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Our Generation
P.O. Box 1288,
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EDITORIAL OFFICE

Our Generation
Suite 444
3981 boulevard St-Laurent
Montréal, Québec H2W 1Y5
Canada

telephone: (514) 844-4076
fax: (514) 849-1956

CONTENTS

Notes to the Reader ....................................... ii

Michael Clow
Ecological Exhaustion and the Global Crisis of Capitalism ........ 1

Juan Martinez-Alier
Ecological Economics and Socialist Economics .................. 26

E.P. Thompson
Making History: An Interview .............................. 46

Howard Hawkins
North American Greens Come of Age: Statism vs. Municipalism ... 54

John Clark
What is Social Ecology? .................................. 91

J. Frank Harrison
The Pitfalls of Promiscuity: Soviet Politics Today ................ 99

Book Review

Graham Baugh
The Sexual Contract; The Disorder of Women, by Carole Pateman .... 110

Books Received ..................................... 123

Note to Subscribers .................................. 124
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As a project that publishes a journal on a non-profit basis, we often have difficulty reaching as many readers as we would like. Advertising is very expensive, so we largely rely on the good will of our subscribers who speak to friends about the value of *Our Generation* and who urge them to subscribe also.

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This book analyses the work of several Canadian women playwrights who have contributed to the creation of a female dramatic mythology based on the recurrent themes of wilderness, immigration, and colonialism. Hodkinson demonstrates how these playwrights incorporate the literary search for identity into the female quest for self-definition. The works of Margaret Hollingsworth, Cindy Cowan, Antonine Maillet, Aviva Ravel, and Betty Jane Wylie are reviewed.

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*Introduction by George Woodcock*

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*edited by Kent Gerecke*

Cities are primarily collections of people. Beyond their glass and concrete exteriors there exists a collective personality — a personality that can be discovered. Based on the belief that a healthy city life is possible, *The Canadian City* collects articles, stories and histories about the city and its people. By covering most aspects of urban living — human and social relations, art and architecture, urban planning, land development and the greening of the urban environment — it is able to offer some of the best insights toward advancing a distinctive and sustainable Canadian urban culture and identity.

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Notes to the Reader

With the collapse of the eastern Empire, nothing stands in the way of the Imperium of the New World; the latter has established itself by the force of arms and the threat of arms in every corner of the globe. The Imperium is not constrained by a limited economic agenda of securing resources and markets. It intends as well to impose approved political structures, cultural supremacy, and carefully defined opportunities for collective and individual choice.

In the face of such bleak prospects, what can women and men of sincere intention and reflection do? How does the sensibility of committed empathy and loving outrage survive in a world committed to competitive expansion and the survival of the ruthless?

One answer is to put forward a comprehensive and sustained critique of existing society and its ideology. If we do our work well, we may be able to use these bleak times to establish an analysis of such depth and power that it later serves as a theoretical nucleus and rallying point when the old system finally succumbs to social and ecological exhaustion. The articles in this Our Generation are in this spirit, replete with provocative and challenging theoretical departures.

Our first essay, by Michael Clow, argues that capitalism will end in an ecological crisis if it does not first succumb to a social crisis. His is not so much an analysis of social forces as a treatment of the inexorable physical laws governing capitalist production. The transformation of Nature into ephemeral exchangeable commodities necessarily impoverishes the biosphere and creates waste. Therefore "sustainable development" is a pipe dream. Our only hope as a species is to slay the dragon of "development" itself and to live within our ecological means.

Our Generation, while respecting most of the views of the radical ecologists embraces the view that it is not the human species itself but rather institutions that are responsible for the current ecological crisis. Solutions can only be worked out and implemented socially, with concerned women and men remaking their societies, dismantling their destructive economies, and living in careful ecological stewardship with the rest of Nature. Activists who stress that social change is the key to environmental healing usually refer to themselves as social ecologists. One particularly elegant and brief introduction to social ecology was written a few years ago by the philosopher John Clark.

The holy grail of "development" in modern thought is matched only by the liturgy of "free markets" and "contracts." Markets are rarely free. We are first forced by social circumstance to come to the market at all; once there, we find that the prices of commodities reflect neither the human and ecological costs of producing them nor the gratification they bring upon consumption. Prices much more closely reflect the relative power of the persons and sectors who "own" the materials, labour, and energy sources needed to produce them.

Given this, an accepted criticism of market theory is that commodity prices do not take into account ecological costs: these are treated as "externalities" for which society as a whole and/or future generations have to pay. One of the goals of "ecological" economics is to show how such externalities can be internalized and brought to the marketplace, i.e. how the depletion of non-renewable components of the earth’s crust and the emission of wastes can be charged to an enterprise’s profit and loss account and be reflected in its prices.

Juan Martínez-Alier argues cogently that the internalization of externalities is not enough to assure environmental justice: market forces cannot be broadened to take into account all externalities, if only for the reason that future generations cannot participate in today’s transactions. He concludes that no system based upon competing interests can hope to arrive at ecological equity; markets will have to be replaced by cooperative political processes in order to achieve that elusive goal.

These and others of Martínez-Alier’s arguments against markets are not only new to North American audiences, they are woven together with a subtlety and scholarship that make them valuable to economic and ecological thinkers of all schools.

While the illusion of a free market is a specific feature of the prevailing intellectual repertoire, social contract theory is the more general explanation for unequal social relationships. This theory often begins by assuming an equality of freely contracting individuals and ends up by assigning culpability to the weaker party!

In recent years, substantive contributions to this debate have been put forward by feminist theorists exploring the contracts between men and women in sexual, marriage, and household relationships.

Notably, Carole Pateman has scrutinized contract theory and she finds it inherently flawed. Not only do free and equal contracts not exist, she writes, they cannot exist. And a more general contract between an individual and
society must involve the exchange of liberty for security thus rejecting all normative theories of a social contract, including those for marriage and sexual services. Graham Baugh, a keen critic of her writing, offers an appreciation of her work in the extended book review published here.

We have dealt at some length with questions of fundamental theory. Now we turn to dispatches from the front lines, analysis from activists change. Our Generation carries two such reports in this issue, both from highly regarded participants. Howard Hawkins on the emergence of the American Greens and E.P. Thompson on the European Nuclear Disarmament movement (END).

This past summer the Greens constituted themselves as both a political party and an extraparliamentary movement, adopting this dual character and strategy in hopes of avoiding the splits and organizational breakdowns that have recently overtaken the German Grünen. As Hawkins lovingly documents, this birthing process required years of argument and a turn away from consensual decision making for it finally to occur. This long piece may one day become a landmark historical document, foretelling an alternative Green politics as the American century comes to a close with further imperial expansion at last slowed by internal contradictions.

For his part, E.P. Thompson situates the thinking of the independent pan-European left as seen from Britain, a green left not dissimilar to the Left Greens of North America. The European current, however, has already been profoundly affected by the ending of the Cold War. Thompson resists the temptation to despair and remains cautiously optimistic that the opportunity for a “third way” has not been entirely lost. He also vests controversial views of the British left and its traditional blinkers, taking some affectionate shots at Marxism along the way.

Eastern Europe’s now powerless big brother is the subject of our final essay. Frank Harrison, a seasoned commentator on the former Soviet Union, visited Russia shortly before the failed coup this past summer. Writing in the fall, he already discerned the outlines of the new, Yeltsin-style authoritarianism that has now come out into the open. He also offers an epitaph for the old palace guard — Gorbachev and the central apparatchiks — who have been left tossing on successive waves of nationalism, constitutional upheaval, and economic dissolution. Harrison’s is a soberly pessimistic account, but one not devoid of hope.

It remains our task to stay the course and prepare the way for a truly human liberation.

ECOLOGICAL EXHAUSTION AND THE GLOBAL CRISIS OF CAPITALISM by Michael Clow

Although no one dismisses the reality of environmental problems any more, and the rhetoric of “sustainable development” has become fashionable in the advanced countries, the seriousness of environmental degradation as a factor in the future course of the development of global capitalism has not been fully recognized. This essay argues that the logic of capitalist development leads to an uncontrollable spiral of ecological damage, that the Brundtland Report’s analysis and recommendations fail to address this reality, and that it is likely to be ecological exhaustion that will bring an ugly end to capitalist development within the next half century.

However, it would seem clear that it is not desirable to allow the course of capitalist development to play itself out by exhausting the capacity of the biosphere to support economic activity. This would bring human society to ruin, if not extinction. Even the most optimistic scenario for letting capitalism play itself out would leave Earth a far less rich, beautiful, diverse, resilient, and stable system of plant and animal life, and leave

---

1 The current enthusiasm for the phrase “sustainable development,” which has roots in much of the argument of the environmental movement since the 1970s, has arisen in public debate as a result of its adoption by the Brundtland Commission, the UN-sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development and its Report, Our Common Future. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

2 Ibid.

Michael Clow teaches in the Department of Social Sciences at St. Thomas University, Fredericton, New Brunswick. He has written frequently on the intersection of social policy issues with those of environmental activism.
precious little upon which the survivors could build a desirable society. Yet
the measure of social change necessary to avoid capitalism's exhaustion of
the biosphere is of such enormous proportions and needed in such short
order as to raise doubts about its possibility. Whether what is necessary is
in fact possible or not, what is foolhardy is to try to hide from ourselves
the full measure of the contradictions and implications that our course of
development confronts us with as we enter the 1990s. We seem poised at
"the end of the world as we know it," whether we feel fine or not.

This essay sets itself modest objectives. In section one, it tries to develop
a clear notion of how economic activities both cause environmental
degradations and are increasingly being limited by them. In section two,
the process of capital accumulation is identified as the underlying societal
cause of spiraling environmental problems, and ecological exhaustion is
identified as the most likely cause of capitalism's demise. In section three
the currently fashionable notion of "sustainable development" as set out
in the UN's Brundtland Report is shown to provide no means to sidestep
the fundamental issue of absolute limits to economic growth and productive
activity. And, in the final sections, we address the need for students of
political economy to modify their assumptions about the process and
prospects of development and to reorient their thinking away from the
expectation that society will sustain continuing expansion of the means
and forces of production.

Economy and Ecology

In seeking to understand society and economy, both liberal and Marxist
thought have focused on the origin of value as productive human labour
and seen the social organization of work (and/or the distribution of the
product of work) as the factor limiting the production of wealth. For all
that divides these traditions of social analysis and prescription, both have
vigorously supported the pursuit of affluence and progress as the goal and
destiny of humankind. Both have recognized and given special emphasis
not only to expansion of the volume of goods but to technological innova-
tion as a means of speeding up production, opening up new human capa-
bilities, and producing new kinds of goods.

What has been traditionally neglected in these theories of society is the
source of the things upon which human labour works. On the other hand,
it is a part of common knowledge that it is human economic activity that is
the direct cause of the myriad of environmental problems - the destruc-
tion of the world of living things - that are spiraling into our lives. To
grasp the breadth and depth of the problems that economic activity and
economic growth both cause and face we must look at the ecological basis
and effects of economic activity. It is this relatively ignored substructure of
economic activity that first requires our attention if we are to understand
how it is that our phenomenal economic successes, not management
failures or shortcomings, is undermining our social progress and, indeed,
the very biological basis of our existence. This point is crucial in evaluating
the Brundtland Report, Our Common Future.

"Nature" is clearly the object of human labour, the raw material of
production. But it is as an abstraction, "Nature," that social scientists have
traditionally thought about the material basis of economic activity. We
have seldom asked about the nature of Nature and often have been con-
tent to think of it as the sum of the "laws" of physics, chemistry, biology,
and geology, and thus as the concern of other disciplines in the human
enterprise of Science. We can no longer do so, for what we as advanced
societies have done in light of our assumptions about the material world
and our capacity to act in it is undoing us.

The most relevant aspect of Nature is that we are but a part of it and
that part is alive. We humans are but one species in a complex global
community of plant and animal species that not only populate the Earth
but whose community existence has made possible, and continues to
make possible, the existence of each species, including our own. All life
on Earth is tied up with all other life and with the weather, soil, and
water cycles that keep the ingredients of life in motion and moderate
extremes of heat and cold within the few kilometres thick layer of the
Earth's biosphere.

3 See Richard Levins, "The Struggle for Ecological Agriculture in Cuba," a paper presented
at "30 Years of the Cuban Revolution: An Assessment," a conference sponsored by the
Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 1-4 November 1989,
Halifax, Nova Scotia.
4 From R.E.M.'s song "It's the End of the World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)," from the
5 World Commission, op. cit.
6 In the Grundrisse, Marx makes it clear that "All production is appropriation of Nature"
(p. 87); see Karl Marx (translated by Martin Nicolaus), Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique
Humans, the furthest evolved of the great apes, emerged in this global ecosystem, and our lives are as much dependent on its proper functioning as that of any other animal species. The biosphere is, quite literally, our global life-support system. The biosphere produces the physical, chemical, and biological conditions necessary for our lives, as well as most of the materials and energy we use in the economy. Because of the unique characteristics of the human species, our relative lack of determined and instinctive behavior, and our capacity to create various cultures, we have moved out from the particular habitat in which we evolved and found ways to tap into many ecosystems for food, energy, and materials. We remain, however, still dependent upon the biosphere’s healthy operation, and because we exist at the top of many food chains, we are directly vulnerable to the disruption or befouling of more ecosystems than is any other species.

Unfortunately, our capacity to act free of instinctual constraint makes us the only species whose actions disrupt the very ecosystem from which it emerged, much less the global biosphere as a whole. And our economic activities, in the last half century in particular, have become so intrusive and disruptive that we are now blasting great holes in the global biosphere.

"Environmental problems" are the visible results of human interference with ecosystems, interference which they cannot suffer without deterioration in the stability and vitality of these webs of life. Such disruptions can result from many specific human activities: an instance of pollution which harms or kills plants and animals in an ecosystem; the extinction of species which leaves holes in a food chain; the diversion of an important physical cycle like the weather, a river, or an ocean current; or the wholesale destruction of habitats like the rain forests, marshlands, or ocean beds. These disruptive actions result in the depressingly long and growing list of ecological problems such as acid rain, global warming, and the disappearance of fish populations.

In the past 20 years we have moved from awareness of isolated and local instances of environmental damage to the recognition of much more systemic-wide problems. With acid rain, global warming, widespread ocean pollution, and holes in the ozone layer we are seeing evidence of a general poisoning and disruption of key circulatory elements in the global biosphere rather than local damage or the disappearance of a particular species or habitat. Climatic change and disruption of the ocean’s living system are portents of truly catastrophic deteriorations of the biosphere. These widespread disruptions of the biosphere’s systems have been caused by human activities over what has been a very brief time in this century, indeed largely since World War II. Just as our economic activities have grown exponentially since the Second World War, so, after a delay as the disruptions these activities cause in the biosphere work their way through the system, we have seen exponentially increasing damage to the global web of life of which we are but a part. The feedback mechanism by which environmental disruption would in turn stymie economic activities was not a major feature of popular environmental concern in the 1960s and early 1970s. But by the 1980s the effects of environmental problems on the economy were becoming apparent, even to those most disinclined to concern for life itself. Most obviously, environmental problems affected "renewable" resource industries: overfishing and ocean pollution led to dramatic falls in catches; overharvesting of forests to present and emerging wood shortages; and industrial agriculture to soil destruction and falling crop yields. Pollution’s direct effect on forests, water resources, crops, and human structures was illustrated by acid rain. Global warming will, it is generally recognized, produce climatic changes that will have drastic effects on agriculture and forestry in the northern hemisphere. As ecological disruption has mounted, the negative feedback of economic activity on the production of renewable resources in the biosphere has become more acute.

The connection between economic activities and the ecology of Earth is not an incidental one. Environmental problems are not byproducts but the principal effects of the scale and character of much of our economic activity. In turn environmental problems feed back onto human health and economic activities. The first question we must raise in examining the connection between society and ecology, then, is: "What are economic activities?" Productive economic activity is the process whereby human work makes things out of the "resources" of Earth, in the course of which we create "wastes" which are dumped back into the biosphere.

These resources can be found in only three places: direct solar energy, the materials and energy of the biosphere, or materials and energy from beneath the biosphere in the Earth’s crust. Productive economic activity is nothing but human work turning these energies and materials into goods and products we desire, plus wastes. Food, roads, paper, houses, electricity, automobiles, and space shuttles are but these materials and energy transformed into stuff we want. In turn the wastes, including the waste energy, of our activities are dumped into the biosphere, eventually to be joined by the junked products themselves. We have presumed, quite erroneously,
that the biosphere can indefinitely support our activities by absorbing our wastes and junk, somehow using them to reproduce — naturally "recycle" — the resources we want out of the biosphere, while disposing harmlessly of the heavy metals, artificial chemicals, and other materials that were either extracted from the Earth's crust or cooked up in our factories.

It should be fairly clear at this juncture that the biosphere cannot perform these miracles for us. Instead, our economic activities, both by their scale and nature are breaking down the biosphere. We are harvesting renewable resources faster than they can be regenerated. We are spreading poisons throughout the biosphere, exhausting nonrenewable resources from the Earth's crust, and distributing them arbitrarily in large quantities throughout the biosphere, destroying whole habitats as well as driving thousands of individual species of living things into extinction. And we are diverting and modifying essential air, water, and soil cycles through such things as air pollution, water diversions, and hydroelectric developments. The result is that the biosphere is literally falling apart.

Since the biosphere is the ecological basis of our economic activities, and the life-support system that maintains the planetary conditions necessary for our biological existence, this is not a situation we will be able to maintain indefinitely. We depend on the biosphere for the production of all of our food and much of our clothing and shelter. Indeed, we depend on the biosphere to generate the water and air and climatic conditions necessary for us to live at all. As has been made clear, we have already seriously impaired and are in danger of losing this life-support system.

It is worth remembering that we do not have to knock down completely the entire biosphere to exhaust its capacity to support us in large numbers together with our sophisticated economy. As the *Blueprint for Survival* pointed out almost 20 years ago:

> We do not need to utterly destroy the ecosphere to bring catastrophe upon ourselves, all we have to do is carry on as we are, clearing forests, "reclaiming" wetlands, and imposing sufficient quantities of pesticides, radioactive materials, plastics, sewage, and industrial wastes upon our air, water, and land systems to make them inhospitable to the species on which their continued stability and integrity depend.  


How many times more economic activity than we at present impose on the Earth's ecosystem will the biosphere take before either exhaustion of its productive capacity or catastrophic disintegration of key global systems occurs?

In its groundbreaking discussions, *A Blueprint for Survival* gave us the simplest way to approach this question. The *Blueprint* uses the notion of "ecological demand" to refer to "a summation of all man's demands on the environment, such as the extraction of resources and the return of wastes, and used the gross domestic product as a crude if convenient national measure of it. At a 3% annual increase in GDP the doubling time for the GDP and ecological demand is 24 years; at 5% just over 14 years. Since there seems to be a roughly 20-year delay between an insult to the biosphere and the full working out of its effects, the damage we are seeing now may be the effects of actions taken as far back as the late 1960s. Surely we cannot expect, with the signs of system-wide problems already evident, something as high as a five-fold increase in ecological demand without a breakdown of the biospheric system.

Prudence would suggest that the global economy is already considerably larger than the biosphere can sustain on an indefinite basis — the only physical basis for the human community. It would seem that in historical terms we have precious little time left at all to alter a collision course between still-expanding economic activities and either ecological exhaustion or precipitous failures in key elements of the biosphere's varied cycles.

The only solution to the problem of human destruction of the biosphere is to sharply reduce our present ecological demand, both at the input end of the economy (resource inputs) and the output end (wastes of all kinds). This means many things:

- less harvesting of renewable and potentially renewable resources of the land and sea
- a move to sustainable agriculture, forestry, and fisheries
- less use of energy
- lower annual production of goods and services
- a shift to goods which are more durable
- less generation of pollution
- large-scale recycling of materials

8 Ibid, p. 16.
9 Ibid, pp. 16-17.
limits on and the reduction of the human population
the rebuilding of damaged habitats like the rain forest
In essence, this reduction in ecological demand means two things on a global scale:
to stop the growth of, and then to sharply reduce, our economic activity so that we will produce only as much as the biosphere can supply us with the raw materials for and naturally recycle the wastes and junked goods of, without affecting its own stable operation;
to refrain completely from those specific economic activities that the biosphere cannot safely support and handle the wastes of at all, for example, nuclear power, the production of hazardous wastes, and the use of chlorofluorohydrocarbons.
Clearly, the better shape the biosphere is in, or can be brought back to when we stop tearing it apart, the larger the economy that it can support; the poorer shape the biosphere is in when we finally bow to the inevitable, the smaller the volume of economic activity it will be able to support.

Why Are We Destroying the Biosphere?

The degradation of the biosphere is proceeding at a rapid pace, a pace we can roughly measure as the rate of growth of our production. Without basic change in our activities, the most optimistic medium-term or 50-year expectation would be for an increasing exhaustion of the biosphere’s capacity to support production. The result will be a gradual but monotonic reduction in the ability of the global ecosystem to support economic activities. The more pessimistic scenario would be for economic activities to cause catastrophic failures of regional ecosystems and global cycles, resulting in a precipitous collapse of economic capacity and perhaps of the provision of basic climatic and physical conditions for life. The threshold of either ecological exhaustion or collapse may well be upon us already.

Why are we in the midst of destroying the biosphere? And why are we not proceeding prudently to reduce the scale of our economic activities and refrain from further employment of extremely destructive technologies? Two common ways environmentalists have tried to explain our expanding destruction of the world are (1) it is our instinct as a species to expand our economic activity or (2) our values and beliefs in affluence and progress which motivate our economic behaviour are radically in error.

However, the idea that it is “instinctual” for humans to have a growing economy is nonsense. Humans were a relatively untroublesome species with very small stable economies for a long time — tens of thousands of years as hunters and gatherers. Humans do not have biological instincts. If we did we would be trapped by them in a fixed habitat, in a particular ecological niche, and with a singular social organization set by our genetic programming. We would be no more trouble for the rest of the biosphere than are wolves, lions, deer, horses, or our great ape cousins. Instead, we are creatures of culture, inventing ways of life and spreading out of whatever habitat we evolved in to adapt ourselves to nearly all habitats and develop vastly different kinds of societies.

Our environmental troubles began in a major way only when we systematically adopted economic systems — ways of organizing work — that allowed and required us to keep an economy growing. In this century a global society and economic system — or family of closely related systems — that is consuming the whole biosphere on an ever-expanding scale has run up against the ecological consequences of its own success, and we are now discovering the general limits of human economic possibilities. Greens have tended to identify the economy we live in as “industrial,” following use of that term by liberal theorists, though I will argue below that it is more accurate to think of it as capitalism in its several variants.

Some environmentalists have tried to locate the propensity of our economy to grow and devour the biosphere in the values and beliefs of our “modern” or “industrial” society: in our desire for affluence and in our belief in an ever-expanding ability to control and manipulate Nature through science and technology. I agree with them that these beliefs and values are self-deceptive and self-destructive, and that they must be thrown onto the garbage heap of human misconceptions. However, I do not think that the principal thing that keeps us locked on the course

10 I have not bothered here to point out the obvious: strategic nuclear war would have catastrophic effects upon the biosphere from which there could be little hope of human survival.

11 This formulation is best exemplified by such books as Neil Evernden’s The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.
12 This is best exemplified in much of the writing appearing in The Ecologist magazine, and in Blueprint, op. cit..
towards collision with ecological exhaustion is mass adherence to the pursuit of affluence, or faith in myth of Progress.

The real problem to be faced is that all "advanced" societies as well as most if not all contemporary Third World societies are organized to foster economic growth, and that for a certain class of people this must be maintained at all costs. Although environmental disruption occurred in a number of preindustrial societies—for example, ancient Greece’s deforestation of hillsides followed by sheep raising, causing devastating soil erosion, and the Babylonian desertification of agricultural land through overuse of irrigation—large-scale and global ecological degradation only began when humankind developed an economic system that both allowed and required us to keep up a process of economic expansion. Widespread and rapidly expanding environmental disruption became visible as a chronic general feature of economic activity largely in this century, becoming acute during the long boom that followed the Second World War.

There should be no great mystery as to the cause of spiraling environmental degradation in modern times, or what is leading people to resist the necessary alterations in our economic activities. I submit that we all know that our whole society is organized to grow economically. We also know that when that growth slackens, the way our society is organized, the economy spirals down into a depression. It is the effort to keep "business as usual" from collapsing that has provided the spur to our suicidal refusal to bow to the inevitable and downsize our enormous and bloated levels of economic activity.

Our economy and society are not organized around the production of goods for everyone’s benefit, nor to employ people and allow them to make a decent and secure living. Our economy is organized around the production of goods to provide profits for business. And a discussion of the organization of the economy to give business healthy profits is incomplete if we do not recognize that the point of corporate profits is not principally to provide the corporate elite with their Rolls Royces and Lear jets but to allow them to engage in successive rounds of profit—investment—production—profit. This cycle of expanding capital accumulation can occur if and only if production also expands.

The ecological consequences follow from the fact that production can expand only if more and more of the ecosystem is gobbled up. Economic growth requires that more and more of the ecosystem be consumed, polluted, and diverted in a given period of time. We have an environmental mess because the expanding accumulation of capital requires us to destroy more and more of the biosphere as each round of the profit—investment—production—profit process proceeds.

The logical conclusion is that we can only solve the environmental mess by reorganizing the economy and society so that they are no longer propelled by the desperate need to expand the accumulation of capital, or directed by business, whose game it is to pursue that accumulation of capital.

It is important at this juncture to make an analysis of capitalist production elsewhere in the world. One of the contributions of the environmental movement to socioeconomic analysis has been to point out the similarities of Western "private enterprise" and Eastern Soviet-model economies. Both have had parallel histories of ecological degradation and both accept similar formulations of the doctrine Colin Fry so aptly phrased as "industrial progressivism." From a political economic perspective the reason this is so is that "socialist" societies of this century are predicated on accumulation as much as the private enterprise economies of the West. Most of the existing "socialist" societies are perhaps best described as "State capitalist." The capitalist class in the Soviet Union are state-employed managers (not unlike the managers of western corporations and state-owned enterprises). Further, an exploited and politically confined working class, much like that in the West, exists in these "socialist" societies. So does a middle class of professionals and low and medium-level managers. Certainly the drive to accumulate, expand production, and develop ever greater technological means of exploiting Nature is to be found in these State capitalist economies.

While the details of social class and the drive to accumulate may be different, the basic socioeconomic process of the Soviet-style economies is the same as in the West. Not surprisingly, then, the State capitalist economies have generated parallel ecological disruptions for the same reasons and face the same endgame, although other failures seem to be overtaking them first. The collapse of the Soviet model of capitalist development is widely attributed to its failure to accumulate at a rapid
pace, a situation that resulted in a shortage of consumer goods and a loss of political legitimacy. Ironically, the failure to accumulate rapidly may also have made the Soviet capitalist class both less able and more unwilling than its western counterparts to engage in the pollution control and conservation measures that popular clamour and increasingly unusable river water and urban smog forced on western capitalists in North America and Europe during the 1960s.

In the present period of emerging global monopoly capitalism the inherent contradiction between the expanding accumulation of capital and the physical and biological basis of society has come to a head. The predictable normal course of global capitalist development, i.e. toward the expansion of accumulation accompanied by a concentration and centralization of capital on a world scale, seems very unlikely to be in the cards. Before the world’s multinational corporations can complete this process, they will be overtaken by the negative feedback of ecological exhaustion caused by the economic expansion they are attempting to accomplish. Left to their own devices, the world’s capitalists would most likely move heaven and earth to achieve their ends and exhaust the productive capacity of the planet. Or even less happily, they could precipitate a catastrophic collision with the ecological limits of the biosphere.

The Brundtland Report and Its Notion of Sustainable Development

The increasing problems that ecological degradation is creating for capitalists are two-fold. Most obviously, the populations of the advanced countries on both sides of the East-West line are in a renewed and reasonable state of alarm about the visible destruction of the natural world, the growing health problems of environmental origin, and the prospects of major social and economic disruption from such phenomena as global warming and acid rain. The second and growing problem for capital is the negative feedback of environmental degradation upon economic activity itself. The spectre of the limits to growth is once again creeping upon the world stage.

Although they did not invent the concept, the phrase “limits to growth” was popularized by the first Club of Rome Report, by Donella Meadows et al., The Limits to Growth. New York: New American Library, 1972.

The most important of the attempts to sidestep the spectre of an end to the era of economic growth is the Report of the United Nations’ World Commission on the Environment and Development, Our Common Future. Often referred to as the Brundtland Report, it proposes a formula of various measures to sustain economic growth in the face of the environmental problems generated by current economic practice. “Sustainable development,” meaning measures to sustain economic growth, has become the phrase of the decade.

As will be shown here, however, Brundtland’s notion of sustainable development cannot deliver on its promises to sustain continuing accumulation and growth in the face of the realities of the process of production on the Earth’s biosphere. It is only blind faith that some combination of technological innovations can be found to sustain growth by continually increasing the volume of resources the biosphere can supply, by continually reducing the wastes of production, and by continually increasing the efficiency of the use of materials and energy. There is in fact no basis for this faith.

The positive aspects of the Brundtland Report are three-fold. Although the Commission wished to present an upbeat, growth-is-still-possible response to the ecological crisis, they clearly recognized that the biosphere is indeed falling apart and that present economic practice is going to produce ecological exhaustion. Secondly, the Commission clearly recognized that ecological exhaustion would create feedback that would cripple production; thus, thirdly, that “At a minimum, sustainable development must not endanger the natural systems that support life on Earth: the atmosphere, the water, the soils, and the living things.” However, while recognizing the “downward spiral of poverty in the Third World” and environmental degradation “engendered by the world economy,” Brundtland attempts to argue that we can and need to have both further economic growth — in order to alleviate worsening Third World poverty — and a concrete solution to “environmental trends that threaten to radically alter the planet, that threaten the lives of many species upon it, including the human species.”

16 World Commission, op. cit., pp. 2–3.
17 Ibid., p. 5.
18 Ibid., pp. 44–45.
19 Ibid., p. xii.
20 Ibid., p. 2.
Indeed, if there is one goal that dominates the Report, it is to avoid the argument that there are inherent ecological limits to growth:

Humanity has the ability to make developments sustainable — to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits — not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth.21

The Commission believes rather naively that there is some technical means to have everything: economic growth, a lessening of poverty, and the recovery from the danger economic activity poses to the biosphere:

This Commission believes that people can build a future that is more prosperous, more just, and more secure. Our Report...is not a prediction of ever-increasing environmental decay, poverty, and hardship in an ever more polluted world among ever-decreasing resources. We see instead the possibility for a new era of economic growth, one that must be based on policies that sustain and expand the environmental resource base. And we believe such growth to be absolutely essential to relieve the great poverty that is deepening in much of the developing world.22

While the Commission relies heavily on faith in technological development to make an end run around ecological limits on both the supply of resources and the deleterious effects of wastes on production,23 what is equally emphasized in the Report is the political will to do the right thing, to be good and sound managers of the world’s ecological resources:“...the Commission’s hope for the future is conditional on decisive political action now to begin managing environmental resources to ensure both sustainable human progress and human survival.”24

If one extracts from the Report its actual list of ingredients for a sustainable economy and sustainable development, they sound very much like those of the soft energy path and the conservser society proposals familiar to Canadian students of the environmental problem:

• reduce throughput of energy and materials
• produce more durable and efficient goods
• take account of the ecological effects of economic activity
• conserve and enhance the renewable resource base
• reduce pollution by employing higher control standards
• cease the destruction of habitats
• manage more responsibly the risk of particularly hazardous technologies
• reorient technology towards the above aims
• merge environmental concerns with economic decision making

What distinguishes the recommendations of the Brundtland Report from the conservser society proposals of the Canadian environmental movement is that while the discussions of a conservser society were generally silent on the issue of further economic growth for tactical reasons, the Brundtland Report argues unstintingly for the possibility and necessity of further economic growth if these measures are implemented.

While the Brundtland Report is a very interesting document and represents a major point of reference in the process of bringing the profound threat of ecological exhaustion to the fore, it is fatally flawed. From a critical sociological perspective what is most clearly in error is its lack of any serious social analysis of the causes of ecological degradation. But it is its rather ill thought through notion that there exists a technological solution to ecological exhaustion leaving open the road to continuing economic growth that is its most crucial failing. The key to the Brundtland Report’s notion that continued economic growth can be combined with less environmental damage is its adoption of “environmental management” thinking.

21 Ibid., p. 8.
22 Ibid., p. 1.
23 Ibid., p. 8.
24 Ibid., p. 1.

The environmental problem can be examined from two opposing perspectives: the environmental management perspective and the ecological perspective. Both agree that environmental problems arise from human disruptions of the functioning of the biosphere. However, from the environmental management perspective, such problems of resource depletion and disruption of the biosphere are side effects of economic activities, subject to technical fix solutions that do not interfere with continued "improving of the management of our environment in terms of human ends."  

The environmental management school of thought argues that the limitations imposed by ecological processes on production can be side-stepped, with caution. Environmental management suggests a number of recipes for how to continue indefinite economic growth within a finite ecosystem. It argues that certain amounts of environmental degradation are tolerable because they do not threaten the collapse of the system and that a certain but indeterminate measure of environmental quality can be traded off against economic benefits. It is often argued that the sustainable yields from renewable resources can be repeatedly raised by what amounts to forest, fisheries, and other forms of "agriculture" through continued technological development. On the output side of the economy, it argues that limitations on resource supply can be repeatedly defeated by continued technological development in the efficiency with which these limited resources can be turned into more and more durable and efficient products with fewer and fewer wastes, more and more of which are recycled back into production. 

The ecological perspective is the one already articulated in this essay, namely that environmental problems are inherent in large-scale economic activity and in the use of particularly intrusive technologies like nuclear power and artificial toxins. The bottom line of the ecological perspective has been clearly laid out here: there are inherent limits to the ecological demand the biosphere can tolerate and thus to the volume of economic activity the biosphere can support. 

On the other hand, the perspective of the Brundtland Report is unmistakably that of the environmental management school of thought. The Brundtland Report uses the idea of "comprehensive management" of resources like a talisman, and recommends technological innovations like pollution controls, better conservation measures, more efficient use of energy, etc. as real means to defeat the limits of what kinds of appropriation and insult the global ecosystem can tolerate. The Brundtland Report clearly believes that such measures will allow continuing economic growth, i.e. will sustain development, understood as the growth of production plus the provision of basic needs to all of humanity. The problem is that, however attractive this idea of continuing economic growth, our situation of ecological crisis is not the result of management failures, nor can it be indefinitely short-circuited by technological innovation. Brundtland's failure is to not identify the actual nature of economic activity.

As we have seen, productive economic activity necessarily consumes resources out of the biosphere and the Earth's crust. Economic activity necessarily produces both goods and wastes and must eventually put both wastes and expended products somewhere back into the biosphere. One simply hopes the ecosystem can reprocess or store these materials out of harm's way. There is no way to isolate production from the need for new resources of materials and energy, or to prevent those materials and energy from returning to the biosphere. Even when wastes are recycled and junked products rebuilt, reused, and then recycled, this cannot be a closed cycle. Energy, if nothing else, is needed to recycle and reuse the materials, and in fact recycling operations also consume new materials and create new wastes. There is no way to reduce waste production to small volumes with large-scale economic activity, and extensive recycling reduces but cannot eliminate the need for new flows of materials and energy from the biosphere, the sun, and the Earth's crust. A continually growing economy requires more resources and produces more wastes no matter what level of technical efficiency prevails.

Brundtland's faith that technological advance can be directed so as to continually make more with less, in order to break down this limitation, is prima facie unrealistic. Technology is not a magical entity, capable of conjuring up ever more products from the same amount of materials, ever more results from the same quantity of energy. Technology represents but the way humans have found to tap into natural processes and flows of

28 World Commission, op. cit., pp. 15–16.
energy and harness them to our work efforts so as to make things and do what we want done.

The natural materials or energy flows must be appropriated from the sun, the biosphere, or the Earth’s crust, and the efficiency of our devices and processes are restricted in the last analysis by the laws of thermodynamics. These laws limit how much of a given energy flow can be tapped and then turned into useful effort for our purposes. Similarly, there are limits on the amount of a product that can be made with a given volume of materials, limits that cannot be stretched by the ingenuity of technologists or scientists. There is no equivalent to a perpetual motion machine able to produce ever more and more from less and less.

The bottom line of technological improvement is that while technological measures to reduce the ecological demand of production upon the biosphere — such measures as pollution controls, improved energy efficiency, extensive recycling of resources, the production of durable goods, aggressive restoration of renewable resources, and so on — can reduce the degradation of the biosphere at a given level of production, or increase production for a time with fixed volumes of materials and energy, an insistence on increasing economic activity will mean increased ecological demand once the technically (and financially practical) possible margin of improvement is exceeded. Although we could do much to reduce ecological demand while maintaining living standards in the North or improving those in the South — if the political will directed our economic activities in that direction — there are real ecological limits to the scale and character of production which the Brundtland analysis fails to perceive as following from ecological “thresholds that cannot be crossed without endangering the basic integrity of the system.”

The second half of Brundtland’s supposed formula for indefinitely side-stepping ecological limits on production and economic growth is better management of renewable resources. This better management consists of two aspects: (1) increasing the capacity of the biosphere to produce renewable resources and (2) reducing the overharvesting and consequent destruction of this capacity. Although never elaborated at length, Brundtland’s formula contains the implicit notion that various forms of agriculture, forest-agriculture, and aquaculture can indefinitely increase the flow of resources the biosphere can supply us with. In more technical language, the assumption of Brundtland is that technological innovation in various forms of resource “farming” can steadily increase the maximum sustainable yield of renewable resources. But this involves the same fallacy of being able to get more with less on an expanding basis.

The increasing ecological problems of contemporary industrial agriculture are indicative of the actual limitations on attempts to force one-divers ecosystems to produce more and more of only the individual species of plants and animals we desire. Just as there are limits to the efficiency of machines, there are limits to our ability to stimulate habitats (and artificial ecosystems such as the aquafarm or replanted forest) to produce more and more of what we want. For ecosystems as a whole the case is similar to that of the goose that lays golden eggs: too much stimulation of production leads to a sick or dead goose. There can be no indefinite increase in the sustainable yield of renewable resources, no matter how cleverly or persistently we try. There are real limits to ecological demand.

Brundtland’s reliance on the management of resources so as to obtain maximum sustainable yields assumes quite erroneously that our knowledge of the biosphere allows us to calculate reliably what those maximum sustainable yields are. In fact, aggressive estimates of sustainable yield are so bent by wishful thinking, corporate pressures, and ignorance that they are often many times too high. I submit the example of fish stock estimates and catch quotas in Atlantic Canada as a tangible illustration.

Let us turn to the question of the Report’s lack of any social analysis of the manic pursuit of economic growth in a finite ecosphere. There is no analysis of the conflicting socioeconomic interests that have produced Third World poverty in the midst of First World abundance and which have generated ecological degradation at the same time. (The Report restricts its analysis of social process to formal State and interstate arrangements). Instead the Report comes back again and again to the notions of “common concern,” “common challenges,” and “common endeavours” while systematically ignoring these conflicting interests.

The Report especially ignores conflicting interests which have proved to be a barrier to actions to solve Third World poverty and environmental problems. It may be easy to understand why a UN commission would not make an historical-materialist analysis of economic life, but the absence of a critique of the social process which has brought us to the mess we are in cripples the Report’s prescription. For whereas the Report assumes basic social harmony, and invokes notions of moral solidarity and restraint to

29 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
call for common action, it would seem appropriate to point out that poverty is not an accidental outcome of the operation of the world economy, and neither is increasing ecological disruption. As we have argued, it is the dynamic of capital accumulation which has propelled the growth of productive forces to the point where their voracious ecological demand threatens exhaustion of the biosphere.

Put another way, the kind of technical measures which the Report suggests could well already have been used to reduce ecological demand while maintaining our present levels of production. But they have not been pursued by the multinationals that the Report calls upon to act in the interests of all humankind. That is because it has been more profitable for corporations, both privately and state owned, to rape and ravage the biosphere rather than reduce ecological demand with the best technology designed to do so. The Brundtland Report simply ignores the political economy of the global society it seeks to stir into action. The pan-societal rationality the Report employs, one which does make sense in the general interests of humanity, has but little purchase in the boardrooms and cabinet chambers to which the arguments are directed.

As Canadian advocates of the conserver society and the soft energy path have already discovered during the 1970s, what is good for everyone is not a course of action which is best for corporate interests. Particular firms take environmental action only under very limited conditions:

- when the particular firm stands to make an immediate profit from doing so, e.g. when a firm sells pollution control equipment or more energy-efficient motors;
- when short or near-medium term profits depend on sustaining a habitat or renewable resource;
- when public pressure or aggressive enforcement of regulatory measures requires a firm to engage in damage limitation measures.

On the other hand, businesses resist environmental protection measures with the utmost vigour when:

- environmental protection is liable to abort their projected operations, e.g. electrical utility expansion via new dams or nuclear power stations;
- when environmental protection measures point to the need for them to reduce their economic activity.

No matter how rational and reasonable one’s appeal to a common future, the rapacious and profitable course of action will be followed at the expense of the common good unless and until corporate power to pursue

the goal of accumulation is met with the countervailing power of a mobilized opposition movement of massive proportions.

Accumulate and Die, or Change

As we enter the last decade of the 20th century, the human prospect, to borrow Heilbrunner’s phrase, is bleak. The drive of global capitalism in the West and South, and in whatever form it emerges from the changes in Eastern Europe, will lead in the normal course of capitalist development to ecological exhaustion, probably around the middle of the 21st century. The kind of response proposed by the Brundtland Commission is too little to do more than buy time for more fundamental changes to take place. Even if it were to be taken as capitalism’s serious attempt to answer its own ecological contradiction, it does not offer any plausible reason to believe ecological limits to growth can be sidestepped and the era of expanding economic activity continued. It may be that capitalism in this decade will pin its hopes on the measures that environmental management à la Brundtland suggests in order not to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. Let us pray they do, because environmental protection measures can buy us needed time.

However, if a resolution of our basic problem is to be found, a much more profound reorganization of the socioeconomic system must be undertaken. The pursuit of accumulation must be abandoned and a new form of society and economy must replace it. Such social changes, which must be initiated in this generation if they are to head off ecological exhaustion, amount to nothing less than a magnitude of change similar to that which took us from feudalism to competitive industrial capitalism. What is more, this change will have to be completed most likely within two generations.

This argument has a two-fold implication for conventional thinking about development:

- Marxism and socialist practice have ignored, like liberal capitalism, in theory and in actual political-economic programs, the material limits to production of the Earth’s biosphere;

• Marxism and socialism’s commitment to economic growth and material expansion cannot be a continuing part of our human possibilities.

It is not only capital accumulation under western capitalism that is unsustainable. Socialism cannot inherit the technological and productive achievements of capitalism only to continue industrial society and the development of the means and forces of production “under new management.” The limits to accumulation, and to the development of productive forces, are not only social and internal to the organization of production. As we have argued, there are also limits which are ecological and absolute.

Rudolf Bahro pointed out in his flawed but valuable contribution to the environmental debate that what is needed to solve the ecological crisis is nothing less than a break with the whole industrial-progressive goal: in Marxist terms, with the development of the productive forces themselves. In this way we can see how deep is the kind of social and ideological shift demanded by the ecological crisis. Not only is the progressive impulse of capitalism spent, but with it that of the whole industrial era. Rather than inheriting and continuing the development of the means and forces of production under socialism, “Socialism cannot be the continuation of this industrial system; it must involve a break with it.” The task is not to take over, but to “bring an end to the industrial era, an era that cannot endure...” As Bahro pointed out so directly:

We find ourselves forced to conceive of socialism differently from Marx on one point above all. For him, socialism was a classless industrial society; and the industrial aspect of this was to be more or less unproblematically the legacy of capitalism.

The End of the World As We Know It

In the wake of the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, some apologists of corporate capitalism are proclaiming the triumph of capitalism and the end of history. It seems a bit premature. Lenin’s experiment with a planned industrial economy under the leadership of a communist party is in ruins because it failed to achieve sustained economic growth. Now western industrial society is becoming increasingly threatened by the consequences of its own success in maintaining economic expansion.

Productive economic activity is but a process in which human work produces things, from paper clips to space shuttles, out of the resources that the global ecosystem and the Earth’s crust offer us. In turn we depend on the biosphere to absorb our wastes and thrown-away goods, wistfully hoping that it will use them to reproduce the resources we want and dispose harmlessly of the heavy metals, radioactive materials, and dangerous chemicals we drew from the Earth’s crust or created in our factories.

In the 1990s it is clear that the biosphere cannot endlessly perform these miracles for us. Our bloated economic activities are rapidly destroying what remains of the global network of living things and the atmospheric, water, and soil cycles that both create our renewable resources and the planetary conditions necessary for our life.

As the slow and horrible realization that our Earth is dying sinks in, there has been a search for any news that we can sustain growth without destroying ourselves. Many have seized on the Brundtland Report’s notion of sustainable development.

The Report has a basic flaw, however. Brundtland’s approach, environmental management, calls for technical solutions to Earth’s destruction, measures such as improved pollution controls, extensive recycling, increased energy efficiency, the production of longer-lasting goods, the integration of economic decision making and environmental management, better conservation, and the aggressive rebuilding of renewable resources. These are all good and necessary things in themselves and must be pursued. They can help us get better value out of what we draw from the biosphere or lower our demands on the ecosystem at a given level of production. But they do not get to the root of our quandary.

Technical measures to get more from less cannot stop the long-term degradation that results if we attempt to continue with economic growth. An insistence on growth means increased demand on the ecosystem once the technically possible and financially practical margin of technical improvement is exhausted.
So why do we persist in pursuing economic growth?

For Adam Smith economic growth was driven by unlimited human wants. For Marx, economic growth was driven by the accumulation of wealth by capitalists in one round of investment and profit-making after another. We suggest that Marx's is the greater insight into the motivation of entrepreneurs and the roots of economic growth, but that both analyses accept accumulation as necessary, desirable, and inevitable.

The point of corporate profits is not luxury consumption but the accumulation of wealth for investment in order to survive competition in the global market. Nothing is more obvious to business people than the need for new investment opportunities. The endeavour of capitalists has always been to maintain accumulation and compete with each other for more.

The hard truth, however, is that now the jig is up. We can only clean up our environmental mess and survive by reorganizing and downsizing our economy. We have to stop the growth of our economic activities and reduce them so as to produce only as much as the ecosystem can, on an ongoing basis, supply us with. And we have to refrain completely from all those activities which Nature cannot healthily absorb and recycle, like nuclear power and much of the chemical industry. The days are over when we could hope for endless affluence, an ever greater exploitation of Nature, and an ever-expanding accumulation of capital. The ecological crisis emerges out of the accumulatory objectives of capitalist and State capitalist industrialism and is driven by it. Economic expansion is reaching its limits, no matter under what social system.

Inasmuch as economic growth has defined the world we know, the end of the world as we know it is certain. The better shape the ecosystem is in when this happens, the larger the economy it will be able to sustain. Prompt moves toward limiting economic activity and adopting Brundtland's technical measures to reduce our burden on the ecosystem will mean that a genuinely sustainable society can have a high standard of living in historical terms. The more we hesitate, the less we will have to work with when we bow to the inevitable.

Inasmuch as capital accumulation defines the particular social endeavour of business people, the end of the world as we know it will be hardest on them. Their resistance to the inevitable will be the most determined of any sector of society. However, humanity has survived the end of the social projects of other dominant classes, and it will survive the end of this one.

This generation and the next face as great a social transformation as that from feudalism to capitalism. But we have no real choice except to face up to this dilemma, one that neither Smith nor Marx, neither Henry Ford nor Lenin, could have foreseen. The upheaval this requires is infinitely preferable to the real end of history. And that, unfortunately, is our only other option.

One final note of restrained optimism. I believe that workers, small independent producers, and ordinary people in general share a real material interest in reorganizing the economy towards a smaller, more stable, and production-for-use economy that can fit within the limits of the biosphere's capacity to sustain it. We ordinary people do not accumulate capital; indeed most of us more or less consume what our wages, salaries, or small producer incomes give us. And although dreams of affluence may dance in our heads, our real interests lie in a decent standard of living, economic security, and satisfying work. A much smaller, reorganized economic system could supply these needs, whereas our present unstable built-for-accumulation economy denies us not only any economic security but also a long-term future on the planet, as corporations go on a final drunken binge of production before the ecological bust.

It may be the end of the world as we know it, but for the great host of humanity and for the quietly nurturing Earth, that should be fine.
ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS AND SOCIALIST ECONOMICS
by Juan Martinez-Alier

In the last few years, there has been, paradoxically, a simultaneous increase of the ideology of the free market and of ecological awareness. This has occurred both in the West and, as part of the political struggle against the bureaucracy, in non-capitalist economies.1 However, with few exceptions, neither mainstream economists nor critics of economics in the Marxian or institutionalist traditions have seen the economy as human ecology. My purpose here is to highlight those exceptions, thinkers whom we now regard as pioneers, and the ecological issues they tackled.

The Economy As Human Ecology — The Historical View

William Kapp began writing on ecological issues in a socialist economy in his thesis in Geneva in the mid-1930s; he would become in the 1950s and 1960s one of the best known ecological economists.2 Other ecological

1 For a representative East German contribution, see Dieter Graf, editor, Ökonomie und Ökologie der Naturnutzung: Jenais: Gustav Fischer, 1984.

Juan Martinez-Alier is Professor of Economics at the Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona in Spain. In 1987 he published the path-breaking Ecological Economics: Energy, Environment and Society; he is also editor of the journal Ecología Política. In November 1990 he presented a paper to the Third Karl Polanyi Conference in Milan, and this article is an edited version of his remarks. An expanded treatment may also be found in his Introduction to the 1990 paperback edition of Ecological Economics.

economists, such as Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, Kenneth Boulding, Frederick Soddy, Patrick Geddes, Josef Popper-Lynkeus, Sergei Podolinsky, and Herman Daly, also have not viewed the economy as a circular or spiral flow of exchange value — a merry-go-round between producers and consumers — but rather as a one-way "entropic" throughput of energy and materials. This view has provoked numerous counterattacks over the years, including an early critique of Wilhelm Ostwald by Max Weber in 1909.

In my view, Karl Polanyi himself, although aware of ecological issues as shown by many passages of The Great Transformation, did not explicitly adopt this entropic view of the economy, and in fact he rather believed that mainstream economics was analytically adequate for the study of the generalized market system, though not for other economic systems. Karl Polanyi's connection with ecological economics is rather in the fact that, as a major institutionalist economist, he sympathized with the view that the intergenerational allocation of scarce resources and waste cannot be understood by a study of market transactions between individuals, a study separate from the historical study of the social distribution of moral values and beliefs about technical change.

Now, to see the economy as entropic does not imply ignorance of the anti-entropic (organizing and complexifying) properties of life. Thus Georgescu-Roegen's ecological economics would not be opposed to the view that systems which receive energy from outside (such as the earth) may exhibit steadily increasing degrees of structure and organization over time. This idea of "life against entropy" is over one hundred years old and has been very much a part of the ecological view of the economy. For example, Vernadsky explained in a section of his book La Céochimie that the energy flows in living matter were contrary to the energy dynamics of inorganic materials. He added:

3 "Entropic" refers to the second law of thermodynamics in physics, the postulate that all energy and materials degrade and dissipate towards random disorder. This natural and inherent tendency towards breakdown is called entropy.
The history of ideas concerning the energy equation in living matter...comes from an almost unbroken line of thinkers and philosophers who arrived at similar ideas more or less independently...A fascinating Ukrainian writer who died quite young, Sergei Podolinsky, understood the importance of these ideas and endeavored to apply them to the study of economic phenomena.6

Vernadsky's endorsement of Podolinsky's work might prove beneficial in retrospect to the growth of ecological socialist economics, given the importance of Vernadsky's figure in the science of ecology in some republics of the (former) Soviet Union. Podolinsky (1850-1891) was a Darwinist, though not a social-Darwinist. In fact, he was a radical federalist, a Ukrainian narodnik of the 1870s, a doctor of medicine, and a Marxist. Podolinsky rightly attributed differences in energy use within and between nations not to any evolutionary superiority but to the historical inequality bred by capitalism.

Now as in the past, the ecological point of view may lead either to an egalitarian outlook or to a social-Darwinist outlook, the latter being summarized by Boltzmann's dictum of 1886, "The struggle for life is a struggle for available energy." The view argued here is that, since the use of energy and materials outside of our bodies is not in our human genes, it is explained rather by our economy and politics. This point must be made again today in opposition to the doctrine that "social systems" — for instance, Japan, or the European Common Market, or the city of New York — self-organize themselves in such a way as to make worries about resource depletion and pollution of the environment obsolete. In fact the natural sciences cannot explain the size and direction of the human population in the world today. Human ecology is also political economy.

Ecological Marxism

Marxism did not see the economy as human ecology, and this is why there was no Marxist ecological historiography until recently.8 Engels' negative reaction to Podolinsky's work in 1882 contributed to the divorce between Marxism and human ecology.9 Nevertheless, even if unnoticed by Marxists, old and new ecological movements are now struggling over the availability of water and energy (including food energy), workplace health and safety, toxic waste disposal, conservation of forests by native peoples against paper factories, and higher prices for exhaustible resources from the Third World.

Of course, ecological perception in history will not be expressed by the actors themselves in the terms familiar to ecologists, terms like flows of energy and materials, exhaustible resources, and waste. This language is the language of scientists and of some ecological movements (for instance, part of the German Greens), but it is certainly not the language used in history; nor is it used at present by other and perhaps unknown ecological movements which are trying to keep natural resources out of the generalized market system and which have defended an ecological economy in opposition to a consumption economy.

To the extent that the generalized market undervalues environmental costs and other so-called externalities, such social movements which try to keep resources out of the market are also, at the same time, ecological movements. This view is developing in India, mainly through Ramachandra Guha, who has written the history of the struggle for communal access to forests from the time of the British Raj to the Chipko movement.10 It is also developing in Mexico, through authors such as Victor Manuel Toledo and Enrique Leff. The new ecological history is not divorced from the history of socioeconomic conflicts, and it considers some social movements as agencies that bring certain ecological costs into the open.

The view that social movements are able to bring some unacknowledged costs to the market — "internalize the externalities" — also carries implications for an ecological definition of "unequal exchange." To give a Mexican example: social movements could develop in favour of restricting exports of oil and natural gas and increasing their price, because exhaustible resources with an immeasurably long production time are

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6 W. Vernadsky, La Geochimie, Paris; Felix Alean, 1924, editor's translation.
8 For a good example of the latter, see Ramachandra Guha and Mahady Gadgil, "State Forestry
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9 J. Martinez-Alier and Klaus Schüppmann, op.cit.
presently being exchanged for imported products produced in much shorter periods.

As regards the metropolitan economies, the traditional Marxian view is that there is a contradiction between the overproduction of capital and the deficiency in buying power of the exploited domestic working class or the exploited external economies. In ecological Marxism, one would focus not on the overproduction of capital but on the impairment or destruction of the conditions for an expanded reproduction of capital.  

At first sight, this could be related to the view in classical economics that the economy would stagnate because of decreasing agricultural yields in the extensive margin (new lands) and intensive margin (more inputs per unit of land). In fact, Marxist economics, to the extent that it dealt with natural resources, did take such a Ricardian view. Thus in the 1970s it was argued that the increase in the price of oil could be analyzed in terms similar to the increase in prices required in order to cover costs in marginal land in the Ricardian theory of differential rent, and that the resulting increase in rents relative to profits would alter the pattern between consumption and savings (and investment) so as to slow down the accumulation of capital. However, oil prices came down in the 1980s, and nevertheless there was less oil left in nature in the 1980s than in the 1970s. The point is that the price of agricultural produce in marginal land must cover production costs, while the price of an exhaustible resource must simply cover the cost of extraction at the margin. Oil is neither “produced” nor “reproduced” but is rather destroyed, and its rate of extraction is infinitely quicker than its geological production time.

Marx did not believe in decreasing returns in agriculture, because he saw with his own eyes in Britain that production increased despite a decrease in the number of agriculturalists. Although he was unaware of the chemical requirements for agricultural production, he quoted favourably Liebig’s argument that small-scale agriculture was more conducive to the recycling of nutrients. Marx did not discuss whether agricultural prices should only pay current production costs but should also secure the long-term fertility of the land.

In any case, as with fossil fuels, the “reproduction” of soil fertility is clearly not a matter of prices being high enough. If, in Marxian economics, ecological values would need to be transformed into increased prices in order to have a negative influence on capital accumulation, then the ecological critique is also valid against such ecological Marxism, precisely because social costs and the needs of future generations are not reflected in prices. The entropic or destructive character of the economy implies ecological costs in the form of depletion of resources and pollution, costs which remain external to the market. They are brought to the open only when they become the objective of an ecological movement.

Allocations Without Transactions

Since the economy is entropic, there is an exhaustion of resources and a production of waste, and the ecological critique of economics questions the ability of the market to accurately value such effects. Here, the fact that exhaustion of resources is more a problem for the future whereas pollution is a problem for both present and future generations helps to explain why downstream environmental effects are more easily acknowledged than upstream scarcities. The ecological critique points out that because of the time dimension, the economy involves allocations of waste and of diminished resources to future generations without such allocations arising from any transactions with them. Therefore, the economy cannot be explained on the basis of individual choices and preferences. Methodological individualism encounters the insuperable ontological difficulty of coping with future generations. Because of this, ecological economics is closely linked to institutionalist economics, and it is a mortal enemy of mainstream economics.

Is it also an enemy of socialist economics? Since those not yet born cannot participate in a market that ignores future external costs such as ecological damage, environmental concerns and reliance on the market are mutually antithetical. Therefore, one could have expected ecological issues to figure widely in the debates on economic planning in the Central European context of the late 19th century through the 1930s. However, ecological discussion was weak in such socialist circles because of the lack of an ecological Marxism (and also because of the absence of an ecological anarchism). Only a few authors wrote about a collectivized economy with

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13 Martinez-Alier and Schlüpmann, op. cit., chapter 11.
ecological considerations in mind: Popper-Lynkeus (1838-1921),
14 Ballod-Atlanticus (1864-1933),
15 Otto Neurath (1882-1945),
16 and William Kapp (1910-1976). As much as I would like to add Kropotkin to this list, I do not think Kropotkin had an ecological view of the economy. For instance, Popper-Lynkeus pointed out that Kropotkin's program of universal greenhouse agriculture forgot to reckon with energy inputs.

An early participant in the debate on the economics of socialism was the analytical philosopher Otto Neurath. Inspired by Popper-Lynkeus and Ballod-Atlanticus, Neurath was aware that the market could not give values to intergenerational effects. In his writings on a socialist economy beginning in 1919, he put forward the following example: two capitalist factories achieving the same production, one with two hundred workers and using one hundred tons of coal, the second one with three hundred workers but using only forty tons of coal, would compete in the market, and the one using a more "economic" process would achieve an advantage.

Similarly, in a socialist economics, in order to compare two economic plans, both of them achieving the same result, one using less coal and more human labour, the other using more coal and less human labour, a present value must be given to the future needs for coal. A decision must therefore be made not only on a rate of discount and on the time horizon but also on the evolution of technology (use of solar energy, use of water power, use of nuclear power, to which Neurath could have added weights for global warming, acid rain, and radioactive pollution). Because of this heterogeneity, it is impossible to reach a decision on which plan to implement based on a common unit of measurement. Elements of the economy are not commensurable, hence the need for a Naturrechnung.

One can see why Neurath became one of Hayek's "bêtes noires." In fact, Neurath managed to antagonize not only liberals but also moderate social democrats (because he was too radical and not pragmatic enough), as well as official communists (because he did not worship the Soviet experiment). Thus he was said to think "auf so primitive chiliasitische Weise that he was im Utopismus stecken geblieben." 18

As will be recalled, Oskar Lange's ingenious "market socialism" solution to the objections of Weber, von Mises, and Hayek did not include a discussion of the intergenerational allocation of exhaustible resources. (This is a different matter from discussing whether coal and oil should be priced according to the marginal cost of extraction instead of the average cost, as if this would ensure an optimal intergenerational allocation). Maurice Dobb's contribution to the debate emphasized growth over the allocation of resources. Both under capitalism and under socialism, the assumption of growth allows the discounting of future effects to negligible present values without discrimination against future generations. However, ecological economics questions the assumption of growth, and indeed it questions the very definitions of national income accounting.

Otto Neurath's concept of a Naturrechnung was developed because he realized that from an ecological point of view, elements in the economy become incommensurable. Neurath's idea was received by market economists as could be predicted: Hayek wrote that Neurath's proposal — that all calculations of the central planning authorities should and could be carried out in natura — showed that Neurath was quite oblivious of the insuperable difficulties which the absence of value calculations would put in the way of any rational economic use of the resources. 19 Hayek, on his part, in common with almost all participants in the debate on economic rationality under socialism (on both sides of the divide), was quite oblivious to the problems of resource depletion and pollution. Hayek's glorification of the market principle and of individualism led him to dismiss authors who developed a critique of economics from an ecological point of view — authors such as Frederick Soddy, Lancelot Hogben, and


18 "in such a primitive millenarian manner that he remains stuck in utopianism." From Felix Weil's review of Otto Neurath (1929), in Archiv für Geschichte des Sozialismus, edited by Carl Grünberg, Volume XII, 1926, p. 457. This was also reprinted by Syndikat, Graz, in 1979.

Lewis Mumford as well as Neurath — as totalitarian “social engineers” and “neo-saint-simonians.”

Otto Neurath was not only an economist, an active radical in the revolution in Munich in 1919, and a writer in praise of scientific utopias, but he was also a major analytical philosopher of the Vienna circle, the manifesto of which he wrote himself. (There are lists of Neurath’s writings on socialist economics in Weissel, Stadler, and Belke.) Neurath proposed the drawing up of many “scientific utopias,” such as those of Popper-Lynkeus and Ballad-Atlanticus, from which concrete plans for a socialized economy could be chosen.

**Economic Incommensurability**

One of the major polemics of our age has been reopened by pointing out that the market economy by itself cannot provide a guide for the allocation of scarce resources and of waste. Many feel a nostalgia for the freedom of the market when confronted with the prospect of a bureaucracy with the technocratic secrets of ecological and/or economic planning. However, it has long been recognized that the market economy cannot deal with the externalities arising from the fact that localized human actions lead to irreversible ecological damage.

Some externalities are novel in the sense that they have not been socially acknowledged heretofore, but they are not new in a scientific sense. (Witness today’s German usage of Treibhauseffekt, retranslated from greenhouse effect, instead of the original and excellent German word Gashauswirkung). The gradual exhaustion of some fossil fuels caused by the demand in a few countries, species extinction because of tropical deforestation, acid rain, the CO₂ build-up in the atmosphere and its effects on climate change, accidents in nuclear power plants and the absence of a technical solution for the disposal of radioactive waste — all such ecological impacts were discussed at least 50 years ago, and some, one hundred years ago. Lack of awareness of them is “socially constructed ignorance.”

Other environmental effects have been genuinely surprising. For instance, the effects of CFCs on the ozone layer were unknown until the 1970s. Similarly, the awareness that a small nuclear war would be followed by a terrible “nuclear winter” and the alarm at the possible ecological effects of genetically engineered organisms, are not old. Whether noticed and ignored long ago or only recognized a few years ago, there is much uncertainty about such effects, at least with respect to their speed and to countervailing technical solutions.

Economists are unable to put a present value on such effects, duly discounted (at which rate?), and weighed by the (unknown) probability of occurrence. Let us see two examples, the increased greenhouse effect and nuclear power.

Svante Arrhenius explained in his textbook on global ecology that the Gashauswirkung which helped to keep the earth warm would increase with the increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and that in northern latitudes this was to be welcomed. In 1937 it was estimated that fuel combustion had added 150,000 million tons of carbon dioxide to the air in the preceding 50 years, three quarters of which had remained in the atmosphere. The rate of increase in mean temperature was estimated at only 0.005 degrees centigrade per year: “the combustion of fossil fuel...is likely to prove beneficial to mankind in several ways, besides the provision of heat and power. For instance, the above-mentioned small increase of mean temperature would be important at the northern margin of cultivation.” The intellectual history of climatic change up to the scare during the summer of 1988 in the USA will perhaps show that some scientists soon took a pessimistic view, but in general Callendar’s views prevailed. He was, by his own description, a steam technologist for the British Electrical and Allied Industries Research Association. His 1938 paper was received and discussed amiable by the Royal Meteorological Society of Great Britain, whose members questioned his statistics but not the view that increased carbon dioxide would be a positive externality.


Conventional environmental economics, as a branch of mainstream economics, is often useless for environmental management, because the concept of "externalities" merely reveals the inability to value uncertain, socially unknown, or unacknowledged effects, whether of depletion or pollution. Thus the global warming scare is nowadays used in favour of nuclear power, but the economics of nuclear power also provide good examples of externalities that cannot be valued: present values must be given to the costs of dismantling power stations in a few decades and to the costs of keeping radioactive waste under control for thousands of years (or to the damage from radioactive wastes), and such values will depend on the rate of discount chosen.

Further, there are possible by-products of nuclear power, such as plutonium, which we do not know whether to classify as positive or negative externalities, let alone attribute a monetary present value to them. Since the plutonium produced as a by-product of a civil nuclear program may have a military use, it can be given a positive value, thus "improving" the economics of nuclear power. A "plutonium credit" was in fact factored into the accounts of the initial British nuclear power stations. However, plutonium might come to be seen in future as a negative externality. Frederick Soddy, who was a well-qualified nuclear scientist, warned against the civilian uses of nuclear energy in 1947 because of "the virtual impossibility of preventing the use of non-fission products of the pile, such as plutonium, for war purposes". However, it was not until the 1970s that the link between the civil and military uses of nuclear energy became a public issue.

Positional Goods and "Fordism" in the Periphery

Fred Hirsch's concept of "positional goods" in his influential book "Social Limits to Growth" is related to that of externalities. It will be discussed here in an ecological context, although Hirsch himself dismissed an ecological approach while trying to explain the persistence of strong distributive conflicts in high-income countries. (The book's title was a polemical one against the sudden fashion for "ecological limits to growth" following the oil price increase in 1973). Hirsch argued that as wages rose in proportion to productivity, mass consumption goods produced by mass production methods became available to everybody (in a "Fordist" pattern, to use the terminology of another school of political economy).

Now in Western countries, despite the growth of consumption, there remains dissatisfaction, and one of its roots, according to Hirsch, is precisely the "positional" character of some goods and services. Veblen's conspicuous consumption comprises one class of positional goods, the exclusive goods bought by the snobs, but Hirsch's concept goes beyond this. The satisfactions drawn from positional goods impose social costs. His examples are as follows: if everybody has a car, or if everybody strives after a good education which qualifies him or her for a job at a good wage, or if everybody has a country cottage or a yacht, the satisfaction of these wants remains unfulfilled because of traffic congestion and lack of clean air, or because there are not enough jobs for all qualified people, or because the agglomeration of country cottages and yachts makes them unattractive. Hirsch's emphasis is more on the congestion of European cities, roads, and beaches than on the exhaustion of resources or on world pollution effects.

According to Hirsch, the "material economy" is defined as "output amenable to continued increases in productivity per unit of labour input," whereas the "positional economy" cannot grow without limit because of increasing social costs. However, from the ecological point of view it is apparent — and it should have already been apparent in 1976 — that a material economy is also a positional economy which shifts costs to future generations. This is so because the increase in productivity per unit of labour, which in some parts of the world has allowed the generalization of so-called "democratic wealth" in the form of mass consumption goods, has been partly achieved at the expense of exhaustion of resources and pollution of the environment. That is, unless the economy does not use up energy and materials and does not produce waste, certain forms of wealth are causes of poverty, either now or later.

However, in Hirsch's view the limits to growth are social, not ecological, so that he makes such statements as: "An acre of land used for the satisfaction of hunger can, in principle, be expanded two, ten, or a thousand-fold by technological advances..." By contrast, an acre of land used as a pleasure

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garden for the enjoyment of a single family can never rise above its initial productivity in that use. While the second part of this statement is true, the first part is metaphysical since Hirsch provides no analysis of the meaning of “technological advances” in terms of the flow of energy and materials in the economy. We can note that modern agriculture has a low ratio of output to fossil fuel input.

Therefore, the relevance of Hirsch’s concept of “positional goods” is greater than he himself supposed. For instance, a world with a stable population of ten billion people and a North Atlantic car density would have about four billion cars. This is ten times the present number of cars in the world. A pattern of industrial development without cars would be a novelty in the second half of the 20th century: the economies of the successful newly industrialized countries (Italy, Japan, Spain, South Korea) were or are still led by the car sector. Mexico, Brazil, Eastern Europe, the USSR, India, and even China would like to follow suit. Suitable information on the energy and materials side of automobile production and consumption — which was certainly available by 1975! — would have led Hirsch to think not only of traffic jams. Cars will not become universal mass consumption goods, partly because of their thirst for fossil fuels and partly because of their environmental impact in terms of CO₂ and nitrogen oxides.

Fordism in the periphery will be in any case Fordism without Fords. It may even be Fordism without meat — at least not with a North Atlantic meat consumption of over 50 kg per person per year. Distributional conflicts cannot be solved in the world by a universal Fordist pattern of economic growth, therefore, not only because of the social limits emphasized by Hirsch but also because of ecological limits. Here as always, the technological optimists may use the fact that the future is uncertain in order to argue against an ecological orientation of economic policy. To take a prominent example, it is simply not known whether a technology based on photovoltaics (with sun energy) and hydrogen as fuel (taken from water by electrolysis) will soon become available.31

In the meantime, Fordism is not a realistic prospect for the periphery of the industrialized world, where in fact most people live. It is a reality in the metropolitan countries only because there is no competition for oil coming from the poorer peripheral countries, where people lack even the oil they need (as kerosene or butane gas) to substitute for scarce cooking fuelwood. Today’s cars not only damage the present and future environment, they also aggravate the “other energy crisis,” the lack of fuelwood.

International Eco-Managerialism

Although my main point up till now has been that neither the market nor a planned economy by itself can deal with externalities, in this section I shall argue against a purely ecological approach. Policy prescriptions based on ecological analysis make sense only if concrete social contexts are taken for granted; thus policies cannot be more rational than such social contexts themselves. Humankind’s ability to maintain enormous differences in the non-essential consumption of energy and material resources among people, between States and inside each State, requires distinctive human institutions. Because of the lack of genetic instructions for the consumption of energy and material resources outside the human body, and because of the peculiar political, social, and territorial arrangements made by humans, human ecology is different from the ecology of other animals. It is a type of study which cannot be reduced to the natural sciences.

I shall use, as an example, the notion of “carrying capacity.” Carrying capacity refers to the maximum population of a given species which can be supported indefinitely in a given territory without a degradation of the resource base that would diminish the maximum population in the future. Now, however, what does a “given territory” mean? The territorial distribution of the human population is something which political scientists rather than ecologists have to explain.

The right to choose one’s dwelling place in the world remains the most elusive of human rights. Member states of the new “fortress Europe” (or perhaps, “lifeboat Europe”) require visas of all Africans and Latin Americans. Often, in European countries, barriers to immigration are not seen as the consequences of differing standards of living but as the consequences of population pressure on the resources of poor countries. Thus social inequalities are explained away biologically. Nevertheless, when many European countries were countries of emigration, not so long ago, their

30 Hirsch, op. cit., p. 20
population densities were lower than today. Migration, then, is usually the result of "pull" factors. Further, in many cases the carrying capacity can be increased, if not from domestic resources then by energy and material subsidies from outside. Between political States, frontier police stop migrants who come from territories where they are not necessarily starving, but where there is a comparatively low level of consumption of energy and materials. States, frontiers, and policemen are all products of historical social conflicts. Ecologists are unable to explain the territorial-political distribution of the present human population using ecological methods alone. Sometimes, when they take human populations as a given, they preach social-Darwinism, as in Hardin's "lifeboat ethics."

The notion of the "degradation of the resource base," another important element in the definition of carrying capacity, is also problematic. Economists claim that the use of resources, even if they are not produced but merely extracted, is not necessarily economic degradation because, before they are exhausted, they will be substituted by new resources. Economists also point out that although there is no guarantee of such substitution, such resources should be used because economic "growth" makes future consumption at the margin less valuable than today's consumption. However, national income accounting disregards the entropic or destructive character of the economy; for instance, there is no provision for amortization of exhaustible resources destroyed in the economy. "Growth" is defined inside the closed language of economics.

Nevertheless, without denying the shortcomings of economics, a so-called ecological rationality is not a better basis for policy than the rationality of the market, because ecology cannot evade any more than economics the moral issues of giving present values to future effects and of adjudicating distributional conflicts today.

Ecologists and environmental scientists in general are asked to determine standards for human life rather than to pinpoint trade-offs, for example, "safe" doses of radiation, "safe" doses of pesticides, tolerable "CO2 budgets," and even optimum densities of population, at least in poor countries. Scientists are also asked to deliver new materials and new genetically engineered plants and animals, all with no nasty environmental effects. But scientists are uncertain about such things, and even if they knew for sure, they have no methodology for obtaining a common standard of measurement to guide the trade-offs which are really in question. That is, even if reliable scientific information were available, a purely science-based policy from the top down would be impossible, because good ecological data are not a guide to decisions on distribution between different social groups and generations.

Who should set the environmental-economic agenda? The governments of particular States, the EC Commission, the World Health Organization, Greenpeace, the IMF and the World Bank, the Chipko movement, the German Greens, WISE — all attempt to direct the debate, fought with unequal means and unequal opportunities, in order to set the environmental policy agenda of the world and to determine which are the important issues. This fight is not yet so much about decisions as about inclusions and exclusions of topics.

The temptations of international eco-managerialism are strong: Harich's nightmare of "Babelf and the Club of Rome," or, in the opposite direction, an "IMF of Ecology." Some try to escape this by praising the market, some by imagining small-scale eco-regionalist refuges, little "ecotopian" communes presumably protected from large-scale immigration by an armed border patrol. All these efforts fail to address the important questions of global ecology. The existence of an egalitarian ecological movement in the South is ignored in the fierce struggle for the world environmental agenda, from which the rich exclude issues such as their disproportionate contribution to radioactive pollution and to fossil fuel exhaustion, and where the right to migrate from poor to rich countries is never mentioned.

Scientific Progress and Technological Pessimism

Scientific global ecology is an insecure base for policies from above, but this does not stop scientists (and North Atlantic politicians) from telling other people what to do. One result is that some grassroots ecologists, mistrustful of unfounded and prepotent scientific advice, aware also of the deplorable ecological and social consequences of some technologies, turn against science. They become holy and holistic, lost in the mists of irrationality, since they no longer possess, as a counterweight, a peasant or tribal understanding of nature.

Anti-scientific ecological activists mistake science and technology. Reasonable doubts on whether some technologies really mean progress become silly doubts on whether science is the right way to pursue knowledge. In fact, ecological knowledge cannot be but scientific knowledge. Members of other political persuasions, so keen on the scientific-technical revolution a few years ago, also confused scientific progress (the advance in scientific knowledge, which undoubtedly takes place) with technical progress.

The progress of science has often shown technologies to be impossible or noxious. Some examples: ecological worries about scarcity and ill allocation of energy would be stupid if suitable perpetual motion machines became available. Scientific progress, in the form of the laws of thermodynamics, showed them to be an illusion. Another example: although nuclear technology grew out of a marriage of science and politics, science shows why radioactive waste is dangerous, and why safe storage is not possible. More recently, science has provided a critique of current agricultural practices in the overdeveloped countries, explaining why organic farming is superior in terms of fossil fuel energy efficiency and also in terms of pollution effects.

Science not only provides the data to denounce some technologies as impossible or dangerous or wasteful, it also concludes that, because of incomplete data and complex interactions, science itself cannot dispel uncertainties about some global environmental effects. The ozone layer issue is probably exceptional in that scientific data might be the base for consensual policies from above. In contrast, the valuation of the greenhouse effect is embedded in uncertainties and distributional conflicts.

The pathetic enthusiasm for the “cold fusion” titillation in the mass media in the spring of 1989, including the cool The Economist, shows that people who use more than their equal share of available energy are ready to believe in today’s equivalent of the perpetual motion machine. The priests of such quasi-religious technological optimism are often scientists in search of money. Technological optimism prevents rational discussion on the intergenerational and contemporary allocation of resources. I believe that the best defence against irrational technological optimism is science itself. Thus, Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring was, in 1962, a starting point for the scientific critique of modern agricultural technologies.

Conclusion

The ecological critique of economics centres on the issue of the unknown preferences of future generations and their inability to come to today’s market, and therefore on the arbitrariness of the values given at present to exhaustible resources or to external effects to be felt later. The ecological critique also stems from the uncertainty about the workings of environmental systems which prevents the analysis of externalities, those costs and benefits which do not enter into market transactions. Many externalities are perhaps still unknown, and for some externalities about which we do know, we do not even know whether they are positive or negative. Certainly we are unable to give to them a monetary present value. As Kapp has written, “It is important to keep in mind that we are dealing with essentially heterogeneous magnitudes and quantities for which there can be no common denominator... a commensurability which simply does not exist.” Such warnings have been repressed, such critiques unheeded.

Strong rational arguments have been brought to bear against so-called economic rationality, because externalities escape economic calculus. Likewise, they have also been brought against ecological managerialism. Often science cannot give convincing estimates on ecological questions, and even when data prove some ecological fact overwhelmingly, science by itself cannot be the base for policies from above, because science cannot guide the trade-offs implied by the intragenerational and intergenerational allocations of resources and waste.

Thus the question “are policies to be based on economics or rather on the science of ecology?” is not the relevant question. As we have seen, neither economics nor ecology can provide a policy. Rather, the question is, should issues of ecological-economic policy, which are also issues of distribution, be decided (a) by the market, without equal purchasing power and without the presence of future generations, or (b) by policies from above, based on technocratic economics or technocratic ecology, or (c) by a politics of universal, and much more equal, participation?

This third option would be helped by drawing up many different scenarios, well-informed by science and including a sober assessment of their technological prospects, and with explicit acknowledgement of future generations: a collection of concrete, ecological, scientific utopias in the line of Popper-Lynkeus, Ballod-Atlanticus, and Otto Neurath. Many of these concrete utopias should come from the impoverished sectors of the world's population.

Which territorial-political units should decide how we should live, how we should treat fellow humans, how we should treat future generations? The proper units of decision are regional units, or States, or global units? The experience since 1945 shows that international agreements among representatives of States, or blocs of States, merely reproduce existing inequalities. Could plenary-meeting eco-regionalism and eco-globalism be combined? Plenary-meeting eco-globalism is difficult to implement, and, even then, it would not guarantee a proper regard for future generations, while eco-regionalism leaves aside current inequalities in the distribution of resources and population.

An ecological socialism is already found in some unacknowledged social movements of the past and present. Ecological socialism is defined not by State ownership of the means of production, but by equality, internationalism, and communal control over the means of production. It is still growing as an ideology and as a political movement, much reinforced by the new ecological awareness, and its roots will be among the poor. It will rely in its economics neither on the market nor on central planning, because it will be conscious of the fact that economic incommensurability places economic decisions openly in the political sphere.

In the centrally planned economies, the market as an allocator of resources and as a provider of incentives to promote the more efficient use of resources has been absent. Thus, the Eastern European economies have had a greater energy intensity per unit of output than the Western European economies.

It is not so often emphasized nowadays that in market economies, some unvalued externalities are more than sporadic cases of market failure; rather they are serious threats to the sustainability of the economy and indeed, perhaps to the survival of humankind. In market economies within democratic capitalism, an antidote to some externalities is their internalization through the agency of social movements. In contrast, in centrally planned economies with single-party dictatorships, no oppor-
tunity is given to social movements to express themselves. Thus in Cuba today, no antinuclear movement militates against the nuclear power station near Cienfuegos.

Against the glorification of the market, and also against an ecological managerialism from the top down, Enrique Left, 34 Michael Redclift, 35 and James O'Connor 36 have pointed out that ecological movements increase the monetary costs felt by capitalists and raise them to nearer their true social costs. This is certainly a persuasive argument for democratic planning. However, when externalities are felt only in the future or are very uncertain, even social movements cannot give to future generations the voice that a market economy or a centrally planned economy denies to them.

34 Enrique Left, op. cit., 1986.
MAKING HISTORY: AN INTERVIEW WITH E.P. THOMPSON
Interviewed by Ben Webb

QUESTION: I would like to begin with some questions about the meaning and the impact of the peace movement in the 1980s, not only as an instrument in changing politics, that is low politics changing high politics, but as a social phenomenon.

THOMPSON: I think that during the 1980s, there was a growing emphasis on the very heavy statism which was developing, always under camouflage. We found the evolution towards Thatcherism was taking place within the State. Not only within the political parties. And then the rising profile of the Cold War which came at that moment. People put the two things together; they saw that civil liberties and rights were not independent of the international situation, they were two necessary and adjacent pieces of the jigsaw. That was very important at the start of the peace movement. The people one had seen around civil rights protests were also among the first to become active in the revived peace movement.

I think the other thing that was very interesting about the peace movement is that in a sense it was a pre-modern movement — it was a movement founded on a pre-modern infrastructure. For a long time we had been told that you could not do anything — that the media, the new media in particular, had got people's minds wrapped up and yet the peace movement used all the old-fashioned, traditional methods of marching, village halls, street-corner campaigning, as it were, and succeeded in getting a response. Now, maybe we were under the illusion that this would go on. Sooner or later, they figured out how to handle it. In fact, it is a fascinating story how they did handle it: first of all, they totally ignored it, treating us as if we were on another planet; then the movement got so big that they had to admit it was there. And, of course, they had to make the image one that they could live with.

I had a very interesting discussion once, in an unnamed television studio, where they had recently been talking to Michael Heseltine [former Defence Secretary in Margaret Thatcher's government] about his recollection of these movements. Heseltine was asked: "How did you manage to beat the peace movement in the early 80s?" He said: "By changing the questions." So long as the questions were about cruise missiles, the peace movement always won; if the questions changed to "Do you want to be totally undefended?" or "Do you want to go unilateral?", then the ground shifted. The media managers, specifically the Tory managers of the media, created this bogey of unilateralism, and the Labour Party capitulated by separating it totally from foreign policy and any constructive policy that an alternative government could bring in.

There had been a peace movement in Britain for a long time already. What was the new element, or ingredient, in the 1980s? I am thinking particularly of END [European Nuclear Disarmament] here.

If we are speaking of END, the discussions that led up to its founding started at the very end of 1979, and apart from being a more clearly internationalist platform than what CND [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament] had become — it had had moments of this before, particularly around Greece, but nothing like a deliberately European program — it decided to distinguish itself very sharply from World Peace Council operations. That was very explicit; we did not want to be used as an accomplice of official Soviet foreign policy. We were putting forward independent demands. One of the central demands was that we should start to behave as citizens of a post-Cold War world before it came. In that sense, we decided to blaspheme against the holiest notions of the Cold War State, that is the primacy of security.
Yet END was a tendency within the peace movement, but it was also a part of the ongoing debate on the British left. It was part of a lineage...

It had a long inheritance. My own personal association with this particular “line” was pre-CND. It stemmed from the impact of the 1956 events in the world communist movement — the Hungarian insurrection and so on. There was an attempt to join hands with the people who have now triumphed — or seemed to be triumphing in 1989. We knew that these people were there, and we had confidence that they would become stronger, and therefore the anti-war left in the West could join hands with a dissident democratic movement in the Soviet Union and the East. And this, in a sense, would bridge the Cold War politically. The first attempts to do this were very, very difficult, because the dissidents in the East had got themselves into such a mirror view of the world, such a knee-jerk anti-Sovietism, that they could not see any way out. And they were so pro-American, it was breathtaking sometimes.

So yes, “peace” was for a long time a very dirty word in Eastern Europe. I think of an essay by Vaclav Havel, in which he describes the word as lobotomizing, kitsch, and crypto-totalitarian. In something he wrote or said in 1990, he expressed some second thoughts, but there was that view.

At its most simple, there was a sort of ideological block. You could be for peace, and keep silent about democracy, about freedom, or you could be for freedom, and in fact be allowing this huge war engine, this double war engine, to build up without any serious opposition. You had to be either for peace or for freedom. I know that is a simplification; I know there were middle voices — but there were no middle movements, movements that were looking for a third way, though there had been before.

I think that is quite clearly what we were trying to establish. Remember that it was all based upon earlier political work — the Russell Foundation had quite a large network of people in Europe and America to build on. And there was an unusual political thirst for this sort of political lead, among people in this country especially. They were fed up with the old typologies. They were suspicious of being made into the followers of a pro-Soviet peace campaign, but they wanted a peace campaign. Therefore, I think we found the right formula.

There was an analysis lying behind the attempt to put a hyphen between peace and democracy, or a plus sign. As far as I understand it, there was thought to be a compatibility, in the beginning, between socialist forces East and West; by the mid-80s, this had become a compatibility of democratic forces. The old idea that out of this encounter could come some new synthesis — that seems to have come to nought with the events subsequent to 1989. Was the analysis flawed all along?

I think that the analysis, when it was expressed optimistically, not to say euphorically, underestimated certain things. We never foresaw the planeloads of German businessmen going over with candy in their hands, or the lack of preparation among socialists in the West. Neither East nor West was prepared to understand the sort of moment of consciousness that would arise. There was a sense in the West that, oh yes, capitalism has won the Cold War; there was a sense in the East that what they wanted was an uncurbed market economy. That was quite unexpected. I would say, however, that it is a rather short-term view. I think we have to give it a good five years before we see how it works out. Here are societies which did not have formal democratic practices, and which now are getting some rude shocks. The consequences for those countries, like Poland, which are attempting to make a bolt toward the market economy, are only now starting to show. People will need to revive forms of grassroots struggle that are in many senses traditional.

Your thesis of extremism, laid out in your New Left Review article of 1981 or 1982, has received some rather literal-minded criticism.

Well, I had a good bit of my tongue in my cheek talking of “extremism” as a mode of production, because New Left Review was a rather pious Marxist journal, and the only way to get them to listen to the formulation was to put it in these Marxist terms. I was always surprised that of the two things I wrote at that time, one of them, “Extremism” — because it was put in this pat Marxist formulation — was taken very seriously. The other one, “Beyond the Cold War,” was not read at all, really. They need to be read together. “Extremism” sets out a scenario of mutual exacerbation of the Cold War. “Beyond the Cold War” suggests that there might be another resolution, and sketches out what it might be. It can be read partly as a prospectus of what happened in 1989.

I said that the overwhelming characteristic of the second Cold War is that it is an ideological structure, and if it was destroyed, it would happen
very quickly, and it would give rise to a very open situation. We would not really know how it would develop, except that it would develop very fast, and we would have no maps to tell us where we were going. And that is exactly where we are now.

The matter came up last year with an exchange, again in New Left Review (No. 180), with Professor Fred Halliday. He wrote an article saying very firmly that what had happened in Eastern Europe was a triumph of the West, of Western capitalism. The end of the Cold War had no doubt been fueled by many legitimate resistances to Brezhnevism, but the ultimate result was the loss of all the traditional left positions and regenerated capitalism.

I challenged this view (New Left Review, No. 182). First of all, I said that it was too soon to tell what the long-term results of the events in the East would be. Secondly, I challenged it on the grounds that Halliday was sharing the basic Cold War assumption that there was no third way, or for that matter fourth, fifth, or sixth ways. No alternatives. You had to have either a distorted form of socialism or the triumph of capitalism. I was suggesting that this whole mode of thought was now passed by, and that in a sense what we were hoping to see was the superecession of the post-communist societies, and that we were now in a new and open space where it was reasonable to try to implement alternative combinations of economic relations and institutional forms. These have yet to be imagined, and one should effect no closure.

Halliday was effecting this closure by saying, "Right, socialism failed. Now we can go back into the framework of capitalism." But I feel that the great disaster of 1989, which I have said in several different places [including Tallinn, Estonia, addressing the 9th ENL convention], was the failure of response in the West. The peace movement has to question itself about this, too. I envisaged the possibility that the Cold War could, as it were, just exhaust itself, that the structures would collapse. But I thought that if it did, it would happen on both sides, that it would be a mutual collapse of Cold War positions, an opportunity for which arose in the East last year. And the response from the West was just pitiful — pitiful from Western statesmen and politicians, while the peace movement seemed to be looking for a leadership that it did not get.

In my view, it is absolutely outrageous that the Warsaw Pact should be dissolved and NATO should continue. But what was quite extraordinary was that when Germany was reunited, the united Germany came out of the Warsaw Pact but stayed in NATO. At first, when this was proposed, I thought it was a Cold War gambit which could not possibly succeed. Perhaps we did not take it seriously enough. When it did take place, we could not believe that the Soviet Union would accept it.

And I think that is one reason why, even though members of the peace movement were not exactly pro-Soviet, they took the position that, well, if the Soviet Union does not object to having East Germany in NATO, then we will not. I think it is quite dangerous for the future, as long as that old structure is one-sidedly weakened, with the other side effectively strengthened. It gives wonderful ideological propaganda to the Soviet regime's most conservative internal critics and opponents. I am sure that if they throw out Gorbachev, this is one of the first things the military and their allies will change.

Anyway, the peace movement should have its own policy — not the Soviet Union's policy at second remove. This was the moment — 1989/90 — when we could have dissolved the structures on both sides, and had an all-European security system. We could then have built secure East-West relations. I think the peace movement really has to examine itself about its failure to make an all-European intervention at that time. It is not too late. The machinery exists in the Helsinki system.

Still looking back at the 60s, there was another player in the British debate on defence, disarmament, foreign policy — the Labour Party. The peace movement had an impact there, yet was rolled back in the late 80s. The odd thing about the defence issue in the Labour Party in the 80s, though, is that unilateralism became sort of a symbol or talisman — a part of the armory in the revolt of the ranks against the leadership. Thinking about defence seemed to stop there — "Don't ask me, it's all in the resolution."

Yes, that was manifest in the Labour Party, but the same thing applies to ENL — this cutting-off of defence and foreign policy from each other. So that which was politically the central issue — the Cold War — was always discussed in terms of the number of warheads. A lot of peace movement speakers became really pretty expert in the jargon of so-called defence studies — the throw-weight of this and that. They would mug it all up, and deliver it in speeches; all of us did a bit. It shut off people's minds from the political and foreign policy issues of the Cold War.

Back to the Labour Party. It is just pathetic now. Their main, guiding line is to not in any way offend this mythical, media-created figure of the
average voter. They never make any statement about foreign policy without consulting the Gallup polls first.
Which brings us to the current war. The Labour Party decided very early on that it would stick to “bipartisanship,” and has kept its criticism to incidentals.

I have not heard Labour saying a great deal about the two key things we should be concentrating our minds on — that is two things: giving the people of the Middle East a chance to govern themselves, and resolving the Israeli-Palestinian issue. It is obvious to me that people should not sow illusions, even when they are selling dreams. To suppress the crimes of Saddam is a lack of solidarity with the Iraqis — no, with the Arabs, with the Kuwaiti opposition as well.

One of the most hypocritical things about the operation was to pretend that something democratic was going on in Kuwait. I think that to suppress one part of the truth because the other part is not being told and ought to be told, is always a mistake. And it is a mistake that will come back on us. I would call a spade a spade in the case of Saddam Hussein. And there is an Iraqi opposition, albeit fragmented into as many as 46 oppositions!

So can an END approach, combining peace and democracy, be brought to other theatres?

Yes. And I do not think it should be so difficult. One of the most disabling things is an automatic feeling of guilt and cultural relativism. I find that the people from India and the Africans I respect most are the ones who get very uptight about the sort of cultural relativism that some of the Western left show. They find it condescending to the Third World. When I was in America, I was speaking to an Indian friend, who said, “Edward, don’t you realize that there are more millionaires in India than in the United States?” There are gross inequalities, and there is gross exploitation of and exploitation within the Third World, and there is also gross exploitation of the Third World by the First. If we are not aware of it, and do not take steps to correct it, or if we act as if we deny it, we can stand accused.

I am an old-fashioned rationalist in this sense. One has to have some security of values. I think there has been too much genuflection in the West to every sort of ethnic tradition, so that we go around bowed with guilt for things we never did. In that sense, we show disloyalty to people who are trying to maintain rational principles in the face of extremely reactionary, backward-looking forces in their own countries.

I suppose I grew up in a different tradition, an internationalist tradition. And I am sorry that that has been lost.

Yet that relates to something else. Perhaps it is no accident that this has been lost. Are we living at the end of an era that began in 1914, or rather with the Russian revolution?

Yes, I think we probably are. The lack of confidence, the confusion of objectives, are all signs of the end of an era. If you were to poll people on the left, the consensus would be for a greenish socialism, a greenish democracy. But that is not a program.

I have been suspicious all my life of programs that are worked out in offices or in armchairs and then passed down to the masses. I think one has to look at what people are already doing, and build upon that.

But to add something about the possibilities of a “third way.” If you talk about a third way, in the sense of one, two, and three, you are falling into the same framework and having a teleological notion of history. It is to think that there are no open possibilities. I think there are. But we have not argued enough about this. What are these third, fourth, or fifth ways? Are they slightly greener social democracy, or are they a new way altogether? Those of us who are on the left — and of course not everyone in the peace movement is — ought to put our heads together.

In a more personal vein, how does your work in the peace movement over the years relate to your whole intellectual project? A publisher I spoke to some while back said to me: “All that time that Edward Thompson wasted in the peace movement, when he really should have been working on his book on Blake...” How have the two threads worked for you? Have they been parallel, or twined?

They have been parallel. They have been twined. And yes, my history did get left behind during much of the 80s, until these last few years. I do in my writing put a high value on democratic activity, and the peace movement has been a source of invigoration and pleasure in the sense that one has seen what people can do when they get off their backsides. I hope we do not lose that. On the other hand, I would like to finish a few books before I go around the corner.

I did not pose it as a matter of choice. It has always been a matter of impulse, rather. I thought we were in a very tight corner in 1980. I thought those forces I did sketch in “Exterminism” really do exist and continue to exist. Therefore, one did not really have an alternative.
NORTH AMERICAN GREENS COME OF AGE: STATISM VS. MUNICIPALISM
by Howard Hawkins

1992 may be the year the U.S. Greens emerge as a significant public presence on the American political landscape. Since its initiation in August 1984, the Green movement in the U.S. has been linked primarily through the Green Committees of Correspondence, an organizing network devoted to fostering the formation of community-based Green groups. More than 300 such local Green groups now exist. They encompass every region, state, and ethnic group in the U.S., with each group sharing a commitment to the "four pillars" of Green politics: ecology, peace, social justice, and grassroots democracy.¹

The Greens', fourth national conference held August 15–21, 1991 in Elkins, West Virginia marked a turning point for the U.S. Greens. Some 426 delegates and observers from 40 states, the District of Columbia, and 5 foreign countries attended. When the delegates had concluded their deliberations, the Green Committees of Correspondence, the organizing network, had agreed to a new structure that transformed the movement into a national political organization called, simply, the Greens. With a national action plan for the coming year and elected spokespersons authorized to publicly articulate the views of the Greens, the U.S. Greens will for the first time be attempting to inject their views into national political debate.

What makes this organizational transformation a turning point is that most of the Greens had wanted to take this step years earlier. But the polarization of the Greens around the question of organizational structure, which was also indirectly about municipalist vs. Statist strategies of social change, had kept the Greens stalemated at the national level. Political differences within the U.S. Greens have played themselves out to a large degree over the question of organizational forms ever since the very first meeting that founded the Green Committees of Correspondence in St. Paul, Minnesota in August 1984. The left wing of the Greens (who formalized a Left Green Network in 1989) has advocated confederal forms of organization based on local chapters and mandated and recallable representatives to the state, regional, and national levels of confederation. The right wing of the Greens has advocated a variety of more centralized forms over the years. Going into the Elkins conference, they had organized a faction called the Green Party Organizing Committee (GPOC) which advocated an electoral party that would be separated from the local Green chapters in order to "insulate" (as one GPOC leader had put it) the electoral "party" from the "movement" based in the local chapters.

Different strategies of social change have been behind this organizational debate. On the left there is a municipalist orientation. The municipalists believe that an ecological society can only be built from below. They look to a synergistic combination of direct action and municipally oriented electoral/legislative action to forge new community-based structures of grassroots political and economic democracy that stand outside and opposed to centralized State and corporate structures. They want to contest elections at the municipal level on a program of restructuring municipal governance around citizen assemblies in the neighbourhoods, socializing the economy on a municipal basis, and confederating democratized municipalities as a popular dual power that can initially

¹ The U.S. Greens have elaborated upon the “four pillars” (which were the initial basis of unity for the West German Greens in 1979) with “Ten Key Values” Ecological Wisdom, Grassroots Democracy, Social Justice, Nonviolence, Decentralization, Community-based Economics, Postpatrarchal Values, Respect for Diversity, Personal and Global Responsibility, and Future Focus. While the Ten Key Values serve as the formal principles of unity for the U.S. Greens, U.S. Greens frequently use the “four pillars” as a more succinct way of explaining what the Greens are about.

Howard Hawkins is a member of the Coordinating Committee of the Greens and until recently was the field organizer for the Left Green Network. Long a prominent New England activist, he now lives and works in Syracuse, New York. He lived through much of the history that he describes here. The views in this article are his own and not those of any organization.

resist and ultimately replace the national State and global corporation as the principle power structures in society.

This idea of municipalism — of entering local elections to create a radically new politics based on horizontally federated municipalities — is original both to the libertarian left and to the left in general. Confederal municipalism is not merely a tactic and it is more than a strategy. It is a fundamental program for transforming our society and a utopian vision for a participatory democratic and ecological society.

On the right is a Statist orientation that is hard to distinguish from the top-down electoral reformism of traditional social democracy. The Statists want to run candidates for every office up to president with a view toward electing Greens into and passing reforms through existing State structures.

The significance of the Elkins conference is that it broke through the stalemate between these two views at the national level. At every juncture since the 1984 founding meeting in St. Paul, majorities in the Greens have favoured a confederal organizational structure. But consensus-oriented high-majority decision rules in the national meetings had left the Greens stymied by the minority that wanted more centralized power for a Green leadership. Over time, however, a willingness to take votes in national meetings has grown among the Greens. When discussion reveals that there is no consensus but significant differences, the U.S. Greens now vote in national meetings, although a lingering commitment to consensus reflects itself in the high-majority decision rules, 2/3 or 3/4 on substantive questions. As the Elkins conference ran its course, the GPOC leadership saw that they were a small minority. Rather than risk a vote on competing proposals, they agreed to a compromise proposal that embodied the essential grassroots, participatory, and confederal structures which the left had wanted.

The new structure agreed to at Elkins creates a unified organization in which both electoral and extra-electoral activity will be accountable to a single membership base in the Greens. Members will be organized into local chapters that engage in the whole range of political activity; public education, community organizing, citizen lobbying, street demonstrations, nonviolent direct action, alternative institutions, and independent electoral politics. A non-profit arm, the Green Education Fund, was established to raise and distribute tax-exempt contributions for public education and community-based social and ecological reconstruction. A national electoral arm of the Greens was also established — the Green Party-USA. Its formal legal status is that of a political action committee (PAC). Its functions will be to accredit state Green parties and distribute funds raised from the membership for election campaigns. All three of these legal entities — the Greens, the Green Education Fund, and the Green Party-USA — are accountable to the rank-and-file membership of the Greens, who will elect their leadership bodies and determine their basic policies at annual Green congresses of mandated delegates from the locals.

Whether the Greens should ever run candidates for offices for the national State is a contentious issue, one that divides the municipalists from the Statists most sharply. But both sides agree that the Greens should now lay legal claim to the Green Party label to prevent a well-funded soloist or a small clique from running national candidates, grabbing the Green mantle, and preempting the Green movement's organic development from the grassroots. For the next few years, most electoral activity will remain at the municipal and county level. Some States may run candidates for State office and even national office, but these decisions remain with the Greens in each State. The structure agreed to at Elkins establishes internal democracy in the Greens, but it does not resolve the municipalism/Statism question.

With this structure agreed to by near unanimity at Elkins, for the first time Greens left their national conference energized for joint action rather sobered by the realization that the national level was stalemated. A national press conference was called by the newly elected Coordinating Committee to announce the results of the Elkins conference. It was broadcast in full on the C-SPAN television network and reported on CNN, National Public Radio, Pacifica Radio, the AP wire, and other networks. As a result, the Greens' national office was flooded with inquiries. The potential popular support for a Green political alternative is obvious. But can the Greens realize that potential?

The Green Space in the American Left

The vacuum on the left in the U.S. today is cavernous. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition filled this space as a metaphor and a hope for many activists in the 1980s, but not as an organizational reality. Jackson, in fact, never really wanted a membership organization to which he would have to be accountable. Today, virtually no activists still hold illusions about the Rainbow Coalition becoming an independent political alternative.
Meanwhile, the organizations of the ideological left, always marginal in the U.S., have shrunk to an historic low. And the popular left of oppositional social movements is in the doldrums, dispirited by the growing national chauvinism of the post-Gulf War period, which caps fifteen years of conservative ascendancy in the national political culture.

But the Greens have been growing. The Greens are the only alternative political organization — and the environmental movement generally is the only social movement — that has expanded over the last decade on the left side of the political spectrum. Despite the clear marginalization and defeat of the anti-Gulf War movement which has severely demoralized the peace and anti-intervention movement, the Greens have continued to grow in the wake of the Gulf War. Many of the new Green groups that formed in the spring of 1991 grew out of community antiwar groups that came together in the anti-Gulf War movement and decided that the Green movement would be the best way for them to continue working together on a permanent basis.

The potential for further growth by the Greens in this political vacuum is tremendous. Subjectively, there are broad sectors of American society that would support and participate in a popular movement for basic social change — impoverished ethnic minorities, downwardly mobile former industrial workers, and the broad transclass sectors that have internalized the values and sensibilities of the 1960s movements for peace, ecology, racial and sexual equality, and participatory democracy.

Objectively, there is a crying need for substantive policy alternatives to the basic bipartisan policies of the Democrats and Republicans. Ecological problems worsen with proliferating toxics, trash incinerators, and plans for scores of new-generation coal- and nuclear-fired power plants. Public policies come nowhere near to dealing seriously with ozone depletion, global warming, acid rain, deforestation, soil destruction, water pollution and depletion, and massive species extinctions. Social problems also worsen as two decades of the steady growth of wealth and income inequality and the steady decline of middle-income jobs continues with no end in sight. The result is ever-increasing joblessness, homelessness, crime, and explosive racial polarization.

Renewed militarism is the principal means by which the managers of the American State are trying to cope with social and economic problems. The demise of the Soviet Union and the Cold War rationale for high military expenditures has merely shifted the axis of officially propagated conflict from East/West to North/South. Third-World terrorists and drug lords (both of whom have frequently been former U.S. military clients) have replaced "commies" as the convenient enemy for domestic purposes. But these small powers in the South are merely pawns in the real struggle now with German and Japanese economic power in which U.S. military power is deployed worldwide as the guarantor of U.S. economic power. With a domestic productive structure geared increasingly to speculative capital and the military rather than the production of real goods and services for civilian consumption, the maintenance of the speculative bubble upon which U.S. corporate profits now float is dependent upon military enforcement of U.S. hegemony in the world. U.S. dominance over the rising economic powers of Germany and Japan requires a militarily enforced imperialism that brings client States in the South that are dependent upon U.S. military backing into a U.S.-led bloc that can force Germany and Japan to continue financing U.S. deficits and to limit their penetration of U.S. markets. Military State capitalism remains today as much as ever during the Cold War the means by which U.S. State managers and corporate elites plan to keep their hold on power and privilege. The State managers in the Pentagon today control one third of the fixed capital stock in the U.S. Their annual budget of $300 billion is greater than all U.S. corporate profits combined.

The domestic concomitant of military intervention abroad is growing State centralization and repression at home. This growing authoritarianism involves, among its many manifestations, increasing federal preemption of stricter social and environmental regulations at the state and local levels, federalization of the National Guard (the historical descendant of the locally controlled citizen militias of the American Revolution), further militarization of industrial policy and technological research and development, erosion by Congressional legislation and Supreme Court decisions of civil liberties and the due process protections embodied in the Bill of Rights, harsh mandatory prison sentencing with no chance for parole, and a massive prison building program (one of the only growth industries at present). The U.S. now has more prisoners per capita than any country in the world. More than one fourth of African-American adult men have been incarcerated.

There is striking bipartisanship among Democrats and Republicans on this authoritarian program of austerity at home, imperialism abroad, and lip service for the environment. The Greens’ basic program offers real alternatives to this dismal situation. It rejects not only the present neoliberal path of military Keynesianism as a means of propping up speculative capital, but also Old Left models of social-democratic Keynesianism designed to revive a growth-oriented, high-pollution smokestack economy. Instead, the Greens propose an ecological model of social and ecological reconstruction that is characterized by grassroots political and economic democracy, humanely scaled communities, renewable energy and resources, sustainable technological infrastructures, and generous social guarantees ensuring that everyone’s basic material needs are met.

The Greens’ current national program was adopted at the 1990 Estes Park, Colorado national conference and further developed at the 1991 Elkins conference. Among its ecological demands are the efficient use of solar-based renewable energy sources, a new materials policy based on recyclable non-toxics, and a sustainable organic agriculture. Among its social and economic demands are programs to guarantee full employment and to reduce working hours; to create a “workers’ superfund” to provide income and retraining to workers displaced by bankruptcies, capital flight, military conversion, or technological change; to promote cooperatives and community-owned enterprise; and to socialize on a democratic and decentralized basis a number of key economic sectors, including health care, banking, insurance, housing, energy, transportation, land, and natural resources. On foreign and military policy, the Greens call for unilateral nuclear disarmament, the withdrawal of all U.S. troops stationed abroad, an immediate 95% cut in military spending, and replacement of the standing U.S. armed forces with democratically controlled citizen militias in conjunction with a system of nonviolent social defence. Its political demands call for restructured political institutions based on community assemblies and confederal forms of coordination.

Whether the Greens can popularize this program among a broad public and greatly expand active participation in the movement will depend on whether they can develop creative forms of public action and the organizational competence to follow through effectively. The ineptitude at the national level of the Greens may have been a blessing in disguise in previous years. It gave the grassroots time to take hold in their communities and develop permanent local groups. But now, with the political space on the left so wide open, the time may never be more opportune for the Greens to fill that space and become the framework through which the many alternative single-issue movements and marginalized social groups find a common ground. The first people the Greens will need in making this bid are the many activists who agree politically with the Greens, but have refrained from participating in its formal organization in previous years due to the Greens’ perpetual bickering over structural forms and the consequent lack of an effective national public presence. The Greens hope that now — with a broad grassroots organizational base, a basic program, an action plan, and elected national bodies authorized to articulate the program and organize the actions — they will be able to bring into the Greens many of these activists who have been watching from the sidelines.

Green Origins in the 60’s Left

If the Greens are going to fill the political vacuum on the left in the U.S., they will need to avoid the mistakes of earlier attempts at independent politics by movements that had their origin in the New Left of the 1960s. In many ways, the People’s Party of the early 1970s and the Citizens Party of the early 1980s were unsuccessful attempts to build American parties on the same social and political basis that the European Greens were built.

One of the ironies of the development of Green politics is that many of the elements which came together in the West German Greens, who first drew worldwide attention to the Green movement, were present a decade earlier in the U.S. Indeed, the contemporary environmental movement first took root in the U.S. Going beyond the older conservation movement, which was concerned with protecting wilderness areas from urban/industrial encroachment, the new environmentalism was concerned with the toxic byproducts of industrial production as such. The movement’s arrival was signalled by popular response to Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962 which sounded the alarm over the dangers of pesticides.

The radical implications of industrial toxins for technology and social organization were pursued by Murray Bookchin in *Our Synthetic Environment*, published earlier in 1962. Bookchin warned of the environmental health consequences of food additives, chemicalized agriculture, nuclear

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power, and sprawling industrial conurbations. Anticipating central tenets of the Green movement that was to flower 20 years later, it called for decentralization and a regionalism based on diversified organic agriculture, ecological manufacturing, and solar-based energy systems. Bookchin soon drew out the explicitly anarchist nature of this program in 1964 in his essay "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought." This more socially radical environmentalism took hold in elements of the 60s New Left, but did not really hit its stride until the anti-nuclear direct-action alliances which emerged in the latter half of the 70s.

It was also in the U.S. that the New Left first decisively eclipsed the Old Left. It became strong enough to force the establishment to make concessions on its demands over civil rights and the war in Vietnam. As the breadth of its concerns spread from racial equality to youth and women's liberation, the anarchic sensibilities of the counterculture generalized a challenge to hierarchical domination in all its forms, not only the class exploitation that preoccupied the Old Left.

The New Left was based on new agents of social change: transcendent subjects — blacks, youth, women, and peace, ecology, and community activists — who raised general human interests in opposition to the status quo, not only the particularistic class interests of the proletariat. It based its politics more on direct action than the electoral reformism of social democracy and popular-front communism. It stood outside Cold War allegiances and called for a New Left alternative to both East and West. Participatory democracy and power to the people, rather than a welfare State or a workers' State, were its slogans. These were the types of "new social movements" and qualitative demands that were to form the social base and issues of the Green parties in Europe.

The German Greens: The Power of the New Politics

The German Greens grew directly out of the New Left. Many of its early leading spirits were New Left veterans, among them the two most prominent figures of "the generation of '68" in Western Europe, Rudi Dutschke and Dany Cohn-Bendit. While the U.S. New Left declined in the early 1970s, the German New Left continued to develop through a wide variety of alternative institutions, educational projects, and direct action movements around social and, increasingly, environmental issues.

By the late 1970s, the "extraparliamentary opposition," as the German New Left referred to itself, began to recognize that extraparliamentary action alone had its limits. The 19th-century insurrectionary model of revolution was obviously transcended by the armed might of the modern State. A majoritarian movement and an essentially nonviolent strategy that could disarm and win over the rank and file of the armed forces was now required for fundamental social transformation. Moreover, extraparliamentary action alone tended to engage only subcultures in political action rather than the broad public, thus isolating the radicals and making them vulnerable to the State repression that was growing in the 1970s in West Germany. Extraparliamentary action tended to rise and fall with the life cycles of single-issue struggles, thus failing to sustain and institutionalize the participatory democracy to which the New Left aspired. It was in this context that many New Leftists spearheaded the formation of Green Alternative electoral vehicles for a heterogeneous movement of environmentalists, peace activists, feminists, and community-based "citizen initiative" groups as well as New Left projects and groupings. They were consciously trying to be the party of the movement. The irony is that some U.S. New Leftists had tried the same thing in the late 60s and early 70s in the ill-fated People's Party.

When the German Greens made world headlines in March 1983 by electing 27 deputies to the West German national parliament, New Left radicals the world over took note. Here was an electoral expression of the New Left extraparliamentary opposition, not simply a social-democratic type of professionalized party with environmental and disarmament demands tacked on to an Old Left program and strategy. Hundreds of thousands were marching in the streets in Europe against the new euromissiles being deployed by both East and West, and now they had put some of their own into the legislatures.

Petra Kelly, one of the 27 deputies elected, referred to the Greens in 1983 as the "anti-party party, a new kind of party...The aspirations of the peace and ecology movements should be represented within a political forum, in addition to their expression outside parliament."
Rudolf Bahro, the East German who was imprisoned for writing a left critique of East Bloc “socialism” and who joined the West German Greens when forcibly exiled, wrote in a 1983 election appeal, “We Greens are taking up seats in parliament to give a voice to the pacifist, ecological, and social opposition in our country in parliament, too... We shall remain closely linked to those forces out of which we ourselves have grown,” among which he included the movements for peace, ecology, women’s liberation, civil liberties, and the rights of ethnic minorities, gays, and all workers, native and foreign, employed and the growing unemployed.

At the West German Greens’ national congress in June 1983, called to evaluate how to use the newly elected Green parliamentarians to further the movement, Bahro declared, “The main function which has fallen to the Greens in parliament is to be a multiplier and amplifier for the alternative consciousness outside... Like the Green party as a whole, its parliamentary group regards itself as an instrument of support to the movement. For us, as for our members of parliament, politics must be primarily what takes place in Bonn. In this sense, we say to all our friends in the country: Count upon our will and our readiness to use the platform we have won and the other opportunities in Bonn as well as possible for our common concerns — but don’t rely on us... While parliamentary politics may perhaps restrain the state machine a little here and there, it does not give us a position of power in favour of the change of course that is so important.”

Both Kelly and Bahro presented the Greens in 1983 as a radical alternative to social democracy. In terms of program, Kelly emphasized the Greens’ opposition to the historic militarism of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), from their vote for war credits for World War I to their current enthusiastic participation in NATO and the Cold War. Bahro emphasized the Greens’ rejection of the SPD’s commitment to economic growth as the basis for an expanded welfare State, which basically put the Social Democrats in the same camp with the conservatives, supporting capitalism’s profit-motivated drive for limitless growth that is devouring the environment. The Greens were to be the alternative to both right and (old) left.

What also distinguished the Greens from the Social Democrats just as much as their program was their strategy — a combination of extraparliamentary opposition and electoral campaigns controlled by the rank-and-file activists of the extraparliamentary opposition. As Murray Bookchin observed about the West German Greens on a trip to Europe in November 1984: “How does the extraparliamentary movement extend itself into a political sphere — more precisely, create a new politics — without becoming trapped in party and parliamentary institutions? This is the problem the Greens are really grappling with, whether they know it or not, and one which we in the U.S. must unravel if we are to go beyond the limits already reached by the old direct-action extraparliamentary movements without becoming degraded into another variant of the Rainbow Coalition or the Social Democrats. Hence the significance of the Greens in Germany and, I think, my ‘Theses on Libertarian Municipalism’.”

The Fissure and Decline of the German Greens

A municipalist approach based on municipal confederations as a dual power countering the centralized State and corporate structures has not become a major current in the German Greens. But a part of the municipalism/Statism debate among U.S. Greens has had its parallel in key respects in the fundir/realo debate among the German Greens. Their left wing, the “fundamental oppositionists,” or fundis, has been equally concerned with avoiding the trap of becoming coopted into the administration of the existing system. The fundis (among whom were Bahro and Kelly in 1983) opposed a parliamentary coalition with the Social Democrats.

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They viewed the Social Democrats as having hopelessly trapped themselves into administering the system rather than transforming it. They believed that entering as junior partners into a governing coalition with the Social Democrats would put a Green fig leaf over an anti-ecological system and leave the Greens administering the system they had started out to change. The *fundis* believed that the real base of power for creating a Green alternative would have to be more outside the parliament than inside it. They would not take executive responsibility in government until they had the power to carry through their program, power based on both a legislative majority and a movement outside parliament ready to insure the program’s implementation by direct action.

The *fundis* were in the majority in the early years of the German Greens. But the “realos” — for the *realpolitik* of parliamentary compromise — were present from the start as well. They were to gain dominance in the German Greens in the late 80s and early 90s as some *fundis*, like Kelly, changed their mind about parliamentary coalitions, while others — including Bahro, the ecosexualists around Thomas Ebermann and Rainer Trampert in Hamburg, and the radical ecologists around Jutta Ditfurth in Frankfurt — left the Greens in disgust over the party’s deradicalization. The *realos* advocated a left-reform bloc in parliament against the conservatives. They argued that the crises of peace and ecology were so immediate and serious that Greens should enter coalition governments and seek ministerial positions in order to implement some immediate ameliorative reforms. To achieve this, the *realos* have called for abandoning the anti-capitalist aspects of the Green program in order to make the Greens acceptable to the SPD as a junior partner in a governing coalition. To further this purely parliamentary agenda, the *realos* have also advocated centralizing the Greens as a conventional party by dropping the organizational provisions for internal grassroots democracy, including the frequent rotation of spokespersons and elected representatives and the right of the membership to give imperative mandates (binding instructions) to their spokespersons and parliamentary representatives.

Given that the *realo* Greens’ parliamentary strategy is virtually indistinguishable from that of the Social Democrats and that the Social Democrats have incorporated many of the basic environmental demands that the Greens first raised, one has to wonder how long the *realo* Greens can continue to exist as a political organization independent of the Social Democrats. Indeed, many voters expressed just this question leading up to the electoral defeats that the national Green parties recently suffered in the new Germany in the 1990 national election and in the Swedish national election in September 1991. Why vote for the Greens when the Social Democrats, with basically the same program and strategy, are more likely to win?

Greens in parliament in Germany were faced with a dilemma when the peace marches and other extraparliamentary movements subsided in the mid-1980s. Either they could try to hold onto to their elected offices by adapting to the new political climate and moderating the Green program, or they could stick to the program, quite possibly lose electoral support, and go back into extraparliamentary opposition. In most cases, they succumbed to the privileges of office and moved to the right politically.

**Lessons from the German Greens**

There is a logic of deradicalization when a movement relies on top-down reform through the State. Getting into and holding office becomes an end in itself, partly because the strategy emphasizes it, partly because it pays a handsome regular salary in contrast to most extraparliamentary organizing. With winning elections their primary goal, the politicians then adapt to the current political climate rather than try to challenge it. In power, they are constrained by the extraparliamentary powers of the establishment, including their dependence on private corporate capital to finance the public debt and invest in the economy and their vulnerability to sabotage of reforms by the permanent State in the unelected bureaucracies and military and police agencies. Having won office on a watered-down program and popular mandate and being relatively powerless to implement reforms against the wishes of the corporations, State bureaucracy, and military, electoral reformists end up in office but not in power, administering the system they started out to change. This is the classic impasse of Social Democracy, a pitfall into which the Green *realos* are now falling with open eyes.

The recent defeats suffered by various national Green parties is instructive in this regard. These Green parties were launched on the shoulders of massive social movements. As long as these movements were at high tide, they drove the Greens as their electoral arm forward in a radical direction. But when the movements ebbed, the *realo* politicians stepped into the void.
In an effort to maintain a hold on office despite the movement's quietism, they succeeded in moderating the Greens' message. But now we can see that this strategy is doubly self-defeating; not only does it compromise the Green vision programmatically; it is not even successful as an electoral ploy. For the radical extraparliamentary activists on the left who vote Green, the programmatic deradicalization is alienating. For the pragmatists on the right wing, the Greens have become so little different from the Social Democrats that it makes more sense to vote for the Social Democrats because they are more likely to win.

The Green parties have not made the crucial distinction between extraparliamentary action and an anti-parliamentary critique which the anarchists have long emphasized. All the Green parties want to combine extraparliamentary and direct action. But they have still believed that basic change could be achieved through parliamentary measures. The extraparliamentary movement would keep their parliamentary representatives honest and pressure the State for concessions. The anarchist critique of parliamentary politics emphasizes how the representative republican form of the capitalist State is structured to either coopt or marginalize genuinely radical parties. The power of the legislature is severely circumscribed by the extraparliamentary powers of the ruling class residing in private capital and the unelected bureaucracy and military. In order to be "realistic" parliamentary players, radical parties must begin to limit their programmatic demands to what is possible legislatively. If they do not accept this cooptation into parliamentary possibilities, they are likely to become marginalized relative to more "realistic" reform parties.

Murray Bookchin's "libertarian municipalism" seeks to overcome these twin pitfalls of the cooptation of electoral reformism by the State on the one side and the isolation of extraparliamentary action in subcultures on the other. It proposes to bring the radical movement's program to the general public in local elections with a view toward creating a new politics of direct action in its highest form — direct democracy based on face-to-face citizen assemblies and confederal forms of coordination. The municipalist approach aims to give the oppositional movement a sustainable institutionalized base in restructured and confederalized cities and towns from which to resist and ultimately replace the corporations and the State.

Despite hundreds of Greens elected into the municipal councils of Europe, no attempt has been made to network these Green elected officials and their organizations horizontally with a view toward building up a growing dual power in opposition to the power structure of the corporate state. Instead, success in municipal elections has been merely a stepping stone on the road to "higher" office. From the confederal municipalist viewpoint, the socially transformative struggle is not between parties competing for State power, but between a popular power based in citizen assemblies and municipal confederations on the one hand, and the centralized State and corporate power on the other.

Pointing to the negative example of the Green realos in Europe, Left Greens have been advocating the municipalist and confederalist orientation for the U.S. Green movement. The American New Left's electoral experience raises the same problem: how to extend the social movements into the electoral arena without becoming coopted into the State and administering the old system one wants to change. The repeating pattern has been that the more the independent political efforts that grew out of the New Left became oriented toward an electoral strategy seeking representation in the State, the more they were reabsorbed into the Democratic Party, particularly through the presidential campaigns of liberal Democrats such as George McGovern in 1972 and Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988.

The New Politics in the U.S.A.

The first expressions of an independent politics based on New Left social movements came out of the civil rights and black liberation movements with the Malcolm X-inspired Freedom Now Party in the North in 1963–64 and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee efforts in 1963–66 to empower blacks politically through the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the Lowndes Country Freedom Organization of Alabama. Meanwhile, the Democrats' complicity in the war in Vietnam drove many white liberals and radicals toward independent politics. In 1967, a National Conference for New Politics was called to attempt to unite the black liberation and antiwar movements in a new party. Martin Luther King and noted pediatrician Benjamin Spock were projected as a possible presidential ticket. The conference, however, was a shambles after the black caucus demanded 50% of the votes. Black militants were extremely wary of white liberals by then, after years of patronizing financial control by their church and union supporters in the liberal-labour coalition within
the left wing of the Democratic Party. Black and white radicals would remain largely divided into separate organizations until the Rainbow Coalition of the mid-1980s.

Nevertheless, a number of state parties formed in 1968 and by 1972 had federated into a national Peoples’ Party, which ran Spock for president. Although the Peoples’ Party attempted to be what it called a “movement party” by combining electoral and direct action, “The Movement” (as the New Left was called by then) was not very responsive. Although a household word, Spock received a tiny vote, less than 0.1%.

The black liberation movement was meanwhile attempting to form its own independent party. A National Black Political Assembly was formed at a Gary, Indiana convention of 12,000 in 1972, but it was never consolidated as an electoral force. Its more successful politicians and members were quickly coopted by the Democrats. The Chicano movement did succeed in forming an independent party, La Raza Unida, which elected dozens of local officials in southern Texas. But when it moved to state and national electoral politics, it fared poorly and became demoralized. Its activists and politicians were then reabsorbed by the Democrats.

In 1980, a national Citizens Party was launched hoping to ride the wave of environmental, anti-nuclear, and safe energy activism that crested in the late 1970s. Like the German Greens, its central issues were peace and ecology. At one point, Petra Kelly gave it her blessing as America’s Green Party. But it placed all its hopes on a strong showing in the 1980 presidential race, received a mere 0.3% of the vote, and quickly became perceived by most of its potential social base as an irrelevancy. With the Jesse Jackson presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988 and the projected Rainbow Coalition, many of the activists in earlier independent political efforts were incorporated into the Democratic Party. But these efforts yielded no reforms. The Democrats take their left wing for granted in the absence of an independent alternative. So today there are new independent political efforts afloat in the left wing of the labour, black, and women’s movements.

There is a repeating pattern in all of these efforts to build an independent political vehicle for New Left social movements. Extraparliamentary movements grew but found that street protests and public education would only take them so far. The Democrats could take them for granted and their style of organizing limited them to subcultures. Without political parties that spoke for their interests, they attempted to build alternative parties that could broaden the public arena in which they were acting and bring into public debate demands that the Democrats would not. But these parties were soon coopted by the Democrats, either directly when they were successful (e.g., La Raza Unida) or indirectly when they were marginal and their activists either drifted into the reform wing of the Democratic Party or focused on extraparliamentary single-issue movements that, in the last analysis, were dependent upon lobbying liberal Democrats for reforms.

The theoretical commitments were to building parties that, strategically, would be active outside as well as inside the electoral arena and, programatically, would be pledged to grassroots organization, decentralization, and participatory democracy. But in practice they took winning elections and holding office to be ends in themselves, and presidential elections were taken as the best way to influence national political debate and federal government policy.

This electoralism resulted in marginalization and demoralization when the high hopes of presidential third-party candidacies were dashed against the realities of the corporate money and media that determine the national political debate. After each of these experiences — People’s Party and Citizens Party — many people dropped away in despair. Other more electorally-oriented activists concluded that reforming the Democratic Party held more prospects for having an impact (Rainbow Coalition), and still other radicals resigned themselves to organizing single-issue protest movements to pressure the establishment for reforms.

The Municipalist Alternative

The left wing of the Greens has argued for a municipalist strategy as a way out of the political impasse in which the new social movements in the U.S. find themselves. To break through the oscillation between extraparliamentary protest and conventional electoral reform, the municipalists argue that local elections and municipal restructuring are a way to extend the social movements into the political arena without being coopted by the system — in fact, a way to create a new political arena that is truly popular and participatory and in opposition to the preemption of popular self-government by the professionalized policy-makers in the bureaucracies of the State and corporations.
A municipalist approach would enable the grassroots opposition to institutionalize and sustain itself without relying on an easily cooptable professionalized party leadership. It would bring the movement from its subcultures into a broader public arena without being reduced to the symbolic caricatures and six-second sound bites of media politics at the state and national levels. It would provide an internal democratic framework for the various movements, bringing together the various ethnic, gender, and issue constituencies to develop jointly a common program. It would make the vision of participatory democracy consistent with its means and create an immediate framework — on the city block or just down the country road — through which people could directly participate in shaping the movement and in public affairs. Rather than demoralizing marginalization in hopeless national elections, it is easier to have a major impact on local elections and realistic to expect a majoritarian movement for municipal restructuring to develop in many cities and counties.

To avoid any misunderstanding, let us pause here to emphasize that libertarian municipalism does not intend to repeat the sad history of municipal socialism during the decades at the turn of the century in the U.S. and Europe. Libertarian municipalism aims toward a dual power in opposition to the State whereas municipal socialism viewed municipal power as a step to State power.

Murray Bookchin tried to raise this municipalist approach in the anarchist milieu of the New Left in 1971 in his "Spring Offensives and Summer Vacations" in Anarchos. It was there that he first urged anarchists and New Leftists in general to engage in local elections as a means of promoting community assemblies and confederal forms of coordination as a popular counterpower to the State and capital. But by then the New Left was committing suicide. Its "anarchist" elements were full of self-indulgent individualists and nihilists who were as little interested in building a radical movement capable of reaching a broad American public as the Weathermen and the Marxist-Leninist and Maoist sects that emerged from the ashes of SDS. These groups saw their role as that of a fifth column acting inside the imperialist country on behalf of Third-World liberation movements, rather than as a potentially majoritarian movement.

In September 1969, a conference at Black River State Park in Wisconsin to create a left libertarian organization in the wake of SDS's demise fell apart due to unstructured debate and a naive enthusiasm on the part of many for structurelessness and consensus on all matters. Observing this conference and the ephemeral cycles of New Left street protests, Bookchin initiated several attempts in the 1970s to organize anarchist federations in the Northeast oriented toward a municipalist approach, but they fell prey to the same pendants for consensus, structurelessness, and electoral abstentionism among most self-styled anarchists in this period. It is only in the U.S. Greens that libertarian municipalism has found a network of activists who are trying to put it into practice.

The Difficult Birth of the U.S. Greens

While the Citizens Party was holding what was to be its last national convention in August 1984 in St. Paul, Minnesota, a group of 60 people was meeting elsewhere in St. Paul to discuss the founding of a new national political organization for Green politics. Few of these 60 people knew of the Citizens Party convention or were even aware of the independent political efforts that had come out of the New Left over the previous 20 years. Most of the people present were authors connected with academia or non-profit educational corporations. They were more New Age than New Left. Only a handful were grassroots activists. It was an unlikely group to launch a new political movement.

The impetus for the meeting had come from two sources. One source was the response to a book reporting the development of the West German Greens written by Fritjof Capra, author of The Tao of Physics, and Charlene Spretnak, a writer on feminist spirituality. Entitled Green Politics, it was the first American book about the Greens, whom it viewed through an anti-leftist New Age prism. Many people wrote to the authors urging them to initiate an American Green Party. The other source was a Green Politics Committee set up by the first North American Bioregional Congress (NABC) in July 1984. The bioregionalist notion of decentralizing economics and governance and integrating them with the ecological contours of natural biogeographical regions had been popularized in the 1970s and 1980s by CoEvolution Quarterly.

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13 Bookchin, op. cit.
An invitation committee was formed consisting of Spretnak, David Haenke of NABC, Catherine Burton of Seattle who had raised $10,000 for the meeting, Gloria Goldberg of the Institute for Social Ecology, and Harry Boyte, recently resigned from the Democratic Socialists of America and an author of books that were positive about the radical potential of Alinsky-style community organizations that had become widespread in middle-class and working-class communities in the 1960s and 1970s. Rather than having an open call to conference, this meeting was by invitation only. The 60 or so people who attended were virtually all upper middle class and white.

Politically, the group was extremely disparate. Green independents found themselves next to those who wanted to green the Democratic and Republican parties. The Maine Green Party was already organizing, but pointedly not invited to attend the meeting in part because it was committed to independent politics. Spretnak had written earlier in the year in The Nation that neo-liberal Democratic presidential candidate “Gary Hart’s ‘new ideas’ may turn out to be surprisingly Green,” while a platform that circulated at the St. Paul meeting from the New World Alliance, a short-lived New Age political organization in which Mark Satin and several other meeting participants had been involved, advocated an austere neo-liberal economic policy. Some were enthusiasts of the counter-culture, while others like Spretnak and particularly Boyte were disposed to a cultural conservatism that would be geared to the sensibilities of middle America. A few were anarchists or democratic socialists, but most liked the slogan on the cover of the Capra/Spretnak book, “We are neither left nor right; we are in front.”

But precious little politics were discussed. The main focus of discussion for the weekend was what kind of organization to set up. Three basic proposals were put forward: an informal network linked by computers, a centralized staff-based organization, and a federation of local groups.

Some of the New Age enthusiasts with their laptop computers wanted a structureless informal network, linked by computers. Catherine Burton, for example, called for “a network, not an organization” and equated computer networks with direct democracy. Robert Theobald equated organization with oppression. There was a lot of vague discussion about “a systems approach to organizing.” Those espousing this perspective viewed social change largely as a matter of cumulative individual “personal transformations.” But since so few people had personal computers in 1984, let alone portable laptops, this perspective did not carry.

Others proposed a top-down staff-based organization with mainly at-large members who paid dues and received a newsletter. This view envisioned recruiting experts to draft a program and reaching the public through direct mail, the press, and the media. Boyte, Spretnak, Haenke, and Mark Satin supported this position. Satin had been active in the American expatriate movement of draft resisters in Canada and at one point had been a Weatherman sympathizer. He had returned to the U.S. under President Carter’s amnesty and was now not only critical of Weatherman-style guilt-motivated politics but virulently anti-left as well. His own recent political tract, New Age Politics, espoused a neither right nor left stance. Satin called for “movement-building with professionalism” and opposed a confederation based on locals. “Some of us don’t identify with our region,” he said, “but with our issue networks.” Another Washington-based person offered to represent the peace movement. The obvious questions of accountability that these proposals raised were pointed out by the leftists present.

The third view on organization was advocated mainly by the Northeast Caucus, most of whom were associated with the Institute for Social Ecology (ISE) or the anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance. Dan Chodorkoff, director of ISE, called for a grassroots confederation of local groups. He argued for an “organization based on place” and confederal structures of grassroots accountability for regional and national levels of the new organization. He proposed that an organizing network structured this way be called the Committees of Correspondence and have a clearinghouse with responsibilities for fundraising and communications. The Northeasterners urged the gathering not to presume to speak on behalf of those interested in a Green movement who were not present and had not had the opportunity to confer and debate its political direction. Instead Northeasterners urged that a process be set up to encourage the formation of local groups which would confederate regionally and send representatives to an interim Interregional Committee that would coordinate the organizing network and prepare a founding congress to be held in


six months to a year. In the end this was the decision that was taken, although it was agreed to and then reopened half a dozen times over the weekend because some of the people favouring a national staff-based organization and immediate public pronouncements were on the agenda committee.

The name Committees of Correspondence was chosen for this network rather than Green for a number of reasons. Many wondered if the Rainbow Coalition projected by Jesse Jackson wouldn’t evolve into an independent Green-type party. Given the necessity of linking America’s many ethnic groups into a common movement, there was concern about giving this new movement its metaphor before a more diverse group had debated it. There was also concern about whether importing a foreign metaphor would successfully translate into the American idiom. Another question was whether Green would imply strictly environmental concerns and not the peace and social justice concerns of the other popular social movements that the new organization hoped to unite. Committees of Correspondence (CoC) was chosen as the interim name for the organizing network, taken from the correspondence committee set up by New England town meetings in the process leading up to the first American Revolution.

Toward the end of the meeting, the decision had to be made where to locate an information clearinghouse. Spretnak suggested the Northeast, because between ISE and the Clamshell Alliance there was already an organizational base. But Mark Satin said that he could not agree until he knew what the ideology of the Northeast Caucus was. This was the first pronouncement raising the question of whether the various political views present were compatible. It was obvious to anyone reading between the lines that the politics of the Clamshell Alliance and the ISE were anarchist. Harry Boyte offered to do the clearinghouse. Satin then added, more directly, that “the Green movement should not be associated with the Institute for Social Ecology and Murray Bookchin...or Mark Satin for that matter.” Dan Chadkoff accused Satin of red-baiting and warned that baiting instead of dealing with substantive issues on their own terms would divide the movement even before it had started. Chadkoff pointed out that the clearinghouse was to be purely administrative, not policy-making, and therefore the relevant question was whether people where it was located could do the work, not what their politics were. Spretnak withdrew her proposal, citing “negative feedback” from un-
named people who had been invited to the meeting but who had not come because the Institute was associated with it.

Rather than finally discussing political philosophy, an administrative solution was sought, a way of dealing with political questions that was to become the habit of the U.S. Greens at the national level for the next several years. The administrative compromise was to locate the clearinghouse in Minneapolis under the direction of Boyte, whose New Left background was acceptable to the Northeast leftists and whose cultural conservatism reassured the more moderate elements present.

Political philosophy was discussed indirectly in the acceptance of a draft “Ten Key Values” as an initial discussion paper that would generally indicate the political direction of the CoC. Charlene Spretnak and Mark Satin were the principal writers who ran their drafts past the meeting periodically over the weekend. It was basically an expansion of what had been the West German Greens initial basis of unity, the “four pillars” of Green politics — ecology, nonviolence, social responsibility, and grassroots democracy. Ecology was changed to “ecological wisdom,” reflecting the spiritual and mystical bent of many present. Social responsibility was changed to “personal and social responsibility” to reflect the New Age emphasis on personal transformation. Added were decentralization, community-based economics, post patriarchal values, respect for diversity, global responsibility, and future focus. Post patriarchal values was a euphemism for feminism and respect for diversity for racial equality.

Many in the meeting were extremely worried about red-baiting and opted for words that would distinguish the CoC from the usual left-liberal language. The leftists in the meeting did not quibble much over the statement because they judged it was the first of many working papers that would follow. But in 1986 when a byelaws document was drawn up, the Ten Key Values statement was the only one available as principles of unity, and they have served that function ever since. At the Elkins conference in 1991, personal and social responsibility was changed to “social justice” and global responsibility to “personal and global responsibility.”

Of the 60 or so present at the August 1984 meeting in St. Paul, most never again participated in the Greens and only half a dozen would still be active a few years later. But in the Northeast and in the Bay Area local organizing started immediately. The rest of the country would not see many local groups organized until 1986. The projected founding conference was put off.
Two Steps Forward, One Step Back

Political differences emerged almost at once. Boyte sent a semi-open letter to political colleagues urging them to join the CoC, but warning them about the "anarchist ultra-democrats" in the Northeast. He also sent out a brochure on the CoC without showing it to anyone else in the network. And on a trip to Maine, he declared in a public meeting at which several Maine Green Party members were present that the CoC was oriented toward reforming the Democrats, not independent politics. It was later learned that Boyte had also harshly brushed off inquiries to the clearinghouse from the Citizens Party, the Socialist Party, and the Labor-Farm Party of Wisconsin. The "ultra-democrats" carpeted Boyte on his divisive, anti-democratic, and unauthorized actions on behalf of the CoC and he soon resigned.

After a year, the network had almost fallen apart. The clearinghouse in Minneapolis was not functioning and few groups had been organized outside of the Northeast. The Interregional Committee (IC) came to Boston for a meeting in August 1985 where the Coordinating Committee of the New England Committees of Correspondence was meeting at the same time. Doubts about the grassroots confederation organizational form were being openly expressed outside of the Northeast. But the sight of a dozen New England locals meeting together seemed to inspire the representatives of other regions, and in the coming year locals started sprouting elsewhere. The clearinghouse was moved to Kansas City where Dee Berry took over as clearinghouse coordinator.

The main debate at the national level for the next few years revolved around structure. Spretnak and Haenke were particularly concerned about the left. At the March 1986 IC meeting in Seattle, a decision was made to bar observation by two Wisconsin Greens who had a history of involvement with the Yippies and who were active in Wisconsin's socialist Labor-Farm Party. The decision was made Friday before many of the regional delegates had arrived and some of those who participated in that decision were not representing any Green groups. This raised a number of structural questions such as accrediting affiliated regions and locals and establishing membership standards that could serve as mutually agreed criteria for determining who had a right to participate in the organization. The ensuing debate over byelaws took three years. The views supporting an informal network and a centralized staff-based organization reemerged. Trying to resolve these differences by consensus decision-making dragged out the debate.

It was only the continued growth at the grassroots that enabled the organization to survive this period. In the fall of 1985, the New Haven Greens ran the first slate of Green candidates for mayor and city council, with a strong showing that displaced the Republicans as New Haven's main opposition party in many wards, although no Greens were elected. In the spring of 1986, the Burlington Greens of Vermont, the Orange County Greens of North Carolina, and the Lake Superior Greens of Wisconsin (initiated by Chippewa Indian activist Walt Bressette) ran their first candidates. All the candidates made strong showings, with the Orange County and Lake Superior Greens each winning a seat on their county boards. The New England Greens were in the middle of the post-Chernobyl anti-nuclear demonstrations and the anti-apartheid activism that crested during those years.

The Gathering at Amherst

A national Green gathering was finally set for July 1987 in Amherst, Massachusetts, but not as a founding congress. Without a structure for accrediting delegates and with debate raging on the relative merits of consensus and democratic voting, all that could be agreed upon was an educational conference that would put all points of view out for discussion. This the conference succeeded in doing. Organizing fell upon the New England confederation, which had the reputation for being the left wing, although already it was politically diverse.17 In the end, 1800 people registered for "Building the Green Movement: A National Conference for a New Politics," and 120 workshops and 10 plenary panels were crowded into five days.

Two issues immediately polarized the conference: deep ecology vs. social ecology and spiritualism vs. secularism. Murray Bookchin’s plenary

17 Spretnak at first refused to attend and speak on a plenary panel, arguing that it had become a leftist conference, and discouraged people from attending. But when it became clear that the conference would have a large attendance, Spretnak changed her mind and insisted on speaking on an already crowded plenary panel and adding a dozen workshops to be given by various spiritually oriented Greens whose Spretnak prevailed upon to attend. The organizers accommodated this request despite the logistical burden it imposed because they judged it would be better to get the debate out in open than to have it fester through the very active rumor mills of the Greens.
speech opened by declaring that Greens were the hope for the future. He warned, however, against isolating environmental from social problems and against denying the anarchist roots of much Green thinking in such people as Peter Kropotkin and Paul Goodman. He also launched a blistering attack on the new Malthusianism that was emerging among deep ecologists and particularly from Dave Foreman of Earth First!  

Jutta Ditfurth, a leader of the left wing of the West German Greens who was one of their three elected speakers, harshly criticized the conference for substituting rituals and mysticism for principled political debate. Bookchin was not happy with Ditfurth’s criticisms because he had long been critical of the left’s total lack psychological insight and believed that the spiritual impoverishment of market society was as much of an indictment as the material impoverishment it produced. He looked to a new ecological sensibility to address spiritual needs for meaning and community. The Amherst conference was to convince Bookchin of the need to defend reason against the irrationalism spreading through the social movements, including deep ecologists, in the name of spirituality. In any case, Spretnak and her allies, including Dee Berry and John Rensenbrink of the Maine Greens who would play strong leadership roles in the CoC over the next several years, were extremely upset with Bookchin’s attack on deep ecology to whose spiritual side, not the Malthusianism, they were attracted. They also attributed Ditfurth’s attack on spirituality to Bookchin’s encouragement.  

While most of the conference participants were oblivious to the mounting tension over these issues, the key players in the CoC were caught up in it. A mediation between Spretnak and Bookchin was set up. In the meeting, Spretnak attributed all things bad in the movement to Bookchin and his cadre from the Institute for Social Ecology, which in her mind included many people, this author included, who had never been associated with the Institute. Bookchin proposed that they put the past behind them and agree to debate their differences civilly and refrain from ad hominem attacks. The mediation group agreed to this and to a public hug before the last plenary to demonstrate unity, although several “mediators,” John Rensenbrink among them, told Bookchin that this whole episode was all his fault. After the hug, Spretnak said a few words about Green community, while Bookchin stated that while he agreed with civil relations, he remained a revolutionary and would continue to advance those politics within the Greens. The right-wing was outraged at Bookchin’s statement and in the next few years would try to drive the left out of the Greens.

Red-Baiting and Wheel-Spinning

The Amherst conference received good press and media coverage and stimulated a rapid growth of new Green locals. At the next IC meeting in Kansas City, Rensenbrink proposed that the Greens draft and adopt a national program at their next national conference, to be called SPAKA or Strategic and Policy Approaches in Key Areas. The IC accepted this proposal, assuming it would be sent to the locals for discussion and ratification or modification. But instead it was sent by Rensenbrink to the CoC’s national publication, Green Letter, as a final decision. Thus, without any grassroots debate, program writing, in addition to fighting over structure, became the preoccupation at the national level. The style in which this decision was made came to characterize the functioning of the right wing of the Greens over the next few years.

In New England, the left was under attack. Red-baiting, ad hominem argument, and the rumour mill made regional meetings uncomfortable for the left in New England, which was doing most of the local electoral and issue-based organizing. Many leftists simply stopped attending these unpleasing regional gatherings, while the others were stymied in their attempts to raise programmatic and action proposals. As usual, the meetings were consumed by attempts to agree by consensus or 80% majority on a structure. The last regional meeting in September 1988 in Boston, called to resolve the structure question, was attended by only 25 people and it resolved nothing. It was the last meeting of the New England Committees of Correspondence as the umbrella group of the New England Greens.

Enter the Left Greens

Meanwhile, this attack by the right had motivated the formation of the Left Green Network. In the context of the deep/social ecology debate that
was raging in environmental publications, Murray Bookchin proposed a left caucus within the Greens. After a particularly miserable New England Greens meeting in Maine, where right-wing Greens replaced an agenda agreed upon by the New England Coordinating Committee with an agenda devoted to attacking the left, left-wing Greens decided to form their own network where they could function without all these attacks. The Left Green Network was launched as an educational vehicle within the broader Green movement, not as an alternative to it. The Left Greens agreed upon several key issues they would advance within the Greens:

- **social ecology** — the Greens should deal with the roots of ecological problems in social problems and link ecological and social justice movements;
- **anti-capitalism** — the Greens should explicitly call for a decentralized, democratic economic alternative to both the capitalism of the West and the Statism of the East;
- **independent politics** — the Greens should be completely independent of the Democrats and Republicans;
- **democratic decentralism** — rather than consensus decisions, majorities should have the right to implement organizational policies while minorities should have the right to refrain from implementation and to publicly dissent from majority decisions;
- **confederal municipalism** — independent politics should be conducted by the Greens at the municipal level with a view toward building a popular dual power based on citizen assemblies and municipal confederations rather than trying to change society through State structures.²⁰

The first three points that the Left Greens advanced have come to be majority positions within the Greens, as evidenced by the positions taken in the program that was developed at the next three national gatherings. Consensus as a panacea for all occasions is a dying idea within the Greens, but high-majority decision rules still allow minorities to veto proposals that have majority support. As for the municipalist approach, support for it is broader than the Left Greens, but there is also a sizeable contingent in the Greens who very clearly believe in reform mainly through elections and legislation. Electoral strategy will be one of the key debates at the 1992 Green gathering in Minneapolis.

The Left Green Network had its first continental conference in Ames, Iowa in April 1989. It met again in Plainfield, Vermont in July 1990 and in Chicago in July 1991. Its few hundred members include Canadians, Mexicans, and Caribbeans as well as U.S. activists. The Left Greens' ideas have been very influential in the American Green movement, although with all the red-baiting that has gone on many people influenced by the Left Greens are reluctant to acknowledge it. Organizationally, the Left Greens have not been very effective in mobilizing their members to participate in the internal politics of the Greens. For many Left Greens, the Network has provided a refuge in which to study and debate radical social theory away from the chaotic and sometimes hostile meetings of the U.S. Greens.

The Left Greens are now in the process of developing their own program. In contrast to the laundry list of policy proposals that the U.S. Greens have adopted, the Left Greens are drawing up documents that will consider strategy, movement-building, and distinguish immediate and long-term goals. Within the U.S. Left Greens, some of the issues that originally divided them from the Greens — social ecology, anticapitalism, independent politics — no longer do. Differences within the Left Greens themselves are emerging and becoming the focus of current debate. Municipalists are in the majority, but the more worker-oriented socialists and syndicalists and the more anti-electoral direct-actionists oriented toward the social movements of youth, women, gays, and ethnic minorities are challenging the municipalist theories. In the coming year, the Left Green Network will be discussing program drafts and comments on what a program should do.

From Program to Party?

When the Greens gathered in June 1989 in Eugene, Oregon, program writing was the main order of business. The name of the organization was changed to Green Committees of Correspondence. Left Greens played a major role in writing the economic, political, and social justice sections that were adopted as working drafts. Rensenbrink's proposal projecting Green involvement in presidential politics received support only from a few

²⁰ Fourteen principles were adopted initially by the Left Greens, but these five were the ones that distinguished the Left Greens from the CoC and which the Left Greens wanted to push within the Greens as a whole. See the Call for a Left Green Network, available from Left Green Network Clearinghouse, Box 306, Iowa City IA 52242, USA.
lbers who had wandered in from the Rainbow Coalition and the Democratic Socialists of America. The Left Greens held late-night meetings that were attended by 70–100 of the 300 people present, and these went a long way toward dispelling the myths about the Left Greens that had been generated by the rumour mill. At Eugene, so many people gained personal acquaintance of the Left Greens that red-baiting and the rumour mill often backfired thereafter.

After Eugene, the municipalism/Statism debate crystallized around the question of forming a political party that would be separate from the existing Green confederation. Rensenbrink spearheaded the formation of a Green Party Organizing Committee (GPOC) as an independent "cooperating organization but autonomous from the IC and GCoC." He described the formation of the GPOC as a "giant step" that gives "the party and its candidates (and office holders)...room to develop policy and politics pertinent to campaigning and office holding." It became apparent that the program adopted by the membership was too radical for the aspiring politicians of the GPOC. But the GPOC didn't just break with the GCoC. It wanted the GCoC's blessing to give it legitimacy. But every time the GCoC expressed its view on this question — the June 1990 IC meeting in Ann Arbor, a restructuring working group set up at Ann Arbor, two polls at the Estes Park national conference in September 1990, and a referendum on restructuring in April 1991 — it opted for an integrated structure of combined electoral and other activities.

The GPOC came into the Elkins conference hoping to reopen the question. But after their own pre-conference caucus meeting failed to adopt a proposal to change the Greens' structure, no proposal for a split structure was introduced.

Backroom negotiations over structure continued over the weekend, but GPOC backed away from its earlier position as it became clear that the overwhelming majority of the more than 400 Greens present were not interested in having two national Green organizations. After an early low point of nasty and divisive red-baiting when the GPOC tried to blame the Left Greens for the GPOC's failure to adopt its own structure proposal, the conference's emotional roller coaster swung to a high point by the middle of the five-day conference. The first national Green Action Plan was adopted for the coming year. The unified structure proposal was presented to the plenary and was adopted with near unanimity. Then the Green Justice Caucus, representing the caucus of the first sizeable contin-

gent of people of colour at a national Green gathering as well as the women's and gay caucuses, announced their endorsements for the upcoming elections to the national committees and proceeded to honour individually many of the Greens of all political persuasions who had devoted their energies to the Greens over the previous years. This gesture by the Green Justice Caucus pulled the Greens together emotionally more than they have ever been. It was in that spirit that the Greens left Elkins.

Elections to the Coordinating Committee, seven Greens responsible for day-to-day oversight and serving as national spokespersons for the organization, resulted in a group that lains to the left. One, the author, is well known as a Left Green. Three have attended Left Green Network conferences and share its basic politics though they are not members. One is a bioregionalist with moderate social views. One is chair of the Green Party of Alaska and new to the national Green movement. And one is a spokesperson for the Green Party of California and a core leader of the GPOC. Rensenbrink and Phil Rose, the GPOC clearinghouse coordinator, were not elected. Shortly after the conference, Dee Berry resigned from the Greens and is now working with the National Organization for Women people in Missouri to form an independent party that may or may not include the Missouri Greens.

What Lies Ahead for U.S. Greens

Whether the Greens will be able to fill the political vacuum on the left in the U.S. will largely depend on their ability to attract committed activists into the organization. And whether they attract activists will depend on two factors.

The first is whether the Greens can carry through effective public action on the issues of the day. In 1991–92, the Greens will have for the first time an action plan involving nationally coordinated grassroots action. The plan calls for community teach-ins on Earth Day/Sun Day, April 22, around the theme of "Solar Power through Community Power"; regional anti-nuclear mobilizations on the Chernobyl anniversary, April 26; "Detroit Summer" where Greens will work with primarily African-American community organizations on projects of social and ecological reconstruction; anti-militarist actions on the Hiroshima/Nagasaki anniversary, August 6–9; and participation in Native American solidarity actions in the "500 Years of
Dignity and Resistance" campaign culminating on October 11, Columbus' birthday. These actions in the present period of social movement doldrums have the potential of capturing activist imaginations. Whether or not they do the coming year will tell.

The other factor is whether the Greens can establish a viable electoral presence. In this arena, the Greens will be joined by the national political initiative launched by the Working Group that came out of the National Organization for Women's Commission for Responsive Democracy. What kind of relationship the Greens will have to this initiative, as well as to new independent political initiatives coming from the African-American and labor left, and all of these to each other, is one set of issues the Greens will have to struggle with in the coming year.

With 22 Greens elected to office in 14 municipalities and counties, the Greens have demonstrated that they can be a viable electoral presence at this level. These Greens elected officials are in every region of the country, from Arcata and San Diego, California to Gloucester, Massachusetts, from Missoula, Montana to Columbia, Missouri. Hopefully, the municipalists will learn from the failure of the German fundis to network their municipal people and organizations at the grassroots, which left them without an organizational base from which to resist the ascendance of the raekos at the national level and which alienated many extraparliamentary activists who felt the Greens had abandoned them. In addition to networking the Greens municipal movements in the U.S., the municipalists should argue against the Statists that the Greens will be most effective by building upon their demonstrated strength in municipal politics. If they relate to the other independent political forces at all, it should be to encourage the same approach. The Statists are more likely to join the national campaigns that other forces are initiating and will probably urge the Greens as a whole to do likewise.

There are, of course, many gradations between the two poles of municipalism and Statism in the U.S. Greens, as well as other smaller currents, including municipalism-syndicalists and council communists calling for a workplace focus; Malthusians, Henry Georgists, and (capitalist) libertarians pushing their respective panaceas of birth control, single tax, and free markets; communalists calling for withdrawal from industrial society into rural eco-communes; "green" capitalists and consumers hoping to "green the market"; New Agers counting on the cumulative effect of individual personal transformations aided by various mystical rituals; and a grab-bag of situationist, post-modernist, and Earth First! electoral abstentionists looking solely to exemplary direct action.

But the main political polarization in the Greens — and increasingly so over time as many in the minor currents drift out of the Greens — is municipalism vs. Statism. In many respects, the municipalism/Statism debate is the American Green version of the perennial revolution/refoim debate that sooner or later confronts every movement for basic change that considers entering the electoral arena.

The municipalism vs. Statism debate has yet to be engaged on its own terms among U.S. Greens in a formal organizational setting, although the Left Green municipalists have been circulating their literature around the movement for years. The debate has up until now played itself out indirectly through the organizational debate, but now, with the organizational question no longer at the forefront, the question of municipalism will be engaged directly in the coming year.

**Pitfalls for a Participatory Party**

The organizational debate is not quite over, however. As part of the structural compromise at the national level, an Ad Hoc Working Group was set up to review delegation to the Green congress in light of the formation of state Green parties with ballot status. The right wing of the Greens continues to propose that Green Party registrants and voters in the states be accorded delegates at the Green congress alongside delegates from locals, essentially creating at least two types of membership and two corresponding organizational structures.  

While the Ad Hoc Working Group sorts out how these issues at the national level will be presented in proposals to the Green Council (the new interregional committee of representatives from the 11 new regional confederations in the U.S. Greens) and next year's Green congress, the organizational debate also moves to the state level where municipalists

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21 A proposal from one Green Party Organizing Committee member calls for four tiers of membership: members in locals of state parties with ballot status, members in locals without state party ballot status, members not in locals, and registered Green voters. Delegates of each tier would get proportionally fewer votes per person. How at-large members and registered voters are to elect and mandate their delegates is not addressed in the proposal. See Barbara Ann Rodgers-Hendrick, "Memo to Ad Hoc Working Group for Issues Related to Green Party-USA," August 23, 1991.
and Statists will struggle over how the state organizations are to be structured. In many ways, the debate at the state level will matter more in the end because of the decentralized nature of election laws in the U.S. Every U.S. state has its own electoral laws which govern how candidates can be placed on the ballot and how parties with ballot status are to be internally organized.

Under U.S. law, a national political party has been little more than a coalition of highly autonomous state parties. Its only real function has been to nominate candidates for president and vice-president. The national party platform has been merely a formality, drawn up largely by party insiders with no real debate and, in any case, irrelevant to the campaigns because there have been no internal structures by which the parties could hold the candidates accountable to the platform if they had wanted to. Nominations for every other elected office have been determined by the state parties functioning under state election codes. But without exception, these state laws have functioned to prevent accountability so that candidates and spokespersons are not obliged to act under the direction of a party membership. However, two recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions (Tashjian v. Republican Party of Connecticut, 479 U.S. 208; and Eu v. San Francisco County Democratic Central Committee, 489 U.S. 214) have rendered many of these laws unconstitutional and established the constitutional right of parties to establish their internal structures as they see fit.

If arguments during the last year over the national structure of the Greens are renewed at the state level, the Statist tendencies in the Greens will push for party structures separate from the local chapters of activists for two basic reasons. First, they will argue that their candidates should be accountable not only to active members of the Greens, but also to those who register as Greens and those who vote for the Greens. Secondly, they will argue that state election codes require this form of accountability with their provisions for primary elections and, ignoring the recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions, for caucuses and conventions open to all who are registered Greens or, in some cases, open to all registered voters.

The Challenge for Municipalism

The municipalists should argue for challenging rather than conforming to the states' party system because it contradicts the Greens' principle of grassroots democracy based on face-to-face assemblies that can mandate and recall the agents they authorize to act on their behalf as representatives, administrators, spokespersons, and candidates. The municipalists should point out that the legal composition of unaccountable parties has been eroded by recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions, except in the case of primaries where the issue is now in the courts. The municipalists should also argue for a unified structure that makes the electoral arm of the Green organization accountable to its active members. They should note that Green party registrants and voters have no means of conferring and formulating mandates to Green candidates, that only Green activists who consistently participate in local chapters have the means of doing that.

They should point out historically that proclaiming accountability to voters rather than to party activists has been the means by which politicians have concocted self-serving mandates from vague constituencies of voters in order to legitimize their own personal ambitions. Social democratic politicians have done it for decades in order to justify watering down the program they articulate. This has made them more supreme in the short term and enabled them to cut deals with conservatives in the legislatures — and the result has been a movement that uses the State power thus gained to administer the capitalist system it started out to oppose. East Greens in Germany have used these contrived mandates from voters to justify their own retreat from the Green program, recapitulating the cooptation of social democracy into the capitalist State in about a quarter of the time.

But more fundamentally the Left Greens should argue that participatory democracy requires a new politics which is based on Green cities and towns. This horizontal dual power will inevitably create a dialectical conflictual situation with both capital and the so-called higher levels of the State. This is more particularly the case when such Green cities confederate into cooperative regional associations.

Whether the municipalists can convince the Greens — and, for that matter, the broader movement toward independent politics now underway in the U.S. — will depend most of all on whether they can demonstrate their theory in practice. One or more examples of municipal Green movements beginning to restructure cities into confederations of municipal assemblies and to implement programs of social and ecological reconstruction would be the most persuasive argument the municipalists
could muster. With the declining fortunes of the national Green parties in Europe, an effective confederal municipalist Green movement in the U.S. could demonstrate an alternative way forward.

WHAT IS SOCIAL ECOLOGY?
by John Clark

Social Ecology is a comprehensive holistic conception of the self, society, and nature. It is, indeed, the first ecological philosophy to present a developed approach to all the central issues of theory and practice. It sets out from the basic ecological principle of organic unity in diversity, affirming that the good of the whole can be realized only through the rich individuality and complex interrelationship of the parts, and it applies this fundamental insight to all realms of experience.

In affirming such a holistic approach, Social Ecology rejects the dualism that has plagued Western civilization since its beginnings: a dualism that sets spirit against matter, soul against body, humanity against nature, subjectivity against objectivity, and reason against feelings; a dualism that is intimately related to the social divisions that are so central to the history of civilization — ruler versus ruled, rich versus poor, urban versus rural, "civilized" versus "savage," male versus female; in short, the dominant versus the dominated.

In opposition to this dualism, Social Ecology proposes a principle of ecological wholeness, which Bookchin defines as "a dynamic unity of diversity" in which "balance and harmony are achieved by ever-changing differentiation." As a result, "stability is a function not of simplicity and

John Clark teaches philosophy at Loyola University in New Orleans. Author of many books and essays including The Anarchist Moment: Reflections on Culture, Nature and Power (Black Rose Books, 1991) and most recently Renewing the Earth, an edited collection of essays in honour of Murray Bookchin (Green Print). This essay was first published in 1988 in a special number of Telos dealing with "A New Vision of the World."
homogeneity but of complexity and variety." The entire course of evolution is seen as a process aiming at increasing this diversification. Thus, there is an ever-increasing richness of diversity, not only in the sense of biological variety and interrelatedness, but also in the sense of richness of value.

Accordingly, evolution should be looked upon as a process of planetary development having direction, and involving the progressive unfolding of potentiality. Social Ecology thus forms part of a long teleological tradition extending from the ancient Greeks to the most advanced 20th-century process philosophies. Yet Bookchin rejects the term "teleology" because of its deterministic connotations and its association with a hierarchical worldview that looks to some transcendent source of order and movement. There is no predetermined, necessary path of evolution and world history. The unfolding of potentiality is best described as a "tendency or nusus," rather than "the 'sure win' of classical teleology."2

This directionality of nature is much like the kind of immanent teleology discovered by the early Taoist philosophers. They explained that each being has its own internal Tao, "way," or striving toward its own particular good. Yet reality as a whole (or that part of it that was most vividly experienced, living Nature, the biosphere) has a more universal "way" that can unfold only through the harmonious realization of all individual goods.3

It is in this sense that the entire process of development of life and mind is a movement toward the attainment of value. For Bookchin, "the universe bears witness to an ever striving, developing — not merely moving — substance, whose most dynamic and creative attribute is its increasing capacity for self-organization into increasingly complex forms."4 Life and mind are not random, chance occurrences in a dead and unconscious universe. Rather, there is a tendency within substance to produce life, consciousness, and self-consciousness; a tendency to differentiate itself, to issue in diversity and complexity in all realms of being.

In nature, all stages of such development are incorporated in the subsequent stages. As a result, there is an important sense in which a being consists largely of its own history. As Bookchin expresses this idea, "radical social ecology reads...continuity and connectedness in all its gradations, mediations, and moments of development. By absorbing them into the large and contextual whole we call ecology, it treasures the wisdom of the cell and of the body, the natural history of the mind and its structure."5 Social Ecology comprehends, in a way that the tradition never has, that mind, like all phenomena, must be understood as rooted in nature and in history.

If natural history is the history of the emergence of life, consciousness, and the self-conscious mind, it is correspondingly the history of the development of freedom. Social Ecology sees freedom as essentially meaning self-determination. In this sense, it is found to some degree at all levels of being; from the self-organizing and self-stabilizing tendencies of the atom, through the growth and metabolic activities of living organisms, to the complex self-realization processes of persons, societies, ecosystems, and the biosphere itself. For Bookchin, "freedom in its most nascent form is already present in the directiveness of life as such, specifically in an organism's active effort to be itself and resist any external forces that vitiates its identity." It is this "germinal freedom" that develops along the path of evolution, and finally becomes the "uninhibited volition and self-consciousness" that is the goal of a fully developed human community.6

It is important to see this planetary evolution as a holistic process, rather than merely as a mechanism of adaptation by individual organisms or species. "Not only do species evolve conjointly and symbiotically with each other: the ecosystem as a whole evolves in mutual synchronicity with the species that comprise it and plays a broad role of whole in relation to its parts."7 Thus, the progressive unfolding of freedom depends on the existence of symbiotic cooperation at all levels — as Kropotkin pointed out almost a century ago. According to Bookchin, recent research shows that this "mutualistic naturalism not only applies to relationships between species, but also morphologically — within and among complex cellular forms."8 We can see, therefore, a striking degree of continuity in nature, so
that the free, mutualistic society towards which we aim is rooted in the most basic levels of being.

According to Social Ecology, this holistic, developmental understanding of organic systems and their evolution has enormous importance for ethics and politics. Indeed, only if the place of humanity in nature and natural processes is understood can we adequately judge questions of value. We then see our own experience of valuing and seeking the good as part of the vast process of the emergence and development of value in nature. Value is achieved in the course of each being, according to its particular nature, attaining its good to the greatest degree possible.

Yet, from an ecological point of view, the realization of the planetary good is not merely the sum of all the particular good attained by all beings. For the biosphere is a whole of which these beings are parts, and a community of which they are members. The common planetary good can therefore be conceptualized only in a non-reductionist, holistic manner. The essential place of humanity in the attainment of this good cannot be underestimated. This is true in large part because of the technical capacity of humanity either to aid evolutionary development through judicious and restrained cooperation with nature or to put an end to the process through nuclear annihilation or degradation of the biosphere. But, in a more fundamental sense, humanity’s role in nature results from the fact that our species constitutes the most richly developed realm of being to emerge thus far in the earth’s evolutionary self-realization.

To say this is not to adopt an anthropocentrism that makes humanity the final or even the only end of nature. Neither is it a biocentrism that would ignore evolutionary developments for the sake of biological egalitarianism. Rather, it is ecocentric in the sense that it requires humanity to situate its good within the larger context of the planetary good, and to transform reason into planetary reason. As Bookchin states, “the greatest single role” of an ecological ethics is “to help us distinguish which of our actions serve the thrust of natural evolution and which of them impede it.”

Human society must therefore transform itself, and renew itself, using ecological wisdom, so that it becomes a social ecological system within a natural ecological system. It must be seen as “an ecosystem based on unity-in-diversity, spontaneity, and non-hierarchical relationships.” This demands that a new ecological sensibility pervade all aspects of our social existence. Such a sensibility perceives “the balance and integrity of the biosphere as an end in itself.” It also recognizes the intrinsic goodness of the self-realization process (the Tao or “way”) of all the diverse beings that share our planetary ecocommunity.

As the mentality of non-domination replaces the prevailing hierarchical outlook, there emerges “a new animism that respects the other for its own sake and responds actively in the form of a creative, loving, and supportive symbiosis.” The mutualism found throughout nature thereby attains its highest development in a mutualistic system of values and perceptions. This new sensibility will give direction to the process of regeneration that must take place at all levels: from nature, to the community, to the individual person.

The renewal of nature is perhaps the most self-evident task today for an ecological movement. According to Social Ecology, it is necessary to create ecocommunities and ecotechnologies that can restore the balance between humanity and nature, and reverse the process of degradation of the biosphere. An ecological community will not attempt to dominate the environment, but rather will be a carefully integrated part of its ecosystem. Rather than continuing the system of obsessive, uncontrolled production and consumption, the community will practice true eco-nomy, the careful attending to and application of “the rules of the household.” The extent to which humans have a desirable impact on the ecosystem can be decided only through careful analysis of both our ability to act on behalf of nature and the detrimental effects of our disturbing the natural balances.

A precondition for the achievement of harmony with nature is the attainment of harmony and balance within society itself. Mechanistic organization based on political and economic power must be replaced by an organic community regulated through common ecological values and a commitment to a common life. The post-scarcity society advocated by Bookchin does not transcend the “realm of necessity” through vastly increased production and consumption of commodities, nor by a more equitable distribution of existing material goods to “the masses.”

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11 Ibid., p. 59.
12 Ibid., p. 268.
society does not fight addiction to harmful substances by even-handedly administering increased doses to each citizen.

Rather, the ecocommunity will achieve abundance through a critical analysis and reshaping of its system of needs. The development of an ecological sensibility will create an awareness of the importance of cultural and spiritual richness that which comes from close human relationships, from aesthetic enjoyment, from the unfolding of diverse human potentials, from spontaneity, play, and all activities liberated from the deadening hand of productive and consumptive rationality. The ecocommunity will seek greater simplicity, and reject the mystifying and dehumanizing economic, technical, and political systems that prevail in mass society. It will highly value the complexity of developed personality, of subtle skills, of disciplined intelligence, of liberated imagination. In short, the greatest wealth of an ecocommunity will consist in the flowering of a richly elaborated libertarian and communitarian culture.

The social forms that will emerge from such a culture will themselves embody the ecological ideal of unity-in-diversity. A fundamental unit will be the commune, a closely knit, small community based on love, friendship, shared values, and commitment to a common life. It is founded on the most intimate "kinship," whether or not this kinship is also biological. In addition, cooperative institutions in all areas of social life will be formed: mutualistic associations for the care and education of children, for production and distribution, for cultural creation, for play and enjoyment, reflection and spiritual renewal. Organization will be based not on the demands of power, but rather on the self-realization of persons as free social beings.

Such a transformation requires vast changes in our conception of the political. As Bookchin states it, "society, conceived of as a diversified and self-developing ecosystem based on complementarity, poses a very distinct notion of politics" that stresses "human scale, decentralization, non-hierarchy, communitarianism, and face-to-face interaction between citizens." The ideal method of decision-making is consensus, which requires an outcome based on full recognition of the worth and competence of all involved in the process. But to the extent that this is impossible, the most participatory forms of democracy are necessary if the values of freedom and community are to be synthesized in practice. Ultimate authority must be retained at the level of the local community — the level of lived experience.

For this reason, a political form that is of crucial importance is the town or neighbourhood assembly. This assembly gives the citizenry a new arena in which to publicly formulate its needs and aspirations. It creates a sphere in which true citizenship can be developed and exercised. While it is conceivable that ecological sensibility and ecological culture can flourish through a diversity of affinity groups, cooperatives, collectives, and associations, the community assembly creates a forum through which this multiplicity can be unified and coordinated, and allows each citizen to conceive vividly of the good of the whole community.

Martin Buber wrote that "the whole fate of the human race" depends on the question of whether there will be a "rebirth of the commune." He perceived clearly that if the world is ever to emerge from its self-destructive path, it must become a universal community. And such a community, he says, can consist only of a "community of communities." If human beings cannot develop a deep sense of community — that is, become communal beings, through the actual practice of living in an authentic community of friends and neighbours — then the vast gulfs that separate us from one another can never be bridged.

Such a possibility depends on a renewal at the most personal level: that of the self. As Bookchin has formulated it, Social Ecology sees the self as a harmonious synthesis of reason, passion, and imagination. Hierarchical power has always demanded the repression of many dimensions of the self. As early as the Odyssey, we find Odysseus, the paradigmatic model of civilized man, vanishing, in the forms of Circe, the Sirens, the Lotus-Eaters, Scylla and Charybdis, and so on, the forces of nature, desire, the feminine, the primitive, the unconscious. And in Plato, the first great ideologist of domination, civilized rationality is exalted as the only truly human part of the psyche, while desire is sublimated as the "many-headed monster" that destroys and devours all.

Social Ecology affirms an ideal of a many-sided self, in which diverse aspects attain a mutually compatible development. The self is seen as an organic whole, yet as a whole in constant process of self-transformation and self-transcendence. The myth of the self as a completed totality, as a hierarchical system with a "ruling part," is a fiction designed to facilitate
adaptation to a system of domination. The self contains, on the one hand, its own individuality: its own internal telos, its striving toward a good that flows in large part from its own nature. Yet the nature of that good and the development toward it is incomprehensible apart from one's dialectical interaction with other persons, with the community, and with the rest of nature. The goal is thus the maximum realization of both individual uniqueness and social being.

This conception of self and society does not accept the myth that all tension and conflict can ever miraculously disappear. Indeed, this delusion is more typical of reactionary psychologies of “adaptation.” Instead, it must be recognized that personal growth takes place only through dialectical interaction within the self, and between the self and others. The interrelationship between reason, passion, and imagination will always be dynamic and tend toward discord. In recognizing the inevitable multiplicity of the self, Social Ecology is in the tradition of the great utopian philosopher Fourier, who exhorted us never to deny or repress the vast diversity of human passions and interests; instead, all should be recognized, affirmed, and harmonized to the greatest degree possible — so that the self can be as much a complex unity-in-diversity as are community and nature.

Bookchin has aptly said that the creation of a true ecological community is, above all, a work of art. In the same spirit, we might say that the creation of the organic self, this complex unity of multiplicity, is the most exquisite work of art ever undertaken by humanity and nature.

THE PITFALLS OF PROMISCUITY: SOVIET POLITICS TODAY
by J. Frank Harrison

During a visit to Moscow some months ago in June, to “test the air,” I was told on more than one occasion that the president of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, is nothing more than a “whore.” The word is meant to suggest that he is a political pragmatist, pursuing power, prepared to go into whatever political bed is necessary for achieving that goal.

Of course, Gorbachev used to have policy goals, summed up by the terms glasnost and perestroika, the joint purpose of which was to reintegrate the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) with the population at large, since it was a ruling party which had lost all purpose beyond the perpetuation of its own privileges. Gorbachev rightly recognized that it had feet of clay and that the population was thoroughly alienated from its slogans and policies.

None of this is either original or new. Without reiterating the evidence, it was clear a decade ago that the Soviet regime suffered a crisis of confidence among the wider population. It was possible then to argue that

Ordinary people, not the mythical ‘socialist man’, turn away from politics and are as nicely idiosyncratic as people anywhere. Without organizing any opposition to the Soviet System or the CPSU, they opt out of the theory and practice of the grand design and pursue their own private

Professor Harrison is chair of the Political Science Department at St. Francis Xavier University, a member of the Our Generation board, and author of several books, including The Modern State (Black Rose Books, 1983). He has published numerous studies of state capitalism and its political forms in Eastern Europe.
interest away from the glare of the public realm (to which they are indifferent).

...The official pronouncements of the regime come to be regarded as the colourful veneer of a political system which functions somewhat differently, ideas which have nothing to do with the real business of life. It is the fear that this already-whispered truth will become the public's general opinion which accounts for the constant and continued rejection of 'left-wing' ideas both at home and abroad. Communists feel insecure in their authority, and seek to affirm their legitimacy against a recurring political scepticism.

That insecurity of political tenure was reinforced also by the administrative incompetence of the regime. Economic stagnation and political corruption exposed the ideological dogmatism of the regime, leading as it did to unrealized material expectations. So it seemed reasonable to conclude that Gorbachev's policies of democratization, openness, and reconstruction were motivated by a desire to give a new lease on life to a communist party of self-serving (and ideologically indifferent) incompetents.

Gorbachev's 'reformism' was best understood, therefore, as a means of ingratiating the Party with the public through a process of purge (in the softest sense) of the Party, and by drawing the general population into cooperative participation through political and economic reforms. Gorbachev's goal was to save the ruling Party from the consequences of its corruption and incompetence. That the various reforms were unlikely to succeed was also clear by the end of the 80s — the cause being not only the opposition of the Party and State hierarchy but also the continuing mistrust by numerous sectors of the population.

Gorbachev was left balancing on a metaphorical razor's edge, hostage to the organizing forces of conservatism on the one side and the disruptive forces of popular indifference and nationalist uprising on the other. So, by the end of the 80s it was possible to see, on the one hand, that

...bureaucratic conservatives, military conservatives, or Russian chauvinists and racists of the Pamyat society, might initiate a new

authoritarianism — what Andrei Sakharov has referred to as the danger of fascism.

And on the other,

...the possibility of total State collapse because of the lack of will and lack of capacity of the regime to hold things together. We have seen the internal lack of cohesion and the lack of any general identity with the CPSU. Only the Russian half of the population seems to care anything about the USSR.7

Gorbachev was a politician trying to function within an ongoing system, adapting it through constitutional and structural reform to the requirements for the continued hegemony of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. And he failed, as the events of August 1991 demonstrated.

The Pawnbroker Broken

When the world heard about the overthrow of Gorbachev on August 19, 1991, it appeared that the fascist option had been taken by the Communist Party, the military, and the security forces (KGB). The Western press sang the praises of a godlike figure:

The most important man in the world is now under arrest in a Crimean dacha. No living political leader has so profoundly changed our lives as has Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev. He transformed the Soviet Union, he freed Eastern Europe, he reunified Germany, he ended 40 years of nuclear confrontation between East and West, and he brought sanity and hope back into the relations between nations. His fall is not only a disaster for Russia and the USSR. It is a tragedy of planetary proportions.3

This was the same man whom the Muscovites called a whore, by which we must understand that he had accepted some strange political bedfellows.

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in order to maintain his position as president of the USSR and general secretary of the CPSU. Indeed, he had. In August 1991 the very people whom he had supported as prime minister (Pavlov), interior minister (Pugo), head of the KGB (Kryuchkov), head of the ministry of defence (Yazov), vice-president of the country (Yanayev), and speaker of the Supreme Soviet (Lukyanov) conspired to remove him by use of armed force.

Gorbachev had worked with these traitors, as they were later defined, because his political imagination saw no further than the Communist Party, which was his entire political base. Within the Party he sought to make compromises between divergent personalities and groups — like any political broker in any political system — using this as the basis of the perpetuation of his status and power. This meant giving high office to persons whom everyone knew were authoritarians. Therefore, in mid-July, 1990, Moscow experienced a demonstration by some 400,000 people (according to organizers) demanding the resignation of Gorbachev because he was too reactionary. Speakers demanded the CPSU give up its extensive properties. Oleg Kalugin, former head of the Leningrad KGB, a hero particularly popular because he had been stripped of his medals and his pension by Gorbachev, was one of many who publicly stated that he was turning in his party card. Politics was still seen by these demonstrators to be a monopoly of the Party, and democratic participation a charade.

When the removal of Gorbachev was announced, it appeared that the aforementioned fascist possibility had taken place; and that Gorbachev had been cast upon the garbage heap of history, suffering the consequences of his political machinations. However, with the lack of capacity to control all of the armed forces, the eight-man Committee of National Emergency lost its cohesion and its confidence. The conscript troops that had invaded Moscow could not be depended on to shoot their fellow citizens; and the KGB commanders asked to invade and disperse the Supreme Soviet of the Russian republic, then meeting in Moscow, simply refused to accept the order. Boris Yeltsin, who had been recently elected president of the Russian republic with 60% of the popular vote, became a vocal symbol against the coup and in favour of the reinstatement of Gorbachev, an event which occurred before three days were over.

4 This is the same Kalugin who had his position and pension returned by Gorbachev after the people of Moscow saved the country from the authoritarian designs of Gorbachev's political friends.

This was not, however, a return to the status quo. The dynamics of the situation appear to have driven the USSR rapidly down the path of disintegration as a single state. The fake federalism of 15 union republics had always been held together by the Party; and the Party had been the vehicle for Gorbachev's political power — even though many in the Party opposed some of his policies. As it became clear that large sections of the party had supported the coup, and that many more had sat on their hands afraid to do anything against it (the foreign minister Bessmertnykh being typical), the Party came under attack. Party offices were closed down by republican governments; party activity was declared illegal in many cities. The consequence was an acceleration in the second process already underway — the collapse of the state. With it, of course, went the collapse of Gorbachev's authority as head of the state. As for his position of general secretary of the Party, he publicly resigned his party membership in a futile attempt to distance himself from it.

Gorbachev's return to Moscow after the defeat of the coup was not, therefore, triumphal. With no razor's edge to balance on any more, he has to consider his own declining relevance. His best chance for a political future is to continue to pursue the role of political broker, arranging compromises between opposing interests. Those interests will not be played out within the Party, however, but will be regional in form, as the various republics attempt to hammer out bilateral and multilateral agreements. Deprived of the role of tragic hero, Gorbachev no longer appears as "the most important man in the world," and is more like the bit-part actor in a drama that centres on people and situations over which he has little control.

The Centre Could Not Hold

Perhaps it speaks to the character of the changes promoted by Gorbachev during the last six years that the coup failed. The USSR, certainly in the cities, has become a hotbed of debate, and freedom of discussion and demonstrations is normal. Glairsty and perestroika allowed the development of centres of social activity independent of the Communist Party; Gorbachev has claimed that it was this that defeated the coup. True or not, Gorbachev returned to Moscow a spent force. His policies had also demonstrated what others, like former foreign minister Shevardnadze, former Canadian ambassador and close advisor Yakovlev, and former inte-
rior minister Bakatin, had already told him: that the CPSU, a centralized organization of some 20 millions, led by professional and privileged apparatchiks, was incapable of making the psychological and structural changes necessary for a transformation of the economics and politics of the USSR. Faced with the prospect of a new union treaty reducing Moscow’s authority over taxation and natural resources, to be signed by Gorbachev and nine of the presidents of the republics on August 20, the Party leadership (the Central Committee) went along with a militaristic alternative.

Was Gorbachev surprised? It is easy to have 20/20 hindsight. However, we must remember that on November 14, 1990, Marshal Akhromeyev (who was to commit suicide when the coup failed), had stated that the army might be used to maintain the State’s integrity. On November 27, 1990, the defence minister, Yazov, appeared on television to defend the honour of the army, stating that he had ordered the military to open fire on anyone attacking military facilities. On December 11, 1990, KGB head Kryuchkov stated on television that the country was in the hands of extremist radical groups with foreign support. Through the first months of this year, troops of the interior ministry, headed by Pugo, were killing people in Latvia. In the February 1991 meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, hardliners were highly critical of Gorbachev — with Yegor Ligachev being brought out of retirement to accuse Gorbachev of “insufficient firmness and inconsistency” while also referring to the collapse of communist regimes throughout the Warsaw Pact countries as a “major defeat of world socialism.” What had happened in Eastern Europe was perhaps pointing the way that the USSR would follow — if something were not done by the Party. Just three days before the coup, the military journal Krasnaya Zvezda had argued that communists in the military were “responsible for the fate of the Motherland and the Party.” On the same day, Gorbachev’s former advisor, Yakovlev, resigned from the Party, specifically warning of a coup by “Stalinists.”

However, even if Gorbachev read the signs, it is questionable that he could have done anything about it; the Party was his vehicle of political power, and without it he would be irrelevant — as he seems to be today.

And perhaps the Stalinists, the plotters, were correct. Developments in Eastern Europe perhaps did show the way of the future, there being a pattern according to which communist regimes are born, mature, and then go into decline. If there is, and taking Europe and the USSR as evidence, it looks something like this:

Communists take the power of the State (or are given it by an occupying power) and seek to organize society according to principles of justice as defined by their ideology. In so doing they are prepared to use violence against those who are regarded as opposing the revolution. Some enemies are regarded as “objective” enemies, such as the very wealthy, or the Church, or politicians of a different viewpoint, i.e. those who are identified as “class enemies” and are imprisoned or eliminated without having committed any specific crime.

The single ruling Party becomes a ruling caste, denying the possibility of legitimate opposition and using its position to give itself privileges in society. The socialist doctrine of equality becomes a theory and a practice justifying inequality. This inequality is based on political power rather than on economic status.

The recruitment of the upwardly mobile into the ranks of the Party maintains its power by keeping “the best and the brightest” as well as the ambitious under its control. The mass of the population is guaranteed employment and minimum social benefits such as health and education. Propaganda via the state-owned media constantly legitimizes the system, while the political police ensure the removal of critical remnants, usually intellectuals.

Ideology and propaganda do not reflect the reality of daily experience, and a sense of inferiority, or perhaps of lost opportunity, is found when “communism” is compared to technologically superior and wealthier non-socialist societies. The official ideology is not taken seriously, even by those who benefit from it as members of the sociopolitical elite.

A few intellectuals criticize the system, either through underground pamphlets or through publications in foreign countries. These persons are easily dealt with either by internment or by exile. However, these intellectuals only reflect the tip of an iceberg of antipathy. Broad indifference and cynicism towards the political system is found even inside the ruling Communist Party, whose rank and file know that they hold party membership simply for the advantages that it brings. Commitment to the official ideology is withheld, regarded as a vocabulary of self-justification separate from and irrelevant to the day-to-day business of life.

Legitimacy is recognizably lost, measured by the absence of support for the political system and its symbols, and irretrievably so in the face of an economic stagnation that can be seen in every state capitalist economy. Even without demonstrations and the formation of opposition movements
demanding change — and these do occur also — the Party leadership recognizes its inability to make and implement policies from the centre.

Economic and social reforms are introduced in an attempt to breathe life into the system of state ownership and control. The purpose is to give dynamism to the economy and society without threatening the communist monopoly of political power. It is argued that this is "real socialism" or "humanist socialism" as opposed to the authoritarian deviations of the past. However, the liberalization fails insofar as it is opposed by state bureaucrats frightened of losing their privileges. It also encourages public criticism, demonstrations, and the formation of opposition movements — which carefully avoid calling themselves political parties, such is the popular antipathy towards "the Party." Social stability is threatened by criticism, demonstrations, and strikes.

The ruling communist elite decides not to use coercion to restore discipline. Although this decision has sometimes gone the other way, the leaders usually conclude that they cannot, for they lack faith in their ability to control the armed forces. The officer class is university-educated professionals with no high opinion of party hacks, and the average soldier is an unhappy conscript who does not want to shoot people who look like his friends and relatives on the street.

The collapse of authority takes place. This has occurred particularly rapidly in central and eastern Europe as it becomes clear that the USSR will not intervene to maintain its sphere of influence. Those communists who had previously advocated reforms to allow more independence for individuals and groups in both social and economic structures now begin to abandon the Party and join opposition "movements" and "forums." The old communist regime is confronted by an alternative ruling group, an almost unanimous popular rejection, and no dependable armed force to suppress widespread rebelliousness. Consequently, the ruling group accepts non-communists into its administration, arranges for competitive elections, reluctantly accepts its own demise as politicians, and embarks on new careers, usually as businessmen.

A non-communist government takes power, frequently with a popular anti-government figure at its head — even though this may be a person who was formerly a member of the Communist Party. The new regime looks westward for capitalist "aid" to finance a privatization of the economy. From the debate over the nature of the post-communist regime a multiparty system emerges. The first split is between those who want an unfettered capitalism, with a harsh but rapid transformation into a market economy, and those who would introduce capitalism with its associated social problems gradually, maintaining a prominent role for the State in the economy.

Of course, each State has certain idiosyncratic features stemming from the character and history of its society. In the case of the USSR, its multinational character was an important determinant. As reforms were introduced, nationalist and separatist movements developed in the various republics — most markedly in the Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia and in Georgia, Moldova, and Armenia. In this model of development and decline, the USSR was at the stage of major reform prior to August 1991. By the end of August it had moved into the final phase. In this case, however, given the multinational character of the USSR, the collapse of Party control went hand in hand with the disintegration of the Union itself.

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

This is to be welcomed of course. It demonstrates that political-economic hierarchies can be disrupted and destroyed in spite of their monopoly of coercive force. However, the direction taken by the alternate regimes thus far leaves one in dismay. The new, "non-communist" rulers were often practicing communists until most recently, and they are rightly suspected of being political opportunists. Former apparatchiks change their political labels but continue to pursue power — Yeltsin in Russia and Kravchuk in the Ukraine are but two prominent examples. Most leaders in the republics are driven by atavistic national passions, and we have seen these develop into a violent repression of minorities in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. If that nationalism were to develop into the main political force of the Russian republic as well, then a new Russian empire could be in the making — although this seems unlikely at this time, given the grave economic situation.

The most telling and regrettable circumstance today is the widespread acceptance by the new leaderships of what J.K. Galbraith has called, and criticized, "theological laissez faire." The new non-communist rulers are everywhere attracted by the ideological simplicities of the so-called "market economy" — so much so that entirely spontaneous economic
development, grounded in capitalist property forms, is presumed to have created wealth and satisfaction in the societies of North America, Japan, and Western Europe. The grand economic question of 1991 became: How can we successfully transform our economies into ones where individuals own capital and use it efficiently to produce goods and services for profit? Privatization has become the order of the day, with the presumption that, if individuals make themselves rich, then this wealth will spread through the rest of society. The broad acceptance of this faith marks a dramatic change in the government and policies of virtually every one of the states calling themselves socialist until a few historical milliseconds ago.

Turning to the West for economic advice, aid, and investment, the new regimes place themselves under the influence of neo-conservative economic policies. Thus we have seen the IMF and World Bank linking their Polish and Hungarian loans to promises of reduced social expenditures and rising prices. The ugly side of capitalism must be embraced as the concomitant part of a recovery that is hoped for but far from guaranteed. Meanwhile, the new rulers, shrouded in a mythical veil of “freedom,” drive down the standard of living, drive up unemployment, and keep their populations powerless by presenting themselves as the saviours of national identity. The model of this new politician is the Polish prime minister, Krzysztof Bielecki.

Now That the Party’s Over

Not all recent developments have been discouraging, however. In a triumph of popular will, soviet civil society (in particular, urban society) defeated both a military coup and the power of the Communist Party in August 1991. Significantly, it was the municipal councils who took the lead in organizing the opposition to the coup. The popular resistance in the streets, especially by young people, was put together and coordinated at the city council level, and these councils publicly denounced the putsch throughout the Soviet Union.

At the level of the elite, the attempted coup created an opportunity for anti-Party politicians to take power in the State, with Yeltsin being the most noisome and ambitious. Hopefully, it will not be too long before more clear-eyed people realize that these heroes of the hour cannot make themselves blameless by calling themselves anti-communist. Whether the new leaders be polite former professors like President Landsbergis of Lithuania or authoritarian racists like President Gamsakhurdia of Georgia, they represent the new problem.

This assertion is not a simple anarchist rejection of all political power. It is also a structural critique, a recognition that the new economic policies will create a capitalist hierarchy to complement that of the State. It is a critique crying out for elaboration within the rapidly changing societies of the East; more than ever there is an urgent need for radical movements and left-wing debate.

In any context, but especially here and now, it is as erroneous to think that universal privatization will solve society’s problems as it is for Marxist-Leninists to presume that the State will produce an all-satisfying harmony. Only those who think in an either/or manner, unrealistic and simplistic as it is, can share the doomed optimism of the market economists. Socialist aspiration will not disappear in spite of the failures of its Leninist form. The end of Leninism in the USSR — and probably the end of the USSR itself as anything more than a loose economic federation of newly autonomous States — is likely to be the basis of a revitalized socialist debate, one now freed from the hindrance of state capitalist distortion.

Socialists, and particularly libertarian socialist-anarchists, have many reasons to applaud the collapse of Gorbachev and his back-stabbing comrades. Leninism has always been an encumbrance; now it stands naked and rejected. Even Gorbachev, the last hope of Leninism and its final “whore,” no longer appears to have customers to whom he might sell his person or his purpose.
BOOK REVIEW


by Graham Baugh

In The Sexual Contract,1 Carole Pateman extends and deepens the critique of contract theory that she began in her previous study, The Problem of Political Obligation,2 but this time from an avowedly feminist perspective. The result is an incisive critique of contract ideology that both reveals and transcends the limitations of Pateman’s own earlier work.

That work is well surveyed in her more recent collection of essays, The Disorder of Women.3 The earliest piece in the collection, from 1975, deals with the liberal-democratic conception of politics. Pateman argued then that the liberal reification of politics as an autonomous sphere existing above society both mystifies the nature of the modern State, including its class basis, and unintentionally illustrates the degree to which that State is beyond the control of the people whose interests it is supposed to represent.

As an alternative to liberal democracy, Pateman advocated something she then described as “self-managing democracy,” a “political community composed of a multiplicity of participatory or self-managed units.”4 This was an extension of her arguments regarding the feasibility of industrial democracy contained in her first book, Participation and Democratic Theory,5 in which she also criticized many of the theoretical assumptions and interpretations of conventional empirical studies of political participation (she returned to many of these issues in her 1980 paper, “The Civic Culture: A Philosophic Critique”).6 Even then, Pateman argued that the concept of self-management should be extended beyond the industrial sphere and that it has far-reaching implications. Much of her later work demonstrates how far-reaching those implications can be.

She further developed her critique of liberal-democratic theory in The Problem of Political Obligation, arguing that the liberal notion of political obligation cannot be given expression in the liberal-democratic State. Ironically, then, liberal notions of political obligation, “if taken seriously, lead beyond the liberal-democratic state,” as she put it in her contemporary essay, “Justifying Political Obligation.”7 The only form of democratic politics that can give expression to the liberal ideal of self-assumed obligation is a self-managing polity in which people continually recreate in their common undertakings relationships of reciprocal obligation by directly democratic means.

Much of The Problem of Political Obligation consisted of an impressive reconstruction and critique of social contract theory, particularly as developed by Hobbes, Locke, and, more recently, Rawls. Pateman contrasted their “fraudulent” social contract, in which individuals exchange their obedience for the protection of the State, to the democratic theory of Rousseau, in which politics is no longer conceived as being based on a self-interested exchange but as a means of giving expression to and maintaining the substantive freedom and equality of all citizens.

In The Sexual Contract, Pateman reconsidered contract theory from a feminist perspective and demonstrates the degree to which Rousseau, the great critic of liberal democracy, shared many of his opponents’ patriarchal assumptions. The issue then arises as to whether Rousseau’s alternative conception of politics is vitiated by his own patriarchism.

Pateman’s own conception of participatory democracy had been drawn in large part from Rousseau, who has always been a central figure in her

Graham Baugh is a lawyer and a student of moral and political theory.

4 Ibid., p. 111.
6 Reprinted in The Disorder of Women.
7 The Disorder of Women, p. 69.
writings. In Rousseau she found powerful arguments for rejecting the narrow conception of politics found in liberal theory. In her earlier work, possibly as a result of his influence, she did not clearly distinguish between two very different ways of conceptualizing the “public/private dichotomy” that characterizes the liberal conception of politics.

As she points out in her 1983 paper, “Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy,” the “public” can be conceived as merely encompassing the political sphere of government and the State, in which case the “private” is conceived largely in economic terms, with debate between liberals and radicals focusing on the validity of this separation. Much of Rousseau’s argument can be interpreted in these terms.

However, this conceptualization downplays the importance of or simply ignores those aspects of private life that cannot be subsumed adequately under either category. In particular, the “domestic” sphere of sexual and familial relations is treated as though it were irrelevant to the discussion. The degree to which modern liberal society is structured by the patriarchal separation between the public world of men, including the political and the economic spheres, and the private world of women becomes completely obscured. In The Sexual Contract, Pateman seeks to uncover this hidden aspect of modern liberalism, and in her essay “Feminism and Democracy” she discusses the problems this separation presents for the creation of a truly democratic society.

Rousseau himself was quite clear as to why women must be excluded from the public world of men. In his view, women by their very nature are unfit for political life and constitute a continual threat to the social order: They are incapable of subordinating their emotions and desires to the requirements of justice and reason (a view shared by Freud, as Pateman points out in the title essay of The Disorder of Women).

Because women lack the attributes that render men capable of entering a political association, they must be excluded both from the social contract and from the very notion of the “individual.” The “individual” contracting agent is defined as having all the capacities that women lack, and the conventional, rational order of men is contrasted to the natural disorder of women. Thus, the public world of men, the “civil society” created by the social contract, “gains its universal meaning in opposition to the private sphere of natural subjection and womanly capacities.”

It is this patriarchal construction of individuality, sexual difference, nature, society, and politics that Pateman describes as the “sexual contract.” Together with the slave contract, the story of the sexual contract “is a repressed dimension of contract theory,” an integral part of the original agreement described by the social contract theorists. By retelling the story of the sexual contract, Pateman hopes to show that the “new civil society created through the original contract is a patriarchal social order.”

The fact that modern civil society is a patriarchal order is obscured by narrow definitions of patriarchy as paternal right. Literal interpretations of patriarchy as the right of the father over his children render invisible the domination of adult women by adult men. Exploiting these interpretations, modern civil society is able to portray itself as the antithesis of patriarchal society, paternal right having been replaced by the “impersonal” authority of the law and the State.

Sexual Rights, Sexual Obligations

What these definitions ignore is the notion that conjugal right must precede paternal right. Before men can become fathers they must have sexual access to women. The sexual contract transforms the conjugal and paternal right of the father into the right of all men to have sexual access to women’s bodies. By means of the social contract men create civil society and the State; by means of the sexual contract they exclude women from these public spheres and thereby render women’s sexual subordination politically irrelevant.

Civil society is structured by the sexual contract in yet another way. The existence of the “individual” contracting agent presupposes the existence of a private sphere of sexual subordination. Men do not appear out of nowhere as fully fledged contracting agents. They are born and raised by women, who also provide them with the unpaid labour “housework,” that enables them to participate in their “public” world of work, business, and politics.

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8 Reprinted in *The Disorder of Women*.
9 Reprinted in *The Disorder of Women*.
10 *The Sexual Contract*, p. 113.
In contemporary capitalist societies many of the legal barriers to women’s membership and participation in civil society have been removed. Social and economic barriers nevertheless remain. Yet even the classic contract theorists, including Rousseau, never entirely excluded women from civil society; they found various means by which to include women, thereby subjecting them to civil authority while keeping them subordinate. The primary means of inclusion was the marriage contract.

Contract, Pateman argues, is the peculiarly modern means of creating, maintaining, and justifying relationships of domination and subordination, all in the name of a fictitious universal freedom. All contracts that create ongoing social relationships involve an exchange of the property that one has in one’s own person. But because property in the person cannot be separated from the person to whom the property belongs, all such exchanges in reality involve the subordination of that person, whether worker, wife, or servant, as Pateman seeks to demonstrate in her examination of the employment, marriage, prostitution, and surrogacy contracts.

Contracts involving property in the person generally have two stages. In the first, the parties exchange words or signatures in order to create a particular social relationship, such as that between employer and worker or husband and wife. In the second, one party agrees to obey the other in exchange for protection. The prostitution contract does not really fit this model, being too short in duration to involve any element of protection. The prostitute must nevertheless obey the customer by providing the sexual “services” requested. In exchange she receives money but no other benefits, unlike workers and wives. Ideally, individual contracts mirror the social contract, in which individuals exchange their natural freedom for the protection of the State. Obedience is always the price for security and subsistence.

Pateman therefore argues that it is a mistake to focus on the inequality of bargaining power between contracting parties. This leaves the possibility that social relationships created by contracts involving property in the person would be acceptable if genuinely freely entered into despite the fact that they entail the subordination of one of the parties. But as she herself admits, only unequal parties would ever voluntarily agree to subordinate themselves to others, so the focus on inequality of bargaining power is not entirely misplaced.

She also argues that to focus on the exploitation that results from contracts between unequal parties obscures the fact that it is the relationship of subordination created by contract that makes exploitation possible. The capitalist must gain “the political right to determine how the labour of the worker will be used” before he can “engage in exploitation.” Similarly, the husband must gain the political right to the services of his wife before he can exploit her unpaid labour.

But is it really the case that contract cannot be shorn of its patriarchal precedents? In Canada, for example, women have now been granted the civil rights of men, including security of the person, and husbands who rape their wives no longer enjoy legal immunity from prosecution. Nevertheless, Pateman would argue, sexual subordination still exists and is maintained, at least in part, by contract and by the social meanings attached to it.

Consider the position of women in contemporary democratic capitalist societies. Pateman shows that the patriarchal construction of what it means to be a “wife” is still predominant, even though it may have lost some of its legal supports. Married women are still expected to do the housework, raise the children, and provide sexual services to their husbands. Women who work outside the home are not referred to as “workers” but as “working mothers,” and often identify themselves as such, illustrating the extent to which the category of “worker” itself remains primarily a masculine one. At work, women are subject to sexual harassment and are confined to lower paying and less prestigious jobs. At home and at work, a woman’s refusal to engage in sexual relations is often interpreted by men as consent, a graphic demonstration of the contradictions of women’s legal incorporation into civil society (the theme of Pateman’s aptly titled essay “Women and Consent” in The Disorder of Women).

Contracts Without Enforcers?

A committed contractarian would respond that none of this proves that the notion of contract is itself irredeemably patriarchal. A consistent contractarian would dispense with or oppose prescribed sexual roles and advocate that all men and women should be free to dispose of the property in their persons as they please.

\[13\text{Ibid., p. 149.}\]
There are a number of problems with this response. First, unless men and women are substantively equal, women will continue to be forced by circumstance into entering contracts that preserve their subordinate status. From the standpoint of contract, it would be irrational to agree to terms that do not preserve and enhance one's superiority, and in contemporary capitalist societies it is men who enjoy the superior position. Liberal contractarians, being committed to maintaining the separation of "public" and "private" spheres, must therefore oppose the political transformation of the "private" social relationships upon which women’s subordination is based. For liberals to admit that private relationships are politically relevant would be for them to abandon their liberal conception of politics.

But there is an even more fundamental objection. Suppose a consistent contractarian agrees that the liberal conception of politics is arbitrary and unworkable. Further, this contractarian (call him "Proudhon," if you like) agrees that contracts are valid only if the parties to them are free and equal in a substantive as well as legal sense (in fact, Proudhon was a firm proponent of the sexual contract, but unlike him we will not limit his arguments to men). This contractarian is, as it were, a socialist.

Pateman claims that even this "contract socialism" cannot successfully eliminate subordination. If the parties to the contract are self-interested "individuals" who contract with each other to "make mutually advantageous use of the property in their persons," they will continually be faced with the problem of ensuring that each of them performs his or her side of the bargain. They can do this, Pateman argues, only by subordinating themselves to each other.14

Pateman seems to conflate monitoring each other’s performance with mutual subordination, but does the former necessarily entail the latter? There are a number of ways by which contract socialists could ensure performance of contractual obligations without anyone being put in a position of authority. Proudhon advocated a system of mutual guarantees, a sort of insurance system that would protect people from nonperformance (by guaranteeing, for example, that they would receive that which they had contracted for, or its equivalent). Such a system would remove the uncertainty making nonperformance a rational alternative. Those who failed to perform their obligations would not receive such protection — a

strong disincentive to shirking or taking a "free ride." Nevertheless, no one would have the political right to determine the manner in which each person disposes of his or her property in the person. Consequently, there would be no opportunity for exploitation, and each person’s substantive freedom and equality would be preserved.15

What this response inadvertently demonstrates is that contract socialism cannot possibly function outside some sort of institutional framework. The problem of nonperformance is insolvable within the context of individual contracts between self-maximizing individuals. Institutions are required to render performance rational for individuals seeking to maximize their individual advantage. Absent such institutions, it will always be rational for contracting agents in conditions of uncertainty to renege on their commitments.

Further, not all social relationships can be reduced to contractual relationships (Proudhon himself acknowledged that the family cannot be based on contract). Contract socialism, like other, liberal forms of contractarianism, presupposes the existence of noncontractual relationships. But if one rejects the liberal conception of politics, these noncontractual relationships cannot be dismissed as politically insignificant; neither can the institutions that make a contractual order feasible. Proudhon’s contract socialism, like Rousseau’s democracy, presupposes the existence of both a "private" sphere of sexual subordination and institutions that perform political functions (as he admitted in his later work, *The Principle of Federation*).16

The Person As Property

Not only socialists have sought to reform contracts. Indeed, some feminists argue that the marriage contract should not be completely rejected — despite its historical role in the subjection of women — but transformed into a genuinely free agreement between equals. Pateman, not surprisingly, rejects this approach, for so long as the "individual" is conceived patriarchally as the owner of the property in his or her own

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person, marriage will be nothing more than an agreement by which two persons grant access to their sexual property. Because sexual property cannot be separated from the person to whom it belongs, any agreement requires the person granting such use to subordinate himself or herself to the other.

If the marriage contract is transformed into a contract of mutual advantage and reciprocal use, the parties to the contract will want it to last only as long as it works to their advantage. Marriage contracts must be capable of being dissolved at any time; otherwise they would inhibit the free exchange of sexual property in the person. Ultimately, marriage itself would be replaced by a universal market in bodies and sexual services, or universal prostitution.

Interestingly, some contractarians do not deny this possibility. Neither do they see anything wrong with universal prostitution, at least between “consenting” adults. Pateman argues that the prostitution contract must itself be rejected. The purchase by a man in the capitalist market of the sexual use of a woman's body constitutes the means by which “men gain public acknowledgement as women's sexual masters.” It cannot be ignored that the vast majority of people who purchase the “services” of prostitutes are men, and that the vast majority of prostitutes are women. Prostitution, by ensuring the public availability of women's bodies for the use of men, is an example of the exercise of the law of male sex-right in civil society itself. Contractarian defenders of prostitution who ignore this fact misrepresent the political and social significance of prostitution.

If Pateman is correct in arguing that the modern contractual order is a patriarchal order, then one would expect new forms of contracts involving property in the person to reflect that order. Consider, then, surrogacy contracts. Absent legislation to the contrary, some judges have held that when a man hires a woman to carry to term an egg fertilized by his sperm he has paternal right over the child, despite the fact that it is the woman who gives birth to the child and that, in most cases, it was her egg that was fertilized. As Pateman comments, patriarchy “in its literal meaning has returned in a new guise.”

Pateman admits, however, that it is too early to tell where this will all lead, for artificial insemination also “enables women to become mothers without sexual relations with men.” Moreover, Pateman is incorrect in claiming that “sperm is the only example of property in the person that is not a political fiction.” Eggs, blood, tissue, cells, kidneys, retinas, and various other body parts can also literally be separated from the body of their owner and sold in the market. It is unclear whether contracts for the sale of such body parts necessarily involve any sort of subordination, although they may well involve the worst forms of exploitation.

At the heart of contract doctrine lies the contradiction of slavery. Contracts involving property in the person inseparable from an embodied self always involve an exchange in which the other party acquires a right of command over that self. Without this right of command, there would be no guarantee that the property in the person, which is the subject of the exchange, would be used in the manner that the purchaser requires.

So long as the political fiction is maintained that one can exchange the property in one's person without selling one's self, contract can be portrayed as a means of creating free relations, even when one freely exchanges the property in one's person for the duration of one's life and thereby constitutes oneself a civil slave. As Pateman remarks, the fact that “individual freedom, through contract, can be exemplified in slavery should give socialists and feminists pause when they make use of the idea of contract and the individual as owner.” Civil slavery can be avoided only by either placing limits on freedom of contract or rejecting the notion of the individual as owner of the property in his person.

According to contract doctrine, each person is free to dispose of the property in his or her person, but any such disposition entails the subordination of that person. Thus, the freedom of the party selling the property in his or her person is simultaneously denied and affirmed. The purchaser does not merely desire the “services” of the seller, but recognition by the seller of the purchaser's civil mastery. Moreover, as Pateman emphasizes, the use to which the seller's body is put, or the kind of access granted, “depends on whether a man or a woman is constituted as a subordinate.”

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17 The Sexual Contract, p. 208.
18 Ibid., p. 217.
19 Ibid., p. 218.
20 Ibid., p. 217.
21 Ibid., p. 15.
22 Ibid., p. 231.
Neither Contracts Nor Restraints

Even if it were possible for men and women to confront each other as equal contracting agents, the result would be a world of mutual domination and exploitation in which order ultimately could be maintained only by force. Thus Hobbes' *Leviathan* presents us not with a picture of the beginnings of civil society, but of its end, and it is to just such an end that the politics of the new right is leading us. This is why Pateman argues that ultimately contract must be rejected as a means of creating and maintaining social relationships. In its place she advocates the creation of a noncontractual social order in which men and women "willingly agree to uphold the social conditions of their autonomy." 25

Thus, although Pateman rejects contract, she does not reject other forms of free agreement, such as self-assumed obligation (the social practice of promising, for example). But she is careful to insist that self-assumed obligation and freedom itself require a particular kind of social order if the mutual autonomy of men and women is to be maintained. This implies that some limits to individual freedom will be justified in order to preserve that social order, and raises the Rousseauian paradox of forcing people to be free.

In *The Problem of Political Obligation* Pateman rejected this aspect of Rousseau's argument and defended the right of dissent. If social or political relationships of subordination are inherently illegitimate, then all attempts to reconstitute such relationships, even by means of free agreement or majority vote, must be opposed. Autonomous men and women will always be faced with the daunting task of determining whether any action, policy, or social relationship fosters or hinders their mutual autonomy. For them to assign this task to a State set up above them would be for them not only to abdicate a fundamental responsibility for their political order but to subordinate themselves once again to an alien social power, the State. To reject the patriarchal order created by the sexual and social contracts is also to reject the State that holds that patriarchal social order together. As Pateman argues, they "stand and fall together." 24

In the conclusion to *The Sexual Contract*, she admits that her retelling of the story of the sexual contract "does not, in itself, provide a political program." 25 What it does provide is a perspective "from which to assess political possibilities and to judge whether this path or that will aid or hinder (or both) the creation of a free society and the creation of sexual difference as diverse expressions of freedom." 26

In "The Patriarchal Welfare State," Pateman raises the possibility of an alliance between the labour movement and the women's movement to create the social conditions that would make equal democratic citizenship a reality. Such an alliance would depend on the labour movement's acknowledging the social contribution of women, and this in turn would call for rethinking the meaning of work and industrial democracy. One strategy would be to press for a guaranteed annual income, which would help break down the dichotomies of patriarchal society, "the opposition between paid and unpaid work (for the first time all individuals could have a genuine choice whether to engage in paid work), between full- and part-time work, between public and private work, between independence and dependence, between work and welfare — which is to say, between men and women." 27

Another dichotomy beginning to break down is the separation between nature and civil society. The ecology and environmental movements, by challenging this dichotomy, also bring into question the public/private distinction, in both the conventional sense of the State and the economy and the feminist sense of the domestic sphere, by showing how actions in all spheres affect ecological problems. These new social movements also share with the women's movement an emphasis on the need for movement organizational structures to "prefigure" the structures of a free society. There is a commitment to nonhierarchical, antiauthoritarian, participatory political forms, which, unfortunately, is often lacking in conventional left-wing parties and trade unions. As Pateman points out, these have tended to mimic the hierarchical structure of the State — ever since the anarchists were driven out of the socialist movement.

The extent to which the women's movement should form alliances with other movements depends, fundamentally, on the extent to which these other movements are prepared to step beyond the dichotomies of patriarchal society. The social, sexual, and political barriers that prevent women

23 Ibid., p. 232.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., p. 233.
26 Ibid.
27 In *The Disorder of Women.*
28 Ibid., p. 203.
from fully participating in these movements and, consequently, the social relationships they are striving to create, must be squarely confronted.

Pateman herself acknowledges that political theory alone cannot undermine the life supports of contract doctrine. But if those supports are ever successfully undermined, surely some of the credit should go to the feminist political theorists, such as Pateman herself, who have done so much to bring into question the theoretical underpinnings of the patriarchal order.

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