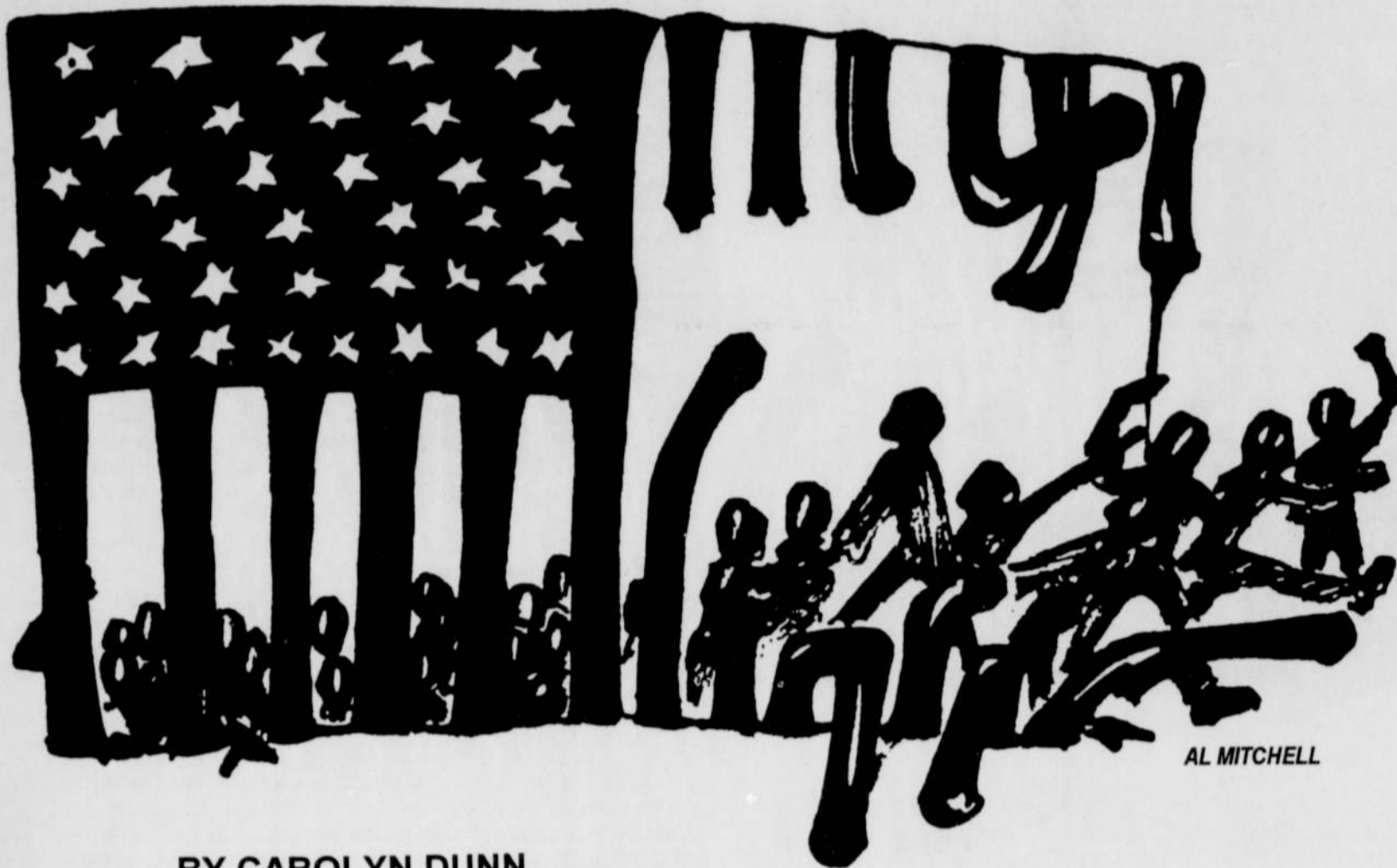


THE GREEN PARTY



AL MITCHELL

BY CAROLYN DUNN

"I always voted at my party's call, and I never thought of thinking for myself at all."
~GILBERT & SULLIVAN, 'HMS PINAFORE'

"In the end we defend only what we love"
~THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

A CURSE & AN APPEAL

Let's start with a curse (which is, let us admit it, the way most change begins):

"A curse on monocultural industrial civilization and its almost deified economic and political systems that compete, exploit, and then give vast wealth and power to a tiny few while draining and scattering the cultural and natural wealth of our planet. I say"

~Gary Snyder

from 'He Who Hunted Birds in His Father's Village' (1979)

Let's continue with an admonition and appeal:

"...when you have done what you can in your own zone, in your own field, then you can call a halt and despair as much as you like. Understand this: we can despair of the meaning of life in general, but not of the particular forms that it takes; we can despair of existence, for we have no power over it, but not of history, where the individual can do everything."

~Albert Camus

in 'Letter to a Man in Despair' (1939)

TIRED OF 'ZINGING'

Half a year into the 21st Century these two 20th Century statements — the first a poet's fist raised in despair and anger, the second an existentialist's appeal to action — define our condition as individuals mired in our own daily needs and problems, and as groups and communities desperate to solve a mind bending array of social and environmental ills. We're all of us weary of this zinging between idealism and nihilism, between what could be done and what isn't done, between voting election after election for the candidates of one political party or the other and realizing, time after time, that it was all for nothing.

A CHOICE AT LAST

Politics and elections are upon us again, and though politics neither causes nor corrects all of our problems, in a functional democracy it is one place in which we should be able to participate and to hope for both repair and progress. This time around, we have a choice: *The Green Party*. It has been around in the U.S. since the 1996 elections, and has grown in both strength and sophistication since then. 76 Greens hold elected office in 19 states and Washington, D.C., as of April 2000. At least 75 Greens are running in the 2000 elections in 14 states and D.C. The only political party of grassroots democracy, the Green Party's nominating convention was in Denver the weekend of June 24. They give us a party so completely separate from either of the entrenched Republican/Democratic Parties that we will, finally, have a reason to vote.

The announcement of the national nominating convention says it this way: *This convention — held during the lull between the bunched up primaries in March and the major-party conventions in the late summer, will be the kickoff point for what may be the most significant national progressive campaign in many years.*

RALPH NADER & WINONA LaDUKE Green Ticket Candidates

Ralph Nader is the Green Party candidate for President of the United States 2000 and Native American activist Winona LaDuke is his running mate for Vice President. They are both experienced campaigners, having run on the Green Party ticket in 1996.

THE GREEN PARTY PLATFORM 2000

Like seals, otters, whales and dolphins, we, too — the electorate — need to come up for air. The two entrenched parties have not given us air for several decades. They are like bottom sediment, which we are rightfully leery of, full of the toxic residues of broken promises and soft campaign millions which we should leave alone. This November we can do exactly that.

If you decide to push on up for air and vote the Green Party ticket this November, here's what you will be breathing:

1. Grassroots Democracy

This is about accountability of our public representatives to the people who elect them, and about the "right for those who

are the most silent to have a voice, the right for all of us to be able to participate in political discourse and dialogue. The multi-party system is about that process." (Winona LaDuke)

This is not only a right, of course, but a duty; both right and duty have been taken from us over the years, with the two-party system, which has stripped us of hope for honesty and change. This platform asks us all to participate again, and promises to work toward the changes needed to let us do that.

2. Social Justice & Equal Opportunity

The gains made by minority groups, women and workers in the 19th and 20th centuries need to be solidified, and class oppression, ageism, disability and homophobia need more work to overcome them. This platform declares that the Green Party will undertake that work.

3. Ecological Wisdom

Human societies must operate with the understanding that we are part of nature, not separate from nature. Wendell Berry furthers this understanding when he writes, "The answers to the human problems of ecology are to be found in economy. And the answers to the problems of economy are to be found in culture and character... Our understandable wish to preserve the planet must somehow be reduced to the scale of our competence — that is, to the wish to preserve all of its humble households and neighborhoods." (Harper's Magazine, 9/1989)

4. Non-violence

Quoting from the platform, "It is essential that we develop effective alternatives to society's current patterns of violence... We recognize the need for self-defense and the defense of others who are in helpless situations. We promote non-violent methods to oppose practices and policies with which we disagree, and will guide our actions toward lasting personal, community and global peace."

Petra Kelly, who with others, started the politically successful German Greens in the 1980s, was more radical than that: "When we speak of a new type of power, the power of nonviolence, it is rather about abolishing power as we know it... We must stop believing in deterrence, stop believing in the lie that more refined and accurate weapons of all types can give us more security... 'Power over' is to be replaced by 'shared power'... by the discovery of our own strength as opposed to a passive reception of power exercised by others, often in our name."

Kelly's ideological mentor, Gandhi, worked also for this purer form of nonviolence. Both knew that few individuals or nations are capable of it, which does not lessen the need for striving toward it. This Green value attempts to recognize both the real and the ideal in regard to nonviolence in a world permeated with power struggles.

5. Decentralization

The wording of this platform states, among other things, that "Decision making should, as much as possible, remain at the individual local level, while assuring that civil rights are protected for all citizens."

Ralph Nader reminds us (in a speech 2/21 announcing his candidacy) that, "The unconstrained behavior of big business is subordinating our democracy to the control of a corporate plutocracy that... (moves) on all fronts to advance narrow profit motives at the expense of civic values... They flood public elections with cash, and they use their media conglomerates to exclude, divert or propagandize... By their control of Congress, they keep the federal cops off the corporate crime, fraud and abuse beats... They imperiously demand and get a wide array of privileges and immunities... They weaken the common law of torts in order to avoid their responsibility for injurious wrongdoing to innocent children, women and men."

This Green platform seeks to stop the centralization of wealth and power, with its inherent social, environment and violence promoting abuses.

6. Community-based Economics & Economic Justice

"At the least, says Ralph Nader, "our government can facilitate the voluntary binding together of interested citizens into democratic civic institutions" that can "create more level playing fields" and the "flowering of a deep-rooted democratic society."

7. Feminism & Gender Equity

The platform states: "We have inherited a social system based on male domination of politics and economics... We call for the replacement of the cultural ethics of domination and control with more cooperative ways of interacting that respect differences of opinion and gender."

Again, Petra Kelly (speech, India, 1988) sheds light on this topic by indicating that women are not the only victims of patriarchy's imbalance of power:

"Patriarchy is a system of male domination, prevalent in both capitalist and socialist countries, which is suppressive of women and restrictive to men. Patriarchy is a hierarchical system in which men have more value and more social and economic power... To put it bluntly, men are at the center of a patriarchal world... whether they want to be or not."

Gender equity places more responsibility and power on women, while freeing men of some of both. This has the effect of leveling, and doubling, not so much the playing field as the working field — in business, home, and the life of the engaged citizen.

8. Respect for Diversity

The emphases here are on the development of respect across cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, religious and spiritual lines and on the inclusion of these differences and groups into our public discourse, leadership and institutions.

This platform includes respect for "other life forms other than our own and the preservation of biodiversity."

9. Personal & Global Responsibility

Though Wendell Berry sees "global responsibility" as only practicable for most of us on a personal/community level, this platform encourages us to "join with people and organizations around the world to foster peace, economic justice and the health of the planet."

10. Future Focus & Sustainability

The platform states, "Our actions and policies should be motivated by long-term goals... developing a sustainable



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ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY

The Alliance for Democracy is a new movement that seeks to end the domination of our economy, our government, our culture, our media and the environment by large corporations.

We have united to examine the ways in which various economic interests either enhance or harm the health of democracy and we focus on creating basic change.

Piecemeal reform has been rendered ineffective. We seek deep systemic alterations to establish economic and political democracy.

**End
corporate
rule;
revive
democracy.**

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