

New Options

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Economic Growth Is Not the Answer

Despite their surface differences, all the major presidential candidates have the same underlying economic goal: to make the economy grow and grow and grow.

Even their rhetoric differs little on this issue. Bush, the conservative incumbent, pledges to "sustain America's economic growth." Dukakis, the liberal challenger, says he is "committed to vibrant and sustained economic growth."

That rhetoric is repeated—often even more forcefully—by our "alternative" political periodicals. *The Nation*, *Mother Jones*, *In These Times*, *National Review* . . . all of them want to get this economy GROWING again.

None of them suggests that most of us can already meet our genuine material needs.

None of them suggests that our larger socioeconomic problems may have more to do with distribution than "growth," more to do with values than economics.

None of them suggests that what we're getting now, from our overheated economy, may be less than what we're giving up as human beings by keeping it all GROWING.

Over the last 10 years or so, a number of social scientists have begun to write about alternatives to the growth economy. Probably the best known are Herman Daly, economist, author of *Steady State Economics* (1977) and Paul Wachtel, psychologist, author of *The Poverty of Affluence* (NEW OPTIONS #7).

But their ideas are rarely discussed on the traditional left or right. And they're rarely asked to speak at conferences. So when we heard they'd both been invited to speak at a Nov. 20-22 conference in North Carolina (delightfully entitled "Economics as if the Earth Matters: The Case Against Growth"), we knew we had to go.

The conference was sponsored by The Center for Reflection on the Second [i.e., "Entropy"] Law (8420 Camellia Dr., Raleigh NC 27612), brainchild of James and Mary Berry, affable long-time Southerners and major players in the just-founded North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology (#38). Jim picked us up at the Trailways station and drove us out to Camp New Hope, a

magical setting for the conference: rolling hills, rustic cabins, fearsome woods.

You couldn't help but worry as the 80 conference registrants began to arrive. Talk about cultural diversity! There was Wachtel, straight from Greenwich Village with his heringbone jacket, walrus moustache and assertive-intellectual style. There was Daly, looking every bit the distinguished Alumni Professor of Economics at Louisiana State University. There were activists from the Boswash corridor in T-shirts and denim. There were long-time North Carolinians, many of them friends of the Berrys in their 60s and 70s. There were city councilpeople and carpenters, philosophers of creation-spirituality and Christian ministers, left-wing sociologists and libertarian economists.

What kept us all together—what harmonized us—were the surroundings. The wood-paneled meeting room, with its four big windows and massive wooden beams; the food constantly cooking in the kitchen, the good rich smells wafting in across the divide; the fire crackling and hissing from the fireplace—all this created a sense of comfort and warmth. For three days, it was our community; it was Home.

Our surroundings suggested—at least as powerfully as anything Daly and Wachtel said—that there is more to life than producing and consuming; and that that "something" is cheap, and dear.

We cannot bring you that hissing fireplace. But Daly's and Wachtel's speeches are condensed below.

Economic growth —or human growth?

By Paul Wachtel

We *are* destroying our environment. But I think the way we've tried to communicate this has been faulty.

Very often, the message that seems to be coming through is that we've got to tighten our

belts; we've got to give up a lot; we've got to get off the gravy train.

As long as your message is that people's standard of living has got to go down, people are going to be powerfully motivated not to hear that message. People don't want to live worse—and that's very understandable.

But I think that's an erroneous message. Because what it leaves out is all the ways our present way of life *doesn't work*. And not only does it not work ecologically (which we all know), it doesn't work psychologically. It doesn't bring us the kinds of satisfactions we assume it brings.

Side effects

There are very powerful side effects of economic growth that make the benefits of growth quite problematic. I want to focus on a few: uprooting, isolation and the endless stirring of desire.

Let's start with uprooting, which has been at the heart of the development of Western society for the last couple of hundred years.

The uprooting has been *geographic*. People don't stay put. They don't stay in stable communities, as has been the case throughout most of human history. Think of the stress that that creates in people.

There's also been an uprooting of *customs and traditions*. The framework of religious meaning has been eroded for millions and millions of people; and the various secular value systems have not compensated sufficiently.

Then there's the uprooting from *family and family ties*.

Vicious circle

From the beginning of the industrial revolution, people sought to deal with the weakening of the ties that had been at the heart of what made life worth living.

The way they sought to deal with it was by compensating through improvements in material comforts.

That was the strategy people took in the modern world. The irony, though, is that it led to a kind of vicious circle; in which the effort to make up for what was missing in our lives by accumulating more goods, had the effect of leading us to live in ways that further undermined the traditional sources of gratification.

In order to be "successful" in the modern world, you have to be willing to live a certain kind of life; you have to be willing to give first priority to work and accumulation and so forth. And as you do that, you undermine your ties to family and community and human relationships.

When you say to your kids, "Don't bother me now! I'm working," you then have to work even harder. Because every time you undermine your more gratifying ties, your need to compensate with material goods becomes greater. And the circle keeps on generating itself.

Stagnation—or stability?

It's fascinating to look at the linguistic choices a culture makes.

The constant sense in the 70s, on television, on the radio, is that we were in decline; that we were going through hard times. You could hardly speak to somebody in the 70s without a kind of assumption, unquestioning, of hard times.

But were times "hard"? Even assuming that, yes, people's wages were no longer going up, one could reasonably describe that as "stability." But you didn't hear, on the radio, "We have another year of stability." You heard about "stagnation."

When stability is described as stagnation, it tells you something about the psychology of our culture.

Cotton candy

In our consumption of goods, there's something called the "cotton candy effect."

Since there's been economic growth over the last 30-40 years, one would expect that surveys would show there's been a progressive increase in the reported well-being. Well, in fact, reported well-being peaked in 1957.

The reason why economic growth no longer brings a sense of well-being is that—at the level of affluence of the American middle-class—what really matters is not one's material possessions but one's psychological economy: one's richness of human relations, and freedom from the conflicts and constrictions that prevent us from enjoying what we have.

At the root of our present malaise is our tendency to try to use economics to solve what are really psychological problems.

Totem pole

One rationale for economic growth has been that it's only through growth that we can help

the poor. What doesn't get noticed is that the stock of possessions held by the typical poor person in America includes the kinds of items that would have defined a middle-class or even upper-middle class style of life not very long ago.

Once, having a television set was exciting; now it's horrendous to think anybody could live without one. Once, having a color set was an exciting idea. Now it's not affluence, it's just, you know, what you need not to be poor.

Poor people are really poor. They're poor because in America, when you have less than most everybody else, your experience of life is of deprivation, of despair, of not being respected, of being low man on the totem pole.

But no amount of growth can change that! Being low man on the totem pole is painful no matter how high the totem pole is.

We have this myth in America of upward mobility. It flies in the face of logic! Because no matter how much growth you have, only 10% of the population can be in the top 10%; only 50% can be in the upper 50%. There is no way that can change.

It is illusory to believe that growth can eliminate a kind of poverty that is a result of how goods are distributed, [and how our culture judges those with relatively few goods].

Intimacy & sharing

If our isolated, individualistic, overly-focused-striving way of life is in large measure responsible for our economic problems, then that points us at least implicitly toward the alternative; toward a way of life characterized by interdependency and full affectionate interchange between equals.

The alternative would have something to do with equality and sharing and intimacy and openness and mutual efforts . . . and being able to "go home again."

Economic growth —or moral growth?

By Herman Daly

If you want to learn about the economy, you have to watch the television commercials. By far the most penetrating insight for me recently has come from an ad for Merrill Lynch.

The scene opens with a bull trotting along an empty beach. Now this bull is obviously a very powerful animal. Nothing is likely to stop him. And there's a chorus in the background as the bull trots along, and it goes [Daly sings] "To know no boundaries. . . ." And the bull trots off into the sunset.

Abruptly the scene shifts. The bull is now trotting across a bridge that spans a deep gorge. There are no cars or bicycles or 18-wheel trucks crossing this bridge. So again the bull is

alone, in an empty world, unobstructed by anything.

What are we being told by this set of images? I think Merrill Lynch wants to put you into a world of individualistic, macho "no limits." An empty world where strong and solitary individualists have free reign.

In addition to television commercials, this vision can be found in Ronald Reagan's speeches—and in economics textbooks.

No greater lie can be imagined.

The world is not empty. Even if it were empty of people, it would be full of other things.

It may be empty of people of European background but full of other people. It may be empty of people but full of other species. We live in a full world with countless moral and ecological bonds.

Why does Merrill Lynch regale us with this boundless bull? Ultimately what they're selling you is growth. The boundless bull is always on the move.

What if, like Ferdinand, it sits and smells the flowers? That would not do! If you're selling growth, you also have to sell restless, prodding discontentment.

Growth vs. development

By "growth" I mean a quantitative increase in the physical dimension of the economy. By "development" I mean a qualitative improvement in the design of these physical stocks and flows. An economy therefore can develop without growing—or grow without developing.

A "steady-state economy" is one that does not grow, but is free to develop.

It is not static. Stocks of wealth and people are continually renewed even though neither is growing.

Growth vs. ecology

The growth economy conflicts with ecological first principles.

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NewOptions

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Visioning our way out of here

We're not going to be able to change this society without a shared, coherent vision of the future. But where is the vision that can inspire us, unite us, mobilize us? Where is the vision that can take us out of here?

Don't look to the 12 presidential candidates. None of their visions is transcendent—to put it mildly. “I want to help Americans become known as the nation that's first,” says George Bush. “I believe all Americans have a right to share in the dream of a better life,” says Michael Dukakis.

And don't look to the traditional political left. Too often, its vision is clouded—or even shaped—by bitterness and resentment. Consider the recent 32-page pamphlet introducing *Z Magazine* (150 W. Canton St., Boston MA 02118, pamphlet free), a soon-to-begin-publishing monthly whose editors and writers make up a veritable Who's Who of the old New Left. The titles of some of the projected columns capture the underlying spirit: “Eat the Rich,” “Venting Spleen,” “When the U.S. Pisses, the World Is Drenched.”

If neither our officially sanctioned “leaders” nor the traditional political left can give us a usable vision, who can? Why, *we ourselves* can. And not only “can.” In study groups, forums, and workshops across the U.S., literally thousands of professionals, independent activists and ordinary citizens are coming up with exciting visions of plausible futures.

This phenomenon would be hailed as a major new “movement” if it were easier to type; if there were one spokesperson or organization bringing people together. But there are dozens.

Town meetings

Since at least the 1960s, activists have dreamed of setting up “alternative town meetings” across the U.S. A version of that dream has now come to pass.

For the last couple of years, in over 300 communities across the U.S., citizens have gathered in “National Issues Forums” to discuss public issues.

“The Forums are owned and controlled and sponsored by local groups and organizations,” Jon Kinghorn, national network coordinator of the Forums, told NEW OPTIONS from his office in Dayton, Ohio. “Typical sponsors in a community would be a continuing education program, a community college, a Rotary club, a library, a neighborhood association and a League of Women Voters.

“The local sponsors stage their Forums in the way *they* think best [e.g., in some com-

munities there's a multitude of small study groups leading up to a city-wide Forum; in other communities there are no study groups but several city-wide Forums].”

Once the national network of sponsoring organizations chooses its three yearly topics, it has the Public Agenda Foundation—Daniel Yankelovich et al.—write 30-40 page “issue pamphlets” on each topic. These pamphlets not only give Forum participants a thorough grounding in each topic; they help participants think about alternative directions for the future.

Each pamphlet features *three or more* policy options; not just the typical liberal and conservative options. For example, one of this year's pamphlets—“Rethinking the U.S.-Soviet Relationship”—features the “peace through strength” (conservative) and “cooperating on the nuclear issue” (liberal) options. But it also—and equally—devotes attention to the “working with the Soviets” (transformational) and “avoid entangling alliances” (libertarian) options.

“We don't start out looking at what is liberal or conservative—we don't even approach it from that standpoint,” Kinghorn told NEW OPTIONS. “What we do is look at the fundamental value choices facing us. And then we have the folks in the communities look at the *consequences* of those value choices over the long term.

“The people in the communities recognize that in our system of government, things don't turn around overnight. So they're very interested in trying to focus on what direction we should take.”

Futures thinking

Clem Bezold, Bob Olson and Jonathan Peck are accomplished futurists. But rather than teach in universities, they've chosen to run something called the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF), which helps people think about the future.

Among their recent clients: state and local citizen groups, such as the Kentucky Tomorrow Coalition and Tri-County [Peoria] Tomorrow (there are dozens of such “Tomorrow” and “2000” groups across the U.S.—IAF maintains a master list and is in constant touch with them); various state legislatures; corporations like The Upjohn Co.; and professional organizations ranging from librarians to nurses.

Whomever the client, IAF seeks to get across one basic fact: the future will probably *not* be merely an extrapolation of present trends. So they develop a range of “future scenarios” for each of their clients to consider.

“We use four scenarios because pedagogically that seems to be the best number,” Peck told NEW OPTIONS. “While I am delighted using six or seven, I've seen too many eyes glaze over. . . .

“The content of the four scenarios isn't always the same. We try to be sensitive to the different groups we're working with; what's plausible to us may be less plausible to another group. But we always try to cover four themes. There's always a “good” scenario [“good” from the point of view of the dominant culture—ed.] and a “bad” scenario; and there's usually something in between; and there's usually something structurally different [but preferable from a decentralist/globally responsible point of view].”

At a recent roundtable for the Management and Technology Council of the Information Industry Association, Bezold and Olson helped the assembled executives envision four possible futures: “The High-Tech Information Society,” “Things Bog Down,” “1984 and Beyond,” and “The Creative Society.” The first scenario was characterized by “high consumer demand, an emphasis on improving productivity, and achievement values”; the latter, by “creativity, learning, human development and expressive values that emphasize inner satisfaction, harmony with nature, gender role equality and global cooperation.”

We asked Peck why the IAF stressed the scenarios. “We want to help people understand possibilities that are different from normal everyday thinking,” he said. “Today's thinking—because it is largely based on experience—is limited and shuts out possibilities. Some of these possibilities are important if we're going to create a positive future.”

Policy workshops

Meanwhile, out west, the Montana Alliance for Progressive Policy (MAPP) has been running “economic policy workshops” using its own four scenarios or “models” of possible economies for the state of Montana.

The scenarios were developed completely independently of IAF, and they're more traditionally “political” in content than IAF's.

“In 1982, after the Reagan election and all that, there was a Governor's Committee on Economic Development [here in Montana],” Ken Peres, MAPP's youngish, New School for Social Research-trained economist, told NEW OPTIONS from his home in Missoula. “And what they basically said was, if you lower wages, and cut government spending, and cut governmental-environmental regulations, and cut corporate taxes, and cut union strength, you'll end up with a prosperous economy.

“Well, that shook up our folks!—[especially since] it was the *only* economic policy being discussed in the public arena. There were no alternatives! It was a real stimulus to action.”

Ultimately, MAPP asked Peres to develop a workshop that could present a variety of economic policy models to Montanans. "So what I did," he says, "was look around and see what debates were going on, what policies were being recommended. They kind of fell into four different models.

"The first was the Better Business Climate model—the only one [being discussed back in 1982]. Then there's the Better Business-Government Cooperation model. It's publicized by liberal groups; Dukakis is talking about it.

"Then on the other side you have two other models: Self-Reliance and Self-Determination.

"I see the Self-Reliance model emanating from the work of E.F. Schumacher and, more recently, David Morris and the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (NEW OPTIONS #21). It was being discussed by a few groups in Montana The Self-Determination model is more social-democratic in orientation."

Peres has reached over 1,000 Montanans with his economic policy workshops. At first, he explains, he "gave them on a lecture model. That was good in the sense that it presented a lot of information and analysis. But it was me up there basically talking for three or four hours. And you don't get too far doing that."

So in 1985 he changed from a lecture to a small-group format, and the *kinds* of people attending broadened dramatically. "There's no lecture. There are activities *dealing with* the information we've assembled. . . . We send people to small groups. We have debates. We have people propose their *own* alternatives to the Better Business Climate model. We have people examine specific problems and what each of the four models would maintain. . . . It's very fluid.

"We're really acting on the old democratic value, that an informed citizenry is your most important resource. If you believe in democracy—if you believe in informed choice among as broad a group as possible—then they should have options to inform their decisions!"

The marginalized speak

In mid-1985—about the same time MAPP was turning its workshop into a small-group process—Elly Haney was founding the Center for Vision and Policy, a Maine-based organization committed to "bringing the values and visions of marginalized people into the discussion and solution of issues that concern us all."

Haney is a much-respected activist. "I've been active I guess in every movement that's come along since the Second World War," she told NEW OPTIONS from her home in Bath, Me. "I helped start another organization here called the Feminist Spiritual Community, which is still going. . . ."

The Center's first major project was to hold a retreat this May for "invited Native and Anglo

individuals" from Maine. "The focus [was on] exploring selected Native themes and values. . . . [Among them]: a ceremonial way of living; a sense of 'place'; alternative concepts of time; alternative concepts of boundaries and ownership; and viewing everything as alive."

About 30 people came to the retreat, and on the first morning Haney "led everybody in a kind of guided imaging of the future. It was a journey *into* the future. I had them come to a village, and I sort of took them through a day there, and had them [dwell on what they] saw there.

"And then we shared our visions. And it was very moving—[not least because] there was really an impressive similarity to our visions, cross-class, cross-race, cross-gender!"

Next month the Center is embarking on its second major project. "We're holding an initial meeting of people from peace and justice organizations throughout the state. We want to see what interest there might be in groups working together to develop a vision and [then] a set of goals: legislative and-or action kinds of goals.

"I think it's really important to have that dimension of vision. It's not enough just to be reacting to something negative. I'm much more interested in having a vision and trying to translate *that* into goals."

An outbreak of peace

Interhelp is a world-wide network of peace activists. Not a few of them are workshop leaders who include visioning exercises in their workshops.

Sarah Pirtle's workshops combine visioning, music and storytelling — and no wonder. She's a professional storyteller, musician and songwriter. She's a trained futurist, and teaches "conflict resolution and cooperation skills" at the University of Vermont. She's author of a delightful novel for teenagers, *An Outbreak of Peace* (1987).

She can do workshops at conventions and peace centers, classrooms and restaurants.

"When I work with people I often say that, in this time period, most of us carry two strong voices in us," she told NEW OPTIONS from her home in western Massachusetts. "One voice can be very hopeless and have a very graphic picture of disaster. And the other has a real sense of possibility, a real sense of a livable future.

"I think people almost innately have an ability to sense what the world *could* be like if it was working well. In other words, we're not working against the grain [of human nature] to say, 'Imagine this,' but we're really asking people to go back to back to stuff that is usually very strong for children of what a just world would feel like."

Pirtle's voice deepens and softens. "When I say to people that they have two voices that

they can pay attention to, it's usually very freeing. And sometimes I'll say, Can you remember a time you were walking down the street and you could feel the reality of a nuclear war? And people say, 'Oh yes!' And then I suggest they try an experiment, of walking down the street and imagining, really *imagining* a stable peace and a just world, and seeing what comes from that.

"I find that when you're working with people on imaging, you can't shove aside the pain. As people start to describe what a world that works for everyone would be like, they often feel tremendous sadness as they look at the disparity. So I always include time in the workshops for people to talk about that.

"And I do music, I weave in stories, I really try to be full and sensory, so things can reach people in many different ways.

"I think it's exciting for people to see themselves in the future, and what they would be doing and how they would be contributing if they could. When people can get a very clear image of where they could go, where they really want to go, then they start living *toward* that image. . . ."

Startling

The five visioning processes above are dramatically different from one another. So it's startling—and significant—that many participants are coming up with roughly the *same image* of a preferred future.

The people at the Institute for Alternative Futures report that a surprisingly high percentage of activists, professionals, and—even—corporate executives, prefer the "Creative Society" scenario to those that merely extrapolate from the present.

Elly Haney reports that Native Americans and non-Natives, poor people and non-poor, all relish a newfound sense of "competence and power" in their desired future, especially in the way they "walk and talk and relate to one another."

Sarah Pirtle reports such "common themes" as "a real decentralist vision, with appropriate technology . . . very much sort of a regional base, with also some world government—*both* becoming stronger. . . ."

All across America, it seems, all kinds of people are visioning a human-scale, ecological, human growth-oriented world.

All across America, it seems, people are ready to join together to work for such a world.

Haney: Center for Vision and Policy, P.O. Box 396, Bath ME 04530; Kinghorn: National Issues Forums, 100 Commons Rd, Dayton OH 45459; Peck: Institute for Alternative Futures, 1405 King St., Alexandria VA 22314; Peres: 701 So. Fifth W., Missoula MT 59801; Pirtle: 54 Thayer Rd, Greenfield MA 01301.

Letters . . .

Seeing Green

I enjoy NEW OPTIONS. But I think what's "new" is not the ideas, but the clusters (Green) they're coming in.

—Mary Lou Spencer
Ypsilanti, Mich.

You're much too Green, but you're also damned good! Keep slugging.

—George R. Kaplan
Bethesda, Md.

Not so gentle

In my view, the most important article you've ever run is "Rearing a Gentler People" (NEW OPTIONS #42). Not the least of its virtues is that it forthrightly recognizes that the objective requires changes "in here" as well as "out there."

A set of social and economic values and practices that glorifies defeating others in every realm does not support gentle parenting. Likewise, a harsh parenting does not support gentle social and economic values and practices. We have to improve both.

Such change is not easy. It means that living in fulfilled peace must take precedence over selling more cars, becoming world champions, or seducing the most lovers.

The majority of modern people are devoted to defeating others in at least a few crucial realms, even though they see the problem with respect to others. A world-renowned professor of child psychiatry once exploded at a presentation I made on the contribution of television drama and professional sports to the inhumane, defeating trends in our society. "I'm going to watch 'Streets of San Francisco' and the 49ers [football team]," he cried, "and I don't give a damn how much social damage they do!" This is a man who struggles to get mentally retarded children a decent break.

So, congratulations.

—Roderic Gorney, M.D.
Los Angeles, Calif.

The author is Professor of Psychiatry at UCLA and author of an 800-page reconceptualization of evolution, love, work, play, racism and values, The Human Agenda (1972).

Your readers should be warned. The psychological tests given to near-infants under Missouri's "New-Parents-as-Teachers" program [that you wax so eloquent about] are used in

various ways to harass good parents. Just consider:

- Most children under the age of three can be shown to be "developmentally delayed" in some way by these tests.

- Low scores on these tests can be and have been used as evidence of child "neglect" in the Missouri courts.

The home education movement is growing like wildfire in Missouri—and these tests are one method the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education uses to fight back.

—Terry Inman
Florissant, Mo.

Our kids, ourselves

Your "Rearing a Gentler People" article brings to light an issue which has been peeking from the wings of the feminist movement for some time now: the issue of mothering.

We were somewhat sensitized to it with the birth of our first granddaughter. Peggy gave up her job at the World Bank to be a mother. The most difficult part of her new job was in answering the question "What do you do?" "Mothering" seems to no longer be a respected occupation.

The drive to establish day care centers so women can "work" strikes us as something out of *Brave New World* or "Max Headroom."

We at TRANET have seen the emergence of a number of embryonic organizations with the goal of empowering full-time parenting. If, as you say, "compassion is in direct proportion to the amount of touch" one gets when growing up, the issue you raise should send all of the alternative and transformational movements—particularly the feminists—back to the drawing board.

—Margaret and Bill Ellis
*Transnational Network for Approp. Tech.
Rangeley, Me.*

NEW OPTIONS #42 is timely and essential: NGO partnerships, *Liberating Theory*, order blank and—especially—parenting.

For a Baby-Boomer/professional I had my kids relatively early—1974 and 1977. I have struggled to maintain the balance between saving the world and saving my kids for most of my professional life.

Our solution was to each work part-time and/or freelance until the kids were in elementary school. They also had some daycare, but basically spent mornings and evenings and a couple afternoons with one or both of us.

Another strategy has been to involve our kids in our work. When we did recycling research, the kids sometimes went along. When I did community development, I brought them to the office every couple of weeks to help with

mailings and such. When we taught school, they helped mark multiple choice tests and helped proof grade sheets.

In short, we've tried not to "rear" them (your word) so much as to support them in each of their growth stages and include them in our lives as much as possible.

They've learned how to answer the phone in a "business-like" fashion and take messages. They also know how to talk to tape machines, use a Mackintosh, write letters to editors, and get a group of kids to tackle a problem.

But most importantly, they know that everything in the world is connected to everything else; that you can never do just one thing.

And, they know how to care—for themselves, each other, us, others.

—Ruth-Ellen Miller
Portland, Ore.

Fraught with pitfalls

I came away from "Visionary Bills" (NEW OPTIONS #39) with mixed feelings. The Congressional scorecard concept seems worthwhile enough, but it is fraught with pitfalls. Consider the outcome of the following alternative, and equally important, scorecard:

- Replace Rep. Heftel's Renewable Energy Tax Credits bill with Reps. Schneider and Boxer's Automobile Fuel Efficiency Standards bill. The latter would increase automobile efficiency by 75%. Auto efficiency would rise to 60 mpg which would totally eliminate foreign imports and reduce the U.S. trade deficit by some \$50 billion per year. The effect of [Heftel's bill] pales in comparison.

- Replace Rep. Downey's U.S.-Soviet cultural exchange resolution with the Udall/Schneider U.S.-Soviet leadership exchange resolution. It had more co-sponsors, and subsequent actions promoted by Reps. Brown and Schneider have included the establishment of a "Congress Bridge" for leaders to talk person-to-person rather than solely as superpower vs. superpower.

- Replace the Scheuer/Yatron greenhouse resolution with the Schneider/Proxmire Hazardous Waste Reduction Act. The latter would have imposed a waste-end tax on hazardous and toxic materials as a means of reducing their production. The U.S. produces up to one billion tons of hazardous waste each year.

I haven't calculated all the changes, but Rep. Schneider's score would increase from 55 to 80 [making her one of the top eight Congresspeople], while a number of your top 25 would drop off.

Perhaps more importantly, the scorecard fails to reflect some of the most important work that occurs in Congress: saving the funding for existing programs that are visionary in nature, and securing new programs *without* going the

route of introducing a bill.

One outstanding example comes to mind. While federal programs were being cut left and right, Rep. Schneider succeeded in getting a new program through Congress known as the "Least-Cost Utility Planning Initiative." The Initiative [makes it possible] for state utility commissions and utilities to identify energy efficiency options that could cut in half the \$170 billion spent each year on gas and electricity in U.S. buildings.

My main reason in writing is not so much to praise Rep. Schneider (although I obviously believe her to be one of the few visionary members of Congress), but to share a concern about *any* scorecard process. Admittedly each person's list of visionary bills can be quite different. Perhaps an ancillary value of the scorecard is to foster debate as to what constitutes the most forward-looking actions.

—Michael Totten

Policy Analyst for Rep. Claudine Schneider (R-R.I.)

Washington, D.C.

Who is soft-headed?

I was interested to read your account of the debate between the "spiritual" and "political" wings of the American Green movement ("Fear and Longing at the Green Gathering," NEW OPTIONS #40).

The political types, exemplified by Murray Bookchin, believe that only those "who are fundamentally opposed to capitalism should be part of the Green movement." They criticize the spiritually-minded as soft-headed and think the future of the movement belongs with socialism, anarchism, "social ecology" or whatever.

Who is soft-headed? What is "capitalism"? Libertarians of the right such as Milton Friedman embrace a "capitalism" that allows free exchange of what people value, material or non-material. Such "capitalism" includes, for instance, the Israeli *kibbutzim*, which Friedman regards as a triumph of capitalism.

Critics of capitalism—including, no doubt, Mr. Bookchin—mean something very different when they oppose "capitalism." They oppose greed and materialism—qualities of the *spirit* that are associated with many modern societies, whether their economies happen to be organized as "capitalist" or "socialist."

There can be no genuinely new politics until we begin to take seriously the spiritual problems that afflict modern people.

—A. Lawrence Chickering

San Francisco, Calif.

The author is executive director of the Institute for Contemporary Studies, a conservative think tank whose board members have included Ronald Reagan and Ed Meese.

Continued from page two:

The growth of the economic subsystem is — or should be — limited by the intricate ecological connections that are disrupted as the economic subsystem grows.

If an ecological restructuring of the economy is to be avoided, then economists and politicians must discover an "ultimate resource" which is both infinite in amount and infinitely substitutable for other resources. And of course they're trying. The "ultimate resource" is variously referred to as technology, information, knowledge or the human mind.

Well, clearly it's a risky business to try to specify limits to knowledge. But it's equally dangerous to suppose that new knowledge will always abolish old limits faster than it discovers new ones. The discovery of uranium was "new knowledge" — but discovery of the effects of radioactivity was also new knowledge. And that didn't expand the usefulness of the uranium resource base; rather, it contracted it.

Growth vs. morality

Even when growth is ecologically possible, ethical factors may limit its desirability:

- The basic needs of the present should always dominate the basic needs of the future. But the basic needs of the future should take precedence over the luxuries of the present.
- Other species also deserve their place in the sun.
- The attitudes that foster growth are corrosive. Among them: greed, acquisitiveness, glorification of self-interest, technocratic scientism, and "anything goes."

Beyond growthmania

Whenever you say there's an alternative to growth, all people can think of is "non-growth." And they begin to worry. Their worries are not unjustified.

If you stop growing in a growth economy, you're in trouble! It's like an airplane that's designed for forward motion. If it stops still in the air, it's going to crash. It just wasn't meant to do that.

It doesn't mean there's no such thing as a helicopter—which *can* stay still in the air; but you can't do it with an airplane.

So you've got to ask: How do you convert the growth airplane into a steady-state helicopter? What do you have to redesign?

We can't start from point zero, we have to start from our given historical condition. And our given condition is that we operate in a system of private property in a market economy.

You may want to have a revolution and wipe those out. I'm not interested. I don't think we have either the time or the leadership or the wisdom to come up with anything better.

But I think those institutions can be bent—

can be redesigned—to a certain degree. I think they can be bent and stretched enough to permit us to convert to a steady-state economy.

Only three things are essential: limiting population, limiting "throughput" of resources, and limiting the range of permissible inequality.

Limiting population

By definition, a steady-state economy requires limits on the population of human bodies.

I don't know the best way to control population. There are many possibilities, ranging from the coercive Chinese system to complete *laissez-faire*.

Limiting throughput

By definition, a steady-state economy requires limits on the population of artifacts.

In my opinion, the best way to do that is at the entry level—on the input side. Because there are fewer mines and wells than there are garbage cans and smokestacks.

And if you're limiting input, then indirectly—at the other end of the pipeline—you're limiting output. There's no other place for the output to come from than from the input.

Now, that can be accomplished in several ways. I've suggested a "depletion quota" on basic resources. The government would control the rate of depletion, even though ownership rights would remain in private hands.

Another economist has suggested a "national severance tax." By taxing depletion we'd lower the throughput to some socially determined level.

Either approach would raise the cost of resources. And we'd all have to be more conserving in our use of resources.

Limiting inequality

A steady-state economy may also require minimum and maximum limits on income.

The idea of a minimum income has a lot of support from economists. It could be implemented by means of a subsidy through the income tax system to lower-income families.

The maximum limit is more controversial. Plato thought that the richest citizens ought to be four times as wealthy as the poorest. I don't know where he got that number; I would suggest maybe 10 times.

Where do I get that number? Well, there is some empirical evidence for it. In the civil service, the ratio of the highest level to the lowest is about 10 to one. Same in the military. Same in the university.

The idea of minimum and maximum limits on income is not derivable from my definition of the steady-state. But it's important in the interest of justice, and I think it's essential to community. Community really cannot tolerate unlimited inequality. And without justice and community there can be no steady-state.

Bunch, Johnson: passions of feminism

Many people—even many activists—believe that the energy has gone out of the feminist movement. And it is true that, since the heady days of the early 1970s, many feminists have narrowed their focus, or opted for mere reformism, or harnessed their perspectives to those of socialism (“socialist-feminism”).

But before you consign feminism irretrievably to the past, check out Charlotte Bunch’s *Passionate Politics* (St. Martin’s Press, \$18) and Sonia Johnson’s *Going Out of Our Minds* (The Crossing Press, Freedom CA 95019, \$11 pbk). Both books argue that feminism is as vital as ever. Both are brimming with energy and intelligence and new directions.

Points of view

In important ways, Bunch and Johnson are different from one another. Bunch is a synthesizer and healer, Johnson a “deviant” (her word) and provocateur. Bunch feels it’s time for feminists to reach “beyond the feminist subculture,” Johnson dreads “drowning in the mainstream.”

But their similarities are even more striking.

Both grew up in strong religious households (Bunch as a Methodist, Johnson a Mormon); both were married to supportive men who thought of themselves as feminists; both “came out” as lesbians; both had brief and unsatisfying affairs with organizations on the left; both are incessant feminist organizers (Bunch co-founded radical feminist collectives and periodicals, Johnson co-initiated innumerable public protests and workshops).

Both felt the feminist agenda in the early 1980s was incomplete. Both insisted that feminists had *not* gone too far—“rather,” Bunch says (in a line that could as easily have been penned by Johnson), “we must realize that *we have not gone far enough* with the implications and development of our ideas.” Both are committed to building a *radical* feminism—a feminism that is committed to offering a perspective on all issues (not just “women’s issues”), and committed to developing its own comprehensive political analysis, strategy, ethics and worldview.

Global feminism

Bunch’s *Passionate Politics* is a collection of essays on four basic subjects: movement organizing, lesbian feminism, feminist media and global feminism. You get the impression she knows the work of every feminist theorist and activist, everywhere. And you get the impression she’s integrated at least something from

each of them into her own thought.

One of her key underlying themes is the need for women to organize nationally. “The feminist movement has a wonderful array of creative small groups and projects,” she states (in her typically judicious manner). “Nevertheless, when these don’t have any voice in something larger, a lot of their potential power is lost.”

Another key theme is the relation between reformism and radical change. She outlines five criteria for evaluating reforms. Among them: Does the reform “give women a sense of power, strength and imagination as a group”? Does it “educate women politically”?

The most hopeful trend in feminism today, she says, is the development of feminist perspectives in the Third World, coupled with North American women’s attempt “to develop a global perspective that informs local work.” The last 70 pages of her book—in which she discusses the recent U.N. conferences on women—will keep you glued to your seats. She offers useful advice: “In discussing global connections with women in the U.S., I often find a tendency toward two extremes — arrogance or guilt. . . . Both of these attitudes are patronizing and unproductive and have little to do with real solidarity among women.”

Here is her conclusion: “To work locally with a global perspective does require stretching feminism, not to abandon its insights but to shed its cultural biases, and thus to expand its capacity to reach all people. In this process, we risk what seems certain. . . .”

Eyes off the guys

The first thing you’ll notice about Johnson’s *Going Out of Our Minds* is the style. It’s written in the feisty, biting, wry, exuberant style you’ll find in many women’s letters, especially the long single-spaced typewritten kind produced after 10 p.m.

The next thing you’ll notice is that it builds like a novel. It covers her life over the last couple of years, and many of the chapters begin with her describing her enthusiasm for some big-deal movement initiative she’s about to take part in (civil disobedience, fasting for the ERA, running for president as the “radical feminist” candidate of the Citizens Party, etc., etc.); invariably she ends those chapters by explaining her eventual disillusionment and the need to move on. For example, civil disobedience “teaches women to step over the line and discover in ourselves undreamed reservoirs of love and daring,” she ventures to her mother as a chapter begins. But by that chapter’s end

she’s concluded that “civily disobedient actions and all confrontation, though they may be exciting aerobic warm-up exercises, . . . are neither women’s game nor appropriate or affordable warm-up exercises.”

The next thing you’ll notice is that all her experiences are pointing her in a single direction: away from the mainstream and toward the understanding that, for women to make any real progress, they need now to create a new *internal* reality, one that’s consistent with their needs and prefigures the kind of world they’d choose to live in.

“We must abandon the present global mind that has failed us all utterly,” she writes. “Since truth is reversed in patriarchy, to go out of our minds is to become most truly sane. . . . Going out of our minds means emotionally, spiritually and intellectually boycotting patriarchy. Boycotting it where it has deepest hold, in our viscera, almost in our genes and chromosomes. . . . [Men] can’t do patriarchy without us. . . . The third phase of the women’s movement consists of each of us revolutionizing our internal worlds in the knowledge that this alone can change the external world. If this new phase is to take hold, enough women must refuse utterly all the emotional sops, all the lures that bind us to men’s reality. What would happen if we said no to voting, no to registering voters, no to working in campaigns, no to raising and giving money to candidates, no to lobbying, no to demonstrations—no to organizing in any of the old complicit ways? . . . I swear that what we need to do most is that which scares us most and seems to be just the opposite of what we should do: WE MUST TAKE OUR EYES OFF THE GUYS.”

Some commentators have seen these passages as a call to literal (physical) separatism or even man-hating. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, in the context of Johnson’s book, “man” refers not to a person’s genital apparatus so much as to a complex of attitudes, values and priorities that has been identified as dangerous not only by feminists but by ecologists, Greens, humanistic psychologists, New Agers, and others. Johnson has taken to calling some men “honorary women,” and rather parenthetically remarks at one point that it’s okay to love men.

Bruyn & Meehan: local self-reliance

At last there’s a book that makes a powerful case for local self-reliance (import substitution, local production for local needs, retain local wealth, etc.) as a *national* economic strategy. At last there’s a book on local self-reliance that can go head-to-head with the avalanche of

pompous bestsellers touting such local economic strategies as smokestack-chasing, lowering taxes and wages, and urging the federal government to become the major player.

The book: Severyn Bruyn and James Meehan, eds., *Beyond the Market and the State: New Directions in Community Development* (Temple Univ. Press, \$30).

Bruyn teaches "social economy" at Boston College and is advisor to innumerable initiatives in the self-reliance/economic democracy/social investment universe (e.g., the magazine *Workplace Democracy*); Meehan is a doctoral student at Boston College. Their book is considerably less vivid than the feminist books reviewed above, but what it lacks in pizzazz it more than makes up for in other ways. Bruyn's introduction is the clearest brief introduction to the politics of self-reliant economic development now extant; it entirely succeeds in taking the concept out of the realm of the fanciful. The body of the text—rewritten speeches from a national conference on community development—gives a rigorously systemic overview of the problems and prospects.

Third system

Bruyn's thesis is that the market system and state socialism are both seriously flawed. The former has "historically led toward bigger government," the latter is oppressive. But "a new system is waiting in the wings. It is already evolving in the interstices of modern economies. It simply needs encouragement to develop further through a new climate of public awareness and enabling legislation. . . ."

What would this "third economic system" seek to accomplish?

According to the essays in Part One, the new system would help communities and regions attain "autonomy in land, labor and capital." Regarding land, it might foster the development of community land trusts. Regarding labor, it might foster the development of worker cooperatives. Regarding capital, it might foster the development of such "community finance institutions" as community loan funds and Community Development Credit Unions.

The new system would also help communities and regions attain "economic viability" and competence—in part by encouraging the growth of consumer cooperatives, in part by encouraging the development of local economic coordinating bodies (one essay suggests that the War on Poverty's old Community Development Corporations could be refurbished to do the job).

According to the essays in Part Two, new strategies have *already been developed* for helping us move toward local autonomy. The "education-legislation process" gets particular attention.

Most of these essays were written by people

from such hands-on groups as Institute for Community Economics, Industrial Cooperative Association and National Congress for Community Economic Development. The essays describe the philosophy behind these groups' work, but they lack the magic, the warmth, the animating spirit you can pick up from *watching* these groups in action. No doubt for that reason, Bruyn and Meehan include a final essay by Boston political activists Mel King and Samantha George that's as suggestive and visionary as the rest of the essays are grounded and stolid. Their thesis: "Community development must be about facilitating human growth from the local level to the global."

Beres: no persons, no planet

For years this newsletter has been reporting on books that advocate world cooperation and "world order." For years we've been reporting on books that say we need to re-think our values and priorities and get a grip on our fears. Now comes a book that puts the two together. In *America Outside the World* (Lexington Books, \$20), Louis Beres says that world order is utterly dependent on our becoming better individuated and more sociable and self-aware.

Beres is a substantial man. He's professor of political science at Purdue University and author of 10 more conventional books—including four on nuclear strategy and one (*People, States and World Order*, 1981) that's in our view still the best brief introduction to the concept of world order.

America Outside the World is written with unusual force and verve, and is peppered with insights not just from the great political scientists but from Goethe, Celine, Camus, Gide, Hesse. Its thesis (in a nutshell) is that Amer-

icans don't much like or respect themselves, and so they—we—have to live through the crowd, through the "herd," through the state, in order to feel fully alive.

We don't much like or respect ourselves because we lack a mature basis for feelings of status and self-worth; and until we grow up, we'll continue to project our faults and fears onto other *nations* (not just other people). "By treating the Soviet Union as a pernicious society, Americans affirm that they belong to an elite, one that is based on goodness." Beres makes basically the same point with regard to South Africa (Chapter Two), Central America (Three), the Middle East (Four) and terrorists (Five).

The L-word

What is to be done? Beres proposes two major remedies. First, "essential transformations of personal and collective life within the U.S." will be required. We need a "revival of personal meaning [and of] social and cultural life. It must begin at home, in the schools, in the work place. . . ." Second, scholars must create a new discipline by fusing international relations with sociology and child development theory.

The second remedy is (as it happens) Beres's current intellectual project. The first is, well, a long ways off. But there's an intermediate step that keeps popping up in the text. "The sources of our personal and political transformation," he writes, "lie entirely within those particular individuals who are already aware of our misfortune. Scattered widely across every occupation and profession and in every corner of our country, these repositories of consciousness must become the starting point for a whole new kind of public activity. Rejecting the futile dynamics of partisan domestic politics as a delusion, they must aim at nothing less than real social action and leadership."

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