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# New Options

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Mark Satin, *Editor*

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## Rearing a Gentler People: The Issue Everybody Avoids

You don't have to be a psychologist to know there's a vital connection between the *kinds* of people we're raising and the *nature* of the policies our government supports. Sam Keen, longtime contributing editor of *Psychology Today*, puts it bluntly when he says, "Psychological and cross-cultural studies make it clear that a society's propensity for gentleness and compassion is in direct proportion to the amount of touch, sensuality, esthetic appreciation and caring sexuality that it encourages."

Everybody knows that what we do to our kids *profoundly* affects what they go on to do to other people, other nations, other species. But once you enter the public policy arena, nobody talks about it. It's as if the traditional left and right have entered into a tacit agreement never to discuss the subject . . . for fear it might blow up in *both* of their faces.

None of the major presidential candidates is talking about it. No one at the NEA is talking about it. No one in the big SANE/Freeze disarmament group is talking about it.

Once you step off of the traditional political spectrum, though, you'll find plenty of people talking about it.

### **Encourage unemployment**

"One of the ways to raise the most compassionate kids," Sam Keen told NEW OPTIONS from his home near San Francisco, "is to realize the *limits of schooling* in the creation of compassion.

"In many ways this society has said, look, we're too busy for our children. So here, send them to school, and now the schools should teach them not only the cognition thing but social skills and all these other things.

"But what the kids get, the 'meta-message,' is that we're not important—we're not important enough for our parents to spend time with us. And that's not going to create a compassionate people.

"The first thing I think we should do is aim at a society that has not 9% unemployment but

something like 39% unemployment [with generous unemployment benefits or a guaranteed minimum income]. We're a wealthy enough society that we should not be obsessed with work at the cost of there being nobody to tend family and create community, whether they be men or women."

### **Support parental leave**

Frank Rubinfeld is not only co-founder of Psychotherapists for Social Responsibility, not only author of *The Peace Manual* (NEW OPTIONS #31); he is also a first-time father—at the age of 51.

"I think men's spending time with kids just has to deepen their appreciation of life," he told NEW OPTIONS. "If men have day-to-day contact with a really young infant, I think it has to affect their view of the vulnerability of life, the preciousness of life. It would elicit and enhance their feelings about wanting to nurture and serve. And I think it would affect the kids' *own* view of the self and men and the value of nurturing. . . ."

To make this experience more possible, Rubinfeld supports "generous parental leave [policies]—for men as well as women.

"This is a very tender area for many, many families. You're touching on families' deeply held beliefs, and there are some families that want to be more traditional. And that's their privilege. But for those that want to try this other way, I think they should have that opportunity.

"Just the fact that [paid parental leave for men and women] would become an *issue* in public policy might intensify the change in public consciousness—by making the general public aware that more and more men are wanting to spend more time with their children."

### **Facilitate flex-place work**

David Pearce Snyder, father of three, is lifestyles editor of *The Futurist* and co-author of *The Family in Post-Industrial America* (1979). He believes that families are "perfectly compe-

tent" at raising kids. But he worries that "everybody is working longer hours—and that means less time for their social interactions. The fact that two-income households are going to continue to [increase in number], the fact that more than half of all the workers in this country will have unattended children at home by 1990, means that the family's ability to *perform* the functions it had done so well is now perhaps more threatened than ever before.

"Now, what's the best way to fulfill the functions of parenting while pursuing the necessities of employment? At least three national studies have suggested that the most popular solution suggested by parents has been the ability to work out of their home. So it seems to me legislation that would facilitate 'flex-place work' would be useful.

"If you've got a computer terminal at home you can do the work that you'd otherwise do at the office. Even now, about 2.1 million of us are on flex-place arrangements. . . ."

"The change in our economic base [from manufacturing to information] and in our technology [from industrial machinery to computers] will permit a return of economic production to the household. And that could have a huge, huge positive impact very quickly on the quality of child-rearing.

"In fact, since 25% of all workers today are responsible for the care of an *elderly relative* either in or near their home, flex-place work could also bring back the extended family with its ability to nurture both ways.

"The big issue on flex-place is institutions are adopting it cautiously because there are all kinds of questions over liability, workmen's compensation, that sort of thing. So it's clear to me that setting up basic rules and standards for flex-place employment would [hasten its adoption]."

### **Produce tapes**

Jack Canfield, father of two, is a \$3,000-a-day educational consultant, co-founder of Self-Es-

teem Seminars (NEW OPTIONS #27), and member of the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility, which both left and right have taken great delight in ridiculing since it was set up by the California State Assembly earlier this year.

Canfield can't divulge what the Task Force will eventually be proposing in the way of legislation. But he told NEW OPTIONS that he sees its main task as "educating the general public through reports, videos, prime-time television interviews, newspaper articles. . . ."

"I think parenting education is crucial. One goal [for us may be] to have a set of tapes so a teacher or employer can say to a parent, Hey, I know you're having problems at home with your kid. How about you take these tapes and listen to them, they might be helpful. . . ."

### Promote family counselling

California is one of only six states that licenses "marriage, family and child counsellors" (MFCCs). John Amodeo, 37, is a California MFCC; Kris Amodeo, 29, is an MFCC intern. They're co-authors of one of the least obnoxious self-help books we know, *Being Intimate: A Guide to Successful Relationships* (1986).

"Most parents need to learn new skills," Kris told NEW OPTIONS. "Most parents are just doing some combination of what their parents did and what they think should be done differently—and have never really examined how to be in touch with their feelings, how to communicate gently, how to set limits in a caring way without being critical of their children. . . ."

"MFCCs teach skills for how to communicate in a gentle, caring yet effective way," John added. "One of our roles is [teaching communications skills to parents] while at the same time teaching them to take care of their own needs. Otherwise their frustrations will just get projected onto their children.

"It might help if more states 'credentialled' MFCCs—to give more credence to the profession. It would also help for states to pass 'freedom-of-choice' laws so [private insurers] could be required to reimburse for MFC counselling."

### Launch school programs

But the Amodeos wouldn't stop there. "In the long run," says Kris, "if we're really going to create environments for children to grow up in a loving, caring kind of way, then we've got to reach beyond people who are already interested in learning about these things. Maybe the first step would be something like a voluntary program in the schools."

"Basically," John said, "it would teach the kinds of skills we teach as MFCCs: parenting skills, relationship skills. . . ."

"Any parents who wanted their children to be involved would need to volunteer to be in the program *themselves*," Kris added. "And

we'd [want to] involve the *teacher* in a similar kind of program. . . ."

### Empower parent educators

Although there's no real-life version of the Amodeos' program, there's one that can be seen as a precursor. And it's not in California.

The New-Parents-as-Teachers (NPAT) program, run by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, is now available in every Missouri school district to families with children under the age of three. Beginning from birth, NPAT participants are able to receive—absolutely free—periodic screening of their children's educational, hearing and visual development, and monthly private visits in the home by "parent educators."

"The parent educators make some observations of the child *and* the parent, [and then share their observations]," Deborah Murphy told NEW OPTIONS (Murphy is the baby-boomer who's run the NPAT program since it was funded three years ago). "The parent educators also answer any questions or concerns the parents may have.

"One of the major areas we emphasize with parents is the social development of their children. It is our strong desire that kids not only be competent educationally at age three but also be very compassionate and caring. [We want to] have the beginnings of a responsible citizen in the sense that they'll think of other people when they're making decisions.

"Another thing we do is we give parents the opportunity to get together in small groups based on the age of their children. One of the major goals of our program is to decrease the stress and increase the joy of parenting. I think the research would support that if parents are satisfied and pleased and feel competent in their role as parents, then the children will benefit."

### Foster democracy

Andrew Schmoekler, father of two, is the author of *The Parable of the Tribes: The Problem of Power in Social Evolution* (NEW OPTIONS #5), not to mention "Schmoekler Replies to Anarchists' Replies to Schmoekler's Reply to the Anarchists" (in the Sept. 23 issue of *Earth First! Journal*). "The way the government treats its citizens will ramify through the system," Schmoekler told NEW OPTIONS from his Maryland home. "Throughout history, the tyranny within the family has been a reflection of tyranny within the society.

"I believe the ultimate historical source of parental abuse is displacement by injured and humiliated adults onto the safest available scapegoat—their children—of the rage they feel having to acquiesce under brutal oppression. Our society shows considerable advance over most traditional societies in that respect. But there remains a lot to do.

"Our society does not foster the participatory democratic process as well as it should. It does not deal with its citizens with sufficient respect, with a sense of mutuality. The Jeffersonian ideal of autonomy has been swallowed up in the expanding corporate system as well as by expanding paternalistic government.

"Fostering self-respect and a sense of control over one's destiny—and dealing with people as if they mattered—is the best way I know for the government to encourage parents to treat their children as autonomous, worthwhile people."

### All it would take

Some of the ideas above might read as if they're either-or: classes in parenting *or* a guaranteed income, family and child counsellors *or* a more democratic America, and so on. But if you separate yourself from the proponents' own biases and priorities, you'll see that all these ideas could be complementary parts of a whole new agenda: an agenda to foster "the rearing of a compassionate people."

The biggest stumbling block many not be the logic of the enterprise but the tacit agreement between left and right referred to earlier, to simply avoid all mention of child-rearing practices in public policy debate. But all it would take is one brave national politician or political movement to end the silence. One political leader or movement with the courage to assert that our problems are "in here" as much as they are "out there."

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## NewOptions

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## NGOs call for "new partnership"

This spring, over 100 leaders of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other development experts—from 42 countries (28 underdeveloped, 14 overdeveloped)—came together in London to discuss the role of NGOs in providing development assistance . . . and to rethink the relationship between Southern (Third World) NGOs and their Northern (First World) partners.

Out of it came a call for a "new partnership" between Northern and Southern NGOs—a partnership that would essentially have Southern NGOs *define and administer* development, and Northern NGOs *advise and assist* the South.

Although the conference received no coverage in either the mainstream or "radical" press, many who attended spoke of it as a watershed event—a conference that will help shape the global development debate for years to come.

Sponsors were *World Development*, a prestigious multidisciplinary journal based in Washington, D.C., and Overseas Development Institute, a blue-chip think tank based in London. But the conference could never have taken place without the heroic efforts of one baby-boom-generation woman, Anne Drabek, who left the U.S. in the early 70s because she found it too depressing, and came back 10 years later as managing editor of *World Development*. We understand from good sources that Drabek spent months working 12-hour days on the conference in her trim white office, and that she managed to raise over \$100,000 from sources ranging from the Carnegie Corporation to the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (Japan) to UNICEF.

Some of the participants represented the Establishment wing of the development community: Ford Foundation, World Bank, U.S. AID. . . . But (and this is one thing that made this conference unique), the whole gamut of development organizations was fairly represented: from Oxfam-America to the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, from the International Education Institute of Japan to the Women's Construction Collective of Jamaica.

### Shell-shocked

Drabek leans forward at her desk, the morning sun streaming through the window. It is clear that, even now, months later, the conference is a constant living presence for her. "One of the things we were trying to do," she says, "was to get people together—Northerners and Southerners—who felt secure enough in their own lives to be able to have frank discussions.

So many of the forums we'd heard about had been sponsored by international organizations or NGO umbrella groups so there'd always been some kind of 'interested party' involved and [I think that kept people from being able to say] whatever they felt. . . .

"The really unique thing was the frankness with which people were prepared to talk to each other. And I think a number of the Americans who were there came back feeling sort of shell-shocked. Because we had a *really good* group of Third World people some of whom, you know, just really laid in to them. Which was fine; I mean, I think it really needs to be done. Because if you look at the way some of the NGO people here in Washington talk, it's as if these Third World folks don't know what they're doing. And the thing that came through loud and clear at the conference is that they really *do* know what they're doing. They've built up a lot of experience. And it really made people think."

"There had never been a meeting quite like this," Hussein Adam told NEW OPTIONS late one night from a New York City hotel. He should know. As head of the Somali Unit for Research on Emergencies and Rural Development, Mogadishu, Somalia, he is constantly travelling from conference to conference.

"For the first time, we met with people from the First World [who are] our equals," Adam said in the firm but gentle way he has. "The heads of First World NGOs came, the kinds of people we'd like to talk to. Normally in the field even though we're leaders of our own NGOs we meet a very low-level project officer whose age and experience is much below ours; the gap is so bad it often creates bad relations. But in London we met our equals.

"And they were shocked to hear what we were saying. . . ."

### Two-way flow

According to Drabek and many others, there was a virtual consensus at the conference that (1) NGOs ought to move from a peripheral to a central role in providing leadership for international development; and (2) Northern NGOs ought to give way to Southern NGOs as the leaders of the development process in the Third World. However, some of the more "grass-roots" participants took a slightly different view.

Doug Hellinger is co-director of The Development GAP, a very grassroots-oriented NGO that's won the respect of everyone from tiny African self-help groups to members of the U.S. Congress (NEW OPTIONS #28). "For

some people," Hellinger told NEW OPTIONS last week over coffee and donuts, "the conference was a well-intentioned effort to put the stamp of approval on NGOs as actors; to make the second half of the 80s the 'NGO Half-Decade.' Well that's a too static, insufficiently organic view [of what people were actually saying. The best thing that] happened at the conference is many people said, NGOs are *but a conduit of local expression and local knowledge*. They are a *connection* between the community's roots and the larger society. They are the *interpreter*, they are the *facilitator* and *linker*."

"At the conference you had an attempt to make NGOs The Product rather than *this process*; an attempt to say, hey, we can use [Third World NGOs to do some of our work for us]. The conference ran the danger of getting NGOs to define themselves as a Product, and I think that's the kiss of death. They'd become part of the failed paradigm, part of the problem.

"The message I got at the conference is there's a new challenge for partnership going out from South to North. The South wants its knowledge to be taken seriously as legitimate knowledge; it sought the legitimization not so much of NGOs as of its local level knowledge/experience/expertise. It wants there to be a *two-way information flow* [between North and South]."

### Money not the issue?

Not only did the Southern NGOs want their local level knowledge to be taken seriously; many of them added that they wanted it to be understood that development is *not* primarily a function of money from the North.

"Money is not the issue," Adam told NEW OPTIONS. "To us [in the South], the issue is how to approach development. [We want] to be able to deal with a little money that is catalytic rather than flood the place with money [for individual, isolated projects]."

Coralie Bryant, tall, self-confident, attended the conference as a representative of the Overseas Development Council, one of this country's most prestigious globally-oriented think tanks. "I think there was a bit of unreality about financial problems," she told NEW OPTIONS. "I'm just not convinced that funding isn't as important as A, B or C. I think for many of those groups funding is a problem, has been a problem and will be a problem. . . . It's a little disingenuous for someone whose way has been paid, whose hotel has been paid, to say funding isn't the biggest issue any more."

Atherton Martin, tall, self-confident, attended the conference as a representative of the Dominica Farmers' Union of Roseau, Dominica (a small Caribbean country). "We have seen the phenomenon of more and more money being pumped into [Third World] countries," he told NEW OPTIONS. "And what that

has tended to do is divert attention *away* from people's own things to see what they can do with this new resource, money. In other words, money has become a resource that seeks to replace local knowledge, local technology, local capacity-building. . . .

"Many people came to London with no intention to listen and change! For instance, many of us from the South said, What we need is not *more* aid, but a better *quality* of aid. Well immediately some people from the North latched on to this and said, What we were talking about is no more money! [Laughs bitterly.] It was almost a kind of caricature of a lack of respect for deep opinion from the South."

### "We have the capacity"

Toward the end of the conference, a consensus on a new-style division of labor had begun to emerge. Southern NGOs would *define and administer* the development process in the South; Northern NGOs would seek to provide them with money and technical assistance, and would seek to educate the First World public to the fact that Southern groups are capable of charting their own development paths.

"People from the South are saying, Look, we *know* what's wrong with our countries," Martin told NEW OPTIONS. "And *we have the capacity* to deal with it. We have the organizations, we have the expertise. . . ."

"The groups in the South want funds to develop their own capacity to assess knowledge and develop relevant programs," Hellinger said. "They're looking for organizational support rather than for Northern-conceived and Northern-directed 'projects.'"

"We were challenging the whole concept of projects and projectization," Adam said. "We were saying, Help us to build institutions rather than individual isolated projects. [Here] we differed with many First World NGOs who think that really you're going to change the economy of a country by these little projects. We don't think so. We think, yeah, there is some value there—but the value is in being able to *amplify* the style of doing work so it becomes national economic policy through ministries of planning and so on rather than thinking you can do it totally outside that realm."

### Shadow side

The "new partnership" might have been agreed to verbally, but there was plenty of skepticism the morning after.

"It was a static, Northern-oriented, product-oriented conference," Martin told NEW OPTIONS. "It seemed very clear to me that one of the prime exercises of the conference was to produce [material for a special issue of *World Development*]. I think that turned a lot of people off."

"I think you had some Northern NGOs that

felt really threatened," Hellinger told us.

"I think some people might have moved [toward grassroots empowerment, local capacity-building, etc.] more than they had previously," Bryant said. "But I also think a lot of people said, Hey, this is a one-time event, conferences come and go, I can nod and be polite, this isn't where the long-term pivotal decisions are going to be made. I think a bit of that was going on."

"There were a lot of paternalistic statements that came up," Adam said.

"They took us to eat at one of the oldest British-colonial clubs in London!" Martin said. "Here you have all these Third World people, and I remember seeing one Zimbabwean woman and right over her shoulder was a picture of the royal family! It was so incredible that no one could object. It was a bad joke!"

"The thing that bothered [me most], and that's always the problem when you meet in the First World, is this sense of time," Adam said. "[Northerners] like things to be short because they want to come in and run away! We'd have preferred for the meeting to have been a bit longer; we'd have preferred more time to have known each other."

### Turning point?

Despite all the mixed feelings, most of the participants believe the conference was—or might have been—a turning point.

"It really made people think," Drabek told us. "People like Peter Davies [president of InterAction, the prestigious American Council for Voluntary International Action] came back as though he'd seen the light! It is really very interesting. I've been to several meetings with him since then and he's constantly referring to the fact that at this London symposium it came through loud and clear that the indigenous [Third World] NGOs are determined to lead the development process; that they want the Northern NGOs to reassess their role in this whole process, to spend a lot more time doing development education in their own countries and providing information and technical assistance to Third World NGOs but doing much less operational work themselves. . . ."

"I think our concerns were heard," Martin conceded. "But [the real question is whether] organizations in the North will now attempt to take knowledge from the South and incorporate it into *their* knowledge, into their planning, into their institutional [behavior]. The extent to which that is happening is not yet evident. There are some encouraging signs."

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World Development Journal is about to publish all the papers presented at the conference. World Development: 1717 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., #501, Washington DC 20036; "Development Alternatives" issue, special \$2 price for NEW OPTIONS subscribers.

## On the Vine . . .

**A Directory that Gives Hope:** The day we visited the National Association of Alternative Community Schools (NEW OPTIONS #36), executive director **Jerry Mintz** kind of tossed off the fact that he was working on a directory of alternative schools. People told us he could be pretty understated at times and now we believe them. The "directory" turns out to be a handsome 98-pp. book listing nearly 500 "non-discriminatory and participant-controlled alternative learning situations" in 47 states. There'd never been a longer listing, not even in the 60s.

The directory includes an interesting brief history of the alternative schools movement. There's rich material on "home-based schools" and on "innovative projects and ideas" at some of the more conventional alternative schools. But the very best part is the often quite lengthy descriptions of the 100-plus schools that chose to return Mintz's questionnaire. Just reading through them can give hope (*National Directory of Alternative Schools*, \$12.50 from NCACS, R.D. 1-Box 378, Glenmoore PA 19343).

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**The Gran 500:** And now, the ultimate decentralist/globally responsible bibliography. **Guy Gran's** *Annotated Guide to Global Development* (Resources for Development and Democracy, 17119 Old Baltimore Rd., Olney MD 20832, \$9 pbk) lists and summarizes nearly 500 books in the hitherto unknown field of "development and democracy" — the best 500 books, according to Gran. Among the topics covered: Western and Third World history, social change theory, economic development theory, "the war/growth system" (felicitous phrase!), organization theory, worker management, sexual stratification, appropriate technology, and "area studies."

Gran, author of *Development By People* (NEW OPTIONS #2), is as good at hands-on field work in places like Thailand and Zaire as he is at devouring books in the Library of Congress, and his summaries are incisive and intelligent.

## On the Hill . . .

**Drawing the Line:** Rep. **Charlie Rose** (D-N.C.)—well known as one of the most "spiritually grounded" Congresspeople—recently introduced legislation designed to halt the patenting of animals, and encourage a national debate on the subject.

Citing the major economic and ethical concerns raised by the U.S. Patent Office's decision to permit the patenting of genetically-altered animals, Rose called for a moratorium on animal patenting until Congress has a chance to fully consider the issue.

A remarkably broad-based coalition of farm, animal welfare, environmental and public policy organizations has pledged to launch a national campaign in support of the legislation. Among them: Animal Legal Defense Fund (NEW OPTIONS #16), Center for Rural Affairs (#23) and Friends of the Earth (#2).

Spokesperson for the coalition is **Jeremy Rifkin**, president of the Foundation on Economic Trends and author of *Algeny* (#4). "[The breadth of the coalition] goes to show that ethics is more important than ideology," Rifkin told NEW OPTIONS (for more info.: Robyn Rhymes, Fdn on Ec. Trends, 1130-17th St. N.W., #630, Washington DC 20036).

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# Letters . . .

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## Win some, lose some

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

—Jeff Fobes  
*Green movement organizer*  
*Asheville, No. Car.*

Please cancel our subscription *immediately*.

—Charles and Marcia Miro  
*Green movement organizers*  
*University Park, Md.*

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

—Peter Tautfest  
*Hanover, West Germany*

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

—Marjory Pratt  
*Pennington, N.J.*

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

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

—Pat Nelson and Trip Meima  
*Washington, D.C.*

## "I must say, I bristled"

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

I believe Charlene Spretnak's speech spoke

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

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

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

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

—Susan Meeker-Lowry  
*Worcester, Vt.*

## In perspective

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

—John R. Ewbank  
*Southampton, Penna.*

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

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

—Harry Kerastas  
*Bridgeport, Conn.*

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

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

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

—Marco Ermacora  
*Montreal, Quebec*

## To unify our movement

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

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

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

—Les Brunswick  
*Pittsburgh, Penna.*

## Overarching issue

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

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

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

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

of common ground.

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

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

—Charlene Spretnak  
Berkeley, Calif.

## Ambiguous world

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

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

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

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

—Ann Weiser  
Oakland, Calif.

## Terrribly disappointed

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

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

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

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

## Sandbox way of life

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

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

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

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

—Michael Marien  
LaFayette, N.Y.

## Mr. Sandman

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

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

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

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

Ah, to feel that striving and unity again!

—Margaret Nicholson  
Honolulu, Hawaii

Continued from page eight:

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

## The four spheres

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

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

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

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

## It's Theobald—by a whisker!

In another extremely close vote, NEW OPTIONS's subscribers have given New Options Inc.'s seventh annual Political Book Award to Robert Theobald for his book *The Rapids of Change* (reviewed in NEW OPTIONS #29). It's the first time a sole male author has won the Award, and the sixth time an author from the Sunbelt has won.

In second place, only three points back: Worldwatch Institute's *State of the World 1986* (reviewed in #27). Worldwatch's annual report has finished a close second two years in a row now.

Rounding out the Top Six: Murray Bookchin's *The Modern Crisis* (#30); Annie Cheatham and Mary Clare Powell's *This Way Daybreak Comes* (#26); Donald Carlson and Craig Comstock's *Securing Our Planet* (#33); and Paul Ekins's *The Living Economy* (#35).

Nine books were nominated for the Award by a panel of six distinguished decentralist/globally responsible thinkers chosen by NEW OPTIONS (see #39). All nominees had to be published in 1986 in the U.S. Ballots were sent to all 8,400 NEW OPTIONS subscribers.

The New Options Inc. Political Book Awards are listed in the "Literary Prizes" section of the prestigious *Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information*. To the best of our knowledge, the New Options Inc. award is the only one they list that's decided upon by popular vote, rather than by "experts."

### Acclaim for Theobald

*The Rapids of Change* not only received the most points, it received the most accolades. From a 56-year-old male engineer in Laceys Spring, Ala.: "The most realistic and all-encompassing description of where we are and what we need to do—and the description is non-separative, non-antagonistic." From a 38-year-old male executive director in Spokane, Wash.: "The best book Theobald has written; gives a graspable, comprehensive analysis of our situation." From a 37-year-old female networker in Oakland, Calif.: "It's not only original, groundbreaking theory, but it's practical and usable at the grassroots level."

But there were some dissenting views. From a 29-year-old male "agent for social change" in Washington, D.C.: "Overgeneralized rehash of well-understood thinking."

### Praise for the runners-up

*State of the World* received more actual votes (though fewer points) than *Rapids*. From a 49-year-old social scientist near Syracuse, N.Y.:

"Genuinely fresh and important thinking regarding deficits, sustainable resource use and redefining national security." From a 47-year-old male "househusband" in Cottage Grove, Ore.: "The analysis gets better every year." From a 46-year-old male publisher in Berkeley, Calif.: "More facts and less bulls—." But, from a 32-year-old female administrator in New York City: "Awfully dry."

*The Modern Crisis* received nearly twice as many first-place votes as seconds and thirds combined—sure sign it has lots of enthusiastic supporters. From a 69-year-old male educator in Vancouver, B.C.: "Reveals the essence of one of the finest minds in the field of utopian social criticism." From a 39-year-old writer-activist in Los Angeles: "Presents the most radical decentralist alternative—and we need one!" From a 35-year-old male educator in Wellesley, Mass.: "Bookchin deserves one of those lifetime achievement awards in addition to recognition for this excellent book." But, from a Bethesda, Md. futurist: "Too abstract [and] idealized."

### And fireworks for all

Each of the other books had its passionate advocates. For example:

From a 43-year-old female editor in Baton Rouge, La.: "Annie Cheatham's *This Way Daybreak Comes* is the most positive, hopeful and optimistic survey of women's lives and issues I've read in a long time."

From a 47-year-old male radio producer in Hopland, Calif.: "Carlson and Comstock's *Securing Our Planet* goes beyond traditional solutions to another and more positive level of seeing the 'peace problem.'"

From a 41-year-old female writer in Berkeley, Calif.: "Paul Ekins's *Living Economy* is a great service to the Green movement. I hope it will be studied by everyone willing to help us move beyond harangues against growthist economics to positive, plausible alternatives at the local, regional, national and global levels."

### Age and sex differences

There were some big age and sex differences in the voting.

Among women, Cheatham and Powell's *This Way Daybreak Comes* was the first place winner by a wide margin. By contrast, Bookchin's *Modern Crisis* finished ninth—dead last.

Why did Bookchin's book, third overall, do so poorly among women? Perhaps it had something to do with Bookchin's harsh polemical style—the same thing that got him in trouble

at the Green gathering (see Charlene Spretak's very circumspect letter on p. 5 above).

Among people 60 and over, Theobald's *Rapids* did a full 50% better than it did overall. By contrast, Ekins's *Living Economy*—sixth overall—actually received a *negative score* among older subscribers! According to one self-described "curmudgeon" from upstate New York, "[A post-socialist economics] is potentially a splendid idea. But this uneven, hodgepodge volume is not yet ready for prime time, and its prevailing smugness may inhibit any attempt to ever get there."

Could it be—could it really be—that most men under 60 are less bothered by authors' attitudes and styles (Ekins's "smugness," Bookchin's polemics) than most men over 60, and most women?

## Wallis (ed.), Thich: a new conscience?

Beneath the thin veneer of American political life, a new political conscience is beginning to stir. Two just-published books seek to describe it: Jim Wallis, ed., *The Rise of Christian Conscience* (Harper & Row, \$13 pbk) and Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace* (Parallax Press, P.O. Box 7355, Berkeley CA 94707, \$8.50 pbk).

Wallis's book presents the new conscience as radical-Christian in orientation, Thich's as contemporary-Buddhist. Thus, the books don't see eye-to-eye on all points. But there's no question that they're both talking about the same phenomenon.

### Pro-life ethic

Wallis is editor of our best radical-Christian magazine, *Sojourners* (NEW OPTIONS #36), and his anthology consists largely of articles from *Sojourners*. But the articles were so carefully chosen—and his own contributions are so to the point—that it reads more like a treatise or manifesto than a mere collection.

Conservatives are faulted for their hostility to the poor, their incessant militarism and their intolerance of dissent. Liberals are faulted for preferring "bureaucracy to democracy, dependency to justice, power to genuine participation." Increasingly, says Wallis, Christians have proclaimed a plague on both their houses; and recently some of them have launched "an independent movement of conscience whose cry for justice and appeal for peace is rooted in the Bible rather than political ideology."

Actually, Wallis wants it both ways. At times he is pleased to speak of the new conscience as ideology-free; at other times he speaks of it as—in effect—a new ideology or political world-view, one that's based on a consistent pro-life ethic: "The selective morality of both

the Right and the Left is being challenged by a new pro-life stance that calls for the defense of human life wherever it is threatened, from the beginning to the end of the life-cycle. Thus the rights of women and the unborn, the rejection of nuclear weapons, opposition to military intervention in Central America, the defense of the poor, and the pursuit of economic justice all form a 'seamless garment' on behalf of human life."

The first part of the anthology focuses on such "Signs of Conscience" as the Sanctuary movement, the Free South Africa movement, and the Christian-feminist position on abortion; the latter part focuses on such "Disciplines of Conscience" as nonviolent-action and civil disobedience. Just when you think it's getting a bit sanctimonious, Wallis weighs in with his marvellous essay "Idols Closer to Home" exposing six "cheap substitutes for grace" that shadow the social change movement. Among those things that are said to threaten to become idols for us: our simple lifestyles, our identification with the poor, our protest actions and our principle of nonviolence.

### Time to "wake up"

Thich [say "Tick"] Nhat Hanh—Vietnamese monk—was a spokesperson for the largely Buddhist Third Force during the Vietnam War; he made several trips to the U.S. at the height of the War and was attacked by left and right alike (see NEW OPTIONS #11), just as he was in his own country. Today he lives in France and regularly tours the U.S. *Being Peace* is a short, sweet and deeply affecting statement of Thich's philosophy, and it is something more. It is an attempt to embody—or at least, foreshadow—an emerging *American* conscience based in part on Buddhist teachings as they've been understood and adapted in this country over the last 20 years.

Key to the new conscience is the concept of "waking up": "Children understand very well that in each woman, in each man, there is a capacity of waking up—of understanding and loving. Many children have told me that they cannot show me anyone who does not have this capacity. . . ."

Thich founded the Tiep Hien Order (or "Order of Interbeing") in Vietnam during the war, and he feels its precepts are just as relevant in this country. Among them: don't be bound to any ideology; don't ever feel you have the absolute truth; don't maintain anger or hatred; awaken yourself to the suffering in the world; live simply; be nonviolent; try to heal all conflicts; always speak truthfully; always take a clear stand against oppression.

### Let the dialogue begin

It is clear that Wallis's radical Christianity and Thich's engaged Buddhism have much in com-

mon. But their differences are substantial—and help illuminate the differences between "religious" and "spiritual" approaches to social change. For example:

- Wallis says that the "great uncertainty" of our movement is, "are we ready and willing to suffer?" Thich says pointedly that "to suffer is not enough. We must also be in touch with the wonders of life."

- Wallis laments that the peace movement is "still based on self-interest." Thich refuses to acknowledge any separation between what's good for self and good for others: "If we are not happy, if we are not peaceful, we cannot share peace and happiness with others."

- Wallis insists that we side with "the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed race or class." Thich urges that we get in touch with all sides, for he sees everyone as inextricably connected to everyone else and therefore "to some extent responsible." He urges "understanding and mediation and reconciliation" — always.

- Wallis emphasizes the overwhelming need for *hope*; Thich emphasizes the overwhelming need for *awareness*.

Are these minor differences of emphasis or major differences of worldview? In a political movement, will they prove complementary or contradictory? It is astonishing that, even as the "new conscience" struggles to emerge, few activists have begun to discuss such questions. Thanks to these two books, that discussion can now begin in earnest.

## Michael Albert: a new theory?

Even if a new political conscience does emerge (above), it will not be enough; we'll also need a new political *theory* to make systemic sense of the world.

Several New Age thinkers have begun to build *toward* a new political theory on the scaffolding of 20th-century physics—most notably, Fritjof Capra in *The Turning Point* (1982). It was only a matter of time before the political left got hold of quantum physics and tried its hand at 20th-century political theory-building. Well, it just has, and the result is a quantum leap forward for all political activists: Michael Albert et al., *Liberating Theory* (South End Press, 116 St. Botolph Street, Boston MA 02115, \$8.50 pbk).

The book represents a two-year collective effort by seven very different political radicals. Among them: Mel King, the former Rainbow Coalition candidate for mayor of Boston; Lydia Sargent, playwright and actress; and Holly Sklar, editor of a fine anthology on the Trilateral Commission (*Trilateralism*, 1980). Albert himself is a full-time collective member at South End Press—kind of a left-wing version of New Society Publishers (NEW OPTIONS #39)—and has been writing books of political theory since the delightfully-entitled *What Is To Be Undone?* back in 1974.

### "Complementary holism"

Like many political radicals, Albert et al. were frustrated by the fact that "the movement" seemed *less* than the sum of its parts. Feminists, black nationalists, Marxists and anarchists had all been active through the 1970s and 80s—by some measures they were even gaining ground; but there seemed to be no good way for them to link their causes and struggles. Feminists argued that kinship was prime, nationalists argued that community was prime, Marxists argued that economics was prime and anarchists argued that politics was prime. Sometimes they'd cooperate on immediate issues, but just as often (or, soon enough) they'd be at each other's throats.

*Continued on page six, column three . . .*

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