shapes itself into a slug and begins to migrate to a new location, leaving a trail of slime behind it. As the slug moves the cells differentiate into three distinct types,”^{vii} each type taking up a task vital to the group’s survival.

They form a creature that looks like a tiny futuristic floor lamp with a base, a post and a round, covered bulb. The base roots the slime mold in its new food-rich environment. The post raises the bulb high so that its equivalent of light will cover as large an area as possible. And what’s the equivalent of light in this amoebic democracy analogy? Spores, like tiny eggs. Dispersed like photons in their new space when the bulb “turns on” and emits them, they become new single-celled amoebae. “And then the cycle begins anew.” Individuals do their own thing until collective—democratic—action is required again to deal with another shared crisis.

DOG, MEET DOG

Dog-eat-dog is, after all, an anomaly. It is not the state of nature. Something closer to democracy is. Red in tooth and

claw is a human projection based on incomplete and inaccurate science and biased observation. Carnivores for the most part turn on each other—the weakened, wasting, wounded or recently deceased—only when there’s not enough else to eat. And that happens for the most part only when we or natural forces dramatically reduce their territory and/or sources of food. In other words when our activities and presence or natural cycles or cataclysms have caused Critical Mass. Think urban feral dogs and cats, gorillas when the mist has gone away with the forests, wolves when wildfire or volcanic eruption clears the landscape of herds and small prey. But even in desperate times, most other-than-human species continue to cooperate more like those amoeba than like rabid packs of dogs. Why? Democracy is key to species survival.

- i Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski, Betty Sue Flowers, *Presence: Exploring Profound Change in People, Organizations and Society* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2005), p. 173.
- ii From the website of the Center for the Study of Evolution at the University of Sussex, www.biols.susx.ac.uk/members/lconradt
- iii Ibid.
- iv Tim Roper and L. Conradt, “Group Decision-Making in Animals,” *Nature*, 421 (January 2003): 155.
- v Thom Hartmann, *What Would Jefferson Do?* (Harmony Books, 2004), 141.
- vi Werner Kriegelstein, “How to Feel and Act Like an Amoeba,” *Green Horizon Magazine*, Spring 2008.
- vii Hoagland and Dodson, *The Way Life Works*, 152-153.



ELLEN LA CONTE

writes, gardens organically and schemes Greenly in the Yadkin River watershed of the Piedmont bioregion of North Carolina. Her book, *Life Rules* (formerly *Critical Mass*), was released Fall 2010 in hard cover, paper and e-versions to all the usual outlets by Green Horizon Foundation using iUniverse publishing services.

HOPE? *“In a Darkening Sky?”*

The Editors are very pleased to present to our readers these probing words of Virginia Rasmussen to the participants at the Annual National Green Party Meeting and the New York Green Fest held at Alfred University, Alfred NY August 4-7, 2011.

VIRGINIA RASMUSSEN

THE ALFRED COMMUNITY and Alfred University welcome all of you who have come to learn, teach, kibitz, demonstrate, exhort, counter or sing about things Green, sustainable, humane and fair.

I'm especially pleased that our subject for tonight's forum is "Building Local Economies," a subject that clearly says Green thinking is about new thinking.

There's a comfort in sharing these few days in Alfred, surrounded by people who know we can't reach into the current, dominant systems and institutions out there to fix them. They don't fix, and we certainly don't want them back in robust condition! The Green Party and NY Greens do not seek footholds in a corporate-owned economic-political system that generates ecological havoc and obscene inequalities, a system that undermines community and the Commons, that tramples moral and democratic imperatives.

The ten key values that compose Green philosophy offer a vision of something entirely different and now desperately needed. As John Gorka the songwriter tells us, "the old future's gone," and the new future? Well, "we can't get there from here."

Greens know that our work at its root calls for rethinking, redefining and redesigning the whole reality we want to be a part of governing.

I recently read a column by Robert Jensen, a professor of journalism at University of Texas, Austin, and wise voice on matters of media, ethics and activism. He shares with us some very bad news, news which comes as no real surprise to many of his readers but is, nonetheless, news we seldom speak aloud. But honesty and the future now demand that we speak.

I quote Jensen here and add a few thoughts of my own:

"Without major changes in our relationship to the larger living world, the ecosphere, likely within decades, will be unable to support large-scale human life as we know it. ...we're in trouble, there's no guarantee that enough time remains," and, I believe, most critically, We the People have no real authority in this corporate state to do much about it. Those facts must be shared, or "there's no hope of a decent future."

Yet worse news is "that mainstream culture cannot face this reality." It will neither accept nor respond to "the darkening sky," a denial that rests in a "diminished capacity for empathy, a

Honesty and the future now demand that we speak. . . to say it as it is.

dwindling connection to the natural world" and a deep cluelessness on the meaning, responsibilities and rewards of self-governance.

So what are our best strategies against such a "darkening sky?" We offer, Robert and I, four observations for those who would work to brighten our horizon:

1. Can we stress the building of communities over coalitions – put coalition work in support of our communities. In tough times "coalitions evaporate, communities have a chance of survival."
2. With greater diligence, might we offer "project components that connect people to the non-human world?"
3. Can we acknowledge that the power to govern is not in the hands of the people and talk together about how to change that?
4. Is it possible that we can "tell all the truths that we know and feel...to speak honestly of the darkening sky?"

"It's heartening to know that every day there are more people — though still a small minority, who want to deal with what lies ahead." And surely Greens are among them; many have always had the courage to say it as it is. We must extend to one another unqualified support for that brave strategy.

Jensen concludes with the last stanza of a poem by William Stafford titled, "A Ritual to Read to Each Other:"

For it is important that awake people be awake,
or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep;
the signals we give – yes, no, or maybe –
should be clear: the darkness around us is deep.

"The potential power of social movements at this moment in history flows from this commitment to speaking the truth – not truth to power, which is too invested in its delusions to listen – but truth to each other."



VIRGINIA RASMUSSEN

is a leading member of the Program on Corporations, Law, and Democracy (POCLAD); and is a member of the Alfred Village Board of Trustees. She has taught in the Environmental Studies Program at Alfred University in Alfred, New York; and has served as Education Director at the New Alchemy Institute on Cape Cod.

Upon Reading Charlene Spretnak's RELATIONAL REALITY

EARTH'S ADAMANT URGENCIES, nature's interwoven species, and Charlene Spretnak's passionate vision of integrated human nature in community will inspire both hopeful and critical thinking among her readers. We need fresh vision to demyth the ancient Genesis legend that "(God) has put all things (on Earth) in subjection under thy feet." Charlene Spretnak has voiced her deeply researched challenges to habits and persistent myths of humanity in this vulnerable, wounded Eden. Leaders in education, government, and economics, she implies (and media from news to NOVA, I must add) should far more wisely engage us in policy options that can enrich life on our blue-green Earth.

This book's achievement is magnificent. It is visionary even as it can overwhelm us with an astonishing range of data and urgent insight. "Communion with nature...enables us to be our true, caring, generous, and expansive selves," she reminds us. We are "more alive, more free, and less reactive when we pay attention," she says, for "we are each a luminous presence in the bountiful web of life..." We are infused with "the vast grounding constituted by the myriad dynamic biological and ecological relationships that brought forth our body-in-nature." Don't be frightened by such writing; welcome the power and poetry of the book's achievement. Mark it up and keep coming back to its vision. Let it marinate in your mind. Share it, teach it, read it aloud at a small talk meal. Give copies to your powerful or influential friends. Above all, dare to translate its vision into actions for kids.

A RELATIONAL SHIFT IS A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT

In each section, the book pleads with us to recognize and personally join the discernible worldwide movement she calls a "Relational Shift." That is, to recover our beneficent, essential partnerships between body and mind, humans and nature, self and symbiotic relationships, and other dualities that we struggle to integrate. Chapters on education, health, community structures, and fiscal priorities each reveal interrelated unities that our categorical, pigeon-holing habits tend to deny. We are all related; and we are "members of one another," said St.Paul to early churches. Such ancient truths are desperately needed, yet tantalizing, as T.S.Eliot wrote in his "Four Quartets" –

There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

Spretnak's fellow prophets urge us to learn and implement the Relational Shift in all our schools, hospitals, institutions, public economic-ecological policies and planning. Her summaries of data and issues on each of these endeavors is always tough, pithy,

BARCLAY PALMER

*Spretnak's thesis steadily informs
all our thinking: that human being
and becoming and all life on Earth
are always deeply "relational."*

and masterly. She exposes anti-nature, anti-relational ways in schools, some isolating sciences, and narrow-view authorities. Each has its territorial imperative: historic towers of Babel, one may say. Explicit and implicit remedies demonstrate Spretnak's Olympian scope. If honest, we will walk her maze of exhaustive data in humility, learning to better integrate our insulating professions, as did the unifying Renaissance exponents of Arts and Sciences.

We are shown countless tensions in social systems: efficiency vs. empathy; punitive isolation vs. restorative justice; obsessive mind fragments vs. our organic wholeness; resistant disease vs healing skill; biosocial breakdown vs. recovering relationship. And dozens more shining fellow prophets, like Darwin, Whitehead, Vandana Shiva, Rachel Carson, Yunus, Wangari Maathai, Lynn Margulis, and so many others give this crowded book a vintage fellowship that moves the knowing reader's heart and mind. News is often bad, but some Real news about "all our relations" is better than good.

Spretnak's thesis steadily informs all our thinking: that human being and becoming and all life on Earth are always deeply "relational." Yet curiously, our relational start as babies is not spelled out. It's always implicit, for of course we first know that we know anything from a parent's intimate encouragement — like perceiving our child self's feelings and perceptions. Thus, the absence of pre- and post-natal research on babies may be a serious omission for some readers. But our author's constant echoes of children's lives tell us enough about her knowledge and reverence for parents. Happy two-year-olds guess what's hiding in our adult Peekaboo game; later, they imagine fulfilling their own or their elders' suggestions. Early make-believe, stories, games and arts depend on trusted parents and others, with life-long relational impact.

Such knowing parents, schools and friends convey trust, empathy, habits of happiness, and healthy relationship by their example. I agree with the author's demythifying various brands of academics and business that scorn what they see as "touchy-feely" prejudices. I've marked most pages of her book for eloquent quotes on personal relations, whether by instinct or intention, in all meaningful, remembered walks of life. For instance, the relational thesis suggests

that schools practice the delights of collaboration more than habitual competition. Many now do that.

Her abundant anecdotes of interpersonal projects are inspiring. Despite these promising eruptions of sanity, middle and high school curricula are still in servitude to so much fixed college prep curricula. Students — and their teachers — are stuck on an endless treadmill of always working for the next level. They should be asking, and some do: "For ...what? For yet another level? (Boring!) Then what? And why? Tell us now why this stuff we learn is important in Real life — besides the alleged skills." Thus, relevant college guidance is vital. Parents are overly busy and do not know enough about societal and work options. They will hugely profit from the book's massive information.

LESS TESTING – MORE STORIES OF REALITY EXPERIENCE

The book asks tough questions on the complex priorities we urge on our young. Remember that so many people today change jobs and fields of work several times in their middle years. What anticipations of the confused and jostling world do parents give the young (if they're ever sitting still) for career and vital relational versatility? After my forty years in college preparation teaching and leadership, I ask all parents, teachers, and advisors of the young to focus on less testing and more on stories of reality experience. All teachers need to get outside their fields of knowledge, likewise; first, by listening to the young far more than they think they have time for; and second, for grasping this radically changing and ever-dangerous, ideological, cliché-driven, and anti-relational world. What's around us always tends to model our lowest common denominators, not the highest factors that make for peaceful community, cheerful morale, and zest for each day's opportunities

This demanding book's four realms of life — education, healthcare, communal values, and economic priorities, are vivid and readable — and may be overwhelming for some readers. Therefore give yourself and the book the many "stitches in time" you need. (I can't wait to put it in front of a class of Senior College adults). Though there are far too many important concepts and data to cite in a review, you should realize that Spretnak has genius for defining the issues in her four relational areas. Like myself, the reader will want to reread so much.

This demanding book's four realms of life — education, healthcare, communal values, and economic priorities — are vivid and readable.

Nearly every topic of Spretnak's challenge to our politically dumbed down young can be grasped by kids before college.

THE SCHOOLS AND PARENTING

Though lacking to some degree vital wisdoms on pre- and post-natal parenting, the chapter on Education and Parenting is brilliant in insights for families, teachers, and future mating. Homes and schools either actively or helplessly resist those seductive markets, coarse media, and gadgets that reel in the kids. Probing realism about those influences should be top priority reading in parent readiness counseling. If ready for parenthood, (all parents I ask this question emphatically say they were not) – they create the first intimacy a baby learns: the primal I-Thou bond of loving. The daily impacts of highly potent media and technology on the young defeats so many parents: many say they've "given up." Statistics on behavioral pathology, criminality, and human failures all reflect the culture's impotence in demanding maturity for parenting, a theme that this book strongly implies – and many of us insist should be part of teachers' thinking and preparation. I ask my reader to confront all thoughtful friends, and schools, on this issue amid our hurried lives of frenetic consumerism and self-centered anxieties.

Spretnak's excellent Bibliography and sixty-six pages of often brilliantly helpful Endnotes suggest tireless scholarship. Her summary of research on youth should be top priority reading for all in authority. How do the young develop reflection, self-knowledge, and self-controls in a college-prep-and-pop culture that doesn't consider parenting-readiness as a graduation requirement for well indulged and under-challenged teens? Spretnak's book constantly implies the challenges we try to deny – but that the children will inevitably face.

Now realize also that teachers are preparing kids for pot-holes of abstract testing and urgent academic traffic ahead, with little time to sit, discuss and think: for college prep, not life readiness, is the narrow-focused boss of middle/high school curricula. Yet we consistently under-estimate and coddle the mental capacity of youth.

Nearly every topic of Spretnak's challenge to our politically dumbed down young can be grasped by kids before college. Notice how much they respond to Earth's failures and successes. I've watched 4th grade classes grasp with outrage the destruction of rain forests in South America; and 9th graders at human trafficking and slavery worldwide in their (daily) New York Times Ed. & Op.Ed pages. Schools habitually underestimate capacity, readiness, and intellect in children. Notice their willing courage in the face of realities ahead – gender behaviors, instinctive empathy and bullying, our hunger for respect, parental love-myths and rear-view mirrors, roots of evil and wars, life's indispensable laws, and what it costs for humans to enact their dreams.

I am thrilled with this book's achievement after teaching my own elective course, "Nature, Woman & Man," since 1958: biosocial protohominids and primate empathies vs. political empires – our lively readings captured my 10th-12th grade kids with visibly engaged focus. I longed for a scholarly study such as Spretnak's of life on Earth – the reality that we are all (already) related.



BARCLAY PALMER

79, lives in Topsham, Maine with his wife Esther Lacognata. From 1957 until his retirement in 1996 he taught English Studies in U.S. college prep schools. He now teaches at Senior College in Bath, Maine. He received his education at English Anglican boarding schools, was an Officer in the British Army, and studied Theology at Oxford. He competed in the 1956 Olympics. He is a pianist, artist, gardener, tennis-player, father of three and grandfather of five.

SUMMER READING

on ECOLOGY, JUSTICE, *and* DEMOCRACY

GREG GERRITT

Evanoff lays out the intellectual history of a three-way relationship.

I READ RICHARD EVANOFF'S BOOK *Bioregionalism and Global Ethics*, Routledge, New York, 2011) as part of my summer vacation reading that focused on the current ecological crisis and what to do about it. As my practice (ProsperityForRI.org) focuses on community prosperity on planet Earth, I am immersed in the daily struggle at the community level to keep Earth a livable planet with justice for all.

In addition to Evanoff's book, I also read Lester Brown's *Plan B 4.0* and Ellen LaConte's *Life Rules*. Lester Brown repeats what he and many of us have been saying for years, with only this year's special flavor for additions. We are in big time trouble, and going green is the only alternative.

I read Ellen LaConte's *Life Rules* in an early draft and commented on it. I found it fascinating as a draft, and even better this time around. Using HIV, bacteria, and much else in the natural world, LaConte provides us with a picture of how life on Earth has traditionally responded to crisis, and what might be done this time around. Her focus on how wide input from a variety of species working together in an ecosystem, almost as if they were in a consensual democracy, underscores her belief that only democracy will allow people to solve the current problem.

LaConte also maintains an optimism that we humans will solve the ecological crisis and that human communities will thrive beyond the current darkness. She provides many examples of light in the darkness, and things to do in your community, which adds strength to her message and makes it more useful.

Brown and LaConte all write for the attentive popular audience, and reading was easy. Evanoff presents us with something entirely different. It's a text book for an environmental philosophy class, written for peers and students in academia.

Turning to his book, the first thing I have to say is that he really gets it. He totally understands that the crisis on earth is a convergence of many factors, and that in order to undo the conundrum, we have to be careful to place our solutions in a very large context involving prosperity in human communities, justice, and the health of the planetary and all local ecosystems. Nothing will actually solve problems on Earth unless the solutions take into account healing the ecosystem and making sure human communities are thriving at the same time. This will only happen in a situation in which justice prevails because people have the habit of abusing power, and abuse of power over people, also results in an abuse of the land and waters. Richard Evanoff absolutely gets this and lays it out quite well.

We are in big time trouble, and going green is the only alternative.

In a well documented series of chapters Evanoff lays out the intellectual history of a three-way relationship, as follows: “You can not end poverty without healing ecosystems, you can not heal ecosystems without ending poverty, and you can not get to either without closing the military industrial complex”. For the intellectually inclined and for new students who need to know the history of thought in their community, this is well done.

The middle chapters focus on relating bioregionalism to the healing of ecosystems, the creation of prosperity in human communities, and how none of this is possible without a real system of justice and democracy. His analysis is clearly written, and as a 40 year practitioner in the field, I think he weaves the strands together quite properly. Dense, but anyone with an interest in the subject will keep moving through it.

As I came to see more clearly what Evanoff was trying to accomplish with the book, I started to wonder what he would say to do in order to bring Bioregionalism and Global Ethics to our communities (from neighborhood, to watershed, state, region, country, and planet). The description and prescription are necessary, but can we actually bring those prescriptions to our communities? Here, it seems to me, he does not provide much useful advice. I speak from my experience of bringing the criticisms of economic development strategies to local policy discussions — while at the same time trying to grow those economic activities that meet reasonable criteria for actually healing ecosystems and trying to grow justice. As an on the streets guy, I will be talking one day about the medical industrial complex and how using it as the centerpiece of economic development in the community makes it much harder to have health care for all; the next day I will be helping a culinary school fit composting into the green hospitality curriculum. Examples of this sort I would like to see in a book of this depth, but was disappointed.

I did appreciate his clear statements on why the Green Party, as the only overtly political organization clearly articulating a plan to heal ecosystems, address poverty, and to build justice is a necessity in these times. As a founding member of the Green

Party, as a former candidate and leader in my local and state parties, I absolutely know that one of the ways we must confront the ecological crisis on earth is with an independent politics that clearly articulates the message expressed so well by Evanoff. Evanoff recognizes the problems Green Parties around the world face. Money-based politics will never be the strong point of Green Parties. Governing in a world of short term budgets and in a world filled with war will never be easy, but the politics represented by the Greens is an important component of what must happen as we go forward.

It is going to take many different things to heal our home planet and our communities. It will take many different people doing many different things in order to accomplish this gargantuan task. One thing we can always use is a clear written description of what is going on and how we got this way. If you are serious about expanding your view of the crisis and providing yourself with additional tools of analysis, *Bioregionalism and Global Ethics* will provide value.

Richard Evanoff teaches environmental ethics at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo, Japan. He is a member of the International Green Network and of Friends of the Earth Japan. He has been active with local campaigns to prevent road construction and mountain destruction in the area west of Tokyo, where he lives.



GREG GERRITT

organized his high school for the first Earth Day. Since then he has farmed, done construction, worked in the woods, run for mayor and worked in the NGO sector. Current projects include managing the coalition of environmental groups in Rhode Island, blogging at ProsperityForRI.org, and coordinating the Compost Initiative in an effort to collect and compost all the food scraps in Rhode Island so it can be used to fuel our agricultural renaissance.

ECO-AWARENESS FESTIVAL IN UTAH

Experiential Discovery and Learning

RICH CSENGE

INSPIRED BY THE NATURAL BEAUTY of Southern Utah's colorful cliffs, high plateaus and deep, red rock canyons, the annual Amazing Earthfest in Kanab, Utah, spans ideological divides by exploring ideas, history, natural sciences, artistic creativity, land ethics, human society, community conservation, and economics. Amazing Earthfest is helping to invigorate a regional and national conversation about stewardship of our planet's natural resources, and responsibility to future generations.

From personal habits to industrial processes, advancing ecological wisdom at the local level must be a central guiding principle in human society's transformation toward an all-inclusive sustainability. At the events of Amazing Earthfest, families and individuals expand personal relationships with each other and with nature, while increasing their understanding of the natural systems and resources surrounding them on cherished public lands.

The uplifting experience and magnificent grandeur of treasured and protected landscapes inspires curiosity to learn in both visitors and community residents and a growing determination to conserve. This expansion of human awareness is needed on a grand scale if we are to sustain Earth's livability in the 21st Century.

With over 50 events held free of charge during seven days in May, Amazing Earthfest contributes to the local economy by creating a destination for adventure and discovery. Festivals to boost local economic development by providing venues for expressing regional talent, heritage and traditions are ubiquitous. As a public festival conceived from a spiritual perception of the divinity within Nature itself, Amazing Earthfest is uncommon in its focus on facilitating discovery and learning about the natural world.

Now entering its sixth year, Amazing Earthfest may be unique among the nation's community festivals, as the first such event celebrating the very existence of our nation's National and State Parks, National Forests, Monuments and Public Lands; specifically, the land and life of the Colorado Plateau in Utah. Its success derives from people's aspiration to re-connect with nature. The volunteer-driven festival is supported

[A] core of trained naturalists forms the basis for attracting artists, musicians and performers to Earthfest

The 6th annual Amazing Earthfest will take place from May13–19, 2012.

Protecting natural beauty is an expression of the Green principle of future-focus.

by local governments and business owners, Federal land management agencies, regional non-profits, educational institutions, and individuals sharing a recognition that abundant natural beauty enlivens people, and where protected, is a perpetual engine for rural regional economies.

Protecting natural beauty is an expression of the Green principle of future-focus, and depends upon the collective understanding of its importance to the human psyche and to overall community health. Kanab, Utah is a small city amidst a land of immensity surrounded by Zion, Bryce Canyon, and Grand Canyon National Parks, and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Amazing Earthfest builds upon the strengths that the many nearby National Parks, Forests, Monuments, and Public Lands provide to the region. Remarkably, there are 18 of them within a half-day's drive!

America's spectacular Western public lands are administered by three agencies of the Department of the Interior: National Park Service, US Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management. Specialists from these Federal agencies as well as numerous national and regional non-profits with interests on the Colorado Plateau in Utah provide the expertise for learning events at Amazing Earthfest. This core of trained naturalists forms the basis for attracting artists, musicians and performers to Earthfest, who provide experiences for the public that engage our emotions, skillfully expressing a deep love for their special place, and by extension also for our planet.

People concerned about quality of life know a critical need exists for a thoroughly considered land ethic in America's political discussion. By engaging participants and the local community in a dialogue about the tangible and intangible values of our National Parks, Forests, Monuments, and Public Lands, Amazing Earthfest encourages and promotes learning by experience, sharpening powers of observation, and the art of listening to one another. This dialogue is the expression of Americans' desire to protect, conserve for future generations, and use wisely the gifts of Earth's natural evolutionary processes.

Having developed entirely without us (homo-sapiens) over billions of years, natural systems and processes support our every breath. Now, as awareness of climate change forces the critical need for sustainability in how we interact with and unmistakably affect our planet, Greens are the best positioned to direct a nationwide conversation on sustainable living. Greens are the ones who can play a leading role in demonstrating the value of integrating ecological wisdom into actions at the individual and collective level.

For more information about Amazing Earthfest, visit
www.amazingearthfest.com.

A complete schedule of events from the 5th Amazing Earthfest is available at :
<http://www.amazingearthfest.com/Events.htm>.

Amazing Earthfest on U-Tube:
<http://amazingearthfest.com/2011/06/07/watch-the-5th-annual-amazing-earthfest-video/>

The 6th annual Amazing Earthfest will take place from
May13-19, 2012.



RICH CENGE

and his wife Debra have recently re-located to Kanab, Utah from mid-coast Maine. Rich is a master furniture maker and antique restorer, is founder and director of the annual Amazing Earthfest in Kanab, Utah, and serves on the Board of Directors of Grand Staircase Escalante Partners.

GSE Partners supports the mission of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, the largest land-based unit of the National Landscape Conservation System, a newly formed collection of 28 million acres of America's public lands with outstanding resource and scientific values, administered by the Bureau of Land Management. For more information, visit www.gsenm.org, and www.ourconservationlegacy.org

GREENING *the* STRUCTURE of *the* U.S. GREEN PARTY

LINDA CREE AND AIMEE CREE DUNN

[T]he abuses industrial society inflicts on the natural world grow out of a profound ignorance of ecological realities and an equally profound lack of emotional relationship with the natural communities we inhabit.

ISN'T IT TIME NOW for the United States Green Party to be more imaginative about modeling a Greener political structure for itself?

Sitting on a sandy bluff beneath the green branches of a wolfed, lightning-struck white pine on Gichi-gami's shore, it's hard to focus on something as abstract as Green Party structure. Yet the great blue presence of the lake, the world's largest body of fresh water - so beautiful and yet so vulnerable - is a reminder of why we need to devote so much time and energy to the only political party that proclaims Ecological Wisdom as one of its key values.

Greens have long led the way in raising awareness of the need to reconnect with the Earth. We know that the abuses industrial society inflicts on the natural world grow out of a profound ignorance of ecological realities and an equally profound lack of emotional relationship with the natural communities we inhabit.

Our best Green visions and candidates call for a radical transformation toward a more Earth-centered way of living. We realize we must break out of the ecocidal rut of our typical American lifestyles. We are usually out front in pushing creative changes such as bioregionalism, the Transition Towns movement, and voluntary simplicity. We know our survival as a species involves a total paradigm shift and have been quick to encourage developing a strong sense of place as a good first step.

Yes, Greens have been bold and daring in charting where we should be going as a society - but our daring seems to have faltered when it comes to structuring our national political party. Perhaps because so many of us are activists, not politicians, and somewhat intimidated by the labyrinthian nature of politics. Perhaps it was just easier to go with established ideas on political structure.

Take the way the Party apportions delegates to the National Committee (NC), the highest decision-making body of the Green Party of the United States. At one time the national Green Party used a two-delegates-per-state formula, but usually the allocation formula has been more convoluted. At present it's based on how many Greens are registered in a particular state - an inherently unfair apportionment, as how the number of registered Greens are determined varies widely from state to state. Basing apportionment on Green electoral activity in districts within states would be an effort to address the unfairness of the present system but remains based on abstract political statistics.

Should not our structure, in itself, be a lesson in possibilities? What would the national Green Party party look like if the party made a deliberate effort to structure it in a way that connects our politics and ecological realities?

One idea is to allocate delegates to represent distinct bioregions within states with Green parties. There are two major constraints in deciding how to define bioregions for the purpose of NC delegate allocation, however. One, we would be necessarily

working within state political boundaries even though actual bioregions are not limited by such artificial demarcations. Two, we would need to define bioregions in a way that would keep the final size of the NC a workable one; thus we would have to paint with a rather broad brush.

Such bioregional allocation would require that each state party make a bioregional map of their state – a much needed effort in itself! Not only would the mapping require every state GP to become more familiar with its territory, it would also provide an important baseline for measuring the health of any given region. Staying tuned in to the health of a given area of land is a vital Green task organic farmer and co-founder of the Green Party of Michigan, Maynard Kaufman, has called being “the eyes on the land.” That is, those who are consciously and conscientiously connected to the land will note destructive changes such as increasing high voltage power line corridors and the resulting devastation of botanical systems due to subsequent herbicide sprays, over-logging of once abundant forests to feed a new biomass plant, the loss of various wild edibles or decrease in bird migration numbers. The list goes on. In Native cultures, this type of knowledge about the land one lives on, informed by the elders, passed along through the generations, has long been recognized as invaluable. Today it’s called Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and it’s becoming increasingly rare.

In the Green Party and elsewhere, today’s political structures ignore the land as an entity, yet it is the land which is our basis for survival. Who gives the land representation within our American representational democracy? No one. How can the land have a voice within our government when no one is elected to represent it directly? Other human societies have had the non-human communities represented in their political decision-making – we should take a cue from them. Let’s reflect this needed change in the national political structure by giving the land direct representation within the Greens’ political structure.

How might bioregional delegate allocation work? As we are from Michigan, we’ll use our state to demonstrate. It happens that Michigan can be roughly divided into three distinct bioregions. Most people know that Michigan is comprised of two peninsulas. The Lower Peninsula could be defined as two separate bioregions, one beginning around Midland/Saginaw, bounded on the north

What would the national Green Party party look like if the party made a deliberate effort to structure it in a way that connects our politics and ecological realities?

by the Chippewa River and containing all of the southern densely populated and urbanized counties, and the other made up of the rural northern half of the peninsula. The entire Upper Peninsula would be the third bioregion, a distinct landform containing nearly 1/3 of the state’s land and only 3% of the state’s population. Each of these bioregions could be allocated one delegate on the NC.

The great lake is now turning that indescribably translucent evening hue that merges the distant horizon with the heavens. There’s comfort in knowing that people have sat on these shores for millennia enjoying the magical moment when sun and sky become one. It is said that in important council deliberations, some Native American cultures had a custom of asking, “Who speaks for Wolf?” Today we should surely be asking the same question, as well as, “Who speaks for Gichi-gami? And the song-birds, the few remaining old growth forests, the human children, and the migrating waterfowl? Who speaks for the birch, the rain, the black bear, and the Laughing Whitefish River?”

Current apportionment gives delegates status simply as representatives of their particular state’s Green Party. Being a representative on the NC for a particular bioregion would be a very different way of looking at a delegate’s job. Who would you be representing as a bioregional delegate in your work within the Green Party? In answering the above questions, we can move toward a time when even political institutions will recognize and nurture our critical efforts to defend and reconnect with our land.

[B]ioregional allocation would require that each state party make a bioregional map of their state – a much needed effort in itself!



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GREENS *and* LEADERSHIP: RESPONSE *to* BRENT MCMILLAN

BARBARA RODGERS-HENDRICKS

IN THE SPRING/SUMMER 2011 ISSUE of Green Horizon Magazine, Brent McMillan, former Executive Director for the U.S. Green Party, addresses the question, “Is leadership a dirty word in the U.S. Green Party?” He answers the question with a “Yes”. I agree.

From the time I joined the Greens in 1990, I observed that anyone who rose to a level of influence in the movement became the target for attack. Many times the attacks were vicious, and could happen when a person merely presented a different opinion or new idea. From the beginning, the U.S. Greens have crucified their leaders.

Whether this attitude can be changed is problematical, but perhaps we can work around it. On the way to the formation of the GPUS, some of us learned that a decentralized structure such as a network could get around power struggles. It’s time for restructuring.

I propose that the U.S. Green Party’s Steering Committee be dissolved and that the national party focus its attention on networking between states. Such a structure would center on communication rather than decision-making. It would encourage states to help each other with organizing, and petition drives.

National committees which exist at present could continue as the need persists. They would be connected with each other and with the states by communication, not through any hierarchal structure.

McMillan proposes a “Green Leadership Institute” to focus on both “skill building” and “character building”. I heartily agree with skill building. He lists such skills as “fundraising, finance, conflict resolution, facilitation, dialogue and deliberation”. Later in the article he mentions “problem-solving” skills.

However, I question whether character building would be feasible or even possible. It may be that McMillan and I have a different definition of “character”. I think of character as honesty, integrity, respect for others. These characteristics are ingrained in children at a very young age – or should be. Teaching these attributes to adult men and women is a challenge. McMillan gives examples of the attitudes that characterize character building. These attributes illustrate what I call “communication skills.” These could indeed be taught. We can surely attempt to teach candidates, for example, to eschew confrontational approaches in favor of conversational approaches. Rather than spending most or even much of the available air space criticizing the policies of the

opponents, the candidates should be taught, in a problem-solving manner, to present their own ideas and solutions to the problems at hand. It would be useful for the candidates to learn how to diffuse attacks by humor and calm responses. A skill-set in consensus-building and becoming adept at conflict resolution is also very important, as McMillan notes.

McMillan talks about Emotional Intelligence and means, apparently, what I mean by emotional maturity. He questions whether it would be easier to “make it more attractive for those with a high level of emotional intelligence to seek leadership positions within the party” than to try to teach these traits. I would reply with a resounding Yes!

Many factors contribute to emotional maturity, among them are early environment, genetic inheritance, and life experiences – specifically the response to such experiences and the lessons learned from them. For adults who are teachable, some aspects of emotional maturity can be taught. Anger management is one of these. Many courses have been designed for this purpose and courts often mandate the completion of such instruction as a condition for parole for abusive spouses. Nevertheless, I agree with McMillan that a better option for Greens would be to select candidates who are emotionally mature rather than attempt to deal with emotionally immature adults.

A branch of this Institute must deal with creativity. Our approach would be to motivate persons to nurture their innate creativity and carve out spaces in their lives for its expression. The Green Party will be a more vibrant and successful party if we incorporate the fine arts and performing arts in every aspect of our being and campaigns.

But creativity is not limited to cultural arts. Creative problem-solving is a skill that could and should be taught in the Green Leadership Institute. McMillan mentioned the contentious Steering Committee meetings. National Green Party list-serves continue to exhibit dysfunctional behavior. Even our face-to-face meetings reveal such behavior, though the recent one in Alfred, New York, August 4-7, 2011 was remarkably free of it. To begin to see problems as opportunities to find creative solutions might alleviate some of the bickering and nitpicking that has become discouragingly common in Green discourse.

I salute Brent McMillan and the Green Horizon Magazine for addressing the issue regarding the U.S. Green Party’s relation to leaders in our ranks. I hope much discussion will ensue and result in changes within the GPUS.



BARBARA RODGERS-HENDRICKS

member of the Green Party of Florida, was a principal founder of the Green Politics Network, a precursor of the Green Party of the U.S. She was candidate for U.S. Representative from the first district of Florida in 1992. She is a retired educator and counselor and lives in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida.



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