

# New Options

November 27, 1989

Issue No. Sixty-two

## Drugs Are Not the Enemy

A couple of blocks from where I live in Washington, D.C., the drug trade flourishes. Twelve year old "lookouts" hang out near the crack houses. Dealers stand on the street corners waiting for customers.

It is so tempting to blame drugs for this scene — some outside "enemy" that can be combatted and destroyed — and virtually everyone does, of course. Not just Drug Czar Bennett but the liberals and "progressives," as well. "Drugs are poison," Jesse Jackson said in a recent interview. "Taking drugs is a sin. Drug use is morally debased and sick. . . . A commitment to life means a commitment to avoid the short-term pleasure and long-term pain of drugs."

If only things were so simple! If only drugs were the enemy! But if the Sixties taught us anything, it is this: Drugs are neither good nor bad. When abused, they can cause great harm. When used properly, they can help us expand our consciousness and enjoy our world.

### The "New Honesty"

Quite a few people do remember that lesson — though they tend to be scientists and scholars rather than politicians, and they tend to be overlooked by the mass media. We've spent the last two months contacting some of them. Put their ideas together and you've got an innovative new approach to the drug crisis.

Because it sees drug use as natural and inevitable, rather than as a "sin," I call it the "New Honesty."

The political right and left are united in assuming that drugs are "bad." The right asks, How do you get rid of drugs? The left asks, How do you discourage drug use? The New Honesty begins with an entirely different assumption: Getting high, getting intoxicated, changing one's consciousness, is a universal human need. Therefore, the New Honesty asks an entirely different question: How do

you encourage people to use drugs wisely?

Instead of launching a drug war, the New Honesty would launch a campaign to re-define the problem. Once the problem was defined not as drugs or drug use but as drug *abuse*, further steps might include: decriminalizing all drugs, taxing drug revenues (including alcohol and tobacco revenues) to cover drug users' costs to society, designing safe drugs, and promoting a variety of ways of changing consciousness of which drug use is but one.

The New Honesty is politically risky. But unlike Bennett's and Jackson's approaches, it might work. It might even help us grow as human beings.

### Natural

Andrew Weil may be the best-known proponent of the New Honesty. His first book, *The Natural Mind*, was published in 1972, just a couple of years after he graduated from Harvard Medical School; currently he's an adjunct professor of "addiction studies" at the University of Arizona. Last month he had his publisher send us a copy of his most recent book, *Chocolate to Morphine* (1983), in which he and his co-author, Winifred Rosen, make a powerful case for the naturalness — even inevitability — of drug use.

"The basic reason people take drugs is to vary their conscious experience," say Weil and Rosen. "Many drug users talk about getting high. . . . Having high experiences from time to time may be necessary to our physical and mental health, just as dreaming at night seems to be vital to our well-being."

Another semi-prominent proponent of the New Honesty is Ronald Siegel, associate professor of psychopharmacology at UCLA and consultant to the innovative World Health Organization (NEW OPTIONS #50). "Throughout our entire history as a species," Siegel says in his new book, *Intoxication* (1989), "intoxication has functioned like the basic drives of hunger, thirst or sex, sometimes

overshadowing all other activities in life. *Intoxication is the fourth drive*. . . . The solution to the drug problems of our species begins when we acknowledge the legitimate place of intoxication in our behavior."

### Universal

Not only is drug use natural, these analysts claim, it is universal. It's found at all times, at all places, and even in many species.

"With the possible exception of the Eskimos," Weil said in a recent speech, "I know of no human society which has not been heavily

#### Note From the Editor

So many of you have complained about the way we date NEW OPTIONS, that we're taking this opportunity to change our dating system.

We used to date each issue according to when we finished writing our lead article. (Honesty, integrity, etc.) Beginning this issue we are dating NEW OPTIONS in advance of its publication date — just like all the other periodicals. Your subscription will be extended accordingly.

involved with the use of psychoactive substances. Nor do I know of any period in history when that's [not been true]."

"The pursuit of intoxication with drugs is a primary motivational force in the behavior of organisms," Siegel says. "Birds gorge themselves on inebriating berries, then fly with reckless abandon. Cats eagerly sniff aromatic 'pleasure' plants, then play with imaginary objects. Cows that browse special range weeds will twitch, shake, and stumble back to the plants for more. Elephants purposely get drunk on fermented fruit. . . ."

### What's your drug?

If drug use is natural and universal, then it is kind of ridiculous for us to think of drugs as

the "enemy" and of drug use as a "sin." But according to the New Honesty, we're no different from anyone else in this regard; all societies accept some drugs and reject others.

Weil made this point very forcefully in his speech. "In every society," he said, "the use of one or a small number of drugs is not only tolerated, but actively encouraged and promoted. And that goes hand in hand with defining all *other* drugs as 'bad' and trying to keep them out, make them go away.

"But there's no agreement from culture to culture as to which are good drugs and which are bad drugs!

"If you are a mainstream American today, alcohol, tobacco and the various forms of caffeine are the 'good' drugs. And all the rest are Other People's drugs, and we wage war on them.

"[But] if you're a Muslim, alcohol is the Big Bad Drug, the worst thing you could put in your body. In India today, there are certain religious sects that consider marijuana as a religious sacrament, and are very upset if you try to call it a drug."

### Beyond "bad drugs"

According to the New Honesty, it follows from this that drugs are neither "good" nor "bad," and that all drugs can be used positively or negatively.

"From years of looking at other cultures," says Weil, "I feel very strongly that in fact there are no good drugs or bad drugs. That drugs are just drugs. And all of them have the potential to be used creatively or positively, and all have the potential to be used negatively or destructively.

"There are some factors, like the dose and the purity and the manner of administration, that influence these things. But there is no goodness or badness inherent in any drug.

"Goodness or badness come into the picture only in looking at how individuals relate to these substances. How they think about them; how they use them; how whole societies think about them and use them. . . .

"The AMA some years ago defined 'drug abuse' as any use of a 'drug of abuse' without the supervision of a physician. What is a 'drug of abuse'? That's a fancy way of saying 'a bad drug'!

"There is no such thing as a drug of abuse. Any drug can be abused. And any drug can be used. . . ."

### Foolish choices

One implication of this view is that there's no good reason why we tolerate and even promote some drugs (alcohol, tobacco) and declare "zero tolerance" of others. Weil goes so far as to speak of the "irrationality" of our drug choices, and the "emotionalism behind

maintaining" them.

"People in this culture are never funded to look for beneficial effects of marijuana," he says. "We only look for negative effects. That's just the way it is. We don't get money, generally, to look for negative effects of coffee. . . .

"I still very commonly hear the phrase 'drugs and alcohol,' as if alcohol is something else, as if it's in some other category. But not only is it a drug, it's the hardest drug — in terms of its physical effects, its mental effects, its toxicity. . . .

"There is no drug I know that is so tightly correlated with crime and violence. There is no drug that causes such devastation to the body if it is abused over time. . . .

"[And look at tobacco.] Tobacco, in the form of cigarettes, is the most addictive substance known. . . .

"Nicotine is the most powerful stimulant you can put into your body without causing convulsions — more powerful than cocaine. . . . [And] smoking is a much more direct way of putting a drug into the system [than] intravenous injection. . . ."

### Part of the problem

If drug use is natural and normal, and all drugs are open to abuse, and today's legal drugs are just as hazardous as the illegal drugs, then it makes no sense to criminalize some drugs and not others. In fact, the more you listen to the New Honesty, the more you realize that criminalization of drugs is part of the problem.

Luis Zapata is a former civil rights and farmworker activist who runs a national organization called RAPID (for "Rational Alternative Policy to the Interdiction of Drugs"), and when we visited him last week at RAPID's headquarters he gave the lie to all those white and black liberals who say that continued criminalization of drugs is the best way to protect poor and minority communities.

"We've had community watches," he told us, looking out at one of Washington's most drug-ridden neighborhoods. "We've tried to organize. Over in the next neighborhood they have [community residents] stand on the street corner. And it really doesn't stop either the flow of drugs into our communities or the murders and robberies that take place as a result of [the trafficking]. . . .

"We're turning our neighborhoods into war zones! And as long as there's profit to be made [in drug trafficking], big bucks to be made, there's going to be killing.

"I don't see any quick answers [to the problem of drug abuse]. I do see a need to do something about the number of people who are dying."

Ethan Nadelmann is a professor of politics and public affairs at Princeton University.

"Ironically, the greatest beneficiaries of drug laws are traffickers," he wrote in the Sept. 1 issue of *Science* magazine.

"More than half of all organized crime revenues are believed to derive from the illicit drug business; estimates of the dollar value range between \$10 and \$50 billion a year. If those markets were legal, state and federal governments would collect billions of dollars annually in tax revenues. Instead, they expend billions in a virtual subsidy of organized criminals."

Weil put criminalization in telling historical perspective when he said in his speech, "If you look back to America of 100 years ago, before we had any drug laws, everything was better.

"I think the [proportion] of people using drugs was probably about the same. It was probably very high — and I think it will always be high. But I think *abuse* of drugs was much less.

"There was no crime associated with drugs, no crime associated with the distribution and use of psychoactive substances. That is entirely a creation of our social policy.

"Young people generally did not take psychoactive drugs in 1888. That's something else we made happen — by making the drugs we don't like, look attractive. By trying to exaggerate their dangers in ways that don't correspond to people's experience of them, while being hypocritical about the dangers of the drugs that we promote.

"People did not generally take drugs to drop out of society in 1888. It was not seen as an anti-social process. We made that happen through our policies and prohibitions."

### Part of the solution

Logic, history and compassion all point, then, to decriminalization of all drugs as *part* of the solution to this nation's spiralling drug crisis.

## NewOptions

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Editor: Mark Satin

Manager, New Options Inc.: Sylvia Tognetti

Assistants: Robin Cahn, Gail Richards

Business Consultants: Richard Perl, Roger Pritchard

Design: Baker Johnson

Printer/Mailer: Newsletter Services, Inc.

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## Groups

"The only answer I see is for communities to work on pressuring our elected officials to legalize drugs," Zapata told NEW OPTIONS. "Just like alcohol during prohibition, you're not going to be able to stop drugs from [coming into communities. But you can stop] the violence."

We asked Zapata whether he thought drug abuse would skyrocket after legalization (as Harlem Congressman Charles Rangel never tires of saying). "I don't see how the number of users *could* increase," Zapata replied. "Any drug you want is available as per request."

"The price will go down somewhat [after legalization]. But price doesn't seem to be a problem now."

Zapata tugged at his hair, which was braided in the traditional manner of Mexico's Indian peoples. "I can't see that the rate of addiction will go up much more. What you will have, though, is you'll get rid of that seller — the local kid who's driving the fancy car, [the kid] with all the gold chains who is the peer group leader. He's the one who's hooking his younger brothers and sisters on dope — 'cause that's how he makes his money."

"And he's a good salesman! He uses his flashiness just like the pimps do — to say, This is an admirable lifestyle, do these drugs, that's how [you] get into it. . . ."

"So I think the enticement will go [after legalization]."

Nadelmann makes the other crucial point when he says, "Most illegal drugs are not as dangerous as is commonly believed."

"There still appears to be little evidence that occasional marijuana consumption does much harm. . . . Cocaine, heroin and other illicit substances are more hazardous, but not nearly so dangerous as generally believed. For example, heroin — which may be as highly addictive as nicotine — causes relatively little physical harm. . . . There is overwhelming evidence that most users of cocaine do not get into trouble with the drug. . . ."

"Estimates of the number of deaths linked to alcohol use vary from 50,000 to 200,000 per year; tobacco is responsible for an estimated 320,000 premature deaths per year. By comparison, the National Council on Alcoholism reported that only 3,562 people were known to have died in 1985 from use of all illegal drugs combined."

### How to decriminalize

It's easy to talk about decriminalization, much harder (and braver!) to propose a specific plan. Almost alone among elected officials, Joseph Galiber — a black New York State senator from the Bronx — has introduced a bill outlining just such a plan, and last month we obtained reams of documents from Galiber explaining his bill and defending it

against its numerous critics.

"My bill would fully decriminalize drugs," Galiber wrote in a 1988 memo to all New York State senators. "The possession, distribution, sale and use would become legal."

"[At the same time], a State Controlled Substances Authority, similar to the State Liquor Authority, would be set up. This Authority would issue licenses to doctors, pharmacists and chemists to sell these drugs."

"Thereby any adult desiring these drugs would simply go to his or her local doctor or pharmacist; a prescription would no longer be necessary. Isn't this better than going to [the] local street-corner pusher? . . ."

"The Authority would regulate the prices of these drugs [and exercise] quality control."

In a more recent memo, Galiber spells out some rules for drug sales: "It will be illegal to sell any controlled substance to a person under 21, and it will continue to be illegal to sell or distribute drugs in or near school grounds."

### "Harmfulness tax"

Even if decriminalization eliminates drug trafficking and violence, there will still be a need to design — and pay for — massive drug education and rehabilitation programs. Decriminalization would make it possible for us to pay for these programs by taxing all drug sales (since all drug sales would be part of the formal economy).

Lester Grinspoon, an associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, is the author of the only tax plan we've seen that is consistent with the New Honesty, i.e. that totally integrates alcohol and cigarette sales in with those of the other drugs. Last month he sent us an advance copy of a speech in which he outlines his plan.

"Let currently controlled substances be legalized and taxed," he says in his speech.

"The taxes would be used for drug education and for paying the medical and social costs of drug abuse. A commission would be established to determine these costs separately for each drug. . . . The drugs that are now illegal, alcohol and tobacco, would not be distinguished from the others. . . ."

"Present prices might be maintained at the start. Then, as the commission collected more information, pricing could change to reflect social costs. . . ."

"In [the present drug] war a kind of self-reinforcing cycle is developing, as drug enforcement operations begin to pay for themselves by funds confiscated from the drug traffickers whose operations they make enormously profitable. The taxing system suggested here would establish a different kind of revenue cycle, in which society would pay for the costs of drug abuse by extracting them from the drug

users in proportion to the amount they contribute to the problem."

### Marijuana rising

One obvious implication of Grinspoon's plan is absent from his speech — perhaps for political reasons. If the cost of each drug begins to reflect the costs its users inflict upon society, then marijuana will almost certainly become the cheapest drug, and the most popular.

Would that be a good thing? Could America handle it? To shed some light on these questions, we attended the annual meeting of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), which took place this fall just two blocks from our offices.

It was a colorful affair, with men in tie-dyed T-shirts talking happily to women in business suits, and women in short skirts and fishnet stockings talking happily to lawyerlike men with beards, all amidst the quiet elegance of the Dupont Plaza Hotel. Here are the kinds of things we heard from NORML's attorneys and board members:

- "Marijuana is known as a drug which induces serenity rather than violence."
- "Americans who use marijuana are generally productive members of our society."
- "In [recent] litigation, [one federal judge], after reviewing extensive medical research, stated, 'Marijuana is far safer than many foods we commonly consume.'"

Jack Herer, director of Help Eliminate Marijuana Prohibition (HEMP), was a featured speaker at the NORML conference (and the Hemp Rights! speaker at the U.S. Green gathering; see #60). According to Herer, "The continued prohibition of hemp/marijuana cultivation prevents our society from utilizing nature's premier renewable resource — hemp — for paper, fiber, fuels, food, paint and medicine. . . . Today we have the technology to use hemp biomass [to produce much] of the clean and renewable fuel we need [to reverse] the Greenhouse Effect. . . ."

Sounds good to me.

### "Honest" drug ed

Grinspoon's "harmfulness tax" not only sets the stage for the second coming of marijuana, it ensures enough resources for what he calls "honest drug education." But what is that?

The best attempt at honest drug education I've seen is Andrew Weil and Winifred Rosen's book *Chocolate to Morphine*, cited above. Rosen is an accomplished author of books for young people, and *Chocolate* is written for teen-agers as well as adults. It gives accurate, useful and non-judgmental information about every kind of drug . . . "from chocolate to morphine." It also contains "straight talk" on

such subjects as "What Is a Drug?," "Why People Use Drugs" and "Problems With Drugs." These passages set the tone:

"You are growing up in a world well stocked with drugs. All of them can be used wisely or stupidly.

"Grownups will give you much misinformation about them and will often be dishonest or hypocritical about their own drug use. . . . The fact that grownups lie to you about the dangers of drugs they disapprove of does not mean that drugs have no dangers. *All drugs are dangerous.*

"The only way you can be absolutely sure of avoiding problems with drugs is never to use them. That is a perfectly reasonable choice. . . . If you do decide to experiment with drugs, whether approved or disapproved, make sure you know what the drugs are, where they come from, how they are likely to affect your body, and what precautions you should take to contain their potential for harm.

"Remember that forming good relationships with drugs requires awareness and practice. Don't use drugs unconsciously and don't spend time around people who do."

### Safe drugs

As Weil and Rosen say, All drugs are dangerous. All drugs *can* do harm if used improperly. So we might not want to stop at decriminalizing drugs and funding honest education and effective treatment programs. We might also want to pursue two further strategies: developing improved drugs and promoting alternative ways of changing consciousness.

Ronald Siegel, author of *Intoxication* (cited above), is the leading spokesperson for the "improved drugs" strategy. "We [must] acknowledge the legitimate place of intoxication in our behavior," he says. "[But] we must [also] ensure that the pursuit of intoxication with drugs will not be dangerous.

"How can we do that? The answer is to make drugs perfectly safe. . . .

"Scientists and futurists predict that we could do it by early in the next century. We could do it with molecular chemistry, twisting and bending already known psychoactive molecules. It seems equally likely that we could find new and more suitable molecules in nature's own botanical laboratory. . . .

"The ideal intoxicants would balance optimal positive effects, such as stimulation or pleasure, with minimal or nonexistent toxic consequences. The drugs would be ingested as fast-acting pills or liquids or breathed in the form of gases. They would have fixed durations of action and built-in antagonists to prevent excessive use or overdoses. [They] could even be engineered to provide brief but safe

surges of intense effects, thus appearing more dangerous and thrilling than they really are."

### Beyond drugs

The other "perfectly safe" strategy is using advertising and the school system to teach us to recognize — and celebrate — other ways of changing consciousness.

Weil and Rosen make a good case for this strategy when they say, "Is it any better to get high without drugs than with them? The main advantage of drugs over other techniques is that they can work powerfully and immediately. *Their main disadvantage is that they reinforce the notion that the state we desire comes from something outside us.*

"Not only can this idea lead to trouble with drugs, but it can also make people feel inadequate and incomplete. . . . Meditation, chanting, prayer, communing with nature, playing music, and artistic expression of all sorts are especially attractive ways of changing consciousness because they require little outside oneself. . . .

"Ways of getting high without drugs often do not work as fast or as powerfully as popping a pill. To master them you may have to invest some time and effort. Many people may have little motivation to acquire these skills, especially since society does not stress the value of being high or teach us practical ways to get there."

### The mirror

If you think of drugs and drug use as the problem, then a "war on drugs" is a sufficient solution. But if you think of people's *relationship with drugs* as the problem, then even the measures outlined above will not suffice.

The New Honesty goes beyond drug policy to ask: How do you foster the psychological "set" and economic "setting" in which people might use drugs to affirm themselves and celebrate the universe?

The answer, of course, is that the economy, the political structure, social services . . . all are going to have to change to reflect egalitarian, multi-cultural and human-growth-oriented values (see NEW OPTIONS #1-61).

Until that day, people are going to continue to abuse drugs, each other, and nature. Which is to say: Until that day, people are going to continue to abuse *themselves.*

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*Galiber: attn. Tricia Coyle, 414 Capitol Bldg, Albany NY 12247. Grinspoon: Harvard Medical School, 74 Fenwood Rd, Boston MA 02115. Herer: HEMP, 5632 Van Nuys, #210, Van Nuys CA 91401. NORML: 2001 "S" St. N.W., #640, DC 20009. Weil: 1975 W. Hunter Rd, Tucson AZ 85737; "Myth of a Drug-Free Society" (tape of speech), \$10. Zapata: RAPID, 1340 Valley Pl. S.E., DC 20020.*

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## The Eye . . .

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

**ETHICAL CORPORATIONS?:** This year the **Social Investment Forum** (#41) finally got political. It launched the CERES Project to press corporations to take responsibility for their environmental practices.

At a slipshod but fascinating press conference Sept. 7 in Manhattan, CERES and its supporters in the environmental movement released the first draft of the "Valdez Principles," 10 principles that it hopes will be adopted by corporations nationwide. Examples: "We will minimize the creation of waste"; "We will make every effort to use sustainable energy sources" (S.I.F., 711 Atlantic Ave., Boston MA 02111).

True, the principles don't address our most pressing business needs: to reduce corporate size and democratize corporate ownership. But even those goals might not forever elude the kinds of brokers, entrepreneurs and CEOs who drafted the principles. See Marjorie Kelly's three-year-old magazine **Business Ethics**, a fascinating survey of moral growth and caring behavior among corporate types (1107 Hazeltine Blvd, Chaska MN 55318, \$5/issue). And see Pat Barrentine's three-year-old newsletter *World Business Academy Perspectives*, whose focus on process and values and spirit in the corporate world makes it more truly "radical" than its socialist counterparts (433 Airport Blvd, #416, Burlingame CA 94010, \$5/issue).

**PEDAL POWER:** If you enjoyed **Marcia Lowe's** remarks on bicycle transportation in #52, get hold of her just-published booklet "The Bicycle: Vehicle for a Small Planet." It's a magisterial analysis of the promise bikes hold for overdeveloped and underdeveloped countries alike, and unlike most of the ponderous *Worldwatch Papers* it's written in a tone of enthusiasm and delight (*Worldwatch Inst.*, 1776 Mass. Ave. N.W., DC 20036, \$4).

**THIS MOVEMENT'S EXPLODING:** When the first edition of **Healthy Harvest** described over 300 sustainable agriculture organizations, we gushed and gawked (#29). This year's edition describes over 1,000 (Potomac Valley Press, 1424 16th St. N.W., #105, DC 20036, \$18.25). When the first edition of the **National Directory of Alternative Schools** ran to 98 pages, we were amazed (#42). This year's edition has 158 pages (NCACS, 58 Schoolhouse Rd, Summertown TN 38483, \$12.50).

That's an Eyeful!

## The Ear . . .

### Three perspectives

Your article on the Greens' Eugene conference must have been designed to stir up maximum controversy.

I didn't hear anybody talking about Green women being 20 lbs. overweight. Most of us men were happily working on our conference tasks. And anger against injustice, pollution et al. doesn't necessarily equate to being "unhappy." You are much better at political analysis than anecdotal psychology.

Regarding the local/national issue, it's going to take many more years to weave the various diverse threads of the movement into a beautiful tapestry. Much work remains at the regional level. Your questionable "last chance" scenario seems aimed at herding the movement toward the national party of your dreams.

Perhaps you should spend more time out of Washington, D.C. reporting on what the locals are achieving. That's what will make or break us.

— Craig S. Volland

*Greater Kansas City Greens*

*Kansas City MO, Great Plains Bior'n*

Thank you for your article on the U.S. Green gathering, and thanks especially for sharing the tensions and struggles as well as the hope. After reading the article I felt as if I had been there. And I felt more related to the Greens than I ever had before.

— Sally S. Emerick

*Baton Rouge LA, Delta Bioregion*

In American slang, "green" means "immature." Your account of the Eugene Green meeting gives plenty of examples of immaturity in action.

— John T. Harlee

*Florence SC, Coastal Plain Bioregion*

### Deja vu

Thanks for your review of the Greens' strengths and weaknesses. I try to consider and embrace the WHOLE of things. I really believe that if an individual is sure and committed, the last place they should be is in a group of like-minded people endeavoring to effect change.

Groups working against each other is the traditional adversarial system all over again. If we really believe the world is one whole organism, then we should join it, not separate

ourselves out from it like the Greens do. If we want to change the world we should change ourselves to become one with the part of it that needs changing.

— Daniel L. Washburn

*Baldwin KS, Great Plains Bioregion*

Your "Last Chance Saloon" expressed the dismay I have felt over so much squabbling in and among the activist groups — Peace & Freedom Party here in California, for example. And Greenpeace, Sierra Club and Union of Concerned Scientists all sent me fund-raising letters this month, each claiming to be the organization best equipped to overcome the Greenhouse Effect. Why can't they all get on a converging channel and support each other?

— John Sloan

*Salinas CA, Shasta Bioregion*

### Oh that process

I assume you picked up the use of the verb "consense" at the Green gathering. Why couldn't you use the word "agree"?

— Stephen Bach

*Scottsville VA, Chesapeake Bioregion*

I share your keen frustrations that "we" can't seem to field a viable "Global, decentralist, ecological, etc." party to contend for power. However, I also share — with the Greens and the Dynamic Balance Party (#53) — the belief that establishing a healthy *process* is *primary*. And as you know, this takes a lot of painstakingly conscientious work when pursued from within our hierarchical, power-oriented, semi-democratic society.

The need for someone worth voting for in '92 is urgent. But if these groups let go of their emphasis on keeping the means fully in tune with the end, we might still be saying, "Some day there'll be a party. . ."

— Gregory A. Norris

*Edwards CA, Pacific Rim Bioregion*

In your Green article you quote facilitator Sam Kaner as follows: "[The designers of the next Green gathering] can set up processes that will force people to make 'either-or' choices or they can set up processes that will help people analyze their differences until they reach a new level and make 'both-and' choices."

I don't think they have that choice. Participants will have an 'either-or' or 'none' choice. These options will be forced upon them — not by the conference designers, but by time-limits. Every conference is run by a tyrant called the Clock.

But an alternative exists — in the computer-based conference. And there already exists an inexpensive non-profit computer network

[EcoNet-PeaceNet] devoted to peace, social justice and the environment. Over 2,000 people use it worldwide. Some organizations use it too. Regrettably, very few use it for meetings and conferences.

My frustration is knowing about this tool and waiting for distracted and/or unaware alternative culturalists to get around to taking it seriously.

— Genevieve Marcus

*Pacific Palisades CA, Pacific Rim Bior'n*

Your "Last Chance Saloon" gave a less-than-glowing assessment of the Green meeting's methods of participation and decision-making.

The strength of consensus decision-making is that when it works, the decision finally reached is sound because it is everyone's. But its drawbacks — as you lamented — are its interminable wrangling and inability to respond quickly or clearly to anything.

I think there's a solution to this bind. The community at large could consensually select leaders and consense on what powers are delegated to them. And small groups could consense on the guiding principles within which the leaders must act. Once the leaders are agreed on and the context is set, the leaders would be expected to lead.

This approach doesn't eliminate the consensus process. But it does limit the consensus hassle to policy directives and leadership selection, and moves to energetic executive action for getting on with the job.

— Louise Rachel

*Shorewood WI, "Great Lakes Bior'n"*

### You done me wrong

I found your coverage of the Green gathering interesting, to say the least. It may surprise you that I agree with much of your analysis. However, I feel that you have been somewhat careless around two points in which I have a particular interest.

First, your reporting implies that the speech I gave the first evening was as a representative of the Left Green Network. I greeted the conference on behalf of the Youth Greens, an independent formation with ties to both the Green Committees of Correspondence and the Left Green Network.

I think you do the Youth Greens a disservice in personalizing the character of the message I brought. The reason I did not draw on my own experiences was because I was speaking as a mandated delegate. Had you been more attentive, you might have provided your readers with a greater service by analyzing the substance of this message, rather than dismissing it as "my concepts" (I contributed only a small part) which struck you "as if

## Groups

they'd all come out of musty texts." Hopefully textbooks 50 years from now will contain the Youth Greens' founding documents, but right now they are fresh and new. If you disagree with them, please say so directly.

The other issue is more personal. You characterize me as uninformed about the New Age because I have not read [certain] books by Willis Harman, Hazel Henderson and Herman Daly, books which you equate with the "left-wing classics." Your question to me at three in the morning was simply if I had read any of those three books, not if I had read *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, *Small Is Beautiful*, *Be Here Now*, *Higher Creativity* (also by Harman), *The Tao of Physics*, *The Dancing Wu-Li Masters*, and so on.

These books are generally considered "New Age classics" by virtue of acclamation and having stood the test of some time. I am quite familiar with all of them, having been (as I told you) deeply involved in the New Age for a number of years before realizing its essential weaknesses. Participating in the New Age is much more than reading about it, as you should know; I also was an active devotee of yoga and *A Course in Miracles* for a time. (The former I still find quite useful.)

Your implication that I am unqualified to speak of the New Age is thus like my calling you unfit to discuss the Left because you (probably) haven't read recent sophisticated Left books like Mike Davis's *Prisoners of the American Dream* or Simon Gunn's *Revolution of the Right*.

— Charles Betz

Minneapolis MN, Heartland Bior'n

Dear Charles: I appreciate your strong letter and your commitment to dialogue.

Try as I might, I can't see any significant political differences between the Youth Greens and the Left Green Network (unless age counts as a political difference!). Until I can see one I'll probably keep getting the groups mixed up. You can keep blaming me if you like.

I am sad that you didn't feel freer to express more of yourself in your speech. You're very effective when you speak from the heart as well as the head, and it doesn't feel good to me that your group apparently expected you to constrict your style as much as you did. I can still remember how SDS'ers used to get down on each other for their "bourgeois individualism." Some of us bear the psychological scars to this day.

To say I called you "uninformed about the New Age" is a LITTLE EXTREME, Charles. My point was that New Age political ideas (aka post-liberal/post-socialist ideas, aka green Green ideas) were always dismissed out of hand, never rebutted, by you and the other left spokespeople at the gathering. It is bizarre that

in Europe Daly, Harman and Henderson (and Jane Jacobs, and Theodore Roszak, and . . .) are seen as quintessential Green thinkers, but that in the U.S. the political left — even the Green left — refuses to even address their political and economic ideas. The "New Age" books and activities you name can hardly be characterized as political.

## Business as usual

I very much enjoyed your article on the Green gathering in Eugene. My not being there was a very conscious decision on my part for many reasons. Perhaps the most important, ultimately, was my own need to be alone, camping in old growth in the Northwest for several days rather than participating in yet another conference.

I spent some time on the Olympic Peninsula, driving on the road next to Crescent Lake. While on this road, every couple of minutes one or more logging trucks drove out of our supposedly protected national forest loaded with large tree bodies. I started counting the trucks, but soon lost count. My friends who live in the area tell me this happens every day. Every day!

It was painful for me driving along these roads. Tears were streaming down my cheeks and I had to pull over until I could see to drive again.

While all this was going on, Greens in Eugene were talking about strategy. Business as usual was going on.

I see the need for more than strategy sessions and feeling good about how wonderful it is when we all come together (as important as this is). All the talk in the world does not create change. We just fall asleep or become hoarse. These forests, home to the oldest living beings on this planet, need our ACTION.

Business as usual is killing the Earth. You are right — it is time we grew up!

— Susan Meeker-Lowry

Editor, Catalyst

Montpelier VT, Highlands Bioregion

## Media madness

Don't understand the Greens' feeling "we knew what the media would do with that one" regarding hemp prohibition. The media suits itself regardless of the truth. How can you expect to cater to them?

— Cullen Stuart

Lincoln ME, Lower New England Bior'n

Just reading Green article and got to the 24 foot long imitation marijuana cigarette. Hooray!

The U.K. Green party is committed to legalizing cannabis, but many members share

the U.S. Greens' worry about "what the media would do with that one." Surely we want to legalize it for health uses and as a less polluting alternative to wood pulp for high quality paper.

— Linda Hendry

Scottish Green Party

Edinburgh, Scotland

## To market, to market

With one thing I am in complete agreement with you. The Greens are going to have to overcome their fear of money if they want to find new members.

— Jim Young

Co-author, The Faces of Homelessness

Wilmington OH, Heartland Bioregion

You're right on target with the statement that the Greens need "to learn business and marketing skills."

An example of a proven marketing skill is having a "name" or "personality" as the organization's spokesperson/figurehead. I'd like to suggest approaching people like Patrick Watson, whose "Struggle for Democracy" was recently aired on PBS, and Bill Moyers, also of PBS.

— Lois George-Smith

Tucson AZ, Sonora Bioregion

When I read about the Green conference, I thought what was missing was an offer from you to share your expertise on direct mail and fundraising.

— Douglas Fir Wilson

Rowe Camp

Rowe MA, "Connecticut Valley Bior'n"

## Don't think that way

I noticed a tone of resignation in your "Last Chance Saloon." A sense that all your efforts haven't changed things that much, that your views are still shared by only a small minority. Please don't think that way.

I met a wonderful woman at a recent workshop at the Omega Institute. We fell in love, sort of, like friends, since she's married and lives 500 miles away. We had one of those talk-all-night, learn-and-tell-everything-you-can-about-each-other conversations. We knew we were speaking the same "language" when we discovered that our favorite periodicals are *Utne Reader* and *NEW OPTIONS*. You are our voice, to let us know we don't live alone.

Of course we should bring others into the fold. But even if we never become the majority, it is essential that we keep our commitment and our sanity.

— Warren A. Van Wicklin III

New Hartford CT, Lwr New Engl. Bior'n

## Sommer et al.: alternatives to war

With the lull in the cold war has come a loss of interest in the peace movement. Memberships are down, grant money is down; the largest peace magazine, *Nuclear Times* (NEW OPTIONS #36), recently turned belly-up; the largest peace group, SANE/FREEZE (#54), recently had to postpone its convention.

Sadly, even tragically, the professional peace movement blames this state of affairs on the American people. It blames our shortsightedness, fickleness, etc. It would be better advised to blame itself. For years, when "the movement" should have been conducting a dialogue on practical and well-thought-out alternatives to nuclear deterrence, it was out preaching an unrealistic pacifism or militantly "demanding" that we cut military spending, period. Now that millions of Americans are open to hearing about alternatives, the traditional peace movement is manifestly not ready to deliver; and the public knows it.

Fortunately, there are plenty of post-liberal, post-socialist, long-range thinkers on the margins of the peace movement. Armed with first-rate educations, nurtured by think-tanks whose offices are often less impressive than their letterheads, they've done pioneering work in conceptualizing practical, viable alternatives to war-as-we-know-it. This summer three of them published a kind of manifesto: Harry Hollins, Averill Powers and Mark Sommer, *The Conquest of War: Alternative Strategies for Global Security* (Westview Press, 5500 Central Ave., Boulder CO 80301, \$10 pbk).

One nice touch is that they represent three generations. Hollins has been a world order scholar for over 40 years; Powers is a law student at NYU. Sommer is co-founder of the Exploratory Project on the Conditions of Peace (#20), not to mention a homesteader in northern California.

### Beyond arms control

At the heart of the book is an analysis of six "alternative approaches to global security":

- The **United Nations** can (the authors say) be improved if we find the political will;
- A **world peacekeeping federation** is not just pie-in-the-sky;
- **Minimum deterrence** would have each superpower maintain "the minimum number of nuclear weapons necessary to inflict unacceptable damage on its adversary" — a couple of hundred, say, rather than tens of thousands;
- **Qualitative disarmament** would have

nations *collectively eliminate* their offensive weapons in a series of agreed-upon stages. At the same time they would maintain or even strengthen their defenses;

- **Nonprovocative defense** would have *individual nations* gradually reduce their offensive capability and increase their defensive capability. It's kind of a bottom-up, nation-by-nation-by-nation version of qualitative disarmament;

- **Civilian defense** would have people protect their nations nonviolently — primarily by refusing to cooperate with the invader.

Toward the end of the book the authors attempt to synthesize their six alternatives. They call their synthesis a "common security system," since it's "based on the common-sense principle of assuring security equally to all nations and peoples."

### A new dialogue

I'd feel a lot safer living under Sommer et al.'s common security system than I feel now. But I'd still feel ill at ease. With the authors' non-intervention policy firmly in place, and without foolproof sanctions, how could we check the spread of renegade totalitarian regimes? And can civilian defense really supplement the other defense systems? Can you really be a *little bit* nonviolent?

The final answers to such questions can't be found in *Conquest of War*. They can only be found through dialogue with others. The reason this is a supremely important book is that it has the power to inspire that kind of dialogue — a dialogue about how we should defend ourselves in the 1990s. It would take us light-years beyond the old "more vs. less military spending" dialogue spawned by the traditional peace movement.

### Stoltenberg: refusing to be a man

If we're going to change our military defense system in anything like the ways suggested above, our whole culture is going to have to change. To be more specific and blunt — what it means to be a man is going to have to change. One way to envision that change is by coming to grips with John Stoltenberg's recently-published book, *Refusing To Be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice* (Breitenbush Books, P.O. Box 82157, Portland OR 97282, \$19).

I grew up reading Stoltenberg's essays in tiny men's magazines in the 70s, and didn't look forward to reading a whole book of them. I remembered them as being almost ridiculously extreme. But just a couple of pages into this book, I was hooked. Had I changed? Or is his stuff just easier to grasp in 1989?

He's a New York City writer and key activist in the National Organization for Changing Men (#38). None dare call him Andrea Dworkin's boyfriend, though the book is dedicated "For Andrea" and he bounces off her analyses (and other superradical feminist analyses) throughout. He takes pride in not just learning from feminism, but in seeing himself as "part of the feminist revolution."

### Three big ideas

His first Big Idea is that male sexual identity is entirely a political and ethical (as distinct from biological) construct. "Physiologically," he writes, "we are far more alike than different." He doesn't flinch from the implications: "Penises exist; the male sex does not. The male sex is . . . a political entity that flourishes only through acts of force and sexual terrorism."

His second Big Idea flows inexorably from the first. If "manhood" depends on having (and exercising) power over women, then all men have a choice to make. We can either strive night and day to perpetuate our "manhood," or we can work for "gender equality" — gender justice and fairness. We have to choose constantly, even in bed: "Two people might approach a particular sexual encounter either as a ritual celebration of the social power differences between [them, through dominance, coercion, etc.] or as a personal act of *repudiating* all such power inequities."

Stoltenberg's third Big Idea is that refusing male supremacy — i.e., refusing to be a man — means learning a radical new ethic, one that requires us to take responsibility for how our behavior impacts on other people; one that requires us to see others (women, gays, other beings) as just as real and just as vulnerable as ourselves. Stoltenberg writes, beautifully, of "the wall that has been erected between how a man acts toward others and his sense of who he is." And he adds, "Breaking down that wall is crucial."

In the process of explaining his Big Ideas, Stoltenberg touches on many key political issues for the 90s. In a chapter on the peace movement, he notes that many activists lack the "courage" and "vision" to "renounce militarism completely by questioning the institution of patriarchy and by disavowing the cultural power attributed to fathers." Perhaps that's why the Sommer book, reviewed above, for all its life-giving ideas is still written in a cold, impersonal, bureaucratic tone. There are

some harsh words directed toward so-called "men of conscience": "Many will spend more time shopping for tofu than reading the feminist press. . . ."

I still think Stoltenberg is extreme. I am persuaded by cultural feminists and my own experience that there are genuine character differences between women and men. And there's a way in which women are depersonalized by Stoltenberg, held up so high that they become less than complex — less than fully human. But after you walk away from this book, the extremism will fall away and you'll be left with Stoltenberg's haunting question, "Which is more real to us: our moral identity or our sex-class identity? Which makes us feel more real? Which gives us back more the feeling of who we want to be?"

## Dauncey: here comes the rainbow

According to the good economists and other social scientists in the group The Other Economic Summit ("TOES," #50), a new economy is being built in the overdeveloped countries "from the bottom up," via a thousand diverse experiments at the local level. Now one of those TOES activists has published a book detailing those experiments and suggesting how they all fit together: Guy Dauncey, *After the Crash: The Emergence of the Rainbow Economy* (Bootstrap Press, 777 U.N. Plaza, #9-A, New York NY 10017, \$15 pbk).

Dauncey is a British citizen of the Vietnam generation who spends much of his time in North America. When he's not writing books on British unemployment (two so far), he's active in the Green party and the Teilhard de Chardin society, and in this book he brings all his diverse concerns together. More than any book I've seen it is a systematic, "holistic" treatment of the emerging new economy, ranging effortlessly from lifestyles to currency systems, from personal "creativity and fulfillment" to local self-reliance strategies, from the concept of ecologically sustainable development to hopeful trends in business and finance. And it is not just hopeful sentiment. On nearly every page, concrete examples of "the new" are paraded forth.

Structuring this material and gluing it all together is a theory of our evolutionary emergence. "We are in the midst of a crisis of global emergence which happens but once in a planet's lifetime," Dauncey argues (at great length and with no little sophistication). "From a thousand directions, the pressures of global integration are urging us to shift to a higher level of operation, and respond in a positive way to what is happening."

*After the Crash* is well-written. It is as hopeful as can be. It organizes a vast range of material not only in a coherent evolutionary framework but with a pretty "rainbow" constantly in mind (purple for spiritual values, dark blue for planetary values, pale blue for economic values, green for environmental values, yellow for personal creativity, orange for local community values, and red for social values). But it fails to excite me. Why?

It is less than honest. Many of the groups Dauncey describes are not nearly as successful or significant as he implies, and I'm just so tired of that kind of puffery.

In addition, there's too great a gap between the beautiful world of Dauncey's prose and the nitty-gritty world of partisan politics and the daily newspapers. For our writing to be *stirring*, we've got to fill that gap.

## Mills: from protest to bioregionalism

So much decentralist/globally responsible political writing is abstract and politically "correct" — rather than grounded and honest — that I've begun to think a better genre for us might be memoirs. In her just-published memoir *Whatever Happened to Ecology?* (Sierra Club Books, \$19), Stephanie Mills goes part of the way toward proving me right.

Mills became a prominent environmental spokesperson in 1969 — or, more precisely, the day she announced in her college commencement address that, because of rampant global overpopulation, she would bear no children. In the first half of the book she describes what led her to give that speech, the national attention that followed (and caused her to nearly self-destruct), and nearly two decades of working in the trenches for radical

Bay Area environmental groups like Friends of the Earth and *Co-Evolution Quarterly*.

By the mid-80s she begins to feel she's in "the abstraction-mongering racket," and becomes uneasy. Change comes when she goes to the first North American Bioregional Congress (#35) and falls in love with a committed local activist and bioregionalist from northern Michigan. She has the guts to move there from the Bay Area — partly to marry him, but partly also so she can live out, in daily life and at the human scale, the abstractions she'd mongered for so many years.

## Pioneer

The story line is engrossing, but the text — that is to say, Mills's sensibility — is even more so. For despite her real political commitments she is not a True Believer, and she is honest enough to share with us her failings and uncertainties as well as her beliefs. She also brings valuable perspective to bear on today's second coming of environmentalism, as in this passage: "These days when I go to environmental conferences, I feel like a ghost. I was doing this when half these people were in grade school. And few people seem quite aware of how protracted the struggle has already been, and that the plight has been deepening in spite of it."

When I finished this book I felt I'd been in the presence of a very articulate person who'd shared some valuable learnings and understandings with me; but that was all I felt. For some reason I found it hard to like her. None of the supporting characters — including people like David Brower and Stewart Brand, whom Mills had worked with intimately for years — ever came fully to life for me. And for all her brilliant phrasemaking, I never felt I fully understood Mills's own goals or motivations. Perhaps she doesn't either; how many pioneers do?

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