

# NewOptions

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Issue No. Seventy

## You Don't Have to Be a Baby to Cry

This country is more than ready for a post-liberal, post-socialist, Greenish political party. Nearly everybody now knows (on some level of their being) that we can't go on this way: we can't keep piling up debt, we can't keep destroying the environment, we can't keep ignoring the Third World, we can't keep relying on growth to solve our problems and technology to shape our future.

For the last seven years, this newsletter has paid special attention to the U.S. Green movement (see esp. #8, 40 and 60). I thought that it would be out of this scruffy but idealistic grouping that a powerful new party — counterpart to the successful Green parties of Europe — would come.

I guess you could say my political choices reflected my life choices. When I was growing up lonely and unhappy in a small Minnesota town, I made a sacred commitment to myself. My life would not be about chasing power and privilege (like I imagined my father had done), but would be about discovering life-giving new ways of doing things — on every level.

This month I attended the third national Green Gathering, at a YMCA camp in the Colorado Rockies, and what I saw shook my confidence in the U.S. Greens as a credible, competent vehicle for change. It also made me reassess my life choices. Did I really mean to exchange power for powerlessness, privilege for marginality?

### **Shall we begin?**

When Matthew Gilbert was in seventh grade, he had what may have been the prototypical Green experience, the *Catcher in the Rye* experience. He suddenly realized how different he was from most of his classmates — and it made him very sad.

Now, many years later, he looked out from the podium at nearly 200 Green delegates and felt stretched out, exhausted. As head of the site committee he was the person who'd done

most to pull off the Gathering, and for months he'd been looking forward to making inspiring remarks at the opening session. But now that he was up there, his words betrayed a kind of foreboding: "Try to find the space inside of you that's calm. . . . We may have differences of opinion, but let's remember, we are really all friends here. . . ."

Gilbert was followed to the podium by an intense, wiry redhead from Auburn, Ala., whose bearing contrasted sharply with the laid-back image cultivated by most Green women and nearly all Green men. There is such an avoidance of hierarchy in the Greens, and such an avoidance of information that might suggest a hierarchy, that few of them knew that the speaker, Christa Slaton, was an accomplished political scientist with a book on 21st century democracy, *The Televote Experiments*, about to be published.

What they did know was that Slaton was head of the Greens' platform-writing committee, and that she'd performed heroically in that role for over a year, coordinating input from dozens of chapters nationwide. Since one of the three main tasks of this Green Gathering was to re-write the platform and set up a process for ratifying it, they listened to her intently.

On the surface, it was a rah-rah kind of speech, but many Greens noticed a tone of annoyance, even exasperation, as when she emphasized that facilitating the Greens' platform-writing process was "one of the most difficult things I've done in my life," or when she said the thing that "kept me going" was there were so many "good souls here." More than a few Greens wondered what was going on under Slaton's superenthusiastic exterior.

In fact, she was seething. In her local Green groups she'd noticed that many Greens liked to tear down other people's work, but few liked to actually do the work. Now she felt the pattern was repeating itself on the national level. For months she'd been

barraged by criticisms from people who were barely part of the platform-writing process . . . and now there they were, out in the audience, hoping to subvert the work she'd been devoting herself to so assiduously.

Out in the audience, other people were seething. For months they'd heard Slaton respond to their criticisms by moaning about how overworked and good and giving she was. Now she was doing it again, they felt — at the national Gathering, no less — and they weren't going to stand for it.

The most memorable speaker after Slaton was Danny Moses, an editor at Sierra Club Books whose inspirational speeches and calm, centered presence had helped keep the Greens on track through their previous national Gatherings.

This time his inspirational speech contained a few new twists. He characterized our national leaders as vicious, greedy fools. And he claimed that — because of their spiritual understandings and sense of solidarity — the Greens were among the "Real People" (a concept he borrowed from the Iroquois). Not surprisingly, he received a standing ovation.

I didn't stand. Despite my respect for Moses, I felt the vicious-fools-and-Real-People bit was dangerously arrogant.

I remembered telling myself how Special I was when I worked for various embattled and ineffective organizations. It helped keep me going. But it also helped keep me from being able to reach people.

Because of its rootedness in an Iroquois sensibility, Moses's speech foreshadowed the second great task of the Gathering — figuring out how to relate to Native Americans, African Americans and other "minorities."

### **"Bureaucrat's heaven"**

The third great task was to restructure the organization.

Literally from the day after the Greens were founded in 1984, they had been meeting

to restructure themselves. Several restructurings had already taken place. But by the summer of 1990 everyone wanted to restructure the organization again.

The Interregional Committee (IC), the Greens' vehicle for ongoing national coordination, had become a "bureaucrat's heaven and an activist's nightmare," according to one open letter signed by nine Green activists, "torturous marathons trying to reach consensus on administrative trivia while the issues of the day go unaddressed." In another missive, Charles Betz — co-author of one of the restructuring proposals — observed that "The [last] IC had only 10 voting representatives [present] out of a possible total of 70!"

The Greens didn't build much time for restructuring into their formal agenda. But dozens of Greens who cared deeply about the issue met several times to try to work out their differences. I attended the first of these meetings, a marathon late-night session in the lounge of one of the lodges.

When I walked in, they were debating the wisdom of having the Gathering vote on some restructuring proposals that had already been drawn up.

Dee Berry, former clearinghouse coordinator for the Greens, said she didn't feel that the proposals really came from the grassroots. She wanted a new restructuring committee.

Lauren Sargent, of the Michigan Greens, said we needed a decent structure *now*. "I'd hate for us to initiate another whole process now. Our organization is falling apart!"

Charlie Betz said he wasn't comfortable presenting his restructuring proposal to the delegates because the clearinghouse unaccountably failed to send it to the local chapters in advance of the Gathering.

Berry and Sargent argued over who should be on a new restructuring committee.

Nicholas Dykema, a community organizer from Ohio, said he didn't believe how difficult the Greens were making things. We should simply have the Gathering vote on the restructuring proposals that were before us. "If I described this [process] to any progressive group in the country," he added, "they'd laugh me out of the room."

Karen Tucker, of the Maine Greens, passionately defended the process. Each local group needs to feel that they own the process, she said. And that sense of ownership will make this organization more powerful in the long run. She wanted to send the restructuring proposals back to the locals.

Round and round they went — for hours that night, and the next night, too. On the last day of the Gathering, the plenary elected a new 10-person committee to launch a new restructuring process.

I wish the new process well. But after seven years I cannot take it altogether seriously. The Greens don't even have by-laws yet, or a fund-raising capacity, or an accountable leadership structure. Something more fundamental than process or knowledge must be holding them back.

I suspect it has something to do with many Greens' mistrust of — name one — expertise/hierarchy/efficiency/rules/power/worldly success.

I've been Pure before. It's pretty satisfying. But it's more important to be effective in the world.

### Something beautiful?

The Greens began writing their platform in 1985. The effort fizzled, but took off again in earnest two years later, and now, at the Gathering, 23 sections of the platform were to be given their final re-writes before presenting them for ratification to the locals.

The Greens broke up into small groups to consider each of the sections. I spent an enjoyable afternoon drifting in and out of them.

Like most of the groups, "Life Forms and Animal Rights" met in a small log cabin. The 15 delegates began by taking turns identifying their favorite animals, personal heroes, and earliest memories. Then someone suggested they choose a spokesperson by having everyone stand up and put their hands on the shoulders of the person they preferred. Several people objected, and a long discussion about process followed.

The "Social Justice" group took up the issue of decriminalization of drugs. A couple of people spoke up for outright decriminalization. But then Kwazi Nkrumah, a black participant from California, said we needed to "transform our culture" first, and that if we just "took the lid off" things might go from bad to worse.

Nkrumah's forceful speech effectively ended people's willingness to consider decriminalization of all drugs. Nobody spoke up to explain and defend the views of such prominent Greenish advocates of decriminalization as Andrew Weil, Lester Grinspoon and Joseph Galiber (a politician from the Bedford-Stuyvesant ghetto).

Then someone from Santa Cruz said he felt very strongly that marijuana should be legalized. That was batted around for a while ("the public will kill us!" one woman said) and a rather timid version of legalization of marijuana — permitting it to be grown but not sold — was drafted to everyone's satisfaction.

You couldn't fault the Greens for their sincerity, or their willingness to take each other's views into account. But watching their exercise in platform-writing left me feeling both sad and angry.

For 20 years, Greenish scholars and experts have been addressing public policy issues. For the most part, their ideas have been ignored by the mainstream press — and even by the left press. They desperately need a forum, and manifestly deserve one.

The Green platform will fall far short of being that forum. Most of the Greens at the Gathering just didn't have the background to bring the best, freshest Green thinking to the table; truth be told, most of them were better versed in left-wing thought than in Green thought; and of course, Greens would never think of inviting "experts" (even their own experts) to do some of their work for them. That smacks too much of hierarchy and (gasp!) elitism.

There is something beautiful about letting anyone who wants to help write a platform, do so. It is a kind of democracy that even Jefferson never dreamed of. But it is a mistake to confuse that kind of loveliness with crafting a political movement.

### A plenary explodes

The day after the small group sessions, all 200 Greens met in plenary session to discuss and vote on the platform.

The plenary got off to a rocky start, so Margo Adair, champion of mediation and meditation who'd been with the Greens through all three Gatherings, led them in a mass meditation: "Note that particular quality inside you where you can be true to yourself, true to your commitment. . . ."

Then each of the 23 platform planks were briefly discussed, and voted up or down (a 25% vote was sufficient to vote a plank down).

The discussions were even more superficial than those in the small groups — the severe time constraints saw to that. On the other hand, the discussions were at least as full of vim and vigor.

For example, during the discussion on the

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## Groups

Technology plank someone got up and said, "I'd be *ashamed* of showing this to anybody — it doesn't address dozens of issues we need to address!" Someone else attacked the plank for being "too anthropocentric." Other wild haymakers were thrown. Then someone got up and cried, "We're dissipating the process of our work. All these objections could have been raised *anytime during the last two years!*"

All this enthusiasm was broken when Christa Slaton announced that every plank passed at the Gathering would go back to the locals — and Lauren Sargent rose to object. She wanted the material to go back to each of the individual members of the Greens.

Slaton was at the breaking point. Listen, she said, I've had a lot of experience here. Greens have a lousy track record meeting deadlines, and sending the material to individuals for their input is just absurd!

Every Green who'd felt manipulated or slighted by Slaton was at the edge of their seats. One young Green yelled at her to not "get so violently emotional!" Another Green stood up and rather emotionally told her he felt the group was being talked down to.

Slaton was on the verge of tears. I felt so good until two minutes ago, she said. I feel so wonderful about the overwhelming spirit that's been here. I just wish more of you would appreciate what so many of us have done to this point!

Inside her, things were churning. She'd grown up in small Southern towns. Her father was a truck driver, her mother sometimes worked in factories. She was the only person on either side of her family who'd ever attended college. Everything she'd ever achieved, she felt, was a result of extraordinary persistence and grit.

She was aware of the Greens' pattern of trashing anybody and everybody who tried to take on a leadership role. But she felt that, well, if she really worked extra hard, just like she'd always done, and sent out lots of mailings, and answered every letter and phone call — *then* every Green would feel like they were really a part of the process. And everyone would be content.

Now she felt overwhelmed, undone. Nothing she did was enough! By the time she'd arrived in Colorado she was sleeping four hours a night! Every day at least 10 people would come to her with their "demands" — and each of them swore that their perspective was the overwhelming view of the grassroots! And now they were implying she'd been undemocratic and elitist! It was really more than she could bear.

Inside Lauren Sargent, things were churning too. She couldn't believe Slaton was continuing to take all this so personally!

Sargent had grown up in Grosse Pointe, Mich., the daughter of a psychiatrist father and psychologist mother, and at night they'd sit around the dinner table and drink coffee and argue. And isn't that how you worked things out in this world? And weren't the Greens a family?

For months she'd been trying to get Slaton to adopt what her local Green group thought of as a more sustainable process — one that would keep Slaton from having to run herself into the ground. She gave her one good argument after another. And now she felt Slaton saw her as an enemy! It saddened her.

The whole scene saddened me, too.

For *seven years* the Greens had been saying they were moving so slow because they — unlike other political groups — were committed to treating their members as Human Beings. They'd introduced dozens of processes, from consensus decision-making to the hokey-pokey, to make good on that commitment.

But sitting there watching Slaton and Sargent and the others, and remembering the vast cast of characters that had passed through the Greens over the years, never to return, I could no longer believe that the Greens had any kind of special handle on sensitivity to others.

On the whole, I thought, they treated each other no better than people did in Common Cause or NARAL or the Democratic party. And sometimes they treated each other much worse.

### Starry-eyed

That night was the keynote speech, by Walter Bresette, a Chippewa activist from northern Wisconsin. Most Greens cheered it wildly and found it tremendously inspiring. I found it less than that.

Bresette argued that the Green movement, or something very much like it, is going to happen no matter what the U.S. Greens do. He reminded us that Indians don't consider that they "own" land, they're merely preserving it in trust for their grandchildren. He urged us to rediscover the importance of community, and discover what each of our contributions to it can be.

That was all fine, as far as it went. But how far did it go, really? Is it *true* that anything like a Green movement is happening spontaneously? Is it *relevant* that some Indians don't believe in private property? Is it *meaningful* to speak of "community" without defining it anew for the 21st century?

As Bresette spoke, an American flag hung from the front of the room — except a big picture of an Indian, in a headdress, had been added to it. I felt high when I saw it . . . as high as I felt when we used to paint rainbow

colors on school flags in the 60s. But I also felt another 60s syndrome coming on: the syndrome of starry-eyed whites sitting at the feet of oppressed minorities.

And I had no desire to go through it again.

### Poolside

After Bresette's speech I felt kind of blue, the way you do when you know that a chapter in your life is ending, and I wanted to get away for a while. So I walked a friend to the YMCA swimming pool — no Greens there — and watched her swim laps, while children screamed and played all around. Someone had brought a boom-box, and it was playing all these 50s songs, including one of my favorites:

You don't have to be a baby to cry,  
All you need is your love to go wrong;  
You don't have to be a baby to cry,  
Or to lie awake the whole night long.

### "Yaah, ya-a-a-ah!"

The next day the Gathering finished discussing the platform, and then two Greens sang a funny song celebrating the Gathering, to the tune of "Sloop John B." Everyone was feeling pretty relaxed and happy. It was the perfect time for John Rensenbrink, the tall, white-haired Bowdoin professor who'd become one of the most powerful and influential members of the Greens, to announce that he was leaving the organization.

"Didn't we do well?" he began, and people cheered (one person shouted: "The quicksand is firmer!"). But our success has come at a cost, he said. Christa is not with us any more.

We tend to like intelligent people with cold hearts, he said, or caring people without intelligence. Well, Christa was a wonderful combination of intelligence and caring. And we drove her out!

Most of us are MIDDLE-CLASS, he said, and we're conditioned to be polite. We can't even recognize we're bullying when we do it!

A lot of behavior that doesn't seem to us MEN like bullying, he said, seems to women like bullying.

He named a number of women whom he felt had been bullied out of the Greens.

Then he announced he was leaving the organization to launch two parallel (not competing!, he stressed) initiatives: a Green Party Organizing Committee and a "national inter-movement and multi-cultural gathering."

I've "enjoyed working with you," he said. And he walked off stage.

Everyone was shocked. Rensenbrink had been with the Greens from the beginning, and had helped guide them nearly all that time. A facilitator told people Rensenbrink had asked them not to clap, but that they

could stand.

People stood silently for several minutes. Some were openly weeping. Others were thinking: There are two sides to the Slaton affair! Since when is criticism "bullying"! Rensenbrink himself is bullying those who disagree with him, but in the indirect, manipulative, dishonest way that is so characteristic of New Age Greens!

Rensenbrink felt at peace with himself. In 1971 there was a crisis in his marriage, and he resolved to get in touch with his responsible, supportive, nurturing side. He took deep pride in being seen as a protective male. Surely now he would be.

The facilitator asked us to bow in appreciation of Rensenbrink. About half of us bowed. The other half gasped, felt too uncomfortable, felt manipulated, looked away. Then a Salish Indian from Montana began beating a hand-held drum and chanting, "Yaah, ya-a-a-ah! Yaah, ya-a-a-ah!" Incredibly loudly. For at least five minutes. Then we went to lunch.

### Broken rainbow

That night about 30 Greens, including most of the informal leadership, met to discuss building coalitions with people of color. They called their group the "Rainbow Greens" (after their goal, not their composition — only three or four of them were non-white).

Danny Moses and Roberto Mendoza, a Native American activist, opened the meeting. Then John Rensenbrink said their remarks weren't very "practical." Then there was a kind of uprising — everyone wanted a woman to speak. So they called on Irene Diamond, Jewish intellectual co-editor of an anthology on ecofeminism (NEW OPTIONS #69).

She said that what Moses and Mendoza had said was very important, since it was based on the wisdom of grassroots women, peasant people and indigenous peoples. She added that she thought Rensenbrink's remarks were more mainstream, but that both perspectives were needed.

At that, Kwazi Nkrumah got very upset. He said Diamond had "condensed" everything, and defended Rensenbrink. He screamed, "I am not a peasant people!" And stormed out.

(Terri Williams, a petite Green activist from St. Louis, saw Nkrumah running. Get out of my way, he shouted, I could really hit somebody right now and I don't want to.)

People were hurt and in shock, but their discussion continued — for hours.

Linda Dallas, of the North Carolina Greens (and the only other black in the room), said she was appalled by people's inability to be "real." Why are you making an *agenda* for making contact with people of color? Why don't you all just start *doing* it — first and foremost on an individual level?

A gay Green said he was angry at the group because it didn't see him as someone who was oppressed, too.

"I think we're unbelievably constipated by talk and theory," said Mindy Lorenz, a write-in candidate for Congress in California.

An activist from Detroit said that only women and gay people seemed to be real here.

"People here have been implored to be real," said Moses. "But people are real here in different ways. We need to recognize that."

Moses's comment was one of the few I heard that wasn't riddled with blame, anger, guilt and/or self-flagellation. I figured it was a good note to leave on.

### Mau-mauing the rye catchers

The next morning was the last scheduled session. Three new committees were elected with a minimum of havoc, and some people began leaving for the airport. But the Greens weren't done yet.

Christa Slaton's husband was brought on stage to read a letter from his wife. "I regret that my wounds are so deep," she wrote. "We have to change the way we treat each other. . . While I may not see you again. . ."

Margo Adair lamented that Slaton's heart was "too open" for us. Privately, some other Greens muttered their own conclusions.

Then Kwazi Nkrumah was given the microphone. Nearly everyone knew about the Rainbow Greens meeting the night before, and he spent almost 20 minutes lambasting the Greens because of what he felt happened there, and because of many other things.

"I was angry last night because people who know better, still can't get rid of their garbage," he announced. He never did say exactly what that "garbage" was. Perhaps that would have made things too easy on us.

"I don't want to be anybody's token! . . . I don't necessarily want to talk to you just to make you feel good! . . . I'm not afraid of making you know how angry you're making me! . . ."

"We should not let Christa leave this movement! If you let her [leave], don't you dare come to me pretending to be my friend. . ."

After he finished, nobody dared stand up to him — though privately there was some grumbling about "black macho" and "the standard black in white organizations."

Nkrumah had been an activist in the black community since the late 60s, when he was given his name by his high school classmates. It is not difficult to imagine why, in 1990, he'd feel an almost unbearable frustration and rage.

But no serious political organization can afford to recreate the 1960s dynamic of guilty whites and raging blacks. And no organization should want to. The freshest and most challenging black spokespeople today have

put guilt and rage behind them (at least in their public personas). They are speaking of new paths to black self-esteem, new models for black self-help, new approaches to black-white integration.

Among them: Tony Brown (NEW OPTIONS #33), John Childs (#56), Stanley Crouch (#67), Vincent Harding (#67), Julius Lester (#43), William Raspberry (#47), Robert Woodson (#64) and Sylvia Wynter (#68).

The Greens could and *should* have been one of the first political groups to invite these new voices in. The constant presence, instead, of the 60s dynamic was to me a sure sign that the Greens lack the maturity and self-confidence to deal with the race issue.

### Restless farewell

I enjoyed myself at the Gathering. I met wonderful people, had great conversations. But after it was over I felt empty inside, for I knew — as certainly as one can know these things — that the U.S. Greens would never affect the political life of our time.

For seven years I'd been trying to convince myself that they might, just might, break out of their ghetto. (I'd been trying to convince you too, dear reader.) But I no longer believed it, even at 2 a.m. with friends.

I knew this, and yet it hurt me deeply to accept it and act on it. For whatever I may think of their internal battles and political prospects, the Greens are My People. Their life choices are my life choices; their failings mirror my own.

When I was a teen-ager and decided not to chase after power and privilege, I followed a route that took me inexorably to the Greens. To accept that the Greens are never going to make it is tantamount to accepting that many of my life choices were not so smart.

I know how to deal with this on a professional level. NEW OPTIONS will not devote long stories to the U.S. Greens again until they begin to affect the American political dialogue. (I'll be rooting for them, but I won't hold my breath.) In the meantime, we'll devote more coverage to Greenish trends in effective real-world organizations like NOW, the Sierra Club and the NAACP.

I am less certain how to deal with this on a personal level. What do you do, exactly, when you realize that many times in your life you've chosen posturing over power, marginality over privilege — all in the name of some abstract political "correctness"?

Do you have to be a baby to cry?

*U.S. Greens: P.O. Box 30208, Kansas City MO 64112.*

*The thoughts and feelings I attribute to people in this article are based on long taped interviews with them.*

# The Ear . . .

## Round one

I have just finished reading your anti-White issue ("Multiculturalism Will Make Us Whole," NEW OPTIONS #68).

I am a White man and I have been discriminated against [for that reason alone]. But my ancestors founded and built America. I am White and I am proud.

As the *NAAWP News* recently said, "No group has more to be rightfully proud of than the White people of the world. . . . Since the dawn of history, we have been a mighty race of builders, explorers, artists, warriors, inventors, philosophers and cultivators."

— Robert L. Jones

*Riverbend Maximum Security Institution  
Nashville TN, Cumberland Bioregion*

Great article — we'll use it a lot [in our workshops]. I learned things from it, and will look up some of the other folks. Thanks!

— Joan Lester

*Equity Institute*

*Amherst MA, Pioneer Valley Bioregion*

While supporting the multicultural approach, I have to admit there's something to be said for the monocultural position.

For example, New Zealand discriminated among the cultures it admitted to its shores. When an American friend of mine accidentally left a camera on the sidewalk over there, he was told, "Don't worry. Just put a notice in the paper." He did so, and the camera was promptly returned.

That says something for the culture of New Zealand.

— Ernest Morgan

*Burnsville NC, Appalachia Bioregion*

Okay, I'm going to cook ethnic foods for the fundamentalists. But where do we go from there?

— Emily Noble

*Indianapolis IN, Heartland Bioregion*

## Going too far?

I was quite disappointed in the issue on multiculturalism. According to your distinguished commentators, "white culture" — whatever that is — is "empty," "bland," "f-ing insecure," "erotophobic," "immature" and even "un-American." These charges would be greeted by counter-charges of intolerance, racism and homophobia if they had

been directed toward minority groups.

Those who advocate making English the official language are hardly "kooks," as Professor Acuña terms them. The word "nation" refers to a common community, and the principal characteristic of community is communication. Having a common language is essential if America is to avoid the centrifugal forces of race, ethnicity and sexual preference that threaten to bring about the "multicultural bantustans" that Sylvia Wynter is rightly concerned about.

The vision of Mike Myers of "whole areas of cities where English is not heard" would be a nightmare that would preclude any hope of ever achieving a common cultural heritage.

— Mark Smith

*Gainesville FL, Peninsula Bioregion*

Your analysis of multiculturalism has raised in my mind two questions. Are we shifting from a centralized culture to a cultural mosaic made of separate tiles? And, if so, what is becoming of the trend towards a universal culture that was the dream of many utopians and is the business of transnational corporations?

— Mario Kamenetzky

*The World Bank (retired)*

*Falls Church VA, Chesapeake Bioregion*

Everyone needs to practice the old Golden Rule and have consideration for all people regardless of their color or ethnic background. However, homosexuality is *not a culture* and pretending it is is not the way for those with deviant sex habits to get accepted. Please delete homosexuality from your definition of Multiculturalism!

— William E. Baer

*Anniston AL, Dixie Bioregion*

## Ruling class plot

Multiculturalism is the last great WASP leadership opportunity in the USA: Jimmy Carter and the Democratic party take note. Multiculturalism may also be the last great leadership opportunity for USA.

— William M. Alexander

*Institute for Food and Development Policy*

*San Francisco CA, Shasta Bioregion*

Few could argue with the value of multiculturalism, but there are risks involved.

The more we define ourselves (or let ourselves be defined) by our ethnic, racial or sexual identity, the easier it is for the dominant culture/system to divide us, to keep us from uniting around common concerns, and to keep us — as it does now — in competing pressure groups acting out of self- or group interest rather than out of broader communi-

ty, social or ecological interest.

Multiculturalism does enrich us individually. But only shared political and ecological consciousness can help us integrate ourselves holistically and in a socially responsible way.

— Lorna Salzman

*Brooklyn Hts NY, Hudson Valley Bior'n*

## Sins of omission

I'm amazed that in your otherwise excellent piece on "multiculturalism" you almost ignore Asians.

I think it is a grave mistake because the Asian pattern dramatically enlarges what the multicultural process can be. Unlike the other "chords" you highlight, Asians do not (for the most part) feel downtrodden or steamrolled, and here in California often turn over our idea of "minorities."

— Kevin Kelly

*Whole Earth Review*

*Sausalito CA, Shasta Bioregion*

I was quite taken by the issue on multiculturalism, but — and I always have a but, and it is the same one — it really would be nice if multiculturalism would also be seen in its global context.

I am very much aware that it really is important to understand, interpret, and work with the multicultural processes within "a single society." However, all of this multiculturalism has a global base — hence the *necessity*, not just the desirability, of globalism. The global has arrived.

— Saul Mendlovitz

*New York NY, Hudson Valley Bioregion*

*The author is co-director of the World Order Models Project (#52), which has just won the 1990 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education.*

You talked about ethnic cultures, the gay culture, the white non-culture. But what about the *children*? Do you not suppose that children have their own culture?

Children certainly have their own way of thinking, being and relating to the world. Maybe a bit simplistic, a bit experimental, a bit "narrow," some of us might claim. Nevertheless, it is the most innocent, forgiving, and living-in-the-moment culture that we know of.

Maybe a big part of our problems is that we neglect to recognize and respect this important culture.

— Arun Narayan Toké

*Skippping Stones Magazine*

*Cottage Grove OR, Cascade Bioregion*

There is an important group that didn't get mentioned in your issue — the disabled.

The disabled is a unique cultural grouping. Our social conditioning about disability and illness being simply a personal misfortune is so strong, that many disabled people don't consider themselves part of a "group" at all. Or, if they do, they may only identify with those who share their particular disability.

The disability rights movement has provided the impetus for this sort of thinking to begin to change. And because every ethnic, racial and sexual grouping includes some people who are disabled, the emerging "disability consciousness" and "disability culture" will help provide an answer to the question of who we all are.

— **Brian Hartshorn**  
*Hollis NY, Hudson Valley Bioregion*

## Beyond mere pluralism

I grew up in India, and a real problem there is that the language changes every 100 miles or so. The reason for the existence of all kinds of subdivisions is, precisely, lack of communication due to the language barrier.

Now, as a student at USC, it's been an education watching the interaction (or lack of it) between various ethnic groups. Just like in India, the inability to communicate in English isolates various various ethnic groups from Americans — and from each other.

I don't mean to endorse the English-only groups prevalent in L.A. However, if ethnic groups do not make the effort to learn the dominant language in their area, they are doomed to be cultic. (This argument is equally valid if and when Spanish becomes the majority language here in Southern Cal.)

An alternative to your pluralism and hierarchy scenarios is what I like to call the "wheel scenario."

The wheel symbolizes the fact that different cultures are ascendant at different times. And isn't that what's happening now? Consider white teen-age girls of the 90s learning the latest Janet Jackson dance moves and lapping up Arsenio Hall.

Hopefully each of us can be *both* at the center *and* at the periphery of the wheel, continually soaking up the (momentarily) dominant cultures and integrating them with our own.

— **Anand Rangarajan**  
*Los Angeles CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion*

## The self-esteem flap

Thank you for your excellent report on the California Self-Esteem Task Force (NEW OPTIONS #67). It is unfortunate that each of the principals in the argument over the Task Force felt that they must disagree. They all seem so right. . . .

• John Vasconcellos when he says that an

"esteemed" self must be at the core of any truly healthy person;

• David Shannahoff-Khalsa when he says that "the real problem stems from the subconscious";

• William Raspberry when he says that low self-esteem "dare not become an excuse to avoid responsibility";

• Roger Schultz when he says that "the larger issue is that self-esteem problems are rooted in the economy."

The bottom line is this: Until we fully prioritize the healthy raising of children, the building blocks of a new social order will be unavailable. *And*, until we change the institutional pathology of our culture, prioritizing children will continue to be an option only for the few.

We must start both places, always knowing that the one affects the other.

— **Dr. Kent T. Hoffman**  
*Marycliff Institute*  
*Spokane WA, Columbia Bioregion*

## The turning

A belated many, many thanks for your splendid analysis of the 1980s ("The 1980s Were Better Than We Thought," #64).

What a great, unconventional piece of thinking and synthesis. Your analysis gives hope to all of us.

— **Roger M. Craver**  
*Falls Church VA, Chesapeake Bioregion*

*The author is president of Craver, Mathews, Smith & Co., the most prominent liberal direct-mail firm in the U.S.*

I too believe that the 90s have an extraordinary potential to be very different from any previous period. However, the degree of change that will be required is still not understood by our society.

— **Robert Theobald**  
*Author, The Rapids of Change (1986)*  
*New Orleans LA, Delta Bioregion*

I very much agree with your premise about what the 80s signified, and that things have turned around for the better.

It seems to me that somehow a decision to move in a life-affirming direction was unconsciously reached by our culture in the 80s. I've felt that turnaround in my own reading of popular music as well as in many of the trends you describe.

Because I see the rise in consciousness, it's positively embarrassing to me that so many of my friends in the media are determined to be the last to know about it and tell about it.

— **Alan J. Saly**  
*New York NY, Hudson Valley Bioregion*

## Advisors' corner

# Monkeywrenching the bureaucracies

By **Dave Foreman**

National forest planning has failed — in part because of the Forest Service's failure to properly implement a public involvement process and an environmental impact requirement.

These failures are hardly unique to the Forest Service. Conservationists can point to the failure of many other programs at many other agencies.

In all these agencies, the same thing has happened. Instead of using the environmental impact study as a tool of analysis, it is used to justify a previously made in-house decision. Instead of seeing public involvement as a means to gain outside expertise, it is seen as something to be manipulated.

There are several reasons for this usually conscious perversion of the spirit of the law by bureaucracies.

First, the agencies are run by professionals — "expert" foresters, range managers, etc. They think they know what to do and don't need outside interference.

Second, each agency identifies with its constituency: the Forest Service with the timber industry, the Bureau of Land Management with the grazing and mining industries, etc.

Finally, the agencies are motivated toward those programs that bring them money, status, power and growth.

So what do we do? Forget about reforming the Forest Service and the other agencies. Bureaucracy is bureaucracy. Don't reform. Thwart. Monkeywrench.

Let me offer two real-world examples:

• The Wilderness Act of 1964 was not a reform measure, it was a monkeywrench in the gears of the bureaucracy. The Act basically said that the Forest Service was incapable of protecting wilderness, and that that task would be taken out of its hands. Designation of an area as Wilderness is now a means to thwart standard agency management.

• The National Environmental Policy Act is, in part, a monkeywrench. It offers a handle for legal appeals of and lawsuits against agency decisions. It gives conservationists entry into a branch of government — the courts — that is not part of the bureaucracy and that can overrule agency decisions.

Of course, if all the paper monkeywrenches fail there are more solid kinds to use.

*NEW OPTIONS Advisor Dave Foreman is co-founder of Earth First!*

## Aquarian Conspiracy: best of the 80s?

It can only be described as a surprise: NEW OPTIONS's subscribers have chosen Marilyn Ferguson's *The Aquarian Conspiracy* as the "Best Political Book of the 1980s."

Ferguson's book is not ordinarily thought of as a political book, nor was it taken altogether seriously by many of the pundits whose opinions grace the pages of our newspapers and magazines. But it won our contest decisively, with over 10% more votes than the second place finisher, Worldwatch Institute's *State of the World*.

In third place, but approx. 30% more votes back: Thomas Berry's *Dream of the Earth*.

Thirty books were nominated for the Award — all the books that finished in the top three in Renewal Inc.'s and New Options Inc.'s "Political Book of the Year" contests from 1981-90. Ballots were sent to all 12,000 NEW OPTIONS subscribers.

### Why on Earth?

Why did Ferguson beat out such winter-book favorites as *State of the World*, Jonathan Schell's *Fate of the Earth* and Hazel Henderson's *Politics of the Solar Age*? Here's what we found in the margins of some of your ballots:

- From a 68-year-old male engineer in Chevy Chase, Md.: "Gold mine of original thinking, not tied to worn-out left or right premises."

- From a 73-year-old female in Somers, N.Y.: "Provides a wonderful way of looking to the future, with an emphasis on personal transformation as well as on global change."

- From a 63-year-old male college professor in Youngstown, Ohio: "I'm partial to *big* syntheses!"

- From a 44-year-old female administrative consultant in L.A.: "Has had an *incredible* influence worldwide!"

We called Ferguson and asked whether *she* thinks of the book as political. "It's not what you immediately think of as a political book," she replied. "[But] if politics has to do with the distribution and redistribution of power, then I suppose it *is* political — because it was an effort to empower people. . . . I'm interested in the uses of power by individuals for purposes of liberating themselves and for making a creative, just society."

### Top ten

So — here are the books that did best in the voting. Scores were obtained by giving five votes to each first-place vote, three to each second-place vote, one to each third-

place vote, then dividing by the number of ballots:

(1) Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980), 0.80 points;

(2) Worldwatch Institute, *State of the World* (annual, orig. 1984), 0.71 points;

(3) Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (1988), 0.54;

(4) Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade* (1987), 0.53;

(5) Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (1982), 0.46;

(6) Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point* (1982), 0.39;

(7) M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum* (1987), 0.32;

(8) Willis Harman, *Global Mind Change* (1988), 0.31;

(9) Marilyn French, *Beyond Power* (1985), 0.30;

(10) Hazel Henderson, *The Politics of the Solar Age* (1981), 0.29.

Among women only, Riane Eisler's *Chalice and the Blade* finished second, and Marilyn French's *Beyond Power* finished third. Among people 65 and over, Willis Harman's *Global Mind Change* finished second, and Robert Theobald's *Rapids of Change* — 17th overall — finished seventh.

### Striking

There are some very striking and — for me — heartening things about our subscribers' Top Ten choices:

- *Variety.* Ferguson and Capra deal with worldviews, Worldwatch and Henderson with the intersection of ecology and economics, Berry and Harman with the intersection of politics and spirit, Eisler and French with feminism, and Schell and Peck with peace-and-community.

- *Sex balance.* Five books are by men, four by women, and one — Worldwatch — has male and female contributors and a female copy editor.

- *Geographic balance.* Five of the authors are Frostbelt, five Sunbelt.

- *Balance between mainstream and alternative publishers.* Five of the books were published or are currently published by alternative publishers (broadly defined).

Among the things that are not so heartening:

- None of the authors is under 48 years old. This suggests to me that many of us have ego problems giving recognition to our peers.

- None of the books deals with the nitty-

gritty side of politics: passing laws, raising money, building organizations. This suggests to me that many of us are temperamentally inclined to be dreamers rather than doers.

## Korten: a long way from U.S. AID

David Korten was a well-known maverick when he was at the Ford Foundation and U.S. AID — in fact, he may have been the development bureaucracy's highest-placed advocate of "people-centered" and "grassroots-generated" development strategies. Over the years he wrote many books and articles expressing his views, but most were too technical or narrow in scope to win a broad audience.

Recently he left the bureaucracy to start his own organization, and perhaps because of that life change, his new book, *Getting to the 21st Century* (Kumarian Press, 630 Oakwood Ave., #119, W. Hartford CT 06110, \$19.70 pbk), is the comprehensive and inspiring book that many of us had been hoping he'd write all along. It is the best single account of alternative approaches to global development that we now have.

### Transformational approach

There's a devastating critique of traditional development approaches, including the reformist "basic needs" approach. But what makes this book special is its vision of a comprehensive new way of doing things, a vision Korten created not just by thinking deeply about his own work but by synthesizing the work of dozens of innovative global development consultants, some well-known (e.g., Guy Gran, NEW OPTIONS #2, and Doug Helinger, #54), others known just within the international development community.

Korten calls it the "transformational" approach to development, as distinct from the "growth" approach. And unlike many people who use the word transformation, he gets *specific*. The transformational approach to development is said to consist of six stages, as follows: prepare for change (e.g., promote literacy, professionalize the military); reform the rural infrastructure (e.g., redistribute land); diversify agriculture; establish small- and medium-scale rural industries; expand urban industries; promote some exports.

You don't have to be a wizened development expert to see that this sequence basically *reverses* the traditional U.S. AID development model.

Korten has another big fish to fry: He accuses voluntary organizations of being unimaginative and timid in the area of global development. Most of them are still simply pro-

viding relief and welfare, Korten says, though some have begun to encourage Third World community development, Third World policy change, and — even — Third World people's movements. Ultimately Korten would like to see Third World non-governmental organizations play a major role in Third World development, working in tandem with counterparts in the First and Second Worlds.

Korten's last major chapter — a detailed manifesto for change in North and South stressing such post-socialist goals as ideological reconciliation, simpler lifestyles, population control, and local economic self-reliance — is a better summing up of global Greenish thinking than the U.S. Greens' platform. He's come a long way from U.S. AID.

## Guma: Sanders isn't good enough

If you were going to create somebody to write about Bernard Sanders's four terms as socialist mayor of Burlington, Vt., you might make him a fortysomething Vermont journalist and radical-bookstore-founder and former government worker who almost ran for mayor of Burlington himself before Sanders took the plunge. You'd get just the right mix of empathy and envy, expertise and idealism. That's what you have in Greg Guma, author of *The People's Republic: Vermont and the Sanders Revolution* (New England Press, P.O. Box 575, Shelburne VT 05482, \$15 pbk).

Guma writes well, and he gives you a vivid, complex view of the endless fights over key civic issues like what to do about Burlington's waterfront. But the deeper story-line of this book is Guma's increasing disillusion with Sanders and the socialist politics he represents.

At first Guma was caught up — like everybody else — in the excitement of having a "radical" in city hall. But gradually it dawns on him that Sanders stands for a very dated kind of radicalism — make government more open, make economic growth serve everybody's needs, make the distribution of government largesse a little less unfair.

According to Guma, Sanders liked to identify with "working people," but had less-than-comradely relationships with the women's movement, ecologists, peace activists, and, in general, all those whom he once derided as middle-class dilettantes. He often sided with developers and the pro-growth crowd. He "favored a 'strong mayor' system of government, in which the leader makes decisions on behalf of the people."

It is to Guma's credit that he can be just as hard on Sanders's radical opposition: "The

Greens of Burlington drifted past idealism to purism, leaving reality and sometimes even true democracy behind. . . ."

Guma ends by calling for "another progressive revolution," one that begins to address "thorny questions about growth, the future of an endangered environment, the shift toward a postindustrial society, the rights of women and minorities. . . ." In other words: If you really think Sanders's kind of socialism is the solution to our 21st-century problems, you had better go back to the drawing board.

## Tannen: post-feminist manifesto

On one level, Georgetown University linguistics professor Deborah Tannen's new book, *You Just Don't Understand* (Morrow, \$19), is a straightforward study of men's and women's different "conversational styles." On another level, it's the definitive post-feminist book for the 1990s.

Her thesis is that men's and women's conversational styles are so different that conversation between them is like "cross-cultural communication." Little girls grow up trying to achieve closeness with best friends; little boys grow up trying to achieve status in groups. These early patterns inexorably shape our outlooks, wants, needs, hopes, and fears our whole lives long.

Because Tannen argues this thesis in clear, entertaining prose and in fascinating detail, her book has shot to the top of the best-seller lists. But its readers are getting something else in the bargain: a post-feminist philosophy to go with the emerging post-liberal, post-socialist temper of our time.

The feminism of the 70s de-emphasized the differences between men and women; the

feminism of the 80s emphasized the differences and argued that the good society (and/or good men) would have to adopt many allegedly female qualities. Tannen emphasizes the differences, says both men's and women's perspectives are necessary, and urges us to understand, empathize with, and learn from each other.

It's the relentlessly even-handed nature of her interpretations that makes her book post-feminist. Intimacy (a central female goal) is not seen as better than independence (a central male goal); both are seen as admirable but narrow. Men are not seen as more competitive than women; it's just that women compete for different things and by different means (e.g., less directly). It's easy to detect hierarchy among men in conversation — but you can detect hierarchy among women, too, if you know how to look.

What seems odious to traditional feminists often looks different under Tannen's linguistic microscope. Men may criticize other people's ideas harshly and in public — but sometimes it's their way of expressing respect. By the same token, women may use the appearance of community as a way of masking power struggles.

### Death of "one right way"

Tannen's solution to our communication problems is not to argue that men should become more like women. It is, rather, to argue that we should all become aware of and flexible in our conversational styles. We should all learn how to interpret each other's messages — and how to better convey our own.

"The biggest mistake," Tannen writes, "is believing there is one right way to listen, to talk, to have a conversation — or a relationship." The death of the "one right way," the death of the politically correct way, marks the birth of post-feminism.

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# NewOptions

December 31, 1990

Issue No. Seventy-two

## How Can a Good Person Be Effective in the World?

*We suspected that you'd respond vigorously to our article on the national Green gathering ("You Don't Have to Be a Baby to Cry," #70). But we never imagined we'd get anything like the passionate outpouring that fills these pages.*

*Over 100 letters and phone calls came into our office. And what letters and calls! Some of you stomped on the Greens with big black boots . . . some of you stomped on us . . .*

*What made your comments especially interesting to us, though — what made us turn this whole issue into a forum for your replies — is that most of your letters were only superficially about "the Greens."*

*Read them closely and you'll see that most of the letter-writers are struggling with such larger questions as, How can a good person be effective in the world? What is effectiveness, anyway? What does it mean to be a healthy and socially conscious person in the 90s?*

*There can, of course, be no definitive answers to these questions. But we thought you'd enjoy watching some of your fellow readers take a crack at them.*

*We've arranged the letters in careful sequence. The last four — the "morning after" letters — are like four mountains all the other letters lead up to. Call them the "hopeful," "gritty," "spiritual" and "truly mature" mountains, respectively.*

### "It could become a classic"

*First up are some snippets of letters from people who liked what we wrote.*

#### At last!

At last! Somebody with some clout who has publicly told the Greens what ails them.

As one of your "vast cast of characters that have passed through the Greens over the

years, never to return," I celebrate the possibility that with your tough insights, and the storm of controversy this will bring, the Greens just might get their act together.

— **Richard Clark**  
*Berkeley CA, Shasta Bioregion*

Your analysis/critique/explanation of the Green gathering was brilliant. Everyone here loved it, but I suppose I could appreciate it most [since I was there].

— **Lynette Lamb**  
*Utne Reader*  
*Minneapolis MN, Heartland Bioregion*

To your lead article on the Greens all I can say is, "Wow!" It could become a classic.

— **Bill Holden, Jr.**  
*Cypress CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion*

Wow! That must have been hard to write.

At a much more local level, I went through some of the same things you did. And remembering how painful it was for me, I can easily imagine how you must feel.

This issue spoke for me. Keep the faith!

— **Ron Liskey**  
*Rohnert Park CA, Shasta Bioregion*

Totally agreed with and appreciated your feelings re: Greens. I felt that way *last* year at the Eugene gathering.

— **Paul Cienfuegos**  
*Tofino, Canada, "Pacific Cascadia Bior'n"*

I've had those same cold blues. I went to "Greening the West" [two years ago in California] and came away depressed: "These folks are so busy being hippies they forget our urgent problems."

— **Greg Norris**  
*Newmarket NH, Lower New Engl. Bior'n*

Your last issue confirmed my gut level response to the Greens I've met here. I would

like to see this party viable, but I don't see it happening based on the people involved (the ones I've met, anyway).

— **Lark Carroll**  
*Oakland CA, Shasta Bioregion*

I really agree with your assessment of the Greens. It is cause for despair. I felt the same way after a week at the North American Bioregional Congress in August.

So we beat on, boats against the current. . .  
— **Steve Brown**  
*Dover MA, Lower New England Bior'n*

### Back to the establishment

I generally agree with your assessment of the Green movement and its misguided approach to becoming a significant political force.

Not only is it unlikely to become a significant political force, it is unlikely to become a significant social or intellectual force without more internal self-discipline.

After reading your accounts of previous meetings (#8, 40 and 60), I went to Estes Park to see for myself whether or not there was something I could sink my teeth into in an activist mode. I found that I was not able to be fully engaged. People were unable to see the incongruities between the magnitude of the problems we face and the perpetually protesting, outsider-type behaviors they would have us accept as the likely route to change.

For me the experience was something of a dénouement, because I realized I was better off staying in my quasi-establishment role here in Washington, and working both sides of the street as it were.

— **Paul Von Ward**  
*Chair, Delphi International Group*  
*Washington DC, Potomac Valley Bior'n*

I sat in my office less than 60 miles from the Green gathering in Estes Park wrestling

## Analysis

with whether I should take the time to check out the Greens one more time. Your report confirms my suspicion that I was sparing myself a lot of frustration, rage, pain and — yes — tears by staying away.

Life is too short, our problems too serious and our individual responsibilities to our children too important to choose flight from the political trenches of reality for the onanistic pleasures of Utopian fantasy.

Better to remain an official burr under the saddle of conventional wisdom in our own communities until a thousand points of rebellion can become a tidal wave of reform.

— **Miller Hudson**

*Director, Small Business Coalition  
Denver CO, Rocky Mountain Bioregion*

## A bit of free advice

As a veteran of the 60s in Berkeley and over two decades of alternative political and communal groups, I share your observations of the Greens. In fact, I had a similar experience at the 1987 Green gathering in Amherst.

As much as I love Green people and Green environmental goals, I notice certain limitations that really hamper their effectiveness. I would encourage:

- truly going “beyond left and right,” as some of the literature proclaims, and incorporating the best of the right (I heard only leftist ideology);

- celebrating and honoring leadership, rather than fearing and denying it;

- overcoming victim/underdog consciousness and fear of success; and

- becoming comfortable communicating with those of non-alternative lifestyles.

— **Corinne McLaughlin**

*Shutesbury MA, Pioneer Valley Bioregion*

Your description of the national Green gathering was similar to much of what I have seen in my local Green group.

We may be less intense, but we put similar emphasis on process (facilitation, consensus, group discussion of how the group works, etc.), as opposed to practical results. Individuals frequently reflect on how to solve large problems, as opposed to focusing on how to find and register voters for the California Green party. And we have a constant turnover as members leave because they're not getting help with their work, or because the work they do isn't well thought out or supported, or because they want to do something useful rather than talk.

I'm not sure that there is any “solution.” Perhaps the issue is getting people to realize that:

- there is a tradeoff between “perfecting” the process and just letting the process occur

so that results emerge;

- a group that does not create paid, full-time positions, and give some power to those who occupy them, cannot possibly function effectively — particularly at a national level.

— **John Broughton**

*Oakland CA, Shasta Bioregion*

## Psst! Way to go

I was the harried transportation organizer at the Green conference. It was certainly a pleasure meeting you, although I did recommend that you take some time off hiking around and not fuss so much on listening to boring speeches.

Matthew Gilbert circulated copies of your article, and I am sure you have gotten more hate mail than you care for. Between me and you, though, I thought it was a very honest and accurate article. And I loved the way you made it personal.

— **Nader Jalinoos**

*Denver CO, Rocky Mountain Bioregion*

## “A very unconvincing analysis”

*Here are some letters from Greens who did not like what we wrote.*

## Get that boy a drink

We should have bought Mark Satin an extra couple of drinks when we went out after the national Greens conference in Colorado. His report had its personal poetic moments, but as political analysis it was very unconvincing.

I'm sorry you feel depressed Mark, but do you think maybe your expectations are a little unrealistic? The U.S. Greens have *already begun* to “affect the political life of our time,” but it can best be seen at the local level and in subtle ways, not by airily scanning the early national conferences.

Your depression seems a natural companion to the naiveté of those who dream of grand electoral success by an American Green party over the next decade. The best the Greens can do is bring a new understanding and sensibility to political things, strengthen community activism at the local level, forge linkages between social and ecological issues and constituencies — and when engaged in electoral work, help to broaden the scope of political dialogue, and catalyze changes in the Democratic party.

Perhaps more ambitious opportunities will present themselves at some time. But this is enough.

Your reading of the national conference was so self-reflective and between-the-lines that it left all the lines out. One of the most significant events, for example, was the Economics II section of the platform, which represented the best mediation/synthesis to date of “new” and “left” branches of the Green movement.

I do not know what the future holds. But for right now the Greens are to me one of the most promising shows in town. They have a self-awareness, an inner spirit, a depth and comprehensiveness of vision that no other group I work with offers.

So take a vacation, get some exercise, and come back next year, Mark. Even though many of your views are idiosyncratic, you have very valuable ideas that we need to hear. And please try to overcome your blues — they might rub off on your readers.

— **Jeff Ringold**

*Santa Cruz CA, Shasta Bioregion*

I was saddened by your sentence, “But it's more important to be effective in the world.” That's a sign of deep burnout!

— **Al Andersen**

*Tucson AZ, Sonora Bioregion*

Mark Satin looked so sad and out-of-sorts at the national Green gathering. And his article really reflects that.

But his perspective as an observer, rather than a participant, is why he came away so depressed. Nearly everyone I talked to came away energized! We all went home really ready to do the real work of the Greens, which is organizing at home.

We felt that the gathering accomplished what it set out to do, and that there was less turmoil than many of us expected. It all depends on your perspective.

I think Mark Satin is suffering from burnout. His expectations of Green political

## NewOptions

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## Groups

activity and behavior are totally unrealistic. How long did it take the Republican party to get organized? It took 30 years before the abolition movement achieved real success, and then it took a war. We are only just realizing what the struggle is about, and what it will take to achieve our goals.

Our interpersonal behavior at Green meetings leaves much to be desired. Over the last 20 years we have all learned about the behavior we would like to see. But the types of interpersonal changes we want take at least three generations to become established in a population.

You also make the point that all sorts of scholars and experts have proposed Greenish policies for years. My feeling is that if these experts had the courage of their convictions, they would have started organizing their local groups years ago, and then they would have been at the Green gathering representing their local groups. I consider this a failing of your so-called experts, not of the Greens.

— Greg Gerritt

*Industry ME, "Western Mountains Bior'n"*

## It's happening!

Your article on the national Green conference did make me cry. I wasn't there but have had enough first-hand experience with the movement to know the pain you describe.

But please don't lose hope. The Green movement is alive and well at the local level.

Here in Chapel Hill, our position at the solid waste hearing (that waste policy should encourage social responsibility) was front page news. Our position on an expanded library facility (that decentralized services would better promote community, ecology and literacy) also made headlines.

Our member Joyce Brown, who sits on the town council, keeps the Green perspective in the public eye.

We have not solved the race issue but do not feel guilty about it. We organize events together with leaders of the black community; we support each other's issues. We are organized separately but are building the relationships on which new organizational forms can be built.

— Dan Coleman

*Chapel Hill NC, Piedmont Bioregion*

## The community-builders

*This is from a public reply to our article by a founder of the Wisconsin Greens:*

A few Green activists in Wisconsin were troubled to read Mark Satin's critique of the U.S. Greens in his personal forum, NEW OPTIONS. Some characterized it as a "manifesto of giving up." Others were more troubled by

Satin's dismissal of Chippewa activist and Lake Superior Green Walt Bresette's keynote address.

Because of Satin's following in trendy political circles, it is appropriate to critique his critique. I will start mine with recognition of three elements.

First, I recognize the validity of many of his criticisms. Chiefly, the Green phobia about leadership/structure/hierarchy/success.

Second, I recognize the deep confessional nature of his article and his profound horror at finding the Greens to be the mirror image of his life. The rest of us recognize this as mid-life crisis and fortunately do not have the ability to spread it out for the whole nation to read.

Third, I recognize that his observations focus on the national level. If his contacts are with intellectuals on the coasts it is easy to see how Green politics becomes the equivalent of the parlor socialism of writers and academics in the 1930s.

But I also feel that his criticisms are flawed in many respects.

Satin seems to assume that the U.S. Greens are blind to their own difficulties. The Winter 1990 issue of *Green Letter* (P.O. Box 14141, San Francisco 94114, \$2.50) has many articles and letters about the dysfunctional aspects of the Estes Park gathering, along with corrective suggestions.

He sees the platform process as too democratic. I agree that we need not fear the input of Green-leaning experts and technicians. But he misses the root of the problem: insufficient development of a local base to involve in a democratic platform process.

U.S. Greens are stuck with their strange developmental history. As much as Mr. Satin or I would like, we cannot go back and start over. We can try to learn, we can try to solve conflicts. But to imply that political disagreement is out of place, or the result of egos too large or too fragile, is to characterize the Greens as an umbrella group for character disorders.

I can assure Satin that if he employs the same intimate journalism with his "effective real-world organizations," he will find similar difficulties or suppressions of same.

Finally, I must take exception with Satin's use of Walt Bresette to re-ignite his fears of militant Blacks manipulating foolish and guilty whites.

Walt is an idea-person and storyteller [who] uses his stories to empower and to build the community he talks about. If Satin couldn't hear Walt, then for me it calls into question other people observations made by Satin.

— Dennis Boyer

*Cobb WI, Heartland Bioregion*

My friend Dennis Boyer, whom I referred to in my starry-eyed speech, sent along your article. What to do with Boyer's note and your article is now taking up my lunch hour.

While I don't remember having a "long taped interview" with you, if you say so I suppose it happened. My prefatory comments where I explained how I needed to protect myself from "such powerful people" were in part directed at you — even though I don't remember you. (Perhaps it is a reflection of the success of the protection I felt needed to be invoked.)

While you found the talk less than "inspiring," why do you find it *important* even for commentary? Especially as you now have re-found yourself, albeit after seven years' hoping that the Greens were a "credible, competent vehicle for change"? Your personal rambles have undercut your "professional level" of dealing with things.

"NEW OPTIONS will not devote long stories to the U.S. Greens again until they begin to affect the American political dialogue." What power. What nonsense. "If the game can't be played by *my* rules then I'm taking my ball home," cried the tearful child.

A word of caution: please don't overestimate the power and the influence that you so blatantly wield. Like most "oppressed minorities," intellectual rags and wogs are often invisible to real people in the real world.

Old 60s nostalgia, or worse, childhood unhappiness, is indeed a bitter pill to swallow when the Jolly Green Giant had promised you nirvana. But, my stranger-friend, you are the Jolly Green Giant; and self-emasculation will only result as you strike out, whine and charge that others haven't made the world happy for Mr. Satin.

"We are not all disaffected Republicans, or Democrats, or Sierra Club members," remembered Bresette as he wasted his lunch hour over the homeless plight of an intellectual wog.

Lunch is over and so is this short-lived friendship (a prelude to community). If I had a newsletter I'd have had this note typeset — sorry.

Please throw this in the trash when finished. I accept your resignation from the Green movement so there is no sense wasting more time, thought or trees on continued whining.

— Walter A. Bresette

*Bayfield WI, North Woods Bioregion*

## Racism, sexism, etc.

While your article was one of the better attempts to clarify what happened with Christa Slaton early in the Green gathering, I thought it was quite unfair to Walt Bresette and Kwazi

Nkrumah. In fact, you didn't seem to devote the kind of follow-up time to Kwazi and, especially, Walt that you did to the European-American folks involved in the earlier dispute. From my work with Walt in Wisconsin, it's clear that he is far beyond the typical militant 60s radical making white folks feel guilty.

The failure of the Green gathering around racism came from the failure of the planners to follow through on their commitment to get many more people of color there, and from our generally underdeveloped national coalition-building. All this reinforced some of the dynamics you allude to:

- It set up the few people of color there to take on all the frustrations around race and multiculturalism — for example, Kwazi was told that Thomas Jefferson was a great American hero, despite the fact he owned slaves.

- It meant that paternalism toward people of color and their opinions often went unchallenged. (This is our European-American problem, not theirs, by the way.)

- It unveiled some of the volcanic contradictions within the relationship of racism and sexism that any truly multi-racial movement must deal with. For example, when four days worth of process and political frustration lead Kwazi to lay it out for us in an angry voice, do we really want to tell him (and other men of color) not to be angry, it's not the post-liberal way? Do we really want to tell him that Black macho (?) isn't the way to relate to our Green (i.e., white, educated) movement?

I would also question how some feminists responded to Kwazi's anger. Anger from an African-American man is not the feminist way — but from working-class or middle-class European-American women, it is? (I would say it's legitimate from both African-Americans and women, given the politics of it.)

Incidentally, where are all those great luminaries, mentioned in NEW OPTIONS #1-71, when it comes to these tough questions?

— Rick Whaley

Milwaukee WI, "Milwaukee River Bior'n"

I'm pissed off at the Greens too, but for exactly the opposite reasons you are! Too many Greens in my area haven't wrestled enough with issues of domination, and so the men and domineering women tend to run things while the less adamant people float away unheard and unutilized.

You act as if this isn't a problem, or as if the solution is obvious. Do you really think that?

— Tom Atlee

Oakland CA, Shasta Bioregion

## Misrepresentation?

You have me "leaving the organization"! I was shocked when I read those words. From

my mail and phone, you have given confusing signals to a lot of people (and complicated my Green work considerably!).

So please let me correct that: in no way have I left the organization. I did announce that I would no longer continue in my three-year role as leader of the program/platform development process.

You are right that I am turning my energies into multicultural work and Green electoral politics. But you seem to project onto me your apparent belief that the latter is totally separate from the core Green organization. I don't see it that way at all.

We have one Green movement at the core of which are the Green Committees of Correspondence. Green electoral bodies, no matter how autonomous their evolution will be, will remain connected with the core Green bodies. In any event, I certainly intend to remain a participating member of those core bodies, at local, regional, national, and eventually international levels.

— John Rensenbrink

Cambridge MA, Lower New Engl. Bior'n

*Dear John: I'm sorry, but you have got to take responsibility for the way you presented your intentions at the gathering.*

*If you suddenly and unexpectedly take center stage at an organization's national meeting; go on and on denouncing that organization for its hypocrisy and cruelty; announce to shocked silence that you're withdrawing from your role in the platform process (a process you'd not only fathered, but been the public spokesperson for); further announce that you're about to launch two Green initiatives that would have no formal, structural accountability to the Green organization; stand silently by while people weep over your words; and give your consent to a long mourning ritual (complete with drumbeats) — then folks who aren't privy to your innermost thoughts are going to conclude that you're outta there.*

*Even Brian Tokar, who tries very hard to be kind to the Greens, felt obliged to report that you and Christa Slaton "both threw extended public temper tantrums and walked out" (Z Magazine, Nov. 1990).*

## "I did not raise my voice"

I am the "young Green" who, you claim, "yelled at Christa Slaton" to not "get so violently emotional."

I was disappointed and hurt that you so grossly misrepresented what happened, and I hope you will find room to print this letter and set the record straight.

I did not yell, nor even raise my voice. I simply acknowledged that a small group had obviously put a lot of effort into making the

platform process work, and therefore had strong emotional investments. I suggested that "this kind of violent emotion isn't going to help us."

I would have liked to yell. I felt angry and frustrated by our "leadership" and its orchestration of the gathering. Concerns expressed by our local group were being railroaded. But I restrained myself, largely because I believe in "treating people as Human Beings," as you put it. I also realized that being a leader without a clear mandate or guidance can be a great strain.

I am sorry that Christa and others misunderstood me. I tried to make peace with people who came to me later with criticisms. Unfortunately, some were not interested in understanding — like one of our "leaders" who berated me for several minutes because I "didn't know a fucking thing."

— Jeff Allen

Washington DC, Potomac Valley Bior'n

*Dear Jeff: I stood two chairs away from you during your outburst, and it was exactly as I reported it.*

*In the heat of passion, it's hard for people to know exactly what they're saying or how they're saying it. Haven't you wondered why so many delegates "misunderstood" you?*

## "If I learned anything . . ."

*The letters in this section — many by activists — all urge the Greens to change their ways. Of course, their words don't just apply to Greens, or activists. . . .*

## Under Western eyes

I write a weekly column addressing environmental issues, run a recycling center, and do a lot of public speaking in the schools around here, trying to get people to, at the least, make educated choices every day.

I very much enjoyed your commentary on the Green gathering and thought I'd send you my version (published 9/27/90 in the *Douglas Co. News-Press*, the *Highlands Ranch Register*, and the *Vail Trail* — all Colorado papers):

"It is my belief that one must treat other people with respect and dignity until they prove they are unworthy of it, regardless of any differences in their backgrounds or experiences. This is what the Greens profess, but this is not the spirit I observed in Estes Park.

"On the contrary, what I saw was a group of people, the majority of whom preached peace, environmental protection, and commu-

nity-based values, but who could not abide by their own ethics. There were bitter arguments in the plenary sessions, abusive verbal fights in some of the workshops, and a general disrespect for most of the key workers. . . .

"If I were to offer advice to the Greens, it would be to work on some sensitivity training before they meet again on a national level."

— **Debi Kimball**

*Parker CO, Rocky Mountain Bioregion*

### The party's over

Even if the U.S. Greens could somehow overcome their intramural sniping, I doubt they could become much of a political force in this country.

The Green party became viable in Europe because European nations have had long traditions of entertaining many political parties. In the U.S. creating a new party is simply too radical a step to inspire the public.

The solution for the U.S. is found in the martial art of aikido: work with what is given. What is given to Green-thinking Americans is the Democratic party. Working to steer the Democrats toward greener horizons is a far more realistic enterprise than attempting to re-make the U.S. with strategies that don't reflect its unique nature.

— **Brad Lemley**

*Bath ME, Lower New England Bior'n*

I am more convinced than ever of the need for a third party. I just think it was incredibly naive to think that the Greens would be the ones to found a serious one.

I cling to the hope that Tony Mazzocchi or Molly Yard or someone else nearer the mainstream than the Greens will publicly begin the impetus for a serious third party in the next few years, and we Greens, having squandered our claim to moral leadership, can bring in our issues and take our proper place among the "followership" in the ranks.

— **Vincent Stankiewicz**

*Amherst MA, Pioneer Valley Bioregion*

If I learned anything networking the "appropriate technology" movement years ago, it was this: the anarchists can't be organized.

— **Byron Kennard**

*Vice Chair, Sun Day 1978*

*Washington DC, Potomac Valley Bior'n*

### The party's not begun

I read your report on the Green gathering with an increasingly icy feeling in my heart.

As you have discovered the hard way, the bottom line is that if you ignore power, it doesn't go away — it simply falls into other hands.

I've never believed that power corrupts *inevitably*. I reckon the real weakness lies in ourselves in that we are too frightened to handle power — in the outside world and in our own organizations.

This is an odd fear for a movement that claims it wants to redistribute wealth not only between continents but also between generations! Just how we plan to do this without getting involved in the dynamics of power I do not know.

If Greens can take power out of the woodshed of nameless horrors and spotlight it, they'll be much better able to build lines of accountability and responsibility into their organizations. Then the abuser(s) of power can be swiftly removed before the integrity of the whole is imperilled. If you think about it, this is actually a very ecological way of doing things!

In a nutshell, the U.S. Greens should elect/choose/appoint their office holders, tattoo on their foreheads "the buck stops here," write down clearly the job-description and report-back mechanisms — and trust the person(s) to get on with the job.

If they do good they should be rewarded; if not they should be fired. To give people a lot of responsibility but no authority and then trash them is psychologically vicious, as your report made abundantly clear.

Of course we want a Green society where leaders are selected for their wisdom and trustworthiness. The key is to develop a culture of civic participation and make sure everyone is plugged into what is going on.

But we also need a Green political force that is going to go in there in the very un-Green world of the 1990s and put up a good show of getting power for our ideas. Because that is what we want, power for our ideas.

Perhaps that will mean power for ourselves. And if it does we must be ready to take it — and take it responsibly. No Green who really understands the state of our environment, and the threat this poses to human existence, can seriously do anything but want power for Green ideas.

Green parties are not mirror-images of the society we seek. Green parties are not encounter groups for lost souls. Green parties are not pressure groups, lobbying for single issues. Green parties are political parties!

Marrying efficiency with a green style will always be difficult. But our job — our top priority — must be to get the Green choice onto every ballot we can and explain as clearly as we can why it is vital people vote Green.

A related point: All over the world, Greens have been developing political programs for years. There is no need for anyone to do as we had to do at the beginning of the 1970s and invent the wheel!

A lot of the early inspiration for European Greens came from U.S. writers and activists. Let us return the favor. Trawl the world to get the best available Green policy options. Take what you want, junk the rest. Agree upon the broad outlines nationally and leave the details to local groups. Then *get on* with getting onto state ballots and putting your program to the electorate.

Dear American Greens, please start to do something — fast! How will you feel if your time comes to win power for your ideas and you are not ready?

— **Sara Parkin**

*Speaker, British Green party*

*Co-secretary, European Greens, 1985-90*

*Lyons, France*

### Thanx for the memories

I found myself reading aloud your account of the Green gathering to [my wife,] Nancy, over breakfast this morning — a slow-starting Saturday morning.

Your Green meeting reminded me of various peace movement gatherings I have been part of over the years, though very few were equally difficult: leaders resigning, new organizations being launched, rage and grief in many faces, etc.

Still more I was reminded of the Left, into which I was born as a card-carrying red diaper baby but which I never took to largely because of a tendency to get seasick in situations in which correct ideology is all-important.

Reading your piece, I realized that somewhere along the line I made my peace with being marginal. This may have had something to do with having become a religious person and being influenced by the monastic side of religious life: real marginality.

Being marginal doesn't mean that I don't care what happens and don't want to have some influence. But I suspect the best bet in influencing politics for people like me (maybe you too) is through responses and activities that stand outside structures which are self-consciously political.

— **Jim Forest**

*Peace Media Service*

*Alkmaar, Holland*

*The author was a prominent pacifist activist in the U.S. in the 1960s and 70s.*

In their squabbling and closet Europhilia, the U.S. Greens remind me of the Marxist students I met on campus in the mid-1970s. They seemed to be doing nothing that had any hope of making a difference in even the small society of the campus. Their main activity, so far as I could tell, was trashing other

radicals over insignificant issues.

And don't you think there's something odd in the constant work on structure in an organization so small that a telephone tree and mailing list are all that's really needed? One might conclude that the real purpose of working on the structure is not to make the organization more effective but to make it more virtuous, like a group of perfectionistic Buddhists seeking to make every detail of life in their ashram conform to their religious principles.

And, hey, blacks are not the only ones who practice the form of dominance called mau-mauing. I'd bet that a fair number of whites at the gathering have done it themselves, standing in all their scruffiness to lay down guilt trips among the neckties and pantyhose.

It's not that we shouldn't have national Green gatherings. Let's just quit pretending to be building a political party, and instead use the gatherings as chances to get together with each other and have free-form shop talks that last into the wee hours. The cross-pollination of ideas from these conversations might be invaluable. Let the good times roll!

— **Joan Howe**

*Boston MA, Lower New England Bior'n*

## Déjà vu all over again

I have a pile of unread books and magazines in my room, but I read with riveted attention your account of the Green gathering with the rest of my new mail still sitting on my lap.

It gave me the feeling of "déjà vu all over again," to quote one of our most fundamental cultural philosophers, Yogi Berra. How many times have we seen this phenomenon of self-destructive infighting in minority and counter-cultural organizations?

I am a refugee from one of those fights — in the alternative education movement. I was the first executive director of an international alternative school organization. I built it up from 50 to 500 schools and was on the verge of getting the ear of the mainstream [see NEW OPTIONS #36 — ed.]. Then the attacks came from within.

I won't bore you with the gory details, but the upshot was that I resigned from that position and am now working independently.

Sitting, stunned, after reading your piece, I asked myself, "What is going on here?" Finally the answer became clear. These commonality of all these conflicts is that most of the participants grew up in authoritarian and anger-producing environments, without freedom.

In the alternative school that I founded in 1968, we found it was counter-productive to admit new students after the age of 13. By

that time the backlog of anger was too deep. It would take too much time to work it out in the thoroughgoing way that our process encouraged. But students who started at a younger age fared very well indeed.

So — I suggest that the basic common problem in all these warring counter-culture organizations is that the participants do not understand freedom and are not free people. And I suggest that the answer to our organizational problems and, ultimately, the world's problems, lies in the creation of a generation of children who can grow up with freedom.

That is not an easy solution, and it may not even be possible within the time constraints that have been created by those in power who have grown up with such anger in their beings. But it is the only solution I know of. So I will continue to work on it alone, while I hope to unite and inspire people by what I write and how I network.

In a sense, I guess that's what you've chosen to do too, isn't it?

— **Jerry Mintz**

*Roslyn Heights NY, Hudson Valley Bior'n*

## Into the mainstream

You state that you are going to devote "more coverage to Greenish trends in effective real-world organizations like NOW, the Sierra Club and the NAACP."

I personally believe that the real possibilities are emerging in *even more* mainstream organizations across the country. I see the schools and colleges, the social service agencies and the chambers of commerce becoming aware of the need for fundamental change.

I hope you will begin to look at the extraordinary things that are happening in *these* institutions across the country.

— **Robert Theobald**

*New Orleans LA, Delta Bioregion*

I was very moved by the honesty and anguish in your story on the Greens. It's really about the human condition. The gay community — which I have been politically active in for 12 years — creeps along at a snail's pace because ineffective and dysfunctional modes of behavior and interpersonal interaction retard forward progress.

I am a yuppie who still feels poor relative to the great wealth on display in Manhattan. Health crises in the 1980s created something of a spiritual awakening, but I still believe that human nature is human nature, and societies are organized around that bedrock reality. There will be specialization and hierarchy.

The genius of the American ideal is that it recognizes reality, and uses human nature as a check and balance on itself. This is the best

mankind has been able to do so far, and although our system falls far below the mark set by the founding fathers, no utopian system based on utopian fantasies has ever surpassed it.

The kind of shenanigans you described in your essay are just so uninteresting to a bottom-line, results-oriented personality. The end doesn't justify the means, but the goal must be paramount in the organization. The Greens worship process as an end, so that is what they produce — more and more process.

So many alternative types are really seeking personal happiness and fulfillment from the political process, when they really need years of therapy, and perhaps a kick in the butt.

Politics in a "multi-cultural," pluralistic society has to be about the distribution and production of goods and services. If someone wants appreciation, let them volunteer for a service organization or get involved with a church of some kind.

Anything we want and need can be obtained from our system *as it is presently organized*. Alternative organizers should spend more time learning how to pull the levers of our present system, and less time trying to change the system.

What works works, what doesn't work doesn't work. The operative word is WORK, which most of us loathe, if we're really honest with ourselves. It's easier to join a clique, preach to the converted, and live out a mutual fantasy.

— **Campion Read, M.D.**

*New York NY, Hudson Valley Bioregion*

## "After the disillusionment"

*If the letters above urge the Greens to act differently, these final letters urge them — and of course the rest of us, too — to think and feel differently. We find it interesting that all these letters are from women.*

## To be an adult

Thank you for your critical analysis of the Greens. Crying is appropriate when good intentions and psychological/emotional confusions get tangled up and stall a potentially fruitful movement.

Trying hard to not be: racist, fascist, sexist, etc., is not the same as joyously connecting with different races, humbly accepting that one's contribution to a dialogue is inherently biased and incomplete, or yearning to reconcile with those on the other side of the war between the sexes. Constant censoring and

criticizing is inexorably geared toward immobilization.

An experimental, forgiving and ambitious approach makes things happen — including embarrassing errors and oversights. The seeking of purity and innocence is antithetical to such energy.

By definition, I believe, to take responsibility — to act — to be an adult in the world, is to lose the option of innocence. Only then can we move on to take our best shot and suffer the judgment of our progeny.

Somehow, in my middle age, this option now appeals to me.

— **Mallory Crawford**

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

Like you, I was a lonely and unhappy child. At age 50, in retrospect, I see that the experience of not-belonging prepared me well for being out of the mainstream ideologically.

Anyone who has the courage to ask questions for which there are no ready answers has to be prepared for loneliness.

— **Barbara Richardson**

*Rutland MA, Pioneer Valley Bioregion*

Your Green gathering article was fascinating, and you exposed many of "our" weaknesses. What most interested me was the sensibility of the participants.

Many co-dependent and dysfunctional characteristics showed up in their conversations. Hopefully they are working on their issues re: family of origin, so that they themselves can be healed as they are working to heal the Earth!

We who are emotionally injured are often the ones who turn to heal the outside world, instead and in place of healing our lives and emotions. But we cannot hide our injuries. They show themselves in our beliefs, our attitudes, and our defenses.

— **Tally Chilvers**

*San Juan Capistrano CA, Pacific Rim Bior'n*

### Martyrdom doesn't work

I was also at the Green gathering in September. I was invited to present a workshop on intentional communities, drawing from my experience of living at Sunrise Ranch. But I was interested in the Gathering process so I attended a session after my workshop. It happened to be the session where Christa Slaton broke down and cried.

I remember being uncomfortable with her emotionalism — smart facilitators who want to get things done usually have a better grip on themselves — but I recognized her frustration with wanting to make something work and not quite knowing how. I remember it well from trying to get an Earth Community

going in New York City — eternal gatherings and conversations which never got past arguing over the process of the process.

But what really concerns me is to see someone like Christa who is willing to work but clearly doesn't know how things *do* work. Your description of her feeling that "if she really worked extra hard, just like she'd always done, and sent out lots of mailings, and answered every letter and phone call . . ." pointed to successful and deadly brainwashing.

She has evidently accepted the principle that quicker (bigger, more) is better, and that if we just keep plugging away hard enough at something we can make it happen. But when you stop and think, this is the same un-Green, unnatural, manipulative and unsustainable attitude that has built a world that few of us want to be part of.

No wonder she's frustrated! Grinding self-sacrifice and martyrdom has never held people's attention for very long, and for good reason — it doesn't work!

What about operating from the premise that things work (in families, in companies, in communities, in organizations) because people are *inspired* into participating fully? What about a leader knowing that her most important asset is a personal atmosphere that says, "What I'm doing is meaningful *and* fun, and you can be part of it too!"

These are the individuals and groups I'm interested in and would like to read about in NEW OPTIONS, because they are the ones really making a difference.

— **Charlene Church**

*Loveland CO, Rocky Mountain Bior'n*

It seems very clear to me as a psychotherapist that political leadership today needs to begin at home with saving ourselves while we try to save the world.

You show Christa Slaton doing her therapy before a couple of hundred people. If she had done it quietly, with her therapist, she would have learned to recognize her own pattern — that she is a compulsive worker needing desperately to meet the expectations of mommy and daddy and achieve what they never achieved — instead of having 200 other people learn it while she herself learned only that people are unappreciative.

— **Barbara C. Loy**

*Claremont CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion*

### Moving on

The Greens have not crossed my mind very much until I received your NEW OPTIONS article on the Colorado gathering. When I first read it, I churned inside. When I read it the second time, I felt immense relief. I applaud your honesty and empathize with

your sadness.

The issue for me was *never* how hard I had to work. I expect that; it's how I've lived my entire life. The issue was how each step of progress constantly made had to be retraced as new people got involved and folks participated haphazardly at their own convenience. Time after time, decisions that were made through open group process were altered at the next meeting by a different group of decision-makers.

When I read your article on the Greens two years ago ("Last Chance Saloon," #60), I thought that is *exactly* how I feel. The Greens are our last and only hope. Then in October, 1989, I heard fund-raiser Sue Conti's tearful farewell to the Greens and her comparison of life in the Greens with being in an abusive marital relationship.

Her speech was given on the very first day I took on the role of coordinator of the platform ratification process. It hit me [then] like a ton of bricks, [and now captures] how I feel about my own separation from the Greens.

The Greens seemed to have all the important ingredients to fulfill my desires and needs, but they caused more pain than I wish to endure.

The Greens are driven by the desperate view that they are the "Last Chance Saloon." They act frantically, illogically and chaotically. They've had many experiences telling them it is foolhardy to trust, and, by George, they aren't trusting anybody.

Once Sue Conti clarified the issue for me, I realized that the Greens were not my (our) last hope. I was going to give them my very best, to trust them, and to allow myself to be vulnerable because I was also giving them my heart. But I understood the entire time that my relationship with the Greens would have to end if the negative energy, the lack of trust and support, and the abuse of persons and process continued. I felt confident that there were other paths and other persons.

Today I feel that deep in my soul, and it comforts me. I gave it the very best I could, but once I concluded it was more destructive than positive, I was ready to let go without regret (not without some pain, however). I have not had any second thoughts and I feel free and hopeful again.

All of this is a lengthy way of trying to assure you that all is not lost and your time over the last two decades has not been wasted. What you have learned, through your struggles with folks you respect and love, makes you wiser and stronger.

I sense you still hold on to your earlier hopes for the Greens in your heart, while your head tells you to move on. Well, when you let your heart quit pulling you back to the "what ifs," your wisdom will open doors and

let you see new avenues that are not apparent now.

Those of us who hold Green values are out there whether we are in the Green movement or not. We strive on a daily basis for a better world and to become better people. That is going to be important groundwork at some point for an alternative to the Greens.

— **Christa Slaton**

*Dept Poli. Sci., Georgia Southern Univ.  
Statesboro GA, Dixie Bioregion*

## The morning after (I)

I can't tell whether you are writing an epitaph for the U.S. Green movement or issuing it a challenge with your conclusion that "the U.S. Greens would never affect the political life of our time." I prefer the latter, and hope that in some way your criticisms will wake up many Greens to some of the dark truths that have made the movement largely invisible and ineffective — so far.

You're right: this bunch of visionaries better get themselves grounded, and fast. But I don't believe that the hatefulness and pettiness of some Green insiders at one national conference, nor the disarray of the "structure," nor the alienation of one generation of leadership, will keep the Greens from their *raison d'être*: to effect social and political change in this country.

I attended the Estes Park gathering as an observer, volunteer and closet sympathizer. After the gathering, I came out of my closet and got involved with the Greens largely *because* of what I saw there, and what was largely not dealt with in your postmortem. That is: an eloquent series of progressive public policy visions describing a society, culture and environment in which I would like to live. Change *begins* with vision, and with a union of dynamic, if sometimes disparate, elements.

The Greens are an amazing, if somewhat unruly, assortment of people — youthful and old, shaggy-haired and clean-cut, passionate and soft-spoken, male and female (albeit mostly white) — and perspectives. They are on the leading edge of their own as well as our society's growth, so things are bound to be somewhat messy.

The jury is still out on the Greens. It is an organic, a human, unfolding; not just a political movement.

— **Karen R. Kos**

*Boulder CO, Rocky Mountain Bioregion*

## The morning after (II)

I came to the same conclusions you did about the Greens — some time ago, however — which is why I did not attend the Colorado gathering or any of the Interregional Commit-

tee meetings after the one in D.C.

Somewhat lamely, I am musing that perhaps the time isn't ripe for the Greens — although with a quarter of a million poor kids in the Saudi desert, I don't know what else we need to bring forth real leadership in this country.

I am sorry you feel empty. What can we learn from all this? We are still alive. I have been around a couple of decades longer than you. Unless we commit *hari-kari*, we gotta go on. I'm still Green despite it all.

— **Ingrid Komar**

*Washington DC, Potomac Valley Bior'n*

## The morning after (III)

Each time I read in NEW OPTIONS about this or that group and what "they" do, I am struck by something you leave unsaid, which is, "They are me."

Each of these groups about which you write are like different versions of the same game. Since we can't play with everyone in the world, we pick particular groups in which to grapple. But each group poses essentially the same challenges and offers essentially the same understandings.

So when you are disappointed in "the Greens," it might be useful to draw a distinction. The particular people who chose to act out caring for the Earth in that configuration were not a good team. They need to get better at cooperating. The Greens as an ideology of cooperation and healing is something else again.

Becoming good in teams is what we are all doing . . . whichever ones we happen to be on. We who live on Earth must take care of her, and as we support this cause or that, unavoidably we are doing the "inner work" of aligning ourselves with her, and with each other, and with the peace and harmony in

which creative energy flows.

— **Suzanne Taylor**

*Los Angeles CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion*

## The morning after (IV)

I was putting off responding to your Green report until I could find just the right words — but of course delaying action until one's thoughts are correct is exactly part of the problem. It was Carlyle who said we must not fail to do a good thing simply because we cannot do the best thing.

I have learned, working at a community college, that we are all blind men confronting whatever is the elephant of the moment. Which is by way of saying you're in good company.

Now that you're middle-aged — and I think that Green conference was your rite of passage — you will find on this side people just as earnest, informed, committed, but perhaps less heard from, more apt to be camouflaged by respectability, as likely to be Armand Hammer as a rural high school teacher.

NEW OPTIONS is one of the journals we read and understand. We don't have to agree with what you say to find it valuable, to find the questions worth sharing, to gain a sense that we are not the only ones thinking about these issues.

The next couple of months are going to be tough; a reawakening-and-transcending always is, especially one that says "I will do the best I can, as I can, without knowing exactly where I'm going or how to get there."

I don't mean to sound motherly: I had to spend five months in a wheelchair to learn *my* lessons (and learn how common the exercise is). It's what we do after the disillusionment that matters.

— **Susan Griswold Blandy**

*Troy NY, Hudson Valley Bioregion*

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