

DAVID SIQUEIROS, "PEACE" (1947)

The city has also banned the use of pesticides. ("Freiburg, the Environmental Capital of West Germany," *Earth Island Journal*, Winter 1988-1989).

"Only the Greens," says Italian political theorist Toni Negri, "offer an antibureaucratic challenge to the values of modern industrialized capitalism."

10) Respect for Diversity: The rapid extinction of animal species, caused to a great extent by unchecked human plunder of the ecosystems of the world and by equally unchecked pollution of natural systems, must be brought to a halt. In social terms this principle places importance on the need for individuals and communities to honor diversity of all kinds: cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, and religious or spiritual. It requires, in the words of Rachel Bagby, a San Francisco Green member, "... a deeper listening when something reopens a cultural or historical wound... and the inner spiritual strength required to help each other through such moments with clarity and compassion." ("Building the Green Movement," Issue 9, *Woman of Power*.)

The Green Movement has its roots in the environmental crusades in the 60's in the U.S. The culmination of those efforts by many grassroots groups was the signing of the National Environmental Policy Act in 1970. It was an Act meant to slow down a wave of unbridled economic growth — growth which was based on the habit of taking first and asking later. Twenty years later it has its detractors, even among environmentalists, but it still does serve a "braking" purpose and set an example for grassroots involvement that was noted beyond our own borders. The Green Party (as opposed to the less-organized Movement) started in West Germany in 1979. The catalyst for its formation as a Party was NATO's decision to substantially "upgrade" the number and size of its missiles in western Europe and Britain. This threat to European and British community security brought the issues of environment and military defense into high enough relief to cause widespread popular support for the values put forth by the Greens.

The Green Party has had enough impact, in fact, that Michael Ventura, writing in the *L. A. Weekly* (July/Aug., 1989) says, "Don't... suppose that the government isn't trying to infiltrate and destroy at the root an American version of a political party that's turned Europe on its ear and is seriously threatening official U.S. policy there." And in fact, in a special report published in 1983 by the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis at Tufts University, The U.S. reaction to Green Party successes is one that acknowledges the growing appeal that it has an antiwar organization: "Given the Federal Republic's critical importance, the defense of Western values and institution against erosion... requires a clear understanding of the Greens.... Above all, the Greens have become the focus of both resistance to nuclear deterrence and support for neutralism... (and are) a counterculture that has also emerged in the United States and elsewhere, and, therefore, is worthy of study for possible insights into the problems likely to face the United States and other industrially advanced societies as a result of movements having some of the principles and characteristics of the Greens." ("The Greens of West Germany: Origins, Strategies and Transatlantic Implications")

Six years after the publication of this report, the Green Movement is not only alive in the United States, it is close to forming political alliances and putting candidates on more than just local ballots. Meetings of Greens in the U.S. are called Interregional Committees of Correspondence, or IC. The IC which met in Kansas City in 1987 decided on plans for a series of three Green Gatherings to culminate in a Founding Convention in the 1990s. Whether or not this happens and produces a U.S. national Green Party is yet to be seen. And whether or not the numerous internal philosophical and organizational dissensions can be worked out satisfactorily over time is another unknown at this time. With a dozen or more national meetings and at least one well-attended and much-publicized Green Gathering in Amherst, Massachusetts (1987) to their credit, it is clear

that Green principles will more and more influence political life, even if the Movement does not enter party politics.**

The challenge to capitalism as it is now lived out in this country and in most of the industrialized world, and the offering of an alternative to it so that we do not irrevocably ruin the ecosystem upon which we depend for life and totally ignore the basic needs of the many so that a few may live in immense wealth, is realistic and necessary. When we shy away from such important questions we need to ask ourselves whether we may have developed, in Wendell Berry's words, "the conviction that we cannot change because we are dependent on what is wrong. But that is the addict's excuse, and we know that it will not do."

If we embrace the Green's principles, though, we have some tough questions to work through:

- What is it to be truly "self-governing"? How does that work?
- Can we develop an educational system that can teach such an all-encompassing form of participatory democracy?
- Are adults educable to this kind of change?
- Do we have the resolve in us, in each community, to give grassroots democratic process the time it demands? (Are we willing to push back the kitchen chair after dinner on a rainy night and go to yet another meeting?)
- Can "purists" and "coalition seekers" ("fundis" and "realos" in West Germany) make the necessary compromises?
- Do the Green proposals for economic and defense strategies go not only against political and military tradition and policy, but also against "the genes"?

The Greens propose some changes and plans that some might believe come close to utopian. But let's consider the possibility that utopian appeals don't surface when things are good. They tend to appear when the world is in danger. They are the gasps of a drowning swimmer, and the desperation implicit in them serves as a warning that, if changes are not made, survival may be very uncertain. Whether we call ourselves "Green" or work to change the status quo under other names, it is obvious that changes must be made. Denial and apathy are no longer options. "Only love can do it... (and) love is never abstract," Wendell Berry tells us. Long before the ecosphere was desecrated and missiles left their smallpox pits on our prairies, a poet put it this way:

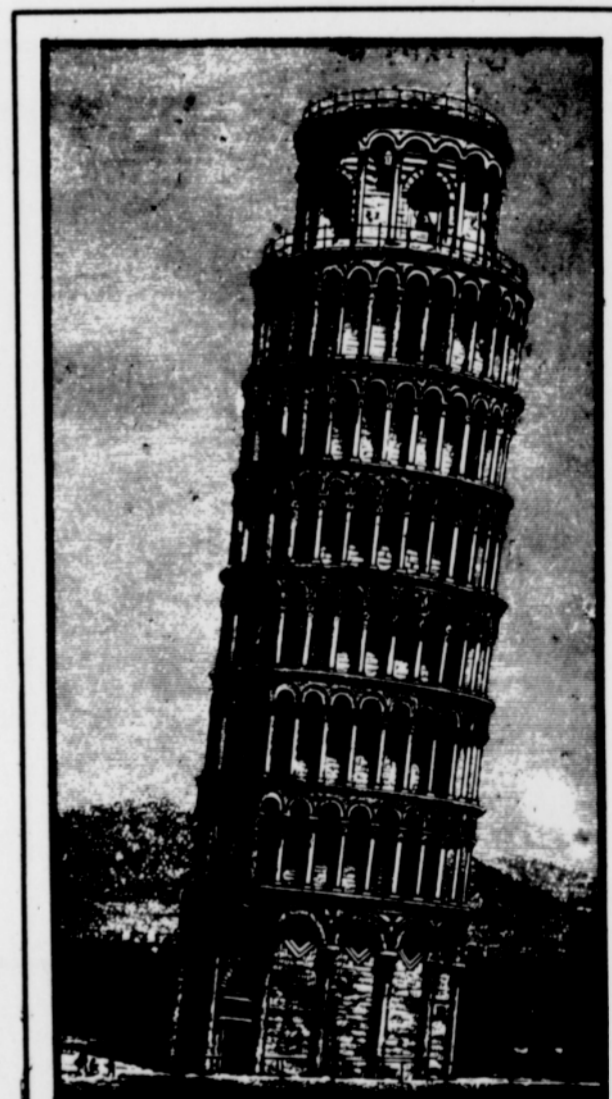
"Some say a cavalry corps,
some infantry, some, again,
will maintain that the swift oars

of our fleet are the finest
sight on dark earth; but I say
that whatever one loves, is."

— Sappho,
"To an army wife in Sardis"
7th century, B.C.

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**The Greens held an IC meeting in Eugene, Oregon in June 1989.



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