

# New Options

February 27, 1989

Issue No. Fifty-six

## Affordable Housing: Laying the Groundwork

Since the mid-1960s, the percentage of personal income we're spending on housing has increased nearly 50%. And yet, for the first time ever, most young Americans can't afford to buy homes. Soaring rents are pushing the "working poor" into the ranks of the homeless.

What can be done? Let me tell you a Washington secret: Behind all the brave rhetoric, nobody really knows.

Recently the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs published *A New National Housing Policy*, a 1,000 page book consisting entirely of recommendations from organizations "concerned about" the housing crisis. Among them, they propose expenditures of well over a trillion dollars! And yet, even the best of their proposals would merely *ameliorate* the housing crisis. Many would render us dependent on housing subsidies without end.

Right now, people like Jack Kemp and Jesse Jackson are gearing up to do battle over whose housing subsidies (aka "tax expenditures," aka "universal operating grants") are Kinder and Gentler. It'll keep the fur flying . . . and the cameras going.

However, those of us who'd build a humane, sustainable society know that it won't do simply to spend more money. The housing market itself needs to be changed, and desperately needs to be fit into a context that honors such values as fiscal responsibility, social justice and ecological wisdom.

### Land prices are key

There's one big question nobody seems to be asking: *Why* are housing costs soaring?

Recently we spoke with Walter Rybeck, president of the Center for Public Dialogue, former special assistant for urban policy to Wisconsin Rep. Henry Reuss, and—psst!—follower of Henry George's economic theories. It didn't take Rybeck long to demonstrate that the major factor in soaring housing costs is, by far, soaring land prices.

"Over the past two decades," Rybeck told

NEW OPTIONS, "the Consumer Price Index has been rising at 12% a year. Wages [for construction workers] have been rising at 11-15% annually. Construction costs for both frame and brick residences have risen 12.5% since 1970. Mortgage costs have risen at an average rate of less than 4% a year.

"However, from 1956-81 (the latest available year) the market value of vacant lots increased 64% a year!"

### By George

If land prices are the major factor in housing costs, then getting control of land prices would appear to be the major factor in providing affordable housing.

Many innovative, decentralist/globally responsible housing activists have been focusing on how to hold down land prices. Like Rybeck, more and more of them are rediscovering Henry George (1839-1897), probably the most original major American economist until Herman Daly (#44).

Like Daly, George has been ignored by establishment and left-wing economists alike. His ideas don't fit onto the old left-right spectrum. His contemporary, Karl Marx, called him "the capitalists' last ditch," partly no doubt because George's book *Progress and Poverty* (1879) was even more widely read—by working people—than Marx's books.

*Progress and Poverty* argued that land should be taxed heavily, buildings and improvements not at all.

### Two-rate property tax

Over the last month, we've talked with two of the most distinguished neo-Georgist economists: Rybeck (cited above) and Steven Cord, president of the Center for the Study of Economics. Both make their living in part as consultants to state and local governments (Cord is even dialoguing with Jamaica's new government). Both helped 10 Pennsylvania cities implement a modest version of George's

land value tax.

"Under the current property tax," Cord told NEW OPTIONS, "land and . . . buildings are subject to the same tax rate. I would just subject the land to a higher tax rate and the buildings to a lower tax rate.

"When I go into Pennsylvania cities, I say to them, just have two tax rates in the property tax instead of one, with a higher rate on land and a lower rate on buildings. [Start at a ratio of two-to-one or three-to-one, and] spread the rates apart in future years as you see fit."

### God & society does it

How does Cord justify taxing land more and buildings less? "All land rent is exploitation," the mild-mannered, very pro-business Cord told NEW OPTIONS. "If the whole Gross National Product is produced by workers and investors, what is left for a landowner to claim?"

Rybeck couldn't agree more. "I've boiled land values down to three basic things," he told us.

"One is *nature, or God*. [Nature gives us] scenic vistas, and the fertility of the soil, and access to water, and coal in the ground. . . .

"The second thing that gives land value is *people*. Just the presence of population. . . .

"The third thing is *government*—public works and public services. An area with well-paved streets, or good schools, becomes worth more than an area without. . . .

"So landowners [make money not because they've produced anything, but because of] nature and society. And to collect those land values—as [even] Adam Smith said—does not take away anything that the landowner *owns*."

"Land has got to be privately owned," Cord told us. "Nobody really wants to attack private ownership of land. But we can [recapture community-created land values] by collecting the rental income from land in taxation."

### Nine easy pieces

The land value tax "is a wonderful tax to adjust to," says Cord. "The usual tax just pro-

duces revenues. This tax produces revenues and promotes economic [vitality]."

Among the things it would do:

- **Reduce land prices.** "The reason it brings prices down," says Rybeck, "is that what you pay for a piece of land is determined by how much it [is expected to] bring in to you." And a land value tax would lower the expected rate of return.

- **Curtail land speculation.** "The cost of holding land out of use, or in an inefficient use, would be [much] greater with a land value tax," says Cord. "[You'd] have to use land more efficiently."

- **Increase production and rehabilitation of housing.** As it is now, says Rybeck, "those who build, renovate and maintain housing are penalized" through higher taxes on buildings and improvements; while "those who let houses fall into disrepair are financially rewarded with lower taxes. . . . Those who completely waste precious resources by tearing down housing or by holding housing sites out of use get the biggest tax breaks of all." Shifting taxes from buildings to land would reverse that sequence.

- **Lower sale prices of homes.** Pittsburgh is the only big U.S. city that's implemented a land value tax (albeit a modest one). In 1988, the average sale price of a Baltimore home was \$124,000; a St. Louis home, \$96,000; a Pittsburgh home, \$51,000.

- **Lower rents.** "Un-tax buildings and they will be cheaper to build and maintain," says Cord. That would lower rents.

- **Reduce property taxes for homeowners.** "If you switch taxes off buildings onto land," says Cord, "then most homeowners will pay less in [total] property taxes. . . . Anywhere from 65% to 80% would pay less, it would vary from community to community."

- **Rejuvenate center cities.** "Hearts of cities [would be] rejuvenated," says Rybeck, "[since the land value tax] discourages owners from holding prime sites idle," or using them as parking lots, etc.

- **Protect the countryside.** "By taxing land more, buildings less, urban land would be used more efficiently," says Cord. "The urge to spill and sprawl over the surrounding countryside would be considerably reduced."

- **Promote sane transportation.** If we cut down on urban sprawl, we could move much more easily to transportation systems based on trolley cars, pedal power and foot power (see NEW OPTIONS #52).

### Three glitches

We thought we saw three flaws in the neo-Georgist remedy, and asked Cord and Rybeck about them.

- *Won't downtown development be heated up to a fever pitch?* "If the [free] market and the

land tax were just 'let loose,' it might destroy [certain parts of town]," says Rybeck. "[You'll definitely need zoning laws] to maintain the architecture or character of a place."

- *Won't landowners just pass the land tax on to their tenants?* "The landowner may [try to] pass the tax on," says Cord. "But how much rent can you pay? You're already paying a market rent. The land tax doesn't make the land any more desirable. . . . If the landowner charges you too much," he'll lose you as a tenant.

- *What do you say to homeowners whose property has been increasing in value?* "Say you bought your property for \$40,000 and it's now worth \$120,000," says Rybeck. "It looks very nice. And yet, if you try to capitalize on it, and sell your home to get another home of equal value and of equally good location—then you have to pay that much [again]. So it's a paper game, really.

"The other thing [I'd say] is that as these inflated prices go up and up, people with short memories or who don't know history tend to think this is the only direction [prices] can go. [Well, it isn't!]

"So to take the inflated value out of this land boom would be to ensure greater stability in the economy—not just for homeowners, but in the economy as a whole."

### The resistance

With so much going for it, why hasn't the land value tax been adopted more widely? What—or, more precisely, who—has been holding it back?

Cord fingers "the owners of downtown property, downtown land in particular. They tend to work behind the scenes and sabotage our efforts [in Pennsylvania and elsewhere]."

Rybeck says, "I think it's fair to say that if you were a land speculator or a slumlord, or a parking lot operator in [a big city], this would not be the happiest thing for you to see."

Cord: "We suspect developers would pay less with this [than they do now]. But many of them hold land which they 'bank' for future development. And they don't trust guys who talk about using land rents for public purposes. They don't cotton to us."

Rybeck: "At the top of my list I would put, not the vested interests, but just the fact that the economists and the people who've known about it have done a very poor job of educating the public."

Cord: "The average guy would pay less with a shift in taxes to land. But he doesn't know that. . . . Too often those small people stay home and sit on their hands and watch television, while the developers and speculators are out there in full force on property tax night [at city hall]."

Plus there's another barrier that Cord and

Rybeck may have been too polite to mention. Too many Georgist theorists and organizations have an air of the cult about them. Nothing can keep you from having an impact faster than that.

### Next steps

Still, with a bit of luck, "Lower Taxes to the Ground" (or, "Own Production, Not Creation") will be a rallying cry of activists in the 1990s.

Interest in the land value tax knows no ideological boundaries. Among its present-day champions are libertarians and socialists, Wesleyan University professor Robert Wood (a former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare) and black activist Chuck Turner (a key player in the movement to turn one of Boston's poorest neighborhoods into a separate city).

A mass membership organization—Common Ground USA—has just been formed to mobilize people to work for Georgist goals.

"One of our purposes is education of the populace," Marion Sapiro, membership director of Common Ground, told NEW OPTIONS.

"[Another purpose] is to get legislation introduced into every state where enabling legislation is necessary. [Most state constitutions] prevent taxing land and improvements at differing rates. . . ."

The Berkeley/Oakland and Eastern Massachusetts Greens are seeking to put the land value tax into the U.S. Greens' political platform (due this summer).

Someday soon, most Americans are going to get tired of listening to Jack Kemp and Jesse Jackson argue about how to throw money at the housing problem. Will Common Ground and the U.S. Greens then be ready to roll?

*Cord: Center for the Study of Economics, 2000 Century Plaza, #238, Columbia MD 21044.  
Rybeck: Center for Public Dialogue, 10615 Brunswick Ave., Kensington MD 20895.  
Sapiro: Common Ground USA, 1566 Monte Viento Dr., Malibu CA 90265.*

### NewOptions

NEW OPTIONS (ISSN 0890-1619) is published every month except August by New Options Inc., 2005 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., lower level, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) 822-0929.

Please address ALL correspondence to Post Office Box 19324, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Subscriptions: \$25 a year in the U.S., \$32 first-class and Canada, \$39 elsewhere. Back issues \$2 each.

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Designer/Typesetter: Baker Johnson Graphic Design, Inc.

Printer/Mailer: Newsletter Services, Inc.

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## A day at Nuclear Free America

Ever since we can remember, peace activists have been making countless demands on the federal government, few demands on anyone else. It's as if the nuclear war machine were "out there" and had nothing to do with our own lives and communities.

The nuclear free zone movement is different. It's a way for citizens and communities to take responsibility for their *own* participation in the nuclear war machine—first of all by saying "No!" to it and then by dealing with the economic and political consequences of that principled refusal.

Some cities and counties have hopped on board—but not too many. In the November elections, four more places became nuclear free zones, bringing the total number of U.S. zones to 160 (if you count a couple of communes). Three places voted not to become zones.

How capable is the movement's one national organization, Nuclear Free America (NFA)? To find out, we hop the Amtrak to Baltimore. . . .

### Inner-city comfort

The first thing you see, after you climb the stairs to the national office of NFA in a run-down part of Baltimore, are the posters. All over the fake wood walls are brilliantly colored posters from "nuclear free zones" from around the world.

Then Albert comes out to meet you. Albert Donnay, NFA's co-founder and director: A tall bearded 30-year-old with dark curly hair, blue jeans, purple-and-green checked shirt over a flannel T-shirt. Warm eyes, nice smile. *Does it always feel like Saturday in here?*

It is so comfortable. It is so generic. The huge space (three big rooms for \$250 a month), the linoleum floors, the ancient desks and chairs, even a marble sink. A xerox machine, a fax machine and two computers. And linking it all together, the loud insistent ticking of an old wall clock.

### What zones do

We ask Donnay what nuclear free zones actually *do*. "All zones ban nuclear weapons from within the jurisdiction of the zone, and many do much more." Many ban nuclear power, nuclear waste, and the transportation of nuclear or radioactive materials. Some ban nuclear-related research and keep the city or county government from doing business with firms that have nuclear weapons contracts. Some go so far as to prepare "economic conversion" plans.

"Eighty of the 160 are legally binding. That means they're in place with legislation that can

be enforced—bylaws, ordinances, charters—not mere 'resolutions.'

"We haven't discouraged resolutions. But we strongly encourage [people to work for zones that are] legally binding. And that's been the trend. Now it's 50%. A few years ago it was only 25%.

"Fourteen of the 80 include investment and/or purchasing [restrictions]. Those are among the strongest. Another half dozen or so include ongoing 'commissions' to preserve, promote, enforce and implement the zone."

*A peace office downstairs had been broken into by vandals the night before, and two city inspectors show up to tell Donnay how to secure his windows and door. One of them stares, uncomfortably, at the loud wall clock.*

### What Donnay does

"We've made a conscious effort NOT to make ourselves the focus of the nuclear free zone movement," Donnay tells us.

"This is a *grassroots* movement! We have no chapters or members—intentionally [so]. We've seen with Greenpeace and PSR the difficulty of maintaining smooth relations with [local] chapters. Chapters are always falling out of favor with national and vice-versa. [By contrast], we have a very fluid relationship [with the grassroots]. If a campaign wants our help and wants to have contact with us, here we are!"

Nuclear free zone campaigns have been choosing to have contact with Nuclear Free America ever since it started, in 1982. "I had been studying hazardous waste disposal [at Johns Hopkins University], and was facing a life of writing grant proposals to do pretty unexciting work for an industry that I couldn't stand. And I thought: might as well write grant proposals for something that I like doing."

Here are some of the things you can get from NFA:

- Expert advice over the phone;
- A 100-page "organizing packet";
- A list of all the U.S. nuclear free zones, showing the restrictions and requirements each has adopted;
- A booklet featuring articles by over a dozen NFZ organizers, summarizing the positive and negative experiences of their campaigns;
- A fun booklet featuring dozens of examples of "NFZ art" (signs, ads, logos, etc.);
- A list of all the nuclear weapons contracts and contractors *in your community*.

"We're not trying to 'send a message' to Congress," Donnay tells us. "[We're trying to

help communities frame peace] issues as *local* issues. And to take responsibility for what goes on [within their borders]."

*Donnay drives us to his house on the outskirts of Baltimore and fixes us a health food lunch. It's good. At one point he laughs and tells us the big park behind his house is known as "body park," because so many corpses are dropped off there by criminals.*

### What others say

Despite its services over the years, Nuclear Free America has been criticized by other peace organizations, overlooked by the media, and misunderstood by funders.

"A lot of the criticism we've had from the peace movement [stems] from the idea that nuclear free zones are too controversial," Donnay told us. "[They're said to] pit labor against the peace movement, [by seeming to threaten nuclear-related job opportunities]. They don't necessarily speak to the issue of conversion [of military to civilian production]."

Donnay deals with that criticism by pointing out that some nuclear free zones actually require "conversion commissions." Other free zone proponents argue that free zones can help communities *attract socially responsible businesses*, since they reflect popular concern for quality of life.

"The organization and the movement never get the publicity," Donnay told us. "The press doesn't cover us because we're not happening in Washington. We're so grassroots and decentralized. There's no nuclear free zone 'campaign' in the sense of a lobbying effort in Congress, or even a national coalition. . . ."

"When we send out a press release and say, It's the most widely-voted-upon local issue in the country, the press *still* doesn't cover it. Because there are hundreds of ballot initiatives and the one or two they pick to cover are the ones with 'color': Are we going to restore gambling in some small town. . . ."

As with the media, so with most foundations—even most "peace" foundations. "They can't accept that we have different goals [than the Washington public-interest groups]. So they think we're less successful. They don't 'get' our goal, [of NOT being the focus, but serving a decentralized network]."

*Donnay's wife is finishing her medical internship. Soon she'll be making five, six times as much money as he. He knows he doesn't want NFA to become a big, top-down organization. But having opted out of the status/money/power system, he worries what will happen to his marriage.*

### Of time and hope

We ask Donnay for his long-term vision.

"I [see] Nuclear Free America continuing to serve the nuclear free zone movement [for] as

long as there's a movement to serve.

"I see the nuclear free zone movement continuing to grow. I don't see it as suffering the same kinds of doldrums as the rest of the peace movement in Washington, post-Reagan, post-INF.

"I hope that in 10 years nuclear-free investment and purchasing will be as common as South-Africa-free investment portfolios [are today]. And I hope nuclear free zones will lead the way in institutionalizing this presence in local government of 'peace commissions,' just like the environmental movement [brought us] to the point where now it's surprising to find a local government that doesn't have somebody dealing in environmental issues. . . ."

We take a last look at the posters, and on our way out the door we hear the sharp tick-tock, tick-tock of that ancient clock.

*Donnay: Nuclear Free America, 325 E. 25th St., Baltimore MD 21218; memberships, \$10/yr.*

## Building a global people's assembly

In his recent speech to the U.N., Mikhail Gorbachev came out for a kind of global people's assembly.

"I believe," he said, "that the idea of convening on a regular basis, under the auspices of the U.N., an assembly of public organizations, deserves attention."

Few U.S. media outlets reported on that part of Gorbachev's speech. Fewer still have reported on the existence of two organizations that have long been working for the founding of a world people's assembly: the International Network for a Second U.N. Assembly, based in London and New York, and the World Constitution and Parliament Association (WCPA), based in Colorado.

Both have scheduled key conferences for 1990. Both are run by people born well before the Great Depression. Both have been endorsed by dozens of (mostly tiny) organizations worldwide.

But there's a big difference between them. The Network wants to restructure the U.N. The WCPA wants to circumvent it.

If both organizations belonged to the German Greens, the Network would surely identify with the Greens' "realist" faction, the WCPA with the "fundamentalist" faction.

### The realists

The International Network for a Second U.N. Assembly wants "the peoples of the world" to be represented in a "Second Assembly" at the U.N. (the first assembly is, of course, the General Assembly, which represents nation-

states).

In its Fourth Appeal to the U.N. General Assembly, a 10-page document issued last year (and widely circulated at the U.N. Secretariat), the Network suggested that the Second Assembly consist of people who'd be "guided only by their humankind identity, and therefore by global and regional—not national—considerations."

The Network wants each U.N. member-state to "decide on its own method of choosing" Second Assembly delegates. Among the recommended methods: election by the voting population, and election by representatives of hundreds of "people's" (peace, environmental, occupational, etc.) organizations.

Imagine the Soviet Union choosing delegates by majority vote! Imagine the U.S. turning the selection process over to its thousands of private, voluntary organizations!

Still, the Network isn't overly attached to its scheme. "The current recommendation of the Network is for a U.N. 'expert group' to judge the feasibility of [this] proposal, [and similar proposals]," Harry Lerner told NEW OPTIONS with his rough, wizened voice. Lerner, a clinical psychologist and long-time world order activist, is the Network's U.S. "convenor."

We asked Lerner how the Network got started. "It's a [project] of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, the 'PSR' of Great Britain, and part of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. . . . I've been representing them here at the U.N. for the past two years. . . ."

"We're convening an international conference in 1990 to consider [various] means of achieving more democracy at the U.N. It will be open to many organizations and [might even] work with [members of] the European Parliament. . . ."

### The fundamentalists

Philip Isely, 73, secretary-general of the World Constitution and Parliament Association, doesn't think the U.N. can be turned into anything like a world government. "It has no legislative authority whatsoever," he told NEW OPTIONS. And adding a "people's house" to the General Assembly won't add to its power one bit.

If we want a world government, Isely told NEW OPTIONS—and Isely manifestly does want world government, not world governance, world order, or other watered-down versions of the Real Thing—then we're going to have to circumvent the U.N.

Specifically, good people everywhere are going to have to produce a world constitution—and then try to get the governments of the world to ratify it. Kind of like what the framers of the U.S. Constitution did, but on a world scale.

*Continued on page six, column three . . .*

# The Eye . . .

The Eye watches people and groups that have appeared in NEW OPTIONS.

**LOCAL SUCCESSES:** Rocky Mountain Institute's **Economic Renewal Program** (#15) has brought out its long-awaited booklet, *Business Opportunities*, documenting the ways small cities and towns have been reinvigorating their economies "from within" — *without* chasing smokestacks or pushing growth-for-growth's-sake (\$20 from RMI, 1739 Snowmass Creek Rd, Snowmass CO 81654). . . . **AND GLOBAL SUCCESSES:** Linda Starke, self-effacing editor of the *State of the World* books (#51), has edited *Bankrolling Successes*, a booklet documenting 20 small-scale, inexpensive, ecological development initiatives abroad (\$6 from National Wildlife Federation, Merchandise Dept., 1400 16th St. N.W., DC 20036, item order #79960). . . .

**EYE ON EARTH:** Center for Reflection on the Second Law (#44) recently held a conference on "The Land," and released a beautifully printed "Declaration" in which the conference-goers set forth their deeply ecological beliefs about the land and some political proposals (\$1 from CFRSL, 8420 Camellia Dr., Raleigh NC 27613). . . . Marty Strange's group, Center for Rural Affairs (#55), has issued a special report, "Rural Economic Development," showing that small-scale, sustainable agriculture can save our rural communities (free from CRA, P.O. Box 405, Walthill NE 68067). . . . If you wonder why Texas Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower won the agriculture post in our Shadow Cabinet (#53), take a look at the Texas Ag Dept's unprecedented organic- and small-farm-oriented quarterly newsletter, *Grassroots* (free from Ag Dept—Regulatory Division, P.O. Box 12847, Austin TX 78711). . . .

**SHOPPING WITH VISION:** Albert Donnay (p. 3 above), Susan Meeker-Lowry (#47) and Joan Shapiro (#46) helped prepare Council on Economic Priorities' booklet *Shopping for a Better World*, a terrific shopping companion. Over 1,300 brand name products are rated on 10 crucial social issues: "women's advancement," "community outreach," "nuclear power" . . . (\$5 from CEP, 30 Irving Pl., New York NY 10003). . . . Knowledge Systems Inc. (#45) has issued a "Guidebook for the 90s" classifying books, organizations and tapes according to the Seven (New Age) Developmental Stages: "taking care of yourself," "making sense of the times," "learning to cooperate" . . . (\$2 from KSI, 7777 W. Morris St., Indianapolis IN 46231). . . .

That's an Eye-ful!

# The Ear . . .

## Good news

I have good news for the TV totalitarians, Todd Gitlin and Jerry Mander ("Breaking the Hold of Television Advertising," NEW OPTIONS #54). On every television set there is a small knob, turning or pushing which will put an instant end to the influence of television over your lives. If all else fails, most TV sets can be unplugged to get the same results.

If it's *my* life you're worrying about, take a hike.

—**Senator John McClaughry**  
*Vermont State Senate*  
*Montpelier VT, Highlands Bioregion*

## Disconcerting

The last issues have been full of good information and insights. However, in "Breaking the Hold of Television Advertising" you again follow a rather disconcerting pattern of starting with people like Mander who present a carefully argued critique, and giving the final word to those whose main credentials seem to be that they were once left-liberal but "not any more."

I don't much care what labels people use or *what* they once were. The only question is whether their argument holds water. In that respect William Leiss and Stuart Ewen, like so many others who have preferred to re-join the world of conventional wisdom, fail completely.

Mander argues that TV advertising is undemocratic, corrupt and unfair. Leiss and Ewen produce no evidence to show that this is not so. Instead they argue that it is "elitist" to suggest that "other people" are not expressing "true needs" and "genuine desire" when purchasing advertised goods.

But if the *need* is genuine, why the necessity for sophisticated commercials—instead of just information available on request?

Of course the *desire* is genuine. It was *created by advertising*, as can easily be shown by comparing different countries. How else do you explain that West European "needs" and "desires" usually follow U.S. trends with a marked time lag?

Cicero wrote that you can increase satisfaction either by increasing consumption or by reducing wants. If the might of TV advertising was used to ridicule waste and conspicuous consumption, to connect social distinction with service to the community and not with private wealth (as many traditional societies do), we would soon find out how many desires and needs are "true"!

If "the system" was sustainable, I couldn't care less how much TV other people watched and how much trash they bought—so long as I didn't have to. But the point is that such lifestyles are *not* sustainable. North Americans cannot go on using, on average, over 1,000 times as much energy as a citizen of Ruanda, without threatening the survival of the planet.

That is a fact, not radical theory, and it's the main reason why TV advertising promoting such lifestyles must be curtailed.

—**Jakob von Uexkull, M.P.**  
*European Parliament*  
*Brussels, Belgium*

## Up to us

Your article on TV advertising omitted a couple of important things. Peggy Charron's group Action for Children's Television. The National Coalition on Television Violence. And how about the Oregon Peace Institute's "Peace Channel"?

*Who says "we" can't have the TV we want?* All we have to do is (1) make it an important issue in our lives, and (2) ORGANIZE.

—**David A. White**  
*Hingham MA, Lower New Engl. Bior'n*

With regard to your recent piece on advertising, I sensed an inclination to throw the baby out with the bath water.

The tools we humans use are not in themselves good or bad; it is how we use them which determines their effect. Advertising, like television, is essentially a communications tool. That it is generally applied to selling a product is our choice, not a limitation inherent to the tool.

In its public service guise, advertising has been used to educate, inform and sell issues and initiatives for decades. From Smokey the Bear to the American Cancer Society's campaigns on the effects of smoking, advertising has generated strong, measurable public response and support on important social issues.

Until "alternative" organizations begin to recognize the realities of popular culture (including the preference for television), and begin to use the most sophisticated communications tools available to them, they will find it difficult to achieve the broad public support necessary to compel politicians to act.

—**Eric V. Cato**  
*AdS: Advertising for Survival*  
*Los Angeles CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion*

I can hardly stand to work on the ranch where I used to help milk, feed and calve because now TV dominates the house. The triviality of most of its programs—whether we resist or enjoy them—troubles all of our minds.

I really liked your issue on TV advertising.

But the more I think about it, the more the TV ads seem to be a mere drop in the bucket of all that promotes our shallow and egocentric lives.

Most Americans don't even realize that they don't have enough information to make ethical or rational choices on the big issues. I call mainstream media "news" our Government's way of advertising its policies . . . and I think that kind of advertising is "corrupt and undemocratic" too.

—**Louise Bowman**  
*Livingston MT, Rocky Mountain Bior'n*

## Realism, cont'd

Michael Marien's letter asks for realism (" . . . a base must be built around the realists, and permissiveness toward the airheads must cease," NEW OPTIONS #53).

He is right. But the question we all need to ask ourselves is what is realistic given the massive imbalances we have created in our society.

It is my sense that only a truly bold program which breaks the downward spirals in all of our systems and institutions has any chance of drawing the energy we so urgently require.

—**Robert Theobald**  
*Author, The Rapids of Change (1987)*  
*Wickenburg AZ, Sonora Bioregion*

Michael Marien's letter stands out in my mind as an example of how easily "backlash" can occur when we are inclusive.

—**Jared Scarborough**  
*Author, A Home Party Platform (1989)*  
*Payson IL, Heartland Bioregion*

## Evil and the kontras

I was mildly irritated by the Herb Walters piece ("Listening to the Contras," #49). Now that you've printed a lot of responses to it, I realize why I was irritated—and am considerably more irked.

It is quite convenient to use this "come-let-us-reason-together" line as a sanctimonious excuse for not digging in and identifying evil, then exorcising it. And I sense that motivation in some of these letters, [as well as in Walters's] silly and self-important "listening project."

—**Mark Drake**  
*Leggett CA, Shasta Bioregion*

Herb Walters's article "Listening to the Contras" is a very needed contribution. I would go even further than he, however.

He encourages the effort "to understand and seek out the best in all sides, even while denouncing the wrongdoing of all sides." I agree, but we need to understand and identify with the evil, also. We need to acknowledge and accept our dark sides and connect with the evil

in others—or that denied and denigrated evil will continue to fester and erupt in new pogroms and holocausts.

I have had clients who have killed in the past or battered in the past who wish not to do so again. I can help them only by joining with them in both the choice not to do so again *and* in a deep understanding of why they did so before and why they'll always be conscious of that as an option again.

—**Mallory Crawford**

*Creative Counseling Services*

*W. Hartford CT, Lower New Engl. Bior'n*

## Talk radio II

No, I'm not going to apologize for my anti-New Age, anti-"humanistic" diatribes. I've known enough suffering at the hands of those jerks to demand as much blood revenge as possible. Anti-spiritual? Too bad. . . .

As far as I'm concerned most of the counter-culture is just as f--ed up as the mainstream culture, more self-righteous, that's for sure. Man, don't let me in the same room with such fascists as Stephen Gaskin, Dave Foreman and Marilyn Ferguson! I wouldn't be able to contain my impulse to choke them! . . .

Maybe all this solitary anti-New Age rage and disgust is a preliminary to some liberation. I hope so, because if something doesn't break in the near future, this fellow is going to end it by some means of direct self-destruction (also known as suicide). One less subscription for you.

—**Name withheld by editor**

*Montreal, Quebec*

My continuing impression of NEW OPTIONS's slant is that it is still fixed in Mark Satin's elitist, enlightened, idealistic, foolish vision—that of the 1960s New Left.

Too bad y'all aren't honest and bold enough to respond to the needs of real people, and adapt to that reality.

—**Bob Cohen**

*Pine Lake GA, Piedmont Bioregion*

The question you always seem to be struggling with is, "How are we going to move beyond a small, intellectual forum to the masses who are democratically able to effect change?"

The only answer I can think of is, With celebrities—which has become the American way of politically dealing with the common people.

It's a shame. But that's the way it is.

—**Heydon Buchanan**

*Los Angeles CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion*

NEW OPTIONS is increasingly important and it is because of your MIND. Many people really do not understand that the brain is not the MIND. I have a wonderful older son. He

can't drink at all—he can't stop—and believes it's a sickness. I think it was what his parents did to him when he was little and we were know-nothings. No use discussing anything of a spiritual nature with him—he's an atheist. His father was a Freudian (atheist) from whom I am divorced. . . .

—**Marion Wylie**

*Oakland CA, Shasta Bioregion*

Nowhere in your publication has there been material relating to the frauds perpetrated on the citizenry of our Republic in the year of infamy 1913. . . .

—**Roy Hookanson**

*Van Nuys CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion*

Here is an important piece which was not touched on by either of the 1988 presidential candidates, or by NEW OPTIONS #53. Please publish it:

Affirmative action is racial discrimination.

It is racial discrimination against White people on a massive scale. . . .

Our civil rights must be respected too! Our loved ones deserve good, safe schools and clean, safe neighborhoods, not the blackboard jungles and violent crime that forced integration has wrought. . . .

The NAAWP will win back our civil rights! No matter how long it takes, no matter what sacrifices we must make, we shall rededicate America to the vision of our founding fathers [and] the spirit and principles of Western Civilization. . . .

—**Comrade Robert L. Jones**

*Nashville TN, Cumberland Bioregion*

I appreciate your newsletters. Especially in the book reviews, your comments are quite revealing of those with awareness who resist the plunge into fundamental personal change. "But I know people whom it can speak to, and I'm buying them copies for Christmas" — a line from your review of Linda Marks's *Living With Vision* (#54)—is the stereotypical paraphrase of this stance.

All of your research into what it will take to change the world leads to one inescapable conclusion: "For the world to change, I must change." But then those who ask you to change are too "precious" (as you put it in your Marks review), maybe too religious or spiritual, too something. So you find another excuse for coping out of the real adventure of our time or any time, and your "fortress" gains another layer of armor.

—**John Stubbs**

*North York, Ontario, Canada*

Die, hippie, die.

—**Unsigned**

*Brooklyn NY, Hudson Valley Bioregion*

Continued from page four:

That's the goal of the World Constitution and Parliament Association, and it's come a long way since its founding in 1958. It claims members in 60 countries. Its "executive cabinet" now includes Ramsey Clark, a former U.S. Attorney-General; Rashmi Mayur, India's world-class futurist; and former cabinet members from Australia, Nepal and Nigeria.

All through the 1960s and 70s the Association was drafting a World Constitution (thousands of people worked on it before it was finally adopted at the Association's second World Constituent Assembly, in Austria in 1977). Ever since, it's been trying to get governments to ratify the Constitution.

"We anticipated a rather rapid campaign to achieve ratification," Isely told NEW OPTIONS. "This did not ensue. . . . [Now we've decided] it would be desirable to convene, in 1990, another session of the World Constituent Assembly."

Delegates to the 1990 Assembly can be (duly chosen) representatives of cities, (duly chosen) representatives of organizations or just plain individuals, so long as they get 700 signatures on a (pre-approved) petition. Other restrictions may apply.

## A touch of realpolitik

We admire Isely's insistence on the need for an effective world parliament. And we hear him when he tells us, with great pain his voice, "Theoretically, [the U.N. Charter] might be amended under the provisions of Articles 108 and 109. But since 1955 there's been no review conference called. . . ."

Still, we think the future lies more with Harry Lerner and the "realists" of the International Network for a U.N. Second Assembly.

For one thing, the Network has out-foxed the U.N. Charter. "There is no possibility of a veto of our plan," Lerner told NEW OPTIONS, "because it does not require amending the Charter! Under Article 22 the General Assembly can develop any agencies or organs required to help it" do its work. And the Second Assembly could be construed as a helpmeet of the General Assembly.

Moreover, Isely's approach has built-in limitations of its own. "It rules out the U.N.," says Lerner. "And anything which can be construed as bypassing or undercutting the U.N. would be opposed by the governments. And all these proposals need the endorsement of governments."

*Lerner: International Network for a U.N. Second Assembly, 301 E. 45th St., #20-B, New York NY 10017. Isely: World Constitution and Parliament Association, 1480 Hoyt St., #31, Lakewood CO 80215.*

## Lewy, Fager: what peace movement?

Dear Guenter Lewy,

Like millions of Americans, I considered myself part of the peace movement in the 1960s—and like many, perhaps most, of those folks, I have a hard time identifying with the peace movement today.

For years I fantasized about writing a book that would explore my/our ambivalences. And I know others who've wanted to write that book. But something always got in our way: the emotionally wrenching research it would entail . . . the friends we'd lose. . . .

Now you come along, a retired professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts and a well-known *defender* of the Vietnam war . . . hardly a person most activists would look to for advice . . . and you write that book for us: *Peace and Revolution, The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism* (Eerdmans, \$20).

I don't know whether to laugh or cry.

Like any good academic, you've done your homework, and the book is brimming with concrete examples of how four pacifist organizations became—too often—apologists for violence, Marxism-Leninism, “democratic centralism,” and all the rest of it. In vast and gory detail, you tell us what was said at meetings and in letters; you go on and on about the sometimes savage pressures that were brought to bear on non-socialist activists. For anyone who was ever part of the peace movement, your book has the unmistakable ring of truth.

But you use your mountains of evidence to convict and condemn, rather than explain, explore and call us to a better path.

How do you expect most activists to hear you? How many of us will even try?

### Lewy's way

You focus on the four “major” pacifist organizations: American Friends Service Committee, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and War Resisters' League. You cover them from their founding during or just after World War I right up to the present.

The period until the mid-60s, you argue, was a time “when pacifists were pacifist.” All four organizations were deeply committed to nonviolence as a moral imperative (not just a strategy); all four rejected “revolutionary” violence, not just U.S. violence; all four were committed to multi-party democracy and refused to cooperate with those, like Communists, who favored one-party rule.

But in the 1960s, you argue, under the impact of the Vietnam war, all four pacifist organiza-

tions moved away from those basic commitments. Most conspicuously, they moved away from support for a ceasefire and free elections in Vietnam and *toward* support for a Viet Cong military victory. They rejected cooperation with the pacifist, Buddhist “third force” in Vietnam (almost certainly a numerical majority) in favor of cooperation with the National Liberation Front.

To this day, you argue, all four “pacifist” organizations have continued to sympathize more with violent revolution abroad than with nonviolent, third force-oriented struggles. You detail how long it took for the pacifist organizations to extend even sympathy to the Vietnamese boat people. And to recognize the horrors of Pol Pot's Cambodia. And to print anything critical about Fidel Castro. And so on and on.

One of the great contributions of your book is to describe the struggles of many pacifist activists *against* the dominant trends in the pacifist movement. Some real heroes emerge from your pages, people who deserve to be much better known: people like Dan Seeger of the AFSC, Al Hassler of the FOR, Dorothy Hutchinson of the WILPF and Charles Bloomstein of the WRL.

Summing up, you argue for consistency. It won't do, you say, for us to urge nonviolence on the bad guys but look the other way when our heroes pick up the gun. And you say we must, absolutely must, take responsibility for the *consequences* of our actions. If an “anti-war” movement would, in effect, permit a Hitler to take power—or a Pham Van Dong—then it is incumbent on us to do something other than launch an anti-war movement.

### Fager's way

Over the last few months your book has been the target of much criticism, some of it very un-peaceful, from the peace movement. But it's also inspired some painfully honest searching. Both kinds of essays—the critical and the self-critical—have been collected in Chuck Fager's stimulating anthology on the response to your book, *Quaker Service at the Crossroads* (Kimo Press, P.O. Box 1361, Falls Church VA 22041, \$13 pbk).

Fager is a well-known journalist and activist, as well as editor of a delightful Quaker newsletter, *A Friendly Letter* (same address).

Of the essays by your critics, Elise Boulding's is easily the most persuasive. Boulding, author of *Building a Global Civic Culture* (#52), argues that there were—and are—“dupes” on

both sides of the peace debate; that the mistakes made by peace activists are, by and large, the mistakes of love; and that we've got to remember that we're all facing a degree of turmoil and diversity in the world that none of us knows quite how to handle.

The essays basically supporting you cover many topics, but keep coming back to one question: Why has socialism become such a dominant presence in the peace movement?

Kenneth Boulding—Elise's husband—argues that it has a lot to do with white middle-class guilt.

Jack Powelson, Quaker expert on the Third World, argues it's because most of us don't really in our heart of hearts think there's any alternative to “revolutionary socialism,” other than being an “imperialist.”

Fager argues it's because an “organizers' subculture” of socialist-leaning peace workers grew out of the 1960s—careerists who give each other jobs in the peace movement just like certain older white male sports executives give each other jobs.

### A real peace movement

Guenter Lewy, you regret—you bitterly resent—that the peace movement has been infused with the agenda of the traditional left. But too often you seem to be wishing for just the opposite: that the peace forces identify with the political right. Don't you see that that just feeds in to many activists' conviction that violent revolution and American imperialism are the only games in town?

If I'd fulfilled my fantasy and written a book like yours, I'd have said that we don't even *have* a peace movement in this country. We have a socialist movement that presents itself in the guise of a peace movement. (I could have used my piece on the SANE/FREEZE conference, in #54, as Exhibit A.)

Next, I'd have asked the peace/socialist movement to be more forthright about its political goals. But I wouldn't (I hope) have infused my presentation with your bitterness. In fact, I think it's a good thing there are socialists in this country. I think we have a lot to learn from them—just as much as we have to learn from you.

Then, I'd have urged that we recognize there is a *second* alternative political movement in this country: the Green or New Age or transformational movement.

Finally, I'd have urged that both socialists and Greens (and liberals and conservatives and . . .) get together and create a genuine peace movement. A movement that focuses on reconciliation and healing, rather than on defining the “correct” political forces in international disputes. A movement that insists on nonviolence as a moral imperative . . . and as the only way to get us to a qualitatively better world.

## Ornstein & Ehrlich: the mind's the thing

Traditional political writers tend to blame our problems on the failure of one or more of our basic *institutions* (capitalism, democracy, the family, etc.). Given the failure of such writers to provide a convincing explanation for our present-day problems, it's not surprising that many current analysts are looking for deeper and less conventional explanations.

Take Robert Ornstein and Paul Ehrlich. According to their new book, *New World, New Mind* (Doubleday, \$19), our problems have mostly to do with the fact that the "human mental system" is no longer in synch with the real world.

A very unconventional thesis—but if anyone can argue it successfully, these two authors can. Ornstein is a well-known expert on the human brain; Ehrlich is a well-known expert on the biological sciences and co-author of the first great textbook on the global environment.

### Out of synch

Our minds no longer mesh with the world, the authors claim, because our mind is "impressed" only by *dramatic* changes. That may have been appropriate thousands of years ago, but not now; not when our greatest dangers consist of *gradual* changes—the steady buildup of nuclear weapons, say, or the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

We want to fight or flee immediately when we perceive threats. Pretty appropriate, for hunter-gatherers. But our greatest threats today are chronic problems—the carnage on our highways, the increasingly severe environmental consequences of open-ended economic growth.

For thousands of years, our basic response to a phenomenon was to ask, "What does this mean to me?" Today that response won't do.

### "New-mindedness"

The authors' prescription flows inexorably from their analysis. We might or might not need to change our institutions; but we desperately need to "change the way we perceive the world [and] the way that humanity thinks." We need to speed up "cultural evolution" by educating for "new-mindedness."

Ornstein and Ehrlich put plenty of flesh on those very haute New Age terms. They'd do everything from producing "a cleverly crafted series of Saturday morning cartoons" to setting up a government-run "foresight institute." Above all they'd alter the school curriculum to emphasize "how fragile our modern world is and how easily it can change."

It's not difficult to poke holes in this book.

There's nothing objective about the authors' concept of "new-mindedness," and sometimes it transparently reflects their own pet preferences, as when they claim that schools should de-emphasize "the classics." There's too little attention given to what we'd be consciously evolving *toward*—as if new minds had less need of ultimate purpose than old minds.

Still, the book is tremendously stimulating, and it puts many decentralist/globally responsible ideas in a non-threatening, just-plain-common-sense framework that should make it easier for some people to hear them. Let's wish it a long shelf life.

## Childs: two kinds of social movements

What is the difference between traditional socialist political movements and the newer Green or communitarian movements?

One crucial difference has been identified and beautifully clarified by black sociologist John Childs in his new book, *Leadership, Conflict, and Cooperation in Afro-American Social Thought* (Temple Univ. Press, \$28).

According to Childs, all Afro-American social thought fits into one of two "perspectives" or "world views": the Vanguard perspective or the perspective of Mutuality.

In the Vanguard perspective, "There is within society a dominant center [e.g., culture, the economy, technology] from which all else flows. To make positive basic changes, it is necessary to understand and control this center. . . . The masses are a dull blade that the Vanguard must sharpen and wield as the sword of liberation. . . . [The goal is] the creation of a closed social movement within which the guidelines of the leading group are faithfully followed."

The perspective of Mutuality is dramatically different. "[It] resembles the Renaissance world of Giordano Bruno, who saw the universe as a complex of many worlds that has no one center. . . . Everyone has the capacity for conscious analysis and the envisioning of a better world. . . . [The goal is] not to develop a leading group, [but] to expand the mutual recognition and interaction of a multitude of groups."

### World views in action

Childs runs many of black America's leading social thinkers through this schema, and the results are startling. Some early 20th century figures who are well-known for *disagreeing* with each other—Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, the editors of a radical socialist magazine and the contributors to a manifesto of the New York black literati—all turn out to *share* fundamental Vanguard convictions.

On the other hand, some of the most unjustly neglected black social thinkers of that era—people like anthropologist George Ellis and cultural historian Arthur Schomburg—turn out to have had one big thing in common: they were Mutualists through and through.

In recent times, says Childs, Vanguard organizations have included the Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Party; Mutualist groups, SNCC (in its early days) and the SCLC (in its Martin Luther King days). The Rainbow Coalition *could* be Mutualist, but like Marcus Garvey's group in the 1920s, it's being pulled in a Vanguard direction because of its tendency to focus on the ideas and goals of "one person, and to marginalize the significant efforts of many people."

This is a gem of a book, not just for its wisdom and clarity but for the delightfulness of many individual passages—such as the one where Childs finds that "the improvisational moment" in jazz is a crystalline example of Mutuality.

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Washington, D.C. 20036

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Issue No. Fifty-six