Mark Satin, *Editor*

NewOptions

June 30, 1989 Issue No. Sixty

Last Chance Saloon

For 25 years I've tried to build an organization that could put my values—call them the values of the idealistic fragment of the Sixties generation—into the mainstream political debate. I've been a civil rights worker, a campus president of SDS, a founder of the Toronto Anti-Draft Programme, a founder of the New World Alliance . . . the list goes on and on.

Now I'm in my 40s, and when I can't sleep I catch myself wondering: What good did it do, really?

In many professions, those of us who were forever changed by the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war have begun to change things for the better. In politics, though, it's a different story. The Democrats and Republicans seem as unchangeable as ever. We don't even have an organization like Common Cause or Moral Majority to call our own.

What's the problem? Why haven't we been able to launch a permanent, competent organization that reflects our values? Will we ever? To provide some answers to those questions, I flew out to the second national U.S. Green gathering June 21-25 at the University of Oregon campus in Eugene, Oregon.

For five years, the U.S. Greens had been trying to launch a permanent, competent political organization, and I was one of only five people who'd been to all three of the Greens' national meetings (see NEW OPTIONS #8 and 40). I knew that quite a few Greens felt—as I did—that their group represented our generation's last chance to affect the mainstream political debate. Walking slowly across campus one night, one of them told me that being in the Green movement now was akin to sitting in the Last Chance Saloon. We might never get another.

The players

If you stood in the middle of the University of Oregon campus and watched the Greens arrive, with their T-shirts and blue jeans and casual manner, you might have thought you were seeing the students arrive. But if you walked closer you'd have seen some gray in their hair.

The average age of the Greens at the gathering was just over 40. Fewer than 10% of them were under 30—an ironic twist on the old Sixties slogan, "Don't trust anyone over 30."

But if they were middle aged, they were hardly settled down. Only two out of seven were married—as compared to nearly two out of three for the country as a whole. Remarkably, another two out of seven were divorced and had never remarried—as compared to only 7% for the country as a whole.

Many of them had exchanged some of their income-earning power for "meaningful" jobs or simple lifestyles. Just consider: About two-thirds of them had spent some time in graduate school. But their median household income was under $25,000 a year! The average household income for people with five years of college is over $58,000 a year now.

All these statistics suggest that the Greens gathered in Eugene had been deeply influenced by the idealistic values of the Sixties. A second reading suggests that they might have been not just shaped by the Sixties, but wounded by them, too. Both the strengths and the wounds would become apparent during the gathering.

A stiff drink

Before the main event, there was a mini-Interregional Committee (IC) meeting that revealed a lot about the internal workings of the organization.

The IC is basically the "people's congress" of the Greens. It consists of delegates from the regional Green groups. The ICs are famous for their storminess and lack of clarity, and this one proved to be no exception, though I was told it wasn't nearly as frustrating as some.

For hours and hours, in a long, narrow room, the delegates wrangled over structure and by-laws. At one point a rather elegant-looking structure was discussed at length, and some delegates went away thinking it had been agreed to in principle; others were adament that it had not been.

In addition, a "clearinghouse coordinator" — in effect, an executive director—was chosen to replace the outgoing coordinator, Dee Berry. On the first day of the IC meeting, the Search Committee described its two leading candidates, both of them gentle and sensitive men. But it was clear from the body language that the Search Committee wasn't entirely happy with either.

Both candidates had led "a very Green life," as one Committee member put it. But both lacked qualities that Greens found very difficult, even embarrassing, to put into words. "The necessary pizzazz," is how one Committee member eventually blurted it out.

The next day the Committee stunned the IC by announcing it had decided to recommend neither of its finalists, but, instead, a third person—Mindy Lorenz, a vigorous and articulate Green activist from Los Angeles. Lorenz accepted the position contingent on the IC's willingness to pay her a full-time salary and move the clearinghouse from Kansas City to Eugene (the IC had located the clearinghouse in the Midwest as a way of telling Middle America, "We're with you").

With minimal discussion, the Search Commit-

Note from the Editor

The *Utne Reader* has just announced the nominees for its "Alternative Press Awards."

NEW OPTIONS is one of eight nominees in the category of "Best Essays and Criticism" — and one of six in "General Excellence: Best Publication from 10,000 to 30,000 Circulation."

According to *Utne*, there are over 2,000 alternative periodicals in the U.S. So we feel honored!

tee's recommendation was consensed upon—as were Lorenz's conditions—and everyone cheered wildly.

I enjoyed the IC's enthusiasm. But I couldn't help noticing that during the discussion nobody asked Lorenz to describe her sense of what the priorities of the clearinghouse should be. And nobody asked an even more obvious question: Since we could barely pay Dee Berry $200 a month, how were we going to pay Lorenz many times that?

Few people questioned the wisdom of moving the clearinghouse from Kansas City to Eugene—a pretty, out-of-the-way college town that happens to be one of the 10 whitest cities (of over 100,000 inhabitants) in the country.

Already a couple of local chapters are up in arms over the Search Committee's process and the IC's decision. One of their objections: Who knows how many other good people would have applied for the job, had they known the clearinghouse could be moved to a place like Eugene?

And while we're on the subject of sins of omission: Nobody told the two finalists what was going on until it was all over. Their barely-suppressed bitterness and hurt was a constant presence for the rest of the gathering. It isn't always pretty at the Last Chance Saloon.

Shall we begin?

It was a relief and a delight to go from the IC meeting to the lawn outside the Student Union building, where the opening speeches were about to begin.

About 250 people were spread out along the lawn, on the steps, under the trees. I hung out among them, listening to the speeches and remembering why I believed in Green politics.

We need to break away from politics as protest, shouted John Rensenbrink, the gray-haired political science professor (and noted Poland scholar; #53) who coordinates the Greens' platform-writing process. We've got to redefine political struggle as the act of taking responsibility for our lives—and our communities. And in the process we've got to totally redefine such ancient political goals as "power" and "victory."

Charles Betz, from the Left Greens, argued for a consistently "anti-capitalist," consistently "oppositional" politics. His concepts came across as wooden and over-abstract, as if they'd all come out of musty texts and not from his experience of the world.

Equally one-dimensional was Joseph Sisto, a consultant to some of the Fortune 500 companies. He informed us that if we demonstrated "love and understanding" when dealing with corporate leaders and political parties, we'd almost surely be successful.

Danny Moses' closing speech set the tone for the best of the gathering. Moses, an editor at Sierra Club Books, presented us with a jazz-like sequence of some of the wonderful and horrible things going on in the world.

He had high praise for Lois Gibbs's Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes, with its "4,600 grassroots groups"; he delivered a devastating (but rhetoric-free) critique of genetic engineering. And he ended with Bob Marley's great plea, "Won't you help to sing/these songs of freedom." Every Green was ready.

Groping forward

Our first two days were spent largely in "working groups." The Green gathering had been called primarily to write the first draft of the Greens' political platform, and 19 working groups were set up to draft each of the sections of the platform.

I chose to take part in the "strategy" group, in part because it was the largest and contained many of the Greens' heavy hitters. The facilitator, Sam Kaner, made his living helping everyone from corporations to social change groups develop consensus decision-making processes. He was a big bear of a man with just the blend of authoritativeness and gentleness that could keep the strategy group from tearing itself apart.

He had his work cut out for him. After a couple of hours it was clear we had very different visions of the future—or at least, very different ways of expressing them.

Brian Tokar, author of a book explaining Green politics from an eco-anarchist point of view (#39), said our movement's task was to empower communities. George Katsiaficas, author of a book on the global student movement circa 1968, wanted a more pressingly global focus.

Genevieve Marcus, a former co-candidate for governor of California (she'd run with her husband), tried to put things as simply as possible by saying our task was to create a "healthy, sustainable world." Carl Boggs, author of a book on contemporary radical political movements, worried that many Greens' visions were too simplistic. He especially lamented the lack of economic-class analyses.

No one could have figured out what was really being said in the room—no one could have picked up on all the subtle thrusts and parries (New Left vs. New Age, anarchist vs. socialist, etc.)—without having spent at least three years in the alternative political wars. An IQ of 130 or more would have helped, too.

We were stumbling toward a point where we could begin to discuss strategy in some detail—but there wasn't time. So before the meeting ended we scheduled four "mini-working groups" for anyone who wanted to continue meeting later that day. Once again, as always, those who were most willing to give up their free time—those who were most willing to ignore their personal needs and attend more meetings than anyone else—would end up having the most say.

The mini-working groups were lively two- and three-hour affairs held under the trees. And the next day we came in rarin' to discuss all kinds of strategic possibilities for the Green movement.

We weren't willing to vote on them (that would have been too "adversarial"), but we did take a "straw poll," which felt like voting to me. The top three: "No elections on any level without first networking among like-minded groups"; "[Support] Green information transfer"; "Focus on local presence."

Significantly, none of the 30-plus proposals received a majority of "No" votes (other possibilities included "High priority," "Low priority" and "Further discussion needed"). So as several people pointed out, the results could have been interpreted not as enshrining the top 3-5 proposals, but as encouraging and empowering virtually everyone to do what they felt needed to be done.

Unfortunately, that was not to be. That kind of suggestion (coming mostly from women) was routinely ignored, and the final strategy document was full of explicit and implicit "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts."

Every night

Every night, after the official events were over, the Left Green Network (LGN) would caucus in the lobby of a dormitory. The LGNers figured they'd get about 10-15 people a night. Instead, they got upwards of 80 a night crowding onto the tacky fake-leather counches and chairs, sitting on the steps and lying on the floor.

Probably most of us came wanting to check out if the LGN would be a positive or negative presence in the Greens. We ended up watching the left argue interestingly, and interminably, about many issues great and small (but always the theoretical issues—never the practical issues of structure and fund-raising and publicity). And we interjected questions and comments so

NewOptions

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

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

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

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Designer/Typesetter: Baker Johnson Graphic Design, Inc.

Printer/Mailer: Newsletter Services, Inc.

Mailing List Manager: Montgomery Data Systems, Inc.

often that, at times, the "caucus" became more like a free-for-all.

One thing we noticed right away is that the LGN is far more diverse—and far less rigid—than its literature suggested. The literature is produced by the eco-anarchist wing of the LGN. But I could detect at least five other (overlapping) wings at the caucus: social democrats, independent decentralists, academics, battle-scarred leftists (primarily refugees from one or more Marxist sects), and left youth.

Another thing we all noticed was a difference in attitude among the leftists. Some believed they had the answers that the rest of the Greens needed. Others believed there should be a kind of live-and-let-live relationship between the LGN and other Greens—an attitude perfectly expressed by a young Wisconsin Green when he said, in response to a hostile questioner: I can understand why you're afraid of us bringing a lot of leftist baggage into the Greens. But please remember, the New Age and spiritual and other tendencies are bringing in *their* baggage, as well!

Still others genuinely wanted to foster mutual learning (not just one-way learning) within the Greens. Bob Koehler, an editor of the magazine *Green Synthesis*, was getting at this when he said he saw the LGN as a "healing forum" for the various factions and tendencies within the Greens.

Hot & heavy

The discussions between left and post-left factions in that cramped dorm room became hot and heavy at times, but the left Greens stood their ground. Many explained why they considered themselves left Greens (as opposed to just plain Greens). Katie Kadwell, from the Madison Greens, said most Greens seemed "afraid" of talking about "substantive issues in a substantive manner." Someone in a T-shirt said most of the preliminary platform statements "didn't go nearly far enough." Phil Hill, a radical journalist, said Marxism is still the best "method of analysis" we have, even though its vision of the good life is no longer valid.

As I sat through these discussions, it became clear that the left Greens were as frustrated by the traditional left as they were by what they rather snidely called "New Age" tendencies within the Greens; and that their conscious purpose was as much to green the mainstream left as it was to give a left spin to (they would say "radicalize") the Greens.

Charles Betz—he of the stiff correct-line speech on the eve of the gathering—passionately reported that one left group tends to think of environmental politics as "petty bourgeois reformist politics"; he ended up characterizing the group as an "iceberg." Tokar lamented that the whole mainstream left wants to merely "tack on" ecological issues to its already-lengthy laundry list. It doesn't accept, he said, that the ecological perspective requires us to re-think everything.

Another thing some of us picked up is that the left Greens were almost completely unfamiliar with the books that gave intellectual weight to the "New Age" beliefs they were criticizing. After Betz called for a synthesis of left-wing "analysis" and New Age "community," I asked him if he'd ever actually read any "New Age" analyses—substantive books by people like Herman Daly (#44), Willis Harman (#45) and Hazel Henderson (#43). He allowed as how he hadn't found the time yet, but he hoped to in the future. (In contrast, most Greens were at least passingly familiar with the left-wing classics.)

The discussions and debates at the LGN caucus continued every night until long past midnight . . . even when half the people (and there were rarely under 50) were slouched in a near-stupor. The talk never seemed to stop; the words kept cascading out, on and on, endlessly.

I began to suspect that the words themselves served to fill a painful void—the void left by our generation's political powerless; the void left by the lack of an adequate political organization. If we'd just keep talking, maybe they'd never turn the lights out at the Last Chance Saloon.

Capitalism/industrialism

The division between "political Greens" and "spiritual Greens" that some detected at the first Green gathering was nowhere to be found at Eugene. Some of the most constructive statements on Green spirituality were made by members of the Left Green Network, and some of the most politically sophisticated analyses came from post-socialist and "New Age" Greens.

A couple of big differences of opinion did surface at Eugene, however. One had to do with whether our problems are due to "capitalism" or "industrialism."

At the hugely successful "Economics Forum," several Greens made the case for treating capitalism as prime. They argued that capitalism—"a global system increasingly seeking control over all the planet's markets and resources" — is the dominant force in the world, and if we failed to challenge it head-on we'd never be able to build a just society. In their view, the industrial system is a product of capitalism.

Other Greens at the Economics Forum argued that industrialism is a broader concept than capitalism. In their view, both modern capitalism and modern socialism are biased in favor of the industrial system (giantism, hierarchy, economic growth, technological drivenness, etc.)—though neither needs to be.

The "industrialism" position has intriguing post-socialist implications. Lorna Salzman, from New York City, put her finger on one when she argued that empowering people and communities—not redistributing wealth—should be first on our agenda. Mitch Chanelis, from Boston, identified another when he drew a crucial distinction not between capitalism and socialism but between "monopoly capital" and "free enterprise."

The latter is what we want, he said—fair competition among many different kinds of small and medium-sized producers. Whether we call it true capitalism, human-scale socialism or some third thing makes little difference.

Local/national

The other big division at Eugene was between those who wanted to focus strictly on local politics (at least for now) and those who wanted to focus on national politics—as well as local politics—as soon as possible.

On the surface, it's amazing that anyone would object to a national political effort. The time is ripe. Even *Time Magazine*, even the big corporations, are beginning to admit that the planet is in danger.

At Eugene, Dee Berry made a moving plea for "multi-level movement building," and Adriane Carr, from Canada, pointed out that her country's fledgling national Green party inspired the Canadian media to pay attention to the Green message.

But many objections were raised. Some feared an early focus on national work would keep us from ever creating a local presence. "The strength of the Greens is that we encourage and even require activists to work at the local level," said Larry Martin, from the Potomac Valley bioregion.

Other Greens said we didn't have the resources to run for national office. Still others said we'd be tempted to trim our sails to public opinion even before we raised them.

Some of the Greens' international guests got caught up—almost despite themselves—in the national/local debates, they were that intense. Wilhelm Knabe, a tall and silver-haired Green member of the West German Bundestag, told a plenary session that he could understand our reluctance to form a national party. But consider the international importance of the U.S., he pleaded; consider the urgency of the situation of the planet. Imagine the difference that just a decent Environmental Protection Agency could make. . . .

Contact high

On the second-to-last day of the gathering, representatives of each of the 19 working groups stood up before all 250 of us and summarized their policy statements and asked for feedback. But there wasn't time to respond in

any depth—and a few people seemed to hog the microphones. Basically we just had to passively sit there.

At any other conference we might have rebelled. But all of us knew we were sitting in the Last Chance Saloon—all of us sensed that if we weren't able to come out of this gathering with a draft document (and a reputation for civility), we'd probably never again have a chance to build a political organization based on our ideals.

So we all sat there politely, listening to the presentations, daydreaming, taking roundabout trips to the water fountain. . . . When a professor from the University of Wisconsin started going on and on about land use policy, I really thought I'd fall asleep.

Suddenly there was commotion at the door, shouting, electricity in the air! Thirty people burst into the auditorium—mostly male teenagers with long hair and headbands. They were carrying a 24-foot-long imitation marijuana cigarette made of canvas and hay—the spitting image of the real thing. And they were chanting, "We smoke pot and we like it a lot! We smoke pot and we like it a lot!"

That woke us up in a hurry. Some of us shouted back, some of us felt panicky, some of us got really mad. Ironically, many of us had spoken up for direct action during the course of the conference. But we'd never guessed that anyone would practice direct action *on us*, and it was clear that it made most of us just as uncomfortable as it did The Establishment.

The unruly teen-agers—most of them participants in a big "National Smoke-In" held in Eugene that weekend—were armed with a message. You guys are selling your generation out, they shouted. All you people look like you smoke dope, and here you are making demands for everybody but yourselves. Your platform has got to demand HEMP RIGHTS—legalization of marijuana!

The kids had hit a nerve. Besides fear and hostility, I detected a kind of embarrassed shock of recognition. Those kids could have been us 20 years ago. And in some ways they were right. . . .

For a couple of minutes, it looked like our whole session would have to adjourn. But, miraculously, our chief facilitator, Caroline Estes, managed to restore order—by including the direct-actionists into our process. They were invited to stay and listen to our speakers. They were invited to send a spokesperson up to address us (for five minutes). And they were invited to attend our picnic afterwards.

Their speaker, a long-time activist for "hemp rights," was forceful and factual—though probably most of us still balked at putting legalization of marijuana into our platform. (We knew what the media would do with that one.) And they did come to our picnic, to which they made a couple of unique contributions.

Platform-to-be

Our last day was even more formal and constrained—and we were just as well-behaved. Reps from each of the working groups read their final policy statements and asked the delegates to "consense" to parts or all of them. (Delegates could also choose to "block consensus" or to "stand aside.")

The statements—along with the degree of support for each—would be printed in a special edition of the Green newsletter (and in a book from New Society Publishers, #39); gone over assiduously by the local Green groups; and finalized at the Greens' next gathering, in Estes Park, Colo., in 1990.

Remarkably, no statement was blocked by more than about 10% of the delegates. No statement was even "stood aside for" by more than about 20% of the delegates.

The statements were of uneven quality and reflected many different political tendencies within the Green orbit.

Some managed to summarize, credibly and succinctly, just what made the Greens different—and worth watching. The Greens' emphasis on ecological wisdom, as distinct from economic growth, was nowhere better expressed than in the "forests" statement: "The principle that forests have an intrinsic value in and of themselves, over and above their economic value, is the foundation of the Green program for forestry."

Their emphasis on personal and social responsibility—not just social responsibility, as per most movement groups (and the West German Greens)—came out in the "ecofeminist" statement. On the one hand, it called for "proportional representation of gender and race." On the other hand, it said this: "Men and women need to take responsibility for their own participatory style and emotional process."

Traditional capitalism *and* traditional socialism call for top-down, centralized solutions to our problems. At their best, the Greens call for solutions that empower people, communities and regions. The "food" statement got it right, calling for "an ecologically based sustainable agriculture system that moves as rapidly as possible towards regional/bioregional self-reliance." Similarly, the "energy" statement speaks of "ultimately render[ing] individuals and communities energy self-sufficient."

Both "economics" statements came out against such underrecognized (by Democrats and Republicans) social ills as "massive overconsumption of products and resources," "addictive consumerism," and our "perpetual growth imperative." And both sought to promote everything from "simpler, self-reliant lifestyles" to "an equitable distribution of basic goods and services." One was rather socialist in its approach, the other was a bit more entrepreneurial, going so far as to speak of our "loss of personal . . . initiative" in the corporate-dominated present.

There were some problems with the Greens' draft document. There was some mind-numbing rhetoric (e.g., "Through education we engender and, at the same time, become products of social and pedagogical relations"). Sometimes people wrote their pet explanations into the document, as if they were writing a thesis: "Greens need to understand Patriarchy as the root cause of our current oppressive structures throughout the world."

Too much of the text was abstract, philosophical. Like the 1988 Democratic platform, it was long on values and code words, short on real world examples. Some key subjects, such as transportation and foreign policy, were left out entirely!

But on the whole, the document is a major achievement. No U.S. political platform comes as close to embodying the ideals of the alternative movements of the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties. And no platform includes anything like the Greens' statement on spirituality.

Pats on the back

There were plenty of reasons for Greens to celebrate their achievements at Eugene, and in three long evaluation sessions following the gathering about 60 exhausted but enthusiastic participants did just that. Two of the evaluations took place at the Green House in Eugene—a big white wooden house with green trim that may soon serve as headquarters for the U.S. Green movement.

Irene Diamond, a well-known ecofeminist, praised the quality of the dialogue in some of the working groups. Brian Tokar praised the "strength and clarity" of the policy statements. Marcia Dickinson, from Kansas City, couldn't believe how close to consensus we were on so many statements.

Danny Moses may have put his finger on the most significant positive achievement of the gathering when he said, "There's been the achievement of a kind of psychological solidarity; a feeling of bonding with each other in a way that is critical to the work we want to do together. The Green movement is more present, now, because of this. . . .

"The feeling takes me back to the times I cherish and the work we did in the early 60s in the civil rights movement, which was an 'inspirited' movement—one in which spirit and analysis worked hand in hand to produce great results."

Women/men

Although the participants were right to congratulate themselves on many things, they were

Continued on page seven, column one . . .

The Ear . . .

"Shire democracy"?

Frank Bryan and John McClaughry would create a system of "shires" to decentralize and enhance Vermont's polity ("Out of Congress' League," NEW OPTIONS #58). The proposal has many attractive ideas worth serious consideration, but one need only glance across the Connecticut River—to New Hampshire—to see the dismal failures of a state government which is far too eager to abdicate its responsibilities, tossing all the balls into local government's court:

- New Hampshire relies exclusively on property taxes to fund municipal education. As a result, wealthy towns have good education while poor towns bleed school budgets dry to pay for the most minimal of services.
- Waste reduction is mandated but stagnant, thanks to the lack of cohesion between towns and counties.

While I couldn't agree more with the authors' sense that decentralization of decision making is generally preferable, the best solutions usually lie in eclectic approaches. Local control where appropriate, state support where necessary.

—Burton J. Cohen
Former Congressional candidate
New Castle NH, Lower New Engl. Bior'n

I have read with keen interest your article about the possibilities for "shire democracy" in Vermont.

I live in a big metropolitan area, but I've had some of the same decentralist ideas.

What if the Central Square neighborhood, where I live, were a largely self-governing shire, leaving to city/county/state only those functions that need to be centralized?

What if New England were to become an "autonomous region" with its own foreign policy, militia and economy?

What if New England were to join with Quebec and other sensibile sub-nations and small nations in a worldwide union?

—Don Finnie
Cambridge MA, Lower New Engl. Bior'n

Bryan and McClaughry say that "policies that most directly affect people are most appropriately decentralized, while policies that affect the planet are most appropriately centralized." This code for redistribution of power does not seem adequate to me.

Already in the 70s, Theodore Roszak and others made the case that the needs of the planet *are* the needs of the person, and vice versa. Also, while I believe that global problems require global agreements, I hope all global decision-making doesn't have to be centralized. Of course, that will require creative new forms of organization.

At a local Green discussion, many people seemed to think that once decentralization had arrived most of our problems would be solved by universal cooperation between friendly bioregions. Since this is not likely to happen in my lifetime, let alone this millennium, what are more realistic approaches? Your mission, if I may be so bold, is to ask *that* question!

—Deborah Wiese
Seattle WA, Cascade Bioregion

Although I was originally very excited about the idea of a *new age* newsletter, I was a bit let down by NEW OPTIONS. It seemed like much of the space was spent reporting on things like Green party activities instead of deeply addressing issues.

Your last issue changed my mind. I found the Bryan and McClaughry article to be not only inspirational (I remember thinking, "I could devote my life to that!"), but also the kind of concrete, detailed vision that is so often lacking in political theory.

The main point that I thought was missing is this: Up until age 18 the message we get from most schools is extremely disempowering and anti-democratic. This message has a devastating effect on our political participation in later life. [It certainly impacts negatively on our desire to decentralize political power.]

—Greg Nadeau
Student, Harvard College
Cambridge MA, Lower New Engl. Bior'n

I agree—we must begin allowing our places to speak to us, helping us create a vision for our place that is possible and bountiful.

This is true in Vermont. It is true in the heart of the rainforest. Just ask the people who live there!

—Susan Meeker-Lowry
Institute for Gaean Economics
Montpelier VT, Highlands Bioregion

Tell it, sister

The title of your cover story, "The New Age Comes to Congress" (#57), is a peculiar contradiction in terms . . . something like rating military generals on their humanitarian sensibilities!

Isn't it understood yet, by "post-liberal New Age activists," that Congress and all the other trappings of the federal government are of the old mechanistic, hierarchical paradigm? A hierarchy imposing the "will" of upper middle class white males on the people cannot possibly implement New Age values.

True new options transcend old-age institutions by withdrawing our energy and cooperation from them. We don't pay taxes, participate in the charade of elections, register for the military. Instead we use our energy to create decentralized, voluntary associations based upon egalitarianism and consensus decision-making processes.

Forget Congress. We must take the risks of refusing to cooperate with evil, earn less money, live more simply—live the (r)evolution each day beginning right now.

—Kayla Starr
Cave Junction OR, "Siskiyou Bioregion"

Where's the hope?

I have been feeling far less hopeful over the past half year. It's not because Bush got elected, though that of course is a part of it. Rather, it's because the entire election process seemed to be so *completely untouched* by what we in the Green and decentralist movements have been struggling to give life to.

If anything, the mainstream is even less responsive to our perspectives now than it was 10 or 20 years ago. New Age decentralists, eco-anarchists, whatever you and I call ourselves, we are still marginal, without hardly a shred of influence on major policy or resource decisions.

If I am right about this, then the three "encouraging facts" you reported on in your cover story "Don't Let the Election Get You Down" (#53) will not provide very much hope:

- There may well be issues that mainstream politicians are not addressing. However, that has always been the case. It therefore cannot give us any ground to believe that "there's an opening for our perspectives like there's never been before."
- Perhaps there are "plenty of people out there [who] could move this country in a humane and sustainable direction." I imagine that this too has been true for at least a decade, but those people have not yet found a constituency, nor a way to make our agenda attractive and viable.
- The fact that there are "200 human-growth-oriented, decentralist and globally responsible organizations," or even 2,000 or 20,000, gives little comfort, if they are continually beset by internal conflicts; rarely imagine themselves collaborating; and lack the means/skills to raise anything like the money that any single centralist and irresponsible organization (GM, ITT, CIA, KGB) spends in a single day.

The point that emerges from this is that we are still very much tiny islands in an ocean full of powerful enemies that care little for Green or decentralist ideas; as little as Burger King cares about the rainforest. For there to be *real*

hope, we must have some conception of how these enemies are to be minimized, countered, disaggregated, dissipated.

None of this is spoken to by your three "encouraging facts." There is, in fact, far too little thought given to strategy in NEW OPTIONS—strategy to transform our marginal presence into a far more powerful one. And until that changes, NEW OPTIONS may continue to give us little to be really hopeful about.

—**Prof. Len Krimerman**
Dept of Philosophy, Univ. of Conn.
Storrs CT, Lower New England Bioregion

The real hope

I really enjoyed your review of Rich Feldman's *End of the Line: Autoworkers and the American Dream* (#55). It was good news to me that many blue collar people already have humane, sustainable values.

But not much of a surprise. I've been noticing some tremendous changes in our culture, sweeping changes that are still mostly hidden from view. Because they aren't considered political. Yet.

These changes have to do with things like relationships, health, recovery, birthing and parenting.

I remember 15 years ago, when the only place to find sprouts and yogurt was the health food store; you had to be under anesthesia to have a baby; and the only proper food for an infant was formula. Chiropractors were quacks, nuclear power was safe, competition produced excellence, driving under the influence was macho, smokers could pollute my lungs with impunity, child abuse didn't exist, and no husband ever beat his wife.

How things have changed!

I don't minimize the significance of traditional politics. It is certainly true that perestroika and glasnost are generating major social transformations in the USSR. But in the U.S., the pendulum is on the other side. Currently personal choices are the main source of change, creating a magnificent ripple effect through the entire body politic.

Seasoned political activists and theorists have a hard time believing that ideals can inspire Americans. They should read books like *End of the Line*. And open their eyes!

—**Rennie Ayers**
Sonoma CA, Shasta Bioregion

Apologists for terror?

I couldn't agree more with your negative assessment of Richard Falk's unthinking definition of terrorism in his book *Revolutionaries and Functionaries* (reviewed in #57).

According to Falk, terrorism is "any type of political violence that lacks an adequate moral and legal justification." It's so true that, as you point out, nearly every act of personal or global violence springs from apparently justified reasons.

Certainly there must be an alternative to the sharp yang/yin of violence/acquiescence—an alternative that partakes of the strength of the former, the smile in the latter.

Dropping fear seems to be a key. Write more on this.

—**David Scott Pollock**
Takoma Park MD, Potomac Valley Bior'n

I read your review of Robin Morgan's book *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism* in #57, and now I've read the book itself. I am just profoundly discouraged that even a gifted, observant woman like Morgan has not been able to connect abortion with the "world-wide directorate of death" that dominates so much of what we call our way of life.

Consider Morgan's key passage about the small, anemic Palestinian woman living in a refugee camp with her husband who—being jobless and moneyless—seems to express his "manhood" mostly by begetting babies, and by beating up her and her children. There was a painful description of how much this woman feared her husband, and dreaded having more children in those conditions.

Now this is what struck me. What did the "feminist" Morgan suggest to empower this woman? Did she try to help her flee this brutal husband? Find a shelter or sanctuary where she could go? Bring criminal charges against him? Arm herself so she could physically protect herself and her children? POISON the monster (you can see I'm exploring all the theoretical alternatives!) so that no other woman or child would ever submit to his cruelty?

No. Robin Morgan wants to find her a way to kill the child she is already carrying.

Violence turned *inward* once again. And because it's the wife (not the husband) who goes under the knife, Morgan doesn't even think it's violent!

The goofy thing is that Robin's some kind of pacifist now. I think she would object to the woman taking direct action against her husband, because that would be VIOLENCE. So instead she wants to "help" the woman direct her fear and anger against herself (her fertility) and her children, as if her problems came from the processes and products of her own sexual interior.

Talk about "blaming the victim"!

—**Juli Loesch Wiley**
Johnson City TN, Appalachia Bioregion

Get this man a drink

Please cancel. I lean toward reality.

—**J.J. Walsh**
Savannah GA, Dixie Bioregion

The Eye . . .

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

EYE ON DEFENSE: A very Serious newsletter on nonviolent defense strategies, **Civilian-Based Defense**, has just put together an international advisory committee that should boost its status and reach. Among the advisors: Gene Sharp (#6), Mark Sommer (#26), Arne Naess (father of deep ecology), Petra Kelly and Desmond Tutu (P.O. Box 31616, Omaha NE 68131, $2/issue). . . . A new newsletter on the same subject is Sharp's **Nonviolent Sanctions** (Albert Einstein Institution, 1430 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge MA 02138, $2/issue). . . . Best newsletter on the whole gamut of alternative defense strategies is NEW OPTIONS shadow cabinet winner Randall Forsberg's **Defense & Disarmament Alternatives** (Inst. for Defense and Disarmament Studies, 2001 Beacon St., Brookline MA 02146, $3/issue). . . .

EYE ON WORK: The **Society for the Reduction of Human Labor**—founded to "help reduce human labor to a minimum, and plan for the consequences" — is resuming its activities. Founding members include David Macarov, #21, and Robert Theobald, #29 (R.D. #1–Box 416, Hopson Road, Dolgeville NY 13329). . . . In the current issue of *Changing Work* magazine, edited by **Len Krimerman** (pp. 5-6 above), U.S. workplace-democracy activists look back at their last 10 years—and ahead to where they hope they're going (Box 5065, New Haven CT 06525, $4). . . .

EYE ON VALUES: Food First—**Frances Moore Lappe**'s (#59) group—recently published two resource booklets that can help us live our values: "Graduate Studies with a Focus on Social Change" and "Alternatives to the Peace Corps" (145 Ninth St., San Francisco CA 94103, $3.30 each). . . . One of the most moving publications I've read this year is **Leonard Rifas**'s comic book *AIDS News*. It's about personal responsibility and our multicultural bouillabaisse, not just AIDS (POCAAN, 814 N.E. 40th, Seattle WA 98105, $1). . . .

EYE ON TV: If you liked our cover story on television advertising (#54), you'll love **Adbusters Quarterly**, a thick new magazine that criticizes TV ads in juicy and informed detail, and presents a variety of strategies for dealing with them. Premiere issue is being sent to 7,000 educators, environmentalists, women's groups and—yes!—advertising agencies (The Media Foundation, 1381 Howard Ave., Burnaby BC, Canada V5B 3S2, $4/issue). . . .

That's an Eyeful!

Continued from page four:

also right to look at some other things with a cooler eye. The interactions between men and women, for example.

Virtually everyone agreed that this was one of the few conferences they'd been to where women were heard—not just listened to—by men. In part that was due to the Last Chance Saloon phenomenon—everyone was on their best behavior. In part also it was due to the sensitivity of the facilitators. For example, at the strategy working group Kaner said he'd try not to let "yang energy" dominate the room.

But behind the scenes, all was not bliss. According to my sources, many women discussed among themselves how unhappy many of the Green men seemed to be. Some men concluded that many of the Green women were 20 pounds overweight, and fretted about "what that meant."

Some women felt that they—and their perspectives—were largely shut out. At one evaluation, Anne Conway, from Los Angeles, said she felt many men cared more about being heard than about participating in a dialogue. She could tell, she said, because there was "no eye contact" from many of them. She wanted "compassion" to be added to the list of key Green values.

One of the bravest evaluations—and to my mind one of the truest—came from Dee Berry. She said what was missing in our process was not the "female" but the "positive male."

She said we'd spent much of the gathering talking and talking, going around and around. She said our movement desperately needed positive male energy—the moving forward, the making rules we could all follow.

We didn't allow the men at the gathering to be positive males, she said. We forced them to act like women. And some acted like negative (aggressive) males and others acted like women. But we ignored the positive male just like we ignored the youth, the Native Americans, and so much more.

Guilt

The "social justice" working group produced a strongly worded statement on such diverse topics as advertising, population control, abortion, heterosexism, dying, and anti-racism. Much of it is excellent. However, parts of it are riddled with traces of guilt and self-contempt.

Nothing good is said about men in the section on (heterosexual) men—nothing; and if you believe the text, it's a wonder we're able to get up in the morning.

The anti-racism section doesn't say what's perfectly obvious out on the street—that the various races in this country desperately need to learn about each other and from each other. It doesn't speak of mutual learning at all. Instead, it's all one-way (and all in the unctuous tones of political correctness): "We especially challenge people of European ancestry to accept their responsibility to confront racism. . . . We actively seek [the] leadership and wisdom [of "people of color"]. . . ."

These weren't just quirks of the social justice working group. Time after time, when racial issues came up at the gathering, it was as if people retreated into a politically correct shell. Our words were "correct" but our hearts and minds were God-knows-where.

For example, I attended the Native American session out on the lawn, and it was the only session I attended at the entire gathering where not one critical question was asked. Guy Chichester, from Vermont, explained it to me this way: "We were there to listen!" But my response was, Were "we" there at all? It was incredible—all these white people (not a few of them Jews whose ancestors had fled from the pogroms) being held responsible for the sins of the Puritans, for Chrissake, and just *sitting* there silently, staring down at the ground.

For hundreds of years, most whites saw people of color as symbols of darkness and evil. Now, apparently, many of us oh-so-well-meaning white people see them as symbols of our *own* darkness, our *own* evil. How long will it be before we begin to see them as just people?

To tell when that begins to happen in the Greens, watch for two things. Their social justice statement will address real problems in the black and Hispanic communities. And their interracial dialogues will be characterized by a sharing of politically uncensored thoughts and feelings—on all sides.

Money

There was another subject that caused a kind of fog to descend on the gathering. That was the whole subject of money and fund-raising.

It wasn't as if we didn't know how important the subject was. At the IC meeting, Dee Berry gave a report that made it clear that—despite her willingness to work for $100-200 a month—the Green clearinghouse was on its last legs financially, with no real help in sight. Jim Richmond, Berry's assistant, put it almost plaintively at one of the evaluations: The clearinghouse might not last long enough to move to Eugene next spring!

It is bizarre—and revealing—that the Greens are having any financial problems at all. When the organization tried a membership drive two years ago, it sent a poorly written, poorly designed and poorly printed direct mail package to 5,000 names on the *Utne Reader* mailing list. The response rate was over 6%—about three times what financially successful organizations usually get.

You don't have to be a marketing genius to see that the Greens are sitting on a gold mine. With results like that, an intelligent direct mail campaign could easily bring in 100,000 members (Common Cause and People for the American Way both have over 200,000 members, and neither has the electric appeal of the Greens). At $20 per member, that's $2 million a year. If even one-fifth of them chose to join their local chapters, that's 20,000 new Green activists, campaign workers and direct-actionists. But the IC isn't willing to appropriate any more money for direct mail.

There are many reasons for that—just as there are many reasons why the organization (now five years old) has still not applied for non-profit status from the IRS. But the underlying reason is simple: Many Greens are ambivalent about the very act of fund-raising.

Talk to them at length and you'll hear there's something suspicious about it, something grubby, something vaguely elitist, something too "Washington, D.C." Like the proverbial businessman who developed a better moustrap, many Greens seem to believe, in their heart of hearts, that if they just develop a better political platform the world will beat a path to their door.

In sensitive 20 year olds, these attitudes are understandable, even endearing. In 40 year olds they're considerably less so. Forty year olds should know that there are only two ways of raising money for an organization—from members or from rich people. And that the former is a lot more in keeping with "Green values," even if it means you've got to learn business and marketing skills (aka "capitalist skills," aka "industrial methods") in the process.

Process

Nobody doubted that the design committee for the gathering did the best it could. I watched one planning group spend three hours on the tiniest details of one plenary meeting (and they'd been up till three a.m. the night before discussing that same meeting). But people's unhappiness with the process was rampant.

Even the facilitators had doubts and criticisms, and after the gathering they were happy to share them with me.

"This particular design—where you had a minimum amount of time together in groups, and a maximum amount of time doing 'right-brain' activities, or at least relaxing and seeing sights—just didn't seem to be [appropriate for the task at hand]," Caroline Estes said. "People didn't have enough time to [think about their policy statements or] to get [good] feedback from the plenaries."

Why the inappropriate design? "We have so many conferences that focus on the left brain, there may have been an over-emphasis [here] on the other. . . .

"Also, the Greens have rejected a lot of what

they consider to be manipulative politics. So they're trying to use the least amount of structure [they can get away with], to keep from manipulating people. But I think they're missing the point. [The point isn't minimal process, minimal structure; the point is appropriate process, appropriate structure.]"

Sam Kaner saw a different problem. "The biggest problem I saw in the design of the process was [we didn't educate participants] to the underlying principles that are necessary in order to do a consensus process.

"Unanimity isn't just the decision rule in consensus; it serves a larger purpose. That purpose is to make sure that every person has participated, full out. And the value of supporting full participation is that it forces a group to come up with interesting, creative, sophisticated solutions. Because the solutions, by definition, have to [incorporate] a lot of different points of view.

"The designers of the next Green gathering have a [major issue to confront. They] can set up processes that will force people to make 'either-or' choices on policies and programs. Or they can set up processes that will help people analyze their differences until they reach a [new level and can make 'both-and' choices. Choices that take all people's views into account.]"

Media strategy

With no money, few members, a national office-to-be in Oregon, no designated leaders or spokespeople, incessant internal squabbling, and a political document that's long on philosophy and short on specifics—how do the Greens expect to get their message across to the American people?

Their ideal is to reach people through their deeds at the local level. But they have a parallel and so far much more successful strategy, unconscious and unacknowledged though it may be. It is a classic American political strategy. It is a media strategy.

That is: They count on the alternative media to wildly exaggerate their importance. And it does.

There were reporters at Eugene from the *L.A. Weekly*, *Mother Jones*, *New Age Journal*, Pacific News Service, Pacifica Radio, *Utne Reader*, *Zeta Magazine*, and many other key alternative outlets. I could have gone to the national NOW conference, I could have gone to the national NAACP conference. But instead, I came to Eugene. Why? For the same reason most of the other reporters came. We wanted the Greens to succeed so much that we couldn't stay away.

Because we share the Greens' hopes and dreams and experience of the world, we find it almost impossible to be "objective" about them. Worse, we find it difficult not to cheer them on, sometimes in ways that border on the unethical.

For example, many alternative periodicals reported the attendance at the 1987 Green gathering to be about 1,500. After all, that's what the organizers said it was. But anyone who used their eyes knew that that was a wildly inflated figure. In fact, registration was around 400, and no more than about 200 other souls poked into our meetings.

Or, for example, many alternative periodicals have reported that the Greens have "more than 200" local chapters. That's what the Greens say—and that's what we want to believe. It sounds so good! But a simple phone call reveals that fewer than 40 local chapters have paid their dues this year.

At Eugene, the temptation to paint a rosy picture was especially great. The bitterness that characterized parts of the first two major Green meetings was nowhere to be seen (neither were most of the antagonists from those meetings), and the worldwide Green movement is growing by leaps and bounds. On the last few days in Eugene there were even some Greens who played the role of "spin doctor," giving interviews to the alternative press in which they put the best "spin" possible on the events that transpired there.

Another way

One supportive way of covering the Greens is to buy in to their exaggerated claims. Another way is to present, fairly, both the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, and hope that people rally around the strengths and seek to correct the weaknesses.

I think the kinds of things that need to be corrected are clear:

- Money will not simply come to you if you're doing the right thing. A sophisticated fund-raising strategy needs to be put in place ASAP. Its centerpiece should be a massive ongoing membership campaign. No members, no resources, no clout. No members, no resources, and you're just doing "recreational politics," as Boston politician Mel King likes to put it.
- Similarly, the organization needs to get a grip on its overblown Sixties fears of hierarchy, structure and leadership (even while continuing to experiment with new processes and forms). These fears of "Big Daddy," in Rensenbrink's telling phrase, are holding the Greens back a lot more than the capitalist system is holding them back!
- The organization needs to be made appealing to people of color—not to mention businessmen, factory workers and people like our parents (to name three more missing ingredients). That means becoming less like a club for certain personality-types and temperaments . . . even while *strengthening* some of the practices that make the Greens "inspirited."

All that will be hard. But when all is said and done, I can't believe it won't happen. Too many good people are involved—too many special, caring, dedicated people—for us to not finally launch that "permanent, competent political organization" that will project our values into the mainstream.

True, too many of us may fear power and success. True, too many of us may want to be large frogs in a small Green pond. True, too many of us are still acting out—in our 40s.

But one thing I've learned, in over 25 years in the social change movement, is never to underestimate the power of context. Deep down inside, the Greens know they're sitting in the Last Chance Saloon—and it's not just their own last chance. The planet itself is at stake. And is calling on us to grow up, already.

Green clearinghouse: P.O. Box 30208, Kansas City MO 64112. Left Green Network: Box 372, W. Lebanon NH 03784. Draft of Green platform: Greener Times, *Box 210628, San Francisco CA 94121, $2 (ready in September).*

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Issue No. Sixty

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. Harllee
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, "Someday 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

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