

NewOptions

June 30, 1987

Issue No. Forty

Fear and Longing at the Green Gathering

Yes, some minor bills in Congress do reflect a decentralist/globally responsible, "Greenish" point of view (NEW OPTIONS #39); and, yes, some visionary groups like RESULTS are able to wangle \$50 million for the Third World here, \$75 million for the Third World there (#37). But is it enough to work for partial change? Did we come through the civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam war movement to work for Joe Biden for president, or to toss pennies at the Third World poor? Is there—in the late 1980s—a way to work for fundamental social change without completely cutting ourselves off from the mainstream?

It was with these questions in mind that, as other political reporters were rushing off to cover the campaigning in Iowa and New Hampshire (then coming back to the Reliable Source Bar at the National Press Club and regaling each other with campaign war stories), we drove up to Amherst, Mass. to attend the first national Green gathering, "Building the Green Movement: A National Conference for a New Politics."

On the floor

We had attended the U.S. Greens' founding convention at St. Paul, Minn., in the summer of 1984 (NEW OPTIONS #8), and we knew how inefficient and ineffective the organization that grew out of it—the Committees of Correspondence—had become. Despite the several dozen local groups that had joined the C of C, its quarterly meetings were marked by endless turmoil, by an almost religious devotion to the process of full-consensus decision making, and by failure to carry out even such basic tasks as fund raising, organizer training and membership building.

And yet we were convinced that, if any "post-liberal/post-socialist" political group was going to succeed in this country, it would be the Greens. We had learned, over the years, that left-wing groups such as Democratic Socialists of America and Citizen Action were too wedded

to old styles and old ideologies to be genuinely open to new approaches; and we had learned through the New World Alliance that you can't build a political organization with writers and professionals alone. You *had* to involve the activists, however abrasive and confrontational some of them might be. And the Greens had activists—boy did they have activists.

And they were open to the new values. At St. Paul, the U.S. Greens had adopted the most visionary founding document since SDS's Port Huron statement—the "Ten Key Values" statement. Among the values cited: decentralism *and* global responsibility (the West German Greens' famous "Four Pillars" statement refers only to the former); personal *and* social responsibility (the German Greens refer only to the latter); future focus (defined to include long-term thinking and fiscal responsibility); ecological wisdom; postpatriarchal values; and respect for diversity.

Our car broke down three times in New Jersey, the third time—fortunately—just outside a bar that served raw oysters; and then it began to rain; and by the time we got to Hampshire College in Amherst, site of the conference, it was midnight and the conference registration desk had long shut down. And no one knew where we should go. So we made our way to a dorm lounge, and took filthy cushions from off the couches, and laid them on the floor. And three of us lay on the cushions, cold and wet, with only one sleeping bag to share among us. And we tried to sleep, comforted by the fact that someone told us that 340 people had registered that day. (Eventually over 600 people, from 38 states and nine countries, would register for at least some of the plenaries and workshops.)

I can remember lying on the cushions trying to sleep and thinking, "I'm 40 years old—too old for this." I imagined the Reliable Source crowd and their Holiday Inns and expense accounts and felt sorry for myself. And yet, every time somebody else, arriving late, slithered into

the dorm lounge, I felt a certain joy.

A surprising shyness

The next morning we stood in a slow-moving registration line and looked at the schedule. It was awesome. Over the next five days would be 10 plenary panels with 44 speakers (among the topics to be covered: Green Movements Around the World, The Greens and Electoral Politics, Green Economic Alternatives . . .). And that was just the tip of the iceberg. One hundred twenty workshops had also been scheduled, covering everything from "The Greens and the Labor Movement" to "Eco-feminism and Spiritual Renewal." By the time we reached the registration desk, we'd forgotten all about our horrible night.

What took us longer to realize was that the real attraction of the conference was not the topics covered, or the well-known speakers. It was the chance to meet our fellow conference-goers—a rather inauspicious-looking crew, clad as they mostly were in tank-tops, T-shirts and blue jeans. Most of them could and *would* go on and on for hours about their ideas and ideologies. But they were modest, almost shy, in speaking of their local work—which often turned out to be incredibly imaginative and exciting.

The cat wasn't let out of the bag, publicly at least, until the day Sarah Lynn Cunningham, a Louisville, Ky. community organizer thoroughly disgusted with the abstract intellectual tone of the plenaries, got up and started talking about what *she* meant by Green politics, e.g. about how she'd helped launch 16 community gardens in the inner city, in part with the help of a bunch of first-time criminal offenders "who got to rub elbows with people who were different from them. . . . By planting tiny seedlings and growing them into plants, they're getting the subliminal message that they *can* rehabilitate themselves." So many conference-goers were engaged in vaguely similar kinds of organizing work—with environmental groups,

peace groups, women's groups—that after Cunningham spoke you could almost feel the collective “Holy smoke!” in the room. The conference-goers had finally discovered how wonderful they were, and how rich was their movement's potential.

“Political/spiritual” split

For five days and five nights, participants discussed and debated and argued. Since the Committees of Correspondence wanted this to be a purely educational conference (“We are not gathering to make decisions for the Green movement”), all people could do was discuss and argue—and they did.

The biggest argument appeared to be between what people began calling the “political” and “spiritual” wings of the Green movement. Murray Bookchin, stocky, garrulous veteran of the communist and anarchist movements of the 1930s, co-founder of the Institute of Social Ecology in Rochester, Vt. (NEW OPTIONS #38) and author of *The Modern Crisis* (#30), took umbrage at a group meditation that most conference-goers had participated in and posed the question starkly: Are we going to be a social movement, or are we going to be a religious movement? Yes, we have got to change our sensibility, he said, but we have got to be committed to rational thought and rational processes.

His position at the conference was challenged most forcefully—or at least, most noticeably—by Charlene Spretnak, tall, striking veteran of the feminist and spiritual movements of the 1960s and 70s, co-creator of Fritjof Capra's Elmwood Institute in Berkeley, Calif. (#18) and principal author of *Green Politics: The Global Promise* (#3). In her plenary speech, Spretnak invited her audience to imagine a “politically correct” society that did not address the needs of the heart and soul. Her point: We can't solve our political problems without explicitly addressing our spiritual ones.

It is not difficult to see how Bookchin's and Spretnak's positions could be happily reconciled, and several speakers at the conference attempted to do just that. For example, a Caribbean Green named Djoa said, “I'd like to see less talk about spirituality and more acting from a spiritual place.” But none of the attempted syntheses won people over, in large part because the conflict went deeper.

Debbie Bookchin—Murray's daughter—got to the nub of the problem during an “open mike” session when she said, I worry about the connection between spirituality and the kind of perspective that, for example, says we need merely to “regulate the market” rather than overthrow the capitalist system.

The deeper conflict, in other words, was not between those who had “politics” and those who had “spirit,” but between two very differ-

ent kinds of politics.

The conflict was between Greens coming out of a leftist perspective who still shared many of the anti-capitalist and confrontational assumptions of that perspective, and Greens coming out of a holistic or “New Age” perspective who sought to bring together the best of *all* the traditional political “isms” and whose approach to problems was healing rather than confrontational.

Three disagreements over core political issues kept coming up at the conference, and they can all be seen as disagreements between the leftist and New Age wings of the Green movement:

Is capitalism OK?

• *Should we be anti-capitalist, or against “traditional” capitalism?* Bookchin spoke of how “horrified” he was to find that the term “affinity groups” — which he'd gotten from the Spanish Anarchists, and introduced into this country in the 1930s—was now being used by business executives in California. He could see nothing good coming from business' use of the term. Howard Hawkins, New England regional coordinator for the Committees of Correspondence, spelled out the political implications of Bookchin's “horror” when he argued that only those who are fundamentally opposed to capitalism should be part of the Green movement.

Another view made itself felt at the conference, however. David Haenke, co-founder of the North American Bioregional Congress (NEW OPTIONS #35), pointed out that no society had ever gotten rid of capitalism completely, that it seems to be part of who we are, and that we'd be better off shaping it to our own purposes than trying to replace it with socialism—which had its own problems! Susan Meeker-Lowry, publisher of a newsletter on socially responsible investing, advocated a human scale capitalism with a conscience.

Chuck Collins, of the Massachusetts-based Institute for Community Economics, sought to transcend the capitalism debate by speaking of a “third way” of meeting people's needs for housing. Yes, he argued, it was important to give people control over their own housing space, and to permit people to benefit financially from taking care of their homes. But there was no need to “commodify” housing, and a community land trust (the “third way”) would guarantee both the humane elements of private ownership and the needs of the community.

Have we the right?

• *Should we support all “legitimate” Third World liberation struggles, or should we take a more measured, critical stance?* Unfortunately, no neat synthesis presented itself here. At the workshop on East/South dialogue (one of the best-attended at the conference), one partici-

pant said—with real passion—“I don't think it's our function to pick and choose among the Third World liberation forces. It's our function to get the U.S. off their backs!” Her statement met with wild applause.

But the spokespeople for the other side were just as passionate. Jan Minkiewicz, the representative in the West of “Freedom for Peace” (the independent peace movement in Poland), spoke movingly of the many “third force” movements in the Eastern bloc and in the South, spoke of the undying hostility of *both* superpowers to those movements, reminded his mostly left-wing audience that Polish Solidarity's representatives were refused entry into Nicaragua in 1981 (on the grounds that they were counter-revolutionaries), and concluded that we have “got to critique the power-conservatives” no matter where they might be found.

“Social” vs “deep” ecology

• *Should our approach reflect that of “social ecology,” or of the deep ecology/bioregional/animal rights movements of the last few years?* A synthesis certainly seemed possible on this ubiquitous issue—but few of the speakers seemed interested in pursuing one.

Daniel Chodorkoff, a leading theorist of social ecology, and Nesta King, a leading theorist of “eco-feminism,” spoke forcefully of the *social origins* of the ecological crisis. It is essentially a byproduct of the “domination of human by human,” men over women, rich over poor, etc. One implication of this view, according to King, is that human interaction with nature can be OK; Earth does not have to come “first.”

The “deep ecology” perspective was at a disadvantage in that none of the prominent deep ecology theorists were on hand to defend themselves! Dave Foreman, co-founder of Earth First! (NEW OPTIONS #25), does argue for “putting the Earth first in all decisions, even ahead of human welfare if necessary” (*Earth First! Journal*, June 21, 1987)—but it is also

NewOptions

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

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

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

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Typesetting: Baker Johnson Design, (703) 237-0557

Printing: Newsletter Services, (202) 529-5700

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true that Foreman's vision of the good society is considered by some to be *more* conducive to human welfare than the social ecologists'.

At the conference itself, David Haenke urged us to "open ourselves up, beyond our egos," to the message of the Earth. Haenke's speech raised one of the key issues between the social and deep ecologists. Should our movement be based on an exclusively rational analysis? Or is there a sense in which it's useful and proper to say, with Haenke, that we're working for a decentralist/globally responsible society "because the Earth wants it to happen"?

"Movement/party" split

The other big underlying difference of opinion at the conference had to do with strategy. People kept referring to it as the "movement/party split," but few participants felt we could have a national grassroots movement without a political party—at least in the long run.

Phil Hill, reporter on the European Greens for the U.S. *Guardian*, spoke for the vast majority when he said we had to learn to function as a party *and* a movement, just as the West German Greens did. Nesta King also spoke for the vast majority when—responding to Ingrid Komar of the Coalition for a New Foreign Policy—she warned us against becoming a "mere" coalition. Coalition politics is lowest-common-denominator politics, said King, and depends on people *not* debating their differences. In Green politics, people constantly discuss and debate their differences, and are committed to mutual learning and mutual growth.

But if the split wasn't exactly between "movement" and "party," it *was* between various kinds of buttons that each of those terms pushed in people. Generally, the "movement" side insisted that the movement grow slowly and organically, taking plenty of time to work out appropriate modes of decision-making and appropriate styles of political and organizational work. (The Committees of Correspondence, sponsor of the Green conference, is very definitely wedded to this approach—as witness its having spent three years unsuccessfully trying to come up with an appropriate decision-making process for itself, and feeling no great need to apologize.)

The "party" side felt a much stronger sense of urgency—felt that the lessons we needed to learn had already been learned, many times over. Jutta Ditfurth, spokesperson for the executive board of the West German Greens, berated the participants because "nothing will happen after this conference," and urged them to get their organizational act together. When she finished, she got a wild standing ovation that clearly stunned and moved her.

Working it out

The "movement/party" split extended to

people's work habits and organizational styles. A funky, laid-back "movement" style pervades the Green movement, and colored the conference as well. But there were quite a few people who said enough's enough, and who began to speak of the need for competency, efficiency and a degree of professionalism.

Barbara Epstein, professor of history at U.C.-Santa Cruz and a long time nonviolent direct-actionist, devoted her plenary speech to just this point. We have got to re-think the "wisdom" of consensus, she declared. We have got to stop trying to create the perfect leaderless organization, and opt for forms of leadership that are democratic and responsive. If we want to ask busy and responsible people to change their lives, then we have got to build organizations that are serious—and will last.

Another division along these lines took place between those who wanted the Green movement to adopt a narrowly local focus (at least at first), and those who wanted the movement to adopt a joint local/national/even global focus from the very beginning. Grace Lee Boggs, an activist in black and labor struggles since the 1930s, and co-founder of the National Organization for an American Revolution in Detroit, went so far as to tell the participants that they weren't *capable* of creating "the movement," since they were largely uprooted from their "natural communities." By contrast, another speaker told the participants that they could and *should* build a national organization of 100,000 paying members by the end of the decade—in part to generate national attention, in part to generate funds.

A final "movement/party" split had to do with the question of how integrated into the system the Greens should be. Some participants, such as Howard Hawkins, argued that the Green movement should actively discourage people from working in the Democratic and Republican parties. Other participants, such as Gerald Goldfarb, a Los Angeles lawyer, felt that a Green caucus in both major parties could only be a plus—and that no one in the Green movement had earned the right to tell anyone else in the Green movement where to put their energies.

Not enough heart

We Americans aren't used to extensive political debate; and by the third day most of the participants were feeling exhausted, out of sorts, undernourished. Accompanied by her five-person "affinity group," Allegra Azouvi, seminar coordinator for the Brooklyn-based Bank for Socially Responsible Lending, walked shyly but firmly up to the mike and said, Let's take some time to enjoy ourselves. Give each other a massage. Take naps. . . . The audience cheered wildly.

Partly just because participants' hearts

weren't being fed, many of them were sensitive—some might say hypersensitive—to questions of scheduling and process. There was an enormous amount of behind-the-scenes grumbling about the choice of plenary speakers. Some topics and perspectives appeared to be overrepresented; others essential to Green politics weren't represented at all (e.g., futurism, world order, humanistic psychology, organizational development).

And there were other grievances, fuelled by both the left and New Age "sides." The hectoring, polemical, superintellectual style of argument of many of the left Greens was anathema to many of the New Age Greens. Bookchin began his first speech with a statement to the effect that he didn't mean to hurt anyone's feelings; but plenty of people were convinced his speech was meant to drum them out of the Green movement. When Danny Moses, editor of Sierra Club Books, urged, "Let's live our values—let's not let people trash each other because they lack ideological purity," he got a standing ovation *in the middle of his speech*.

Not enough head

But if some participants were alienated by the left Greens' polemical style, others were alienated by the New Age Greens' expressions of spirituality and species solidarity.

There were a number of meditations and "healing ceremonies" during the plenaries, and some left Greens sat through them sullenly and resentfully, or left the plenary sessions and stalked around noisily outside. Many conference-goers feared that the explicit expressions of spirituality would seem silly or worse to most Americans—whom we all agreed we wanted to reach. Chiah Heller, of the Burlington Greens (and no great apologist for mainstream sensibilities—she was co-leader of a workshop, "Ecology of Sex: Towards an Erotic Municipalism"), expressed a larger and deeper concern during an open-mike session when she said, There is a space between us—a space that alienates us from each other. But is it only spirituality that we can put within this space? How do we build a community between us?

Another "New Age" phenomenon that bothered most left Greens, and not only left Greens, was the militancy of the animal rights people. Not only did they insist, again and again during the open-mike sessions, that we have no right to eat meat; they put a damper on the Saturday night barbeque by going up and down the food line making people feel guilty about eating the barbequed chicken.

Dog and pony show

Ultimately people's grievances and fears became "personalized" in the form of a bitter running off-stage feud between Murray Bookchin

and Charlene Spretnak. The feud became the subject of a great deal of speculation and gossip at the conference—so much so that it was clear that people were not just concerned about Bookchin and Spretnak. They were also concerned that the perspectives and life-experiences that each represented be able to co-exist in the same organization.

On the last day of the conference, Spretnak and Bookchin spent three hours shut up in a room with some good friends—and a skilled mediator, Margo Adair, author of *Working Inside Out* (NEW OPTIONS #14). That night they appeared on stage together and embraced. Spretnak said, “We had a very sincere and deep reconciliation this afternoon. And the only reason we’re giving you this dog-and-pony show here is to show you that if we can do it here, you can do it in your locals and regionals.” Bookchin added, “I am still a leftist. I am still a revolutionary. What Charlene and I have agreed to is to treat each other respectfully [even as] we [debate] our differences.”

Groping toward community

We have focused this issue of NEW OPTIONS on a movement most Americans have never heard of because we believe the constructive and redemptive energies built up in the 60s are still waiting to come out in a new political formation . . . and the U.S. Green movement could be that formation.

People sensed it at the conference, even very experienced people. Ingrid Komar noted with amazement that, after five days of meetings, “Nobody seemed to be bored—and every plenary seemed to be better than the last!”

After the first day or two, after people discovered how much they had to give to each other, they began seeking each other out—in the cafeteria, under trees, at the literature booths. At midnight on the third day, Myra Levy, collaborator on the book *Heart Politics* (NEW OPTIONS #23), and Nancy Vogl, a musician, sat down in one of the dorm lounges. More and more people drifted in and starting talking with them—not necessarily about politics!—and the group stayed together till nearly dawn.

Out of all the longing and connecting came real growth; the kind of growth that can sustain a movement. One could see as the conference wore on that some New Age Greens were becoming convinced of the need to propose solutions that would challenge the power system. Similarly one could see that some left Greens were beginning to glimpse the necessity of dropping some of their confrontational, “embattled” rhetoric and coming up with solutions that transcended the stale left-right debate. “What we’re doing is working out a common language,” someone said during an open mike session, and as soon as he said it many participants knew he’d hit upon an important part of

the truth.

Another kind of growth and healing that took place at the conference was beautifully expressed by Margot Adler, reporter for National Public Radio and author of the best book on paganism, *Drawing Down the Moon* (to be reviewed). It is time for us to get over our self-hate, she said. In the 1960s many of us, active in the civil rights and anti-war movements, were saying, The white race is awful, and America is awful, so beat me, beat me! “And isn’t that what some of the animal rights and deep-ecology people are saying today? . . . It’s time to stop; nothing good can come out of self-hate.”

Every veteran of the 60s clapped and cheered, and many made a silent vow. Our other movements had all been principally for Others (the poor, the Third World, the biosphere . . .). The Green movement would be for ourselves as well.

Beyond the sandbox?

But if the Green conference included much that was positive, there were still ample grounds for believing that the movement might never get beyond the sandbox stage. Toward the end of the conference, many participants were privately expressing some or all of the following concerns:

● *How genuinely open to other people and ideas were the people at the conference?* They had trouble reconciling “left Greens” and “New Age Greens.” What would happen when they tried reaching out to neopopulist Greens, libertarian Greens, everyday Americans?

● *How genuinely Green were the participants?* A lot of socialist thinkers were cited in the plenaries and workshops, but very few references were made to contemporary U.S. Green thinkers—even those who directly inspired the West German Greens, such as Hazel Henderson, Jane Jacobs, Jeremy Rifkin, Carl Rogers, Theodore Roszak. What was going on? Were people really that ignorant of post-socialist radicalism? Or—just as bad—was it too hard on people’s egos for them to honor and acknowledge their well-known peers?

● *How committed were the participants to real-world success?* The vast majority of the plenaries and workshops were devoted to discussing what people believed—not how to translate those beliefs into a powerful and effective political organization. The workshop on fund-raising was attended by a grand total of eight people, and was punctuated by such howlers as, “It is immoral to communicate with people by direct-mail on the local level,” and, “We should send a one-piece mailer to people because it’s more ecological.” Only one plenary speaker suggested the Greens should attempt to build a national membership organization, and he was attacked for allegedly wanting to turn the movement over to “the experts.”

● *How willing were the U.S. Greens to insist that the Interregional Committee of Correspondence—their decision-making body—get its act together?* Of all the plenary speakers, only Howard Hawkins was willing to take the I.C. on directly (“We get manipulated by the minority that refuses consensus . . .”). And yet, without a bold and effective I.C., all the good ideas in the world won’t be enough to turn the Green movement into a vital political force in this country.

● *Is a foreign model really appropriate for the U.S.?* Our Quaker political activists go back to the 17th century. Our Populist and civil rights movements live on as models of grassroots organizing the world over. Our decentralist/globally responsible authors publish hundreds of books a year. So why should our leading decentralist/globally responsible social change movement take its cue from West Germany?

In fact, most participants took the “Green model” with a grain of salt. Phil Hill, who knows more about the West German Greens than most German Green M.P.s, told the conference that “The German Greens are not always a good model,” and Peter Tautfest, who’s working with Greens in the legislature in Lower Saxony in Germany, went even further: “Don’t look up to them, [power] just kind of fell into their laps. . . . I’ve learned more here in five days about local action and grassroots democracy than I have in five years in Germany. I love the cultivation of diversity here and hope it continues to flourish. . . .”

“Peaches are green”

The real proof that this is our own movement, though, and that it’s open-ended and still evolving, came at the very end of the last day, when a collection of messages from kids at the child-care center was read to the whole group. “Peaches are green when they’re not ripe,” one message went, “so maybe the Greens will turn a different color as they grow.” The audience howled, as if to say: We *know* this is only the beginning.

And very soon after the children’s messages the conference was over, and we went off to our cars to drive home. And it broke my heart, because even though I knew we were supposed to go *back* to our communities, I felt I was *leaving* my community. And then it started to rain, just as it did when we arrived, and soon we’d be driving through New Jersey past the place where we ate the raw oysters. And the next day I’d be at the Reliable Source Bar where some reporters who’d just come back from Iowa or New Hampshire would come up to me and say, What’s the latest? And I’d wonder how to tell them about the Greens.

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Letters . . .

The great impostor

After spending much of my life in left/liberal political work, I felt your mail solicitation spoke to my weariness with the we/they, us/enemy attitude of so many political people. I'm also drawn, increasingly, to spiritual approaches.

But I find your newsletter to be just as maddening as any political dogmatic tract could make me. In your efforts to be neither right nor left, you speak with the same snide, self-righteous, we/they attitude as the worst of the leftists. Your target is the left and right (mostly the former), but it's done in the same condescending, judgmental tone that made me begin to move away from many political causes.

I'm looking for a new spirit of analysis and action, not the old we/they tone of your newsletter. I don't think you're any different from the left or right when you insinuate you're better than they are because the new correct political line is to be above left/right.

(I meant to include examples of what offended me, but my husband threw out the issues after we discussed our disgust with your tone!)

—**Dusky Pierce**
Berkeley, Calif.

Small is wonderful

Just a brief comment on "Let's Get Tiny Loans to the World's Poor" (NEW OPTIONS #37):

The most significant program for helping many of the world's poor is the Heifer Project (216 Wachusett St., Rutland MA 01543)—now rescuing in Conn. good milk cows [and many other farm animals] that otherwise would be slaughtered because of surplus. Each Third World recipient [of the animals] has to share the first chicks, calves or whatever with others.

—**Parker Rossman**
Author, *After Punishment What?* (1981)
Niantic, Conn.

Ritual attacks

Your report on dealing with "the roots of conflict" contains many good ideas, very few of which any peace activist would disagree with (NEW OPTIONS #38). So why the need to start with another of your ritual attacks on the peace movement?

In these days of 100-fold overkill capacities it is ridiculous to claim that the arms race is still fuelled by fear of the other side. It is fuelled by greed and lust for power and domination.

Star Wars is so difficult to stop, not because most of its advocates believe in its naive claims, but because they (or their supporters or voters) are making a lot of money out of it.

At the height of Irangate, it is really absurd to claim that "Both sides are sincere," when we know that one side cheats, lies, and misleads the public all the time.

—**Jakob von Uexkull**
Chair, *The Right Livelihood Awards*
London, England

Perhaps your conclusion that "demonstrations no longer reflect what's best or most vital about the peace movement" is correct. It is hard to prove or disprove such judgments. True, the inspirational and educational value of political rhetoric is questionable. Yet it is doubtful that either here in the U.S. or abroad people will abandon the tactic of taking to the streets, if for no other reason than to gain strength from marching together. Any creative embellishments you could add to these rituals would, no doubt, be greatly appreciated.

Perhaps you are unaware that this latest demonstration, whether or not stylistically old-hat, scored some historically significant firsts:

- it formally demonstrated the support of numbers of American mainstream denominations and their spiritual leaders for the peace movement;
- it was the first time church and labor joined in protest;
- it was the first time since World War I (!) that organized labor opposed U.S. military policy.

If I understand your politics correctly, one of its tenets is respect for diversity. I would thus hope for *constructive additions* to standard approaches rather than put-downs or belittlements. The young plant that is the American peace movement needs—not acid comments—but love and nurturance. Don't fight us, join us!

—**Ingrid Komar**
Coalition for a New Foreign Policy
Washington, D.C.

Beyond conversion

No doubt economic conversion is an element of the ultimate solution to the nuclear weapons dilemma ("Closson: Conversion to What?," NEW OPTIONS #38). But unless economic conversion is viewed in the context of a far more fundamental necessary whole-system change, it can be a distraction away from the real transformational task we face.

Just think: Around mid-century this nation went through two major shifts in values and ethics, both of which stimulated the economy and helped avoid the return of the Great Depression.

One of these shifts involved replacing the value of frugality with the value of consumption. We spoke with pride of transforming to a "throwaway society" where goods would be used once and then discarded. We began to speak of one another not as fellow-citizens, but "consumers."

The second shift was from a strong ethic forbidding sale of arms to other countries to one which actively promoted such sales. The weapons trade is now a significant factor in the U.S. and world economies.

These two value shifts did help solve the economic problems of the wind-down of World War II. However, they also contributed powerfully to today's vexing global dilemmas—the arms race with its diversion of resources away from human development uses, and the resource, environmental and social problems associated with the spreading mass-consumption way of life.

The lesson of this episode is fundamental: Whenever there is an attempt to solve a whole-system problem through actions that amount to less than whole-system change, the result is likely to be substitution of one set of problems for another.

—**Willis Harman**
Co-author, *Higher Creativity* (1984)
Stanford, Calif.

He liked it

I just want to tell you that your review of my book, *Why Men Are the Way They Are* (NEW OPTIONS #38), is the only review I have ever received that has made me feel understood at a level that went beyond the level that I could express if I were trying to explain how I would like to be understood. I am just thrilled with the level of subtlety in the approach that you took and the way you pulled out the gist of some of the things I was saying.

—**Warren Farrell**
San Diego, Calif.

Anderson is not enough

While I find Walt Anderson's argument that we need to establish an evolutionary ethic convincing (*To Govern Evolution*, reviewed in NEW OPTIONS #37), I think it is critical that we reflect upon the attitude we hold while establishing that ethic.

We must not be fooled into thinking that we are actually learning to direct the planet. Our obligation to own up to the legacy of knowledge that the modern era has brought with it, can be met without adopting a doctrine committed to an unquestioning faith in the abilities of humans or a blind trust in the power of reason.

We need to keep a vision of humans as fallible creatures—and a sense of humility that accepts

humans as part of something greater than ourselves.

—Elliott Robertson
New York, N.Y.

Your Walt Anderson review makes reference to what “technocrats” want. I’m a technologist and a technophile (I’ve no desire to rule anyone, which “-crat” would imply). Shall I give you some insight into what we genuine technophiles desire?

First, genetic engineering of humans. (Specifically, *ourselves*.) I’ve a number of genetic defects. Flat feet. Nearsightedness. Crowded teeth. None of these are killers, but I’d spare my descendants them if I could.

As all forms of technology advance, the distinctions between various forms of life, and between machines and life, will be blurred. We will all become part of one great continuum of being. We will each of us be free to become whatever we choose to be. The future will be a world of infinite diversity and choice.

In time what we will become literally surpasses our present understanding—just as the primordial ooze we evolved from couldn’t understand us.

This is what Jeremy Rifkin is trying to strangle in the cradle. He wants to lock us in our painfully limited bodies and lifespans, and throw away the key. It’s as though the gates of Heaven opened wide before you, and someone rushed to slam them shut. Is it any wonder that we fear Rifkin, and even hate him?

Still, I don’t see why there has to be any conflict between technophiles and Greens. Most of my friends are devout libertarians, fanatically dedicated to individual rights. We aren’t going to drag anyone kicking and screaming into the future.

—Brett P. Bellmore
Capac, Mich.

Son of New Options

I enclose a copy of the first issue of *Green Options* (12 Polden View, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8DZ, England, \$2/sample), a publication which, as you’ll see, has been partly modelled on your own NEW OPTIONS.

Although the style and content of GO will no doubt evolve and change somewhat through future issues, its purpose will remain that of focussing the debate concerning how best to create a new and greener Britain.

—Richard Oldfield
Editor, Green Options
Lockyer’s Farm, Somerton, England

It can’t filter down

Sojourners and NEW OPTIONS are wonderful fomenters for the New Age, but for the

most part just intellectuals swapping yarns about today and tomorrow. Revolution starts in Podunk and follows in Washington, not the reverse.

It can’t filter down. The trickle from Washington does not change a million locales very much. In my experience, the most certain and most gratifying way to New Age development is to pioneer new ways of cooperative living.

—Jim Wyker
New Hope Community
Berea, Ky.

Call it sleep

The subject of populism is rightly a fertile field for NEW OPTIONS commentary (“What Is the New Populism?” #34), but as usual you have little or no conception of any kind of thinking from the right on this subject. This makes NEW OPTIONS a chronicle of emerging contrasts among worn-out reactionary liberals, hard-core Left activists, and those wonderful post-neo-transformationalist reconceptualizers.

You might have started with the one authentic populist of our time, in the sense that he fits perfectly in the old populist tradition: Fred Harris, whose book *The New Populism* appeared in 1973. (Jim Hightower was his campaign manager when he ran for President in 1976.)

More importantly, you should have included the conservative populists, whose booklet *Platform for the 80s* (1984) is a fascinating collection of thoughts. Another item of this genre is my own modest article in *Human Events* (“Populism for the 80s Gaining Momentum,” April 16, 1983). Do you avoid interesting points of view from the Right from ignorance or distaste?

—John McClaughry
Institute for Liberty and Community
Concord, Vt.

Paradise lost

I love the review of my book (*Do You Believe in Magic?: The Second Coming of the Sixties Generation*, NEW OPTIONS #37). I love the idea of a zip code as “the poor man’s bioregion” (“Where the Visionaries Are,” same issue).

Touring the country with my book was confusing, revelatory, depressing. I guess I was living in a fool’s paradise to some extent while writing it. Are there really so few of “us”?

Or is there just so little sense of “us”? I found quite a *lack* of consensus among Sixties people, even among those who’d passed through the fire of the Sixties and whose differences were inconsiderable. We seem almost to *avoid* consensus, as if it were an affront to our precious individuality.

—Annie Gottlieb
New York, N.Y.

Continued from page eight:

mendous debt to the Kelsos. But there are differences. For example, Speiser’s plan would give the federal government a great deal of power over the economy. The Kelsos’ plan would make the government a mere facilitator.

Democracy and Economic Power is concerned largely with describing how the eight financing tools would work, and that’s important. But the Kelsos’ sociopolitical scenario is what will put their economics on the map. They’d have us start out in life earning our incomes through toil, just as we do now; but they’d have us gradually obtain more and more shares of productive capital, so by our late 20s we could gradually begin decreasing the amount of time we worked at (formal, paying) jobs. “[Creativity], not toil, and general affluence, not elitist wealth,” would be our goals. As if they weren’t already—deep down in our hearts.

Missing link

The Kelsos have been proposing various “democratic financing tools” for 30 years now. Only the ESOP has caught on, and, ironically, it’s been used to make employees work harder and be more loyal, rather than help them make the gradual transition from “toil” to “creativity.” Recently the Kelsos were in Washington, D.C., and we made our pilgrimage to them, and the following conversation ensued:

New Options: Why did the two of you make the life choices that you did? I mean, usually people wanting to write about economics would go into university teaching.

Patricia Kelso: We’re both loners.

Louis Kelso: It was a matter of simple recognition that the university economists are the problem! What we did is make an end run around them.

Patricia: As every serious innovator has to do.

Options: Is there anybody on Capitol Hill who’s interested in taking up your approach—not just the ESOP part, but the whole thing?

Louis: We don’t have anyone there who sees our economics as a new economic policy for a democracy.

Options: How do you feel when the most exciting and interesting aspect of your work is paid the least attention to?

Patricia: Frustrated!

Louis: I just feel we haven’t hit the right chord. I just wish I knew what it was. We keep trying. . . . I guess it is probably true that the depth of an innovation is measured by the degree of resistance to it.

Patricia: The hula hoop was accepted overnight. And pet rocks. . . .

Options: Would a political movement help?

Louis: The missing link is courage. I would ask for people with courage.

Keen: our enemy is our shadow

"Politicians of both the left and the right keep getting things backward," says Sam Keen in his astonishing new book, *Faces of the Enemy* (Harper & Row, \$20). "Conservatives believe the enemy will be frightened into civility if we have bigger and better weapons. Liberals believe the enemy will become our friend if we have smaller and fewer weapons. . . . But [neither strategy] is working. The problem seems to lie not in our reason or our technology, but in the hardness of our hearts."

Plenty of post-liberal thinkers and activists have argued, over the years, that only a dramatic change in peoples' minds and hearts can lead to peace. But Keen's book is special. It takes the argument to a new and much more politically usable level. It is chock-full of history, of depth psychology, of political strategy. And Keen writes with such power and grace that even the most dyed-in-the-wool socialists and conservatives will be forced to heed its argument: "Depth psychology has presented us with the undeniable wisdom that the enemy is constructed from denied aspects of the self."

Keen is a contributing editor to *Psychology Today*, and for years he's sought to integrate depth psychology with spiritual and political concerns. (His 1974 book, *Voices and Visions*, features interviews with Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown and Carlos Castaneda.) No doubt as a result, he does not fall into the trap of overstating his case, of "overpsychologizing" the problem: "Just because the paranoid mind projects its rejected voices onto the enemy does not automatically mean the enemy is innocent of these projections. . . ."

"Consensual paranoia"

According to Keen, the vast majority of Americans (and Russians and Britons and . . .) suffer from what he calls "consensual paranoia. . . . Paranoia involves a complex of mechanisms by which a person or a people claim righteousness and purity, and attribute hostility and evil to the enemy. The process begins with a splitting of the 'good' self, with which we consciously identify and which is celebrated by myth and media, from the 'bad' self, which remains unconscious so long as it may be projected onto an enemy."

For millennia, says Keen, we've been projecting our "bad" selves onto our enemies, and the first half of the book is a veritable catalogue of our projections. They don't vary much. In ancient Greece and modern America, in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, the enemy has always been portrayed as: sacrilegious; bar-

baric; greedy; criminal; sadistic; a desecrator of women and children; etc., etc.

Keen finds some solace in all this ("We continually visualize our enemies in a demeaning way precisely because we are *not* instinctively sadistic"). But his larger point is that we will always have terrifying enemies so long as we continue to project our imperfect, "shameful" qualities onto others.

The sustainable psyche

What is to be done? How can we be induced to "repent and love our enemy-self"? To begin with, says Keen, we have got to re-own responsibility for what we do. He minces no words: "The persistent efforts of liberals, peacemongers, and assorted groups of nice people to assign the blame for war to the Pentagon, the military-industrial complex, or some other surrogate for the devil, are no less a denial of responsibility than laying the blame on an external enemy."

Once we assume responsibility, says Keen, each of us must seek to *demythologize the enemy*, in part by getting to know the other side as human beings. The Warner and Comstock books, reviewed below, demonstrate that many Americans are beginning to travel to the Soviet Union precisely to discover what our "enemy" is really like.

Another thing we must do, says Keen, is realize that what our enemies say about us is often an (exaggerated, self-serving) version of the truth. We must have the courage to face up to that truth and respond creatively and constructively to it. For example, the Soviets often say we have a sham political democracy, a mere fig leaf for an oppressive economic oligarchy. And it is in fact true that ownership and control of land and capital is largely in the hands of an elite. Louis and Patricia Kelso's book, reviewed below, describes how we can democratize our economy by *strengthening* our capitalist system.

Ecologists like Lester Brown speak of creating a "sustainable society" (NEW OPTIONS #35); Keen speaks of creating a "sustainable psyche . . . men and women who can aspire to create psychic and political possibilities that now seem utopian [but who can] at the same time be satisfied with the moment."

The true holy war

Psychic and political possibilities, says Keen; and the last part of his book summarizes some of the latter.

He gives short shrift to such "moderate solutions" as signing arms limitations treaties. He

has kinder words for such "maximal solutions" as limiting national sovereignty and "transfer[ring] effective military and political power to some world peace-keeping force." But the most essential political task, says Keen, is "creating a new ideal—*Homo amicus*, the kindly human" — in part by fostering better child-rearing practices, better schools, etc.

Keen's book is less than perfectly consistent. At times he appears to suggest that consciousness change is largely a matter of the individual will; at other times, he recognizes that it is largely a social process (child-rearing; schools). Also, his argument might have been stronger if he'd spent less time cataloguing "faces of the enemy" and more time describing solutions. But even with such flaws we can say without reservation that Keen's book stands with Andrew Schmoekler's *Parable of the Tribes* (NEW OPTIONS #5) as one of the two most significant books on war and peace of our time. Its closing phrase echoes Schmoekler, even down to the spiritual/Allen Ginsbergian overtones: "The true holy war is the struggle against the antagonistic mind."

Warner, Comstock: citizen diplomacy

From cradle to grave, we're taught that the Soviet Union is The Enemy—and not just because it has competing geopolitical interests. Its people are said to be, on the one hand, rebellious and miserable, and drunk much of the time; and, on the other hand, godless and demonic. Is it any wonder we need to defend ourselves against them?

If those images are changing somewhat, it's partly due to Gorbachev's new policies; but it's partly also due, we suspect, to the fact that tens of thousands of Americans are now traveling to the Soviet Union each year, not as tourists but as self-designated "citizen diplomats."

Here's how Craig Comstock, executive director of Ark Communications Institute (NEW OPTIONS #33), explains the term in his new anthology, *Global Partners* (ACI, 47 Lafayette Circle, #282, Lafayette CA 94549, \$7 pbk): "Spontaneously, without direction or interference from our government, thousands of individual Americans have decided to reach out to their counterparts in the Soviet Union. These 'citizen diplomats' are discovering ways to move beyond official tours and create a network of personal contacts."

And here's how Gale Warner, a journalist specializing in international affairs, and Michael Shuman, president of the Center for Innovative Diplomacy (NEW OPTIONS #23), explain the term in *their* new book, *Citizen Diplomats* (Con-

tinuum, \$20): "Citizen diplomats believe that expanding the dialogue between [the U.S. and the Soviet Union] at every level is valuable and stabilizing. Some simply seek to learn as much as possible through direct observation and personal experience, and then communicate to other Americans what they have learned. Others try to develop cultural exchanges, joint scientific projects, and trade agreements. Still others work to open new forums of political dialogue. . . ."

Citizen diplomacy has been held up to ridicule by establishment periodicals such as *The New Republic*, and no wonder. The citizen diplomats imply (though they never come out and say) that most professional diplomats are all too willing to sell our common humanity down the river. Here's Comstock: "When a citizen diplomat travels to Moscow and simply passes by the range of ordinary people such as you find in any large city, the first impulse is often to ask, 'Are these the monsters I've been taught to fear?'"

Beginner's guide

Comstock's *Global Partners* is a kind of scrapbook of the new citizen diplomacy—a collection of brief articles (most of them previously published) on who the citizen diplomats are, what they do, and what it all means. Most of the articles are by citizen diplomats themselves, so the book has the feel and immediacy of a scrapbook.

In the section on who they are and what they do, we were struck above all by the obvious sincerity and caring of the diplomats—people like Joel Schatz, a computer networker, and Sharon Tennison, a registered nurse who's taken 16 groups of "everyday Americans" to the Soviet Union. In the "what does it all mean" section, Michael Murphy's article stands out (Murphy is a founder of Esalen Institute's Soviet-American Exchange Project): "In some sense we're married to the Soviets. . . ."

A deeper look

We dreaded opening Warner and Shuman's book—a 381 page tome featuring the "inside stories" of nine citizen diplomats. We dislike gee-whiz books, and this one had the look and feel of one. Imagine our surprise when we started reading it and couldn't put it down!

The book works because Warner, who wrote the nine profiles (and is still in her 20s), is a fine writer with a knack for bringing out people's complexities and mixed motivations without attacking them in any way. It also works because each of the nine diplomats has a thoroughly engrossing tale to tell—whether it's John Crystal, the Iowa farmer; or Cynthia Lazaroff, the wet-behind-the-ears Russian studies major who wouldn't take "no" for an answer; or Bernard Lown, the controversial co-president of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nu-

clear War. . . .

The book's introduction gives us a very thorough overview of the citizen diplomacy movement, defends it against its critics, and argues that the movement is increasingly beyond the control of the Soviet and American governments (!). Shuman's 75-page "what you can do" resource section is definitive, awesome.

We have two small quarrels with these books. First, they don't sufficiently examine why some Soviet citizens are less than enthusiastic about their new-style American visitors. Second, they don't ponder the dangers of U.S.-Soviet rapprochement in a world increasingly divided along North/South lines. "Loving our enemy-selves," alas, is not enough. But it's a start.

Kelso and Kelso: people's capitalism

Nobody on the traditional left or right likes Louis and Patricia Kelso. And hardly any of the rest of us have heard of them, despite the fact that Louis—an investment banker now in his 70s—singlehandedly invented the Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) concept many years ago.

Why this animosity-cum-invisibility? As the Kelsos told us recently, "We refuse to play the game." Rather than promoting the ESOP as a mere financing tool (as the right might like), rather than promoting it as a means for fostering worker control (as the left might like), the Kelsos insist upon promoting it as just one small part of their grand design to "democratize" capitalism.

"Political democracy is only half democracy," say the Kelsos in their first book in 20 years, *Democracy and Economic Power* (Ballinger,

\$20). Economic democracy is the other half—and we don't have much of it. Since the dawn of the American industrial revolution, ownership of land and capital has been channeled into fewer and fewer hands.

How can we broaden the ownership of land and capital? The left would begin by raising the incomes of working- and middle-class Americans. But as the Kelsos point out, capital—not labor—is the chief factor of production in an advanced industrial economy. Even today, most people's wages are kept artificially high through political pressure. (You can see why the left doesn't like the Kelsos.)

The right would have us save and invest. But the Kelsos argue that borrowing, rather than saving, is the key to capital formation . . . and that only those who already have capital as collateral can borrow enough money to make substantial capital investments. In effect, the economy is rigged against the little guy. (You can see why the right doesn't like the Kelsos.)

From toil to creativity

What the Kelsos would do is neither limit nor mystify capitalism, but extend it by making it possible for all households to own productive capital. They've devised eight financing tools—of which the ESOP is one—which could, together, make it possible for every household in America to obtain productive capital. And no one would have to spend a cent. The federal government would ensure that households could pay for their shares in America's productive capital (corporations, mines, buildings, etc.) out of the earnings of said capital.

Sleight of hand? Not really. It's how investors typically pay for their investments today.

If the Kelsos' idea reminds you of Stuart Speiser's Universal Stock Ownership Plan (NEW OPTIONS #29 & 31), that's no accident; in his books Speiser acknowledges a tre-

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NewOptions

New Options, Inc.
Post Office Box 19324
Washington, D.C. 20036

Issue No. Forty

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WASHINGTON DC 20009

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Letters . . .

Win some, lose some

Your lead article on the Green gathering (NEW OPTIONS #40) is wonderful—just wonderful.

—Jeff Fobes

*Green movement organizer
Asheville, No. Car.*

Please cancel our subscription *immediately*.

—Charles and Marcia Miro

*Green movement organizers
University Park, Md.*

I thought you did an admirable job of reporting on the U.S. Green gathering, and of pointing out both its strong and weak points. Having been there myself, I had to wonder how you managed to be at so many different events!

—Peter Taufest

Hanover, West Germany

Bless your heart! I start reading the latest NEW OPTIONS and suddenly I'm a wonderful young person of 40 and what you're feeling about the Green gathering I'm feeling too, I'm there—pure empathy. How bracing for a 91-year-old!

—Marjory Pratt

Pennington, N.J.

The tone of your article on the Green gathering is inconsistent with that of previous articles in NEW OPTIONS. It reads as if you felt silly, bashful or hesitant about attending!

About two-thirds of the article was devoted to various "splits," in quite some detail. We think this runs the risk of causing the conference to appear to have been plagued by irreconcilable factional divisions. It would have been better if you'd described different currents or tendencies, rather than set down the boundaries of putative organizational splits. We need accurate journalism here, not gossip or oversimplification.

—Pat Nelson and Trip Meima

Washington, D.C.

"I must say, I bristled"

I was not prepared for the divisiveness between the so-called "political" and "spiritual" wings of the Green movement. I should have been, I suppose. But I had forgotten how scary, and even threatening, the spiritual dimension of life can be. (It is so much a part of all I do.)

I believe Charlene Spretnak's speech spoke

to a very important point—not so much that we can't solve our political problems without addressing our spiritual ones (as you reported), but that closing our minds and hearts to the magic and wonder of life, in all its dimensions, deadens us.

I must say, I bristled when I read in NEW OPTIONS that I "advocated a human scale capitalism with a conscience." I have a negative reaction to the word "capitalism" which is a gut level response.

I can't argue with the truth of your words. However, I would like to add that what I advocated at the conference, in my plenary speech, was creating an economy based on values—the values of relationship, respect, harmony and balance—and certain basic qualities or principles which naturally follow (appropriate-scale, cooperation, diversity and self-reliance).

An economy based on these values may incorporate some aspects of capitalism, such as worker-owned businesses, cooperatives, family businesses, even some mid-sized corporations. However, the values that guide these businesses would be very different from those that appear to guide most corporate (and political) activity today.

—Susan Meeker-Lowry

Worcester, Vt.

In perspective

I was on the credentials committee at the Libertarian party convention in Seattle (Sept. 1-6). If you think the Greens are in disarray, you should see the Libertarians!

—John R. Ewbank

Southampton, Penna.

I read your report on "Fear and Longing at the Green Gathering" with sadness. The internal squabbles you report between the "political" and "spiritual" wings of the Green movement indicate such a movement is totally incapable of leading others to produce a better way of life.

Mainstream Americans who are desperately looking for new solutions to worsening problems of all kinds will have to look elsewhere for leadership. What I'm afraid of is that they will look to some form of fascism.

—Harry Kerastas

Bridgeport, Conn.

I found your report on the Green conference a very accurate mirror of where I'm at politically. All these conflicts between the "left" and the "New Age," between the "movement" and the "party," between the "laid-back" and the "professional," are *mine*. I was really glad to see that I'm not the only one experiencing them!

I actually felt quite optimistic about the growth of a real alternative politics—because if these conflicts are worked through, even min-

imally, then the people who've worked them through in their souls could be the nucleus for the new politics.

—Marco Ermacora

Montreal, Quebec

To unify our movement

In your fascinating article on the national Green gathering, you describe how Murray Bookchin and Charlene Spretnak were able to resolve many of their differences through a long "mediation" or dialogue session. You also describe how there are a number of important issues that divide the Greens.

One way to deal with these divisions would be to regularly schedule dialogue sessions between leading proponents of opposing views. These sessions could be facilitated by a skilled mediator, as the Bookchin-Spretnak one was, since then they would be much more likely to result in real progress toward agreement. The sessions might be held publicly (unlike the one at the Green gathering), and tapes, transcripts or statements of agreement could be distributed afterwards, so that non-participants could gain from the dialogues.

A public, facilitated-dialogue approach could do a great deal to unify our movement.

—Les Brunswick

Pittsburgh, Penna.

Overarching issue

Your impressionistic account of the Committees of Correspondence (CoC) conference at Amherst did not mention that Green, nonviolent process (the *ways* in which Greens should discuss their differences), which involves ethics and intention, emerged as the overarching issue cutting across all the various topics.

You noted that one speaker got a standing ovation midway through his talk, but did not report that the subject was nonviolence, that is, process. People rose and applauded when he said that the kind of ideological "trashing" of individuals we had witnessed was inappropriate behavior for Greens.

The day after that mass rejection of destructive process, there was a mediation about process (neither theology nor economics was discussed!), which was resolved by an agreement about process, specifically, the promise to "disagree more respectfully," that is, to eschew the attack-mode rhetoric that had been so shocking to most of us earlier.

People apparently projected an enormous amount onto the disagreement between Murray Bookchin and myself about Green process; your characterization of it as a "bitter feud" reflects the hyperbolic rumors. My guess is that when CoC finally gets down to specific issues of platform-building, Greens will discover a great deal

of common ground.

Thanks for reporting that the “spirituality vs. politics” setup at the conference was a false dichotomy, as Ynestra King declared in her closing remarks. In Europe as well as the U.S., a common tactic is to pretend relentlessly that we Greens who want a more just global order, a new economics based on the TOES models [see NEW OPTIONS #35, p. 7–ed.], etc., and an earth-based spirituality are incapable of rational thought and want only spirituality instead of politics.

The best thing about the CoC gathering was the inspiring quality of the people who came from all over. They demonstrated in myriad ways that this is surely a movement worth believing in.

—Charlene Spretnak
Berkeley, Calif.

Ambiguous world

I just read your rich, long report on the Green conference, with great appreciation for you as a participant-reporter.

I had heard two very different word-of-mouth reports from two friends who were there, so different that I wondered if they'd gone to the same conference. Well, both conferences were there in your report, both the hopeful, exciting one and the conflictual, gut-wrenching one.

I especially appreciate the psychological insight with which you say things like, “If the split wasn't exactly between ‘movement’ and ‘party,’ it was between various kinds of buttons that each of those terms pushed in people.” It sounds like a lot of buttons got pushed, and a lot of passion got expressed.

Heaven bless the mediators! They're often unsung, so thank you for saying explicitly that Margo Adair was the one who helped Murray Bookchin and Charlene Spretnak deal with their differences. Let's treasure all the good mediators we know, all the good listeners. The more we try to operate in an ambiguous world without handing our power to authority figures and old institutions, the more we'll need them.

—Ann Weiser
Oakland, Calif.

Terribly disappointed

We were all terribly disappointed to read your disparaging remarks about the animal rights activity at the Green gathering—in particular, your [enthusiastic use of Margot Adler's] characterization of [some] animal advocates as self-hating.

We would also like to point out that if someone can be made to feel guilty about something—like eating chicken [at the Greens' barbecue]—it is because at some level he or she knows it is wrong. If one is secure in a moral

position, no amount of harassment will bring about a sense of guilt.

—Kim Bartlett
Editor, The Animals' Agenda
Westport, Conn.

Sandbox way of life

A very touching—and astute—account of the Green gathering.

I often think “I'm XX years old—too old for this,” as you did on the cushions.

Spretnak and Bookchin are two poles of fundi thinking—spiritual and non-spiritual [the German Greens have fundamentalist (“fundi”) and realist (“realo”) factions—ed.]. But where were the realo thinkers such as Lester Brown, Jane Mansbridge and, to some degree, Robert Theobald, Bill Halal and Don Carlson/Craig Comstock—all celebrated in your Book Award nominations?

Regrettably, I must agree with you that there are “still ample grounds for believing that the movement might never get beyond the sandbox stage.” The sandbox, after all, is a way of life. “Will the Greens turn a different color as they grow?” So who's growing? Who wants to grow? (I mean, really grow, rather than be in a perpetual process of non-growth.)

—Michael Marien
LaFayette, N.Y.

Mr. Sandman

My appreciation for you is so strong, turning to deep love, this morning after reading issue #40 . . . your having given me such an excellent (aware, insightful, sensitive, exciting and heartwarming) discussion of the Amherst Green gathering.

Please send me 12 more copies, these to share with my long-time activist friends across the country who, as you indeed celebrated, are out there implementing and living the Green perspective—whether conscious of the label of Green-ness or not.

These people are now linked together with deep bonds of friendship. To have them all become linked together with others in a conscious movement (again) strikes me as a way to not only provide affirmation of the values that guide their work, but even more, to stimulate growth.

One reason I think my friends will respond as I have today is because your description of the Green gathering was so evocative for me of a more personal gathering—a five-year reunion of about 25 college friends back in 1979. I still cry listening to the tapes of the music we lovingly made together in the evenings of those few precious days of debate and discovery.

Ah, to feel that striving and unity again!

—Margaret Nicholson
Honolulu, Hawaii

Continued from page eight:

Liberating Theory looks at the work of scientists like Bohm, Bohr and Prigogine—the same Prigogine that figures so prominently in Marilyn Ferguson's *Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980)—and concludes that a “scientific” political theory today would teach that “reality is not a collection of separate entities but a vast and intricate unbroken whole.” The authors proceed to construct a theory based firmly on that premise. They call their theory “complementary holism.” The first new “ism” in ages.

The four spheres

“Complementary holism” teaches that there are four spheres of social life—kinship, community, economics and politics—and that none of those spheres is prime. “Rather than a hierarchy of oppressions, there [is] a holistic interweaving of oppressions.” Thus the way is cleared for feminists, nationalists, Marxists and anarchists to stop arguing over whose oppression is “determining” or “prime” and begin to listen to each other—*hear* each other—and take each other's knowledge and perspectives fully into account.

Of course the book is denser and more detailed than that summary can suggest, and if you like political theory you'll love watching the authors construct their intricate arguments (and shoot down the anticipated counter-arguments). But even if you don't like political theory, you'll love the 50-page Appendix in which the authors seek to make their points through an imaginary dialogue among “Coho” (a complementary holist with roots in the political movements of the 60s), “Marlen” (a Marxist-Leninist professor), “Nat,” “Radfem,” “Ana,” and several lesser lights. The dialogue won't remind you of Silone, or even Elmore Leonard, but it *will* remind you of the excitement we used to feel discussing political ideas in all-night diners in the rain—and that's no small gift.

The main problem with this book is *not* its ambition (the authors weren't so foolish as to offer it as a “final answer”), but the fact that the authors only identify four spheres of social life—a fact that can be traced directly to their left-wing bias. They were primarily interested in linking together the four social-change constituencies they knew. If they had been equally familiar with—or respectful of—the environmental, world order, and spiritual/human potential constituencies, they might have added three more spheres: the ecological, the global and the psychological.

Then they'd have not only linked the key left constituencies, they'd have linked the left with the New Age. And they'd have had three more characters for their dialogues: Eco, Globie and Psychie.