

Harbinger

a journal of social ecology



What is Social Ecology?

VOL. 3, NO. 1

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Harbinger, a Journal of Social Ecology,

publishes analysis relevant to the growing social ecology movement and news of the activities of the Institute for Social Ecology (ISE). It is our intention to explore the theory and practice needed to help create an ecological society, and to cultivate a generous intellectual outlook that can inform the principle of hope. Just as the outlook proposed by social ecology is concerned with both what is and what ought to be, so too is *Harbinger* and we will explore the tensions between the two. The central questions we address in the pages of *Harbinger* regard the process with which we must engage to create an ecological society, a society free of hierarchy and domination in all of its forms.

A harbinger is a messenger, or a sign indicating that a major event or change is coming. It was the name given to the journal published by Emerson, the Alcotts, Thoreau and other New England transcendentalists associated with Brook Farm in the 19th century. The name was revived in the early 1980s by the ISE for our literary and philosophical journal. In its current incarnation *Harbinger* will continue the tradition of critically examining theory and practice, attempt to bring you stimulating work by talented authors, and, in addition, update you on the important work of the ISE. Our intention is to publish twice a year and we invite your comments and contributions. While *Harbinger* will entertain many points of view, our primary focus will be on a clarification and expansion of those ideas and practices that contribute to social ecology. We encourage passionate discourse tempered by rationality and a radical intent—nothing less than the transformation of our destructive, anti-ecological society.

Harbinger is a utopian project, but not utopia in the sense of an unachievable cloud-cuckoo land. Rather what we explore are utopian ideas rooted in real, existing potentialities. In the words of social ecologist Murray Bookchin, we seek to “Be realistic and do the impossible, because if we don’t do the impossible, we face the unthinkable.” *Harbinger* will examine ideas that can allow us to transcend the given, to expand our intellectual frameworks, to give voice to our highest aspirations and our dreams for a decentralized, directly democratic, mutualistic and ecological society. ♪

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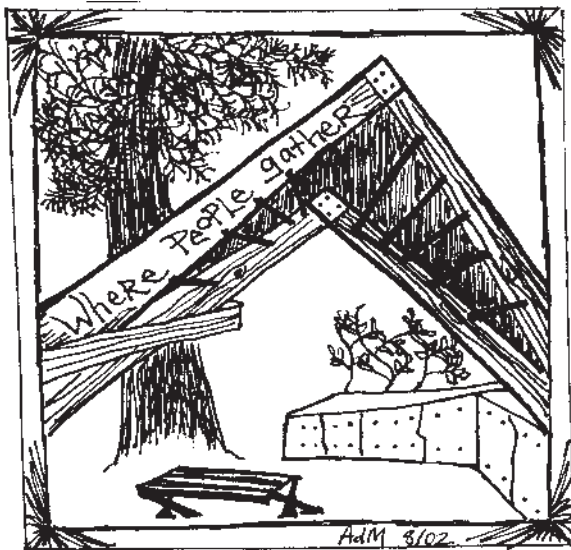
Welcome to the latest issue of *Harbinger*, a *Journal of Social Ecology*. This issue has been a long time coming, but well worth the wait. Our goal, to inform and inspire those actively pursuing an ecological society rooted in decentralist, directly democratic ideals, is clearly expressed in the articles that make up this issue. The thematic core focuses on the vision of social ecology, as expressed by Peter Staudenmaier, and its relationship to new understandings in evolutionary theory. Murray Bookchin, the seminal theorist of social ecology, provides an historical overview of the issues that he faced when he first started fleshing out these ideas as far back as the 1950s. For social ecology, nature is natural evolution, an ongoing dialectic of change and growth. Biologist Sonia Schmitz offers an assessment of the dialectical naturalism of Bookchin based on her interpretation of neo-Darwinian theory. Additionally Bookchin offers his vision for a new politics rooted in the ideas of social ecology, "The Communalist Project."

The history of the Institute for Social Ecology is explored in a timeline of the 29 year history of the ISE, and Brian Tokar examines the significant impact of social ecology on social movements from the 1960s to the present. A related series of articles looks at promising contemporary movements that articulate their visions of direct democracy—Democratic Alternative, from Norway, and the North American based Alliance for Freedom and Direct Democracy.

We also review the latest developments at the Institute for Social Ecology, including a preview of upcoming programs and an update on ISE projects.

Harbinger will continue to publish on an occasional basis, and to bring you the latest developments in the theory and practice of social ecology, as well as news of the ISE. We hope that you find this issue interesting and informative. ♪

Daniel Chodorkoff



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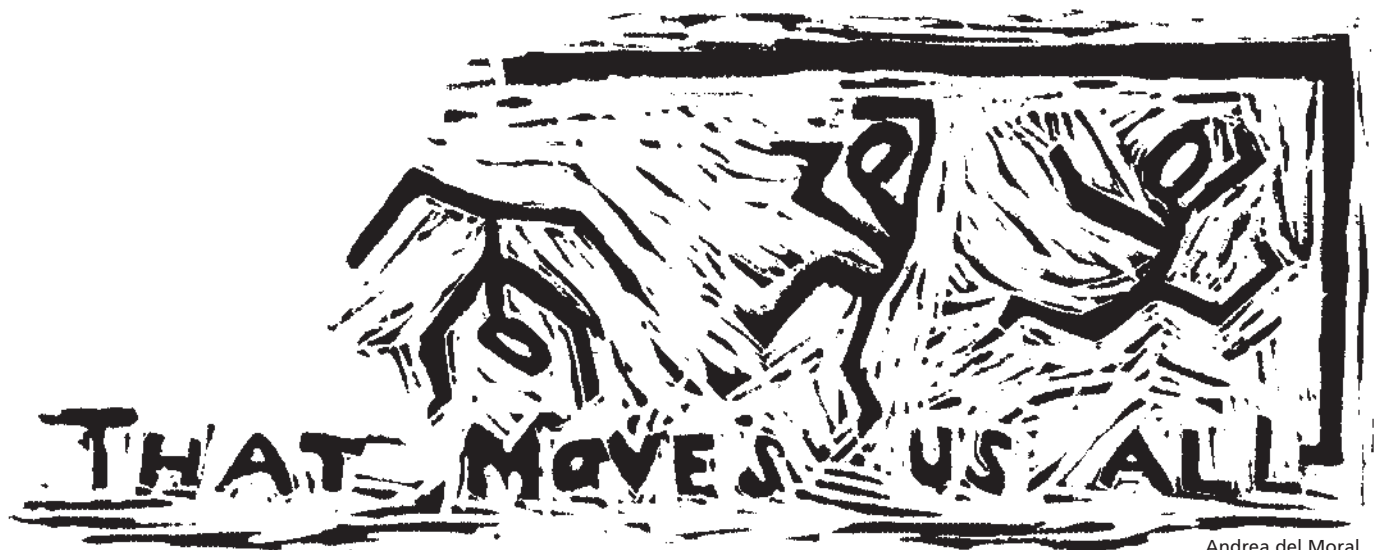
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Andrea del Moral

Reflections

An Overview of the Roots of Social Ecology

By Murray Bookchin

THE EXTENT TO WHICH RADICAL VERSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTALISM UNDERWENT sweeping metamorphoses and evolved into revolutionary ideologies when the New Left came of age is difficult to convey to the present generation, which has been almost completely divorced from the ebullient days of the New Left, not to speak of all the major problems in classical socialism, especially in its Marxist form. These changes burden us to this very day.

In fact, the way in which the New Left initially reacted to my writings on social ecology, even to such manifesto-type articles as my “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought”(1964), was very similar to the way my comrades of the Old Left would have reacted in the 1930s. Perhaps the most sophisticated leftist “movement” of the sixties—and certainly the most arrogant, namely, the French Situationists and their American hangers-on—witlessly denounced me as “Smokey the Bear”(a childlike symbol of the US Forest Service!), so irrelevant was the issue of humanity’s place in the natural world to the Left of the sixties. Accordingly, I was asked repeatedly where the “class struggle” was located in my writings—as though the “class struggle” was not implicit in everything I wrote!—after which I was lectured on how Marx and Engels were “really” firm adherents of the very views for which I had been denounced a few years earlier. My dogmatic opponents of the Left began to shift their ground by trying to fit environmental issues into such frameworks such as the importance of conservation in Marx and Engels’s writings. In short, the Left had been oblivious to ecological issues, which were merely regarded as a “petty bourgeois” endeavor to redirect public attention away from a hazy need to abolish capitalism pure and simple!

This criticism, to be sure, was not without a certain measure of truth. Anything resembling a *socially* oriented ecology, such William Vogt’s *Our Plundered Planet* in the fifties and especially Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962, was more concerned with the impacts of human population growth and the loss of wildlife in an increasingly industrialized world than with the material welfare of humanity and the impact of hierarchy on attempts to create a rational society. In some respects, ecologists were inspired by the reactionary motifs raised by Ernst Haeckel, who created the word “ecology” in the 1880s, notably the harm produced by “humanity” on the planet rather than the effects of the capitalist system in producing ostensibly “biological problems.” Although Carson attacked the chemical industry for promoting the use of toxic pesticides, perceptive readers could see that she was more concerned with their impact on birds than on people. Nor did she and other ecological critics examine the socially and *negatively* systemic sources that produced a growing disequilibrium between nonhuman nature and society. She and her fellow ecological critics often seemed to think in terms of an abstract “humanity” (whatever that socially ambiguous word means) as distinguished from classes. To Carson and her admirers, it was not a specific social order—namely, capitalism and entrepreneurial rivalry—that was responsible for the ecological destruction that was undermining the biosphere but “immoral” human behavior.

By contrast, social ecology completely inverted the meaning and implications of society's interaction with the natural world. When I first began to use the rarely employed term "social ecology" during 1964 in my essay, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," I emphasized that the *idea* of dominating nature has its origins in the very *real* domination of human by human—that is, in hierarchy. These status groups, I insisted could *continue to exist even if economic classes were abolished*.

Secondly, hierarchy had to be abolished by *institutional* changes that were no less profound and far reaching than those needed to abolish classes. This placed "ecology" on an entirely new level of inquiry and praxis, bringing it far above a solicitous, often romantic and mystical engagement with an undefined "nature" and a love-affair with "wildlife." Social ecology was concerned with the most intimate relations between human beings and the organic world around them. Social ecology, in effect, gave ecology a sharp revolutionary and political edge. In other words, we were obliged to seek changes not only in the objective realm of economic relations but also in the subjective realm of cultural, ethical, aesthetic, personal, and psychological areas of inquiry.

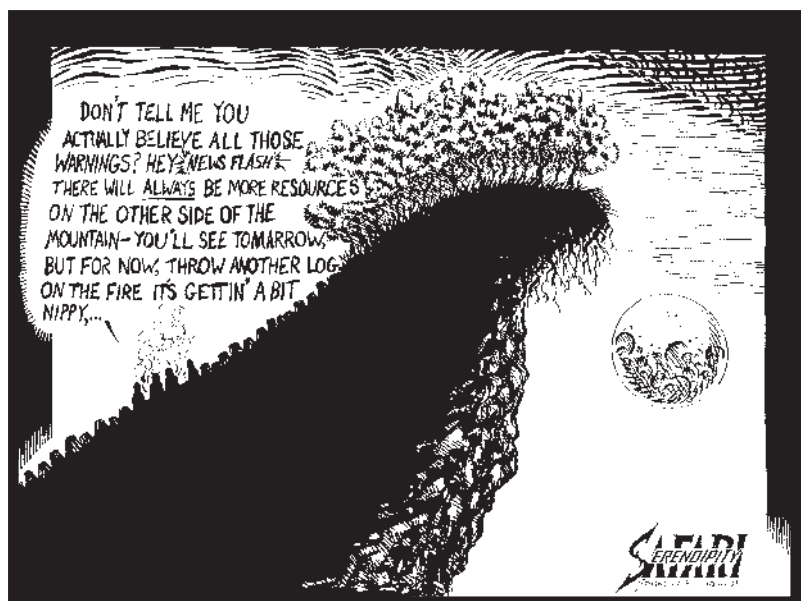
Most fundamentally, these relations exist at the very base of all social life: notably, the ways in which we interact with the natural world, especially through *labor*, even in the simplest forms of society, such as tribal and village stages of social formation. And certainly, if we had major negative ecological disequilibria between humanity and the natural world which could threaten the very existence of our species, we had to understand *how* these disequilibria emerged; what we even meant by the word "nature;" how did society emerge out of the natural world; how did it necessarily alienate itself from elemental natural relations; how and why did basic social institutions such as government, law, the state, even classes emerge dialectically from each other before human society came into its own; and in ways that went beyond mere instinct and custom, not to speak of patricentricity, patriarchy, and a host of similar "cultural" relations whose emergence are not easily explained by economic factors alone.

BUT, IT WOULD BE AN ERROR TO VIEW THE foregoing presentation of what I would call a minimal account of social ecology as the only theoretical source by which one can teach a course on the subject. I did not develop social ecology only because I was disturbed by the

"nature versus society" problem, although it was never far from my mind. *Fundamental* to my development of social ecology is a crisis that developed in socialist theory itself, one that I regard as unresolvable in a strictly conventional Marxist or anarchist framework—or to use the most all-encompassing phrase of all: proletarian socialism.

This was a painful problem for me to cope with because I did not come to a belief in proletarian socialism as a result of an academic storm in a teacup. I was a very passionate participant in what I thought was a revolutionary labor movement, notably as a member of the Communist youth movement early in the 1930s and as result of a thorough training in Marxism and Bolshevism. I became a rank-and-file leader of the Young Communist League as early as 1933 and was militantly loyal to its ultra-revolutionary program (the reckless insurrectionism promulgated by the Communist International in 1928, or so-called "Third Period" line). Stalin had yet to make his reputation as the major figure that he became in the late thirties; accordingly, my comrades and I of that period never regarded ourselves as "Stalinists" but simply as committed Communists or Marxists who adhered to Lenin's revolutionary views.

As a result, I was thoroughly, even intensively trained in *classical* Marxism. This background provided me with a unique insight into problems that, while forgotten at present by young radicals, haunts all of their social projects. Born when the Russian Revolution was still a recent event; when Makhno was still carrying on his guerrilla war in Ukraine; when Lenin, Trotsky, and nearly all the major theorists and activists of the first three decades of the century were still fairly young men; I had the rare chance to imbibe all the fundamental



issues and live through most of the great civil conflicts of the era—from the still buoyant aftermath of the Russian Revolution to the tragic outcome of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War of 1937 to 1939. By the outbreak of the Second World War, I was well versed in the issues the war raised for my generation early in the century.

Again, it is difficult to convey to young people, today, how differently proletarian socialists thought and the ideals to which they were committed prior to 1950, which I regard as the year in which proletarian socialism was faced by its most decisive crisis. What cannot be emphasized too strongly is that all of us who survived the ideological debacle produced by the war had to deal with the complete failure of *all* the prognoses we held five years earlier. Almost all who you care to single out from the interwar period (1917-1940), be it a Lenin, a Trotsky (in my earnest opinion, the most optimistic and the most competent theorist of the period), even going back in time to Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring and the like, were *absolutely* convinced that capitalism was in its “death throes.” The most widely used formulation during this stormy period—far more insurgent than the often pseudo-revolutionism of the sixties—was the expression that capitalism (as I have already observed) was “moribund,” or facing the imminent certainty of “collapse.” Nothing seemed more evident at the time than the apocalyptic belief that we were witnessing the “last days” of bourgeois society, notwithstanding the fact that fascism was on the march throughout Europe and that proletarian socialist ideology was waning and facing defeat.

THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR LEFT NO DOUBT in our minds that the conflict would end in socialist revolutions—or else it was faced with barbarism. And, by barbarism, we meant the expansion of Nazism—of mass starvation, ethnic extermination, concentration camps, a monstrous totalitarian state, and mass graves throughout Europe, if not America and Asia. If socialism did not end the war by producing a new society, barbarism was a historic *inevitability*. For us, the victory of socialism was a near certainty, for it was inconceivable that Europe, in particular, could go through the mass slaughter that marked the First World War without producing successful proletarian revolutions. Barbarism was the only alternative to a failure by the working class. To a man like Trotsky, who Stalin had killed in the year that saw the outbreak of the world conflict, should barbarism become established in the world, we would have to revise *all* the

expectations provided by Marxism and adopt a historically new ideological perspective.

As we know after more than a half century, we were wrong, indeed terribly so. *Neither socialism nor fascism emerged from the war*, but, to our amazement, liberal capitalism—with its welfare state and the extension of “bourgeois democracy” in most of Western Europe and the United States. Indeed, capitalism stabilized itself in the historic sense that a “cold war” provided the framework for thinking out social problems—a framework to which the masses clung for nearly fifty years. Capitalism, in short, managed to *stabilize* itself to a point where it was able to avoid any major economic, not to speak of any social crisis. The New Left, while retaining many features of the Old Left, essentially tried (and failed) to create a *cultural* “crisis” as a substitute for a revolutionary one—which, as we now know, became a new industry and a commercial success in its own right.

Moreover, capitalism, continued to *deepen* its hold on society on a scale and to an extent it had *never* done during the course of its history. All the vestigial features of pre-capitalist society with their monarchical, quasi-feudal, agrarian and craft strata that were still prevalent in Germany, France, and, at least, widespread in England in 1914 gave way, unevenly to be sure, to huge industrial corporations, mass production, the mechanization of all aspects of the economy, widespread commodification at the very base of economic life and monopolization and global accumulation at its summits—i.e. the spread of capitalism into every niche of social life. The concept of “Fordism” was quite known to the Old Left long before it was adopted by New Left academics under such old names as “mass production” and “commodification.”

Finally, the proletariat not only dwindled vastly in numbers (contrary to all of Marx’s expectations) but also in class-consciousness. Workers began to lose their sense of class identity, even began to see themselves as property owners, and *significantly* altered their social expectations. Home ownership, the acquisition of land, cars, and most significantly, stock ownership now became commonplace. Workers’ children were expected to go to colleges and universities, or, least, enter the professions or create self-employed enterprises. So vastly had class solidarity waned that the once-sturdy proletariat began to vote for conservative parties and join with reactionaries in opposing environmental conservation, gender equality, immigration from impoverished countries, ethnic equality, and similar issues. Paris’s famous prewar 1940 “red belt,” which famously gave its votes to the French Communists as the embodiment of the Russian Revolution in Western

Europe, found itself voting, often enthusiastically, for the neo-fascism of the French reactionary, Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Notwithstanding the multitude of “breakdown” theories that Marxists and even anarchists advanced during the interwar period, capitalism has proven to be more sturdy and robust during the past fifty years than it was over the course of its entire history. Not only did *commodification*—its most salient feature—spread throughout the entire world, but it was even spared the recurrence of its notorious “periodic crises” or “business cycles” which reminded the world that a market economy is *inherently* unstable. Indeed, contrary to all the expectations that followed from Marx’s theories of social life-cycles, the supposition that capitalism would become an obstacle to the development of technology—another salient feature of Marx’s “moribund” society—proved to be nonsense. As a force for advances in industry and technical sophistication, capitalism exhibits incredible vitality—notwithstanding Marx’s

had recovered from the war, as I have noted, with unprecedented resiliency and extended its grip on society with unprecedented tenacity. As the middle of the fifties came into view, nearly all the monarchies, their political and bureaucratic underpinnings; the extensive craft, professional, and agrarian strata that barely a generation earlier had linked the Western European economy with its feudal past—virtually *all* had been effaced or divested of the authority they enjoyed a generation earlier. Gone were the Prussian Junkers who survived the First World War, the tsars, dukes, and barons who peopled the upper classes of central and southern Europe, the status groups that presided over the academies well into the thirties, and the like. What the German Kaiser and, later, Hitler tried to achieve with terrible weapons and millions of corpses in 1914 and 1940, the German Bundesrepublik achieved with bundles of Deutsche Marks and, more recently, a patina of pacifism!!

It was out of the *failure* of Marx’s economic imperative that social ecology was born
—not solely because of the impact of pollution, urban degradation, toxic food additives, and the like.

prediction that it would soon become incapable of technical innovation and change. Indeed, all the features that were to mark a “moribund” economy have now appeared in reverse: *unending* technological advances, the *absence* of the heralded “pauperization” of the working class in the classical areas of capitalist development (England, France, western Europe generally, and the United States), the *disappearance* of chronic economic crises, and the *waning* of class consciousness.

By the 1950s, it was self-evident that Marxist (and anarchist) “breakdown” scenarios were palpable nonsense. The notion that the death of capitalism owing to an “economic imperative,” such as the “decline in the rate of profit” (a theoretical construct of Volume III of *Capital*) constituted a basic explanation for the self-destruction of capitalism was completely untenable. The end of the Second World War brought *neither* barbarism *nor* socialism but rather an ideological “*vacuum*,” so to speak, that threatened, like a huge black hole, to extinguish the veracity of Marx’s entire theoretical corpus. Capitalism, I would like to reiterate,

IT CANNOT BE EMPHASIZED TOO STRONGLY that, in the absence of an *imperative* to challenge the desirability of a capitalistic society, and no less importantly, the need to demonstrate that capitalism’s death in the foreseeable future was “inevitable,” no *objective* reason existed for the abolition of bourgeois society. Marx, at least, had satisfied this need with an *economic imperative*, namely, an immense body of theory (unparalleled in its scope and historical knowledge). As I have noted, this theory was based on such precepts as a chronic crisis produced by the tendency of the rate of profit to decline and by a structurally sophisticated class analysis that *inevitably* pitted a proletarian majority of an industrialized country against a dwindling number of capitalists. By the 1950s, however, Marxism revealed for all who have eyes to see, that its traditional imperative was *completely unsound* when compared with the realities of the postwar world, nor could its economic imperative be renovated to meet the challenges posed by the last half of the twentieth century.

It was out of the *failure* of Marx’s economic imperative that social ecology was born—not solely

because of the impact of pollution, urban degradation, toxic food additives, and the like. When, in 1950, I wrote my almost book length article, “The Problem of Chemicals in Food,” in No. 10 of *Contemporary Issues*, the dangers to public health posed by the chemicalization of food by pesticide residues, preservatives, coloring matter, and the like were still relatively minor issues. The problem of nuclear fallout, the vast number and quantity of pollutants that were to threaten the health of many millions of people, and, later, in 1964, the hazard to the world’s climate created by carbon dioxide, were not immediate issues or widely foreseeable ones. The apocalyptic nature of the 1950 article was dismissed by my critics as “wild and reckless” attacks upon the existing society. Actually, I was trying to provide a viable substitute for Marx’s defunct economic imperative, namely an *ecological imperative* that, if thought out (as I tried to do in *The Ecology of Freedom*) would show that *capitalism stood in an irreconcilable contradiction with the natural world*. Nearly all my articles and books—such as *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962), followed two years later by my widely circulated article, “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” and a companion article, “Toward a Liberatory Technology,” (1965)—were guided primarily by this project.

I should note that it was in “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought” that I used the words, “social ecology” for the first time and began to sketch out the complex body of ideas that ultimately reached their elaboration in *The Ecology of Freedom*, two decades later. Let me be quite outspoken: it was not an unbridled passion for wildlife, wilderness, organic food, primitivism, craft-like methods of production, villages (as against cities), “localism,” a belief that “small is beautiful” —not to speak of Asian mysticism, spiritualism, naturism, etcetera—that led me to formulate and promote social ecology. I was guided by the compelling—indeed, challenging—need to formulate a *viable imperative* that doomed capitalism to self-extinction. As the thirties and the war revealed, it was not simply the class war between the proletariat and the capitalist class—driven almost exclusively by *economic* forces and resulting from the concentration of capital—that were destined to destabilize capitalism and produce a revolution. More fundamentally, the crisis produced by capitalism’s “grow or die” imperative could be expected to drive society into a devastating contradiction with the natural world. Capital, in effect, would be *compelled* to simplify all the ecosystems on whose complexity evolution depended. Driven by its competitive relations and rivalries, capitalism would be

obliged to turn soil into sand, the atmosphere and the planet’s waterways into sewers, and warm the planet to a point where the entire climatic integrity of the world would be radically altered because of the greenhouse effect.

In short, precisely because capitalism was, by *definition*, a competitive and commodity-based economy, it would be compelled to turn the complex into the simple and give rise to a planet that was incompatible environmentally with advanced life forms. The growth of capitalism was incompatible with the evolution of biotic complexity *as such*—and certainly, with the development of human life and the evolution of human society.

What is important to see is that social ecology thus revealed a crisis between the natural world and capitalism that was, if anything, more fundamental than the crisis that was imputed to the falling rate of profit and its alleged consequences. Moreover, social ecology opened the very real question of the *kind* of society that would have to follow the abolition of a capitalist economy. Self-styled Marxists (in all fairness, unlike Marx and Engels) made a virtue out of a centralized, bureaucratically planned, and a highly technocratic ideal of progress, based on an urban and mechanistic culture that was almost a parody of Corbusier’s cityscapes.

Social ecology tried to fill the gap between the industrial and agrarian worlds, not by condemning machinery, mass production, or even industrial agriculture. My “Toward a Liberatory Technology” was deprecated by anarchists and Marxists alike: the former because the article celebrated the use of new gardening machines as a substitute for backbreaking toil; the latter precisely because it was “too utopian” in its aspirations. Frankly, I regarded both of my supposed “failings” as real virtues that, with quality production in *all* spheres of economic life, freed humanity from the yoke of toil and a technocratic world. Moreover, there were aspects of the past which, given modern technics and means of communication were desiderata because they could lighten work and vastly increase productivity, without which humanity would be afflicted with fears of material scarcity. Such technological advances were also needed to provide sufficient free time for active participation in public affairs. Let me add, again, that my critics—many of whom were later to high-jack my alleged “failings”—read “could” to mean “would,” and pompously declared that if “post-scarcity” simply meant we *already* had tremendous technological advances, why were we still beset with poverty and exhausting toil? As though capitalism, like a slot machine, “would” always deliver

the most optimal returns on the goodies its technology could produce! Typically, they failed to observe that I had repeatedly warned my readers that almost nothing could emerge from within the context of a market economy that was not tainted by the pathologies of competition, rivalry, and, quite bluntly, pure and simple greed!

By contrast, social ecology's ecological imperative—the contradiction between a competitive society and the natural world—is not simply theoretical. By the eighties, it had been tested by the massive degradation that is occurring in the social as well as the natural world. Speaking for myself, I am astonished by the rapid onset of the greenhouse effect, which, in 1964, I predicted in “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought,” as a possibility that would require two or more centuries to unfold. Yet, as early as the eighties and nineties, the contradiction between capitalism and the natural world was becoming a very visible reality. Thereafter, the greenhouse effect and other destructive imbalances have assumed proportions that even outweigh more “commonplace” problems such as soil erosion and waste disposal.

This philosophy forms the basis for an educative outlook that yields a lengthy dialectical history and exposition of the phases of human development as it emerges out from natural evolution into social evolution. The philosophy of social ecology centers around a dialectical *unfolding* of a “legacy of freedom” that not only *intertwines* but *interacts* with a “legacy of domination,” and includes the evolution of a concept of justice that leads into an ever-expanding concept of freedom, of scarcity into post-scarcity, of folkdom into citizenship, of hierarchy into class, and, hopefully, a growing horizon of freedom (*whose termination, if any, we are not yet equipped to foresee*), yielding libertarian municipalities and institutions. Taken together, as a whole, this educative outlook forms the basis for a practical theory of politics.

WE ARE NOW LIVING NOT ONLY IN A DIFFERENT CENTURY THAT the Institute for Social Ecology was founded—the ISE was founded, I would remind you, in 1974, nearly thirty years ago. I would sound to young people today as an alien enterprise from a very different world than the one that exists today. The world I knew still had a workers' movement in the US and Europe, and the issues it had to confront differ qualitatively from those that have emerged in the past two decades.

Yet it would be unpardonable if we forgot that socialism was meant to be a *rational* society, not a replication of Stalinism and totalitarianism. Nor can we

be permitted to forget that it will require a profound social imperative—an *ecological* imperative, in my view—to move this mass, even lethargic society along rational lines. We must always remember that socialism will come about as the result of logical necessity, the product of deep-seated and compelling forces for social change, not simply “good vibes.” To give these precepts a lived meaning, we shall have to create an educational vanguard to keep the terrible pathologies of our day under control, at the very least, and abolish them at the very most.

For such demands upon our energy and our intelligence, our educational activities must result in a movement, not simply in a lifestyle that celebrates its “freedom” in a closeted community at a distance from real centers of activity and conflict. I cannot emphasize enough that our education, be it at the ISE or among “affinity groups,” will be little more than a form of self-indulgence if it is restricted to our minds, completely removed from an active life.

I would be the first to acknowledge that action is only possible when there is a real, dissident public life. For the present, I see no widespread inclination to give reality to a movement for libertarian municipalism, which, at the turn of the new century, lies dormant as a prospect for a new politics. Marx once perceptively noted in his early writings that not only must the Idea follow reality, but also reality must follow the Idea. This aphorism might well be regarded as a recognition of the Hegelian notion that freedom is a recognition of necessity in the sense that we need sufficient preconditions to produce the most effective conditions for social change. When this is not so, the most brilliant of ideas lie almost silently in wait for society itself to ripen and permit the struggle for freedom to germinate. It is then that we can give to education a priority that defies all false appeals to activism for its own sake.

But one proviso must be voiced: ideas are only true when they are rational. Today, when rationality and consistency are deprecated in the name of postmodernist chic, we carry a double burden of trying to sustain, often by education alone, reason against irrationalism, and to know *when* to act as well as *how* to do so. In such cases, let me note that education, too, is a form of activism and must always be cultivated as such. ♪

Notes

This article is an abridged version of a longer letter from the author to Michael Caplan.



Michael Caplan

Economics in a Social-Ecological Society

By Peter Staudenmaier

IN THE MIDST OF OUR STRUGGLES FOR A BETTER WORLD, social ecologists have frequently engaged in critical dialogue with other strands of radical thought about just what kind of world we're struggling for. Such dialogues often address the question of how people in a liberated future will organize their material relationships with one another and with the natural world. *What would economics look like in an ecological society? How might free communities arrange their livelihood?*

Exploring questions such as these requires us to exercise an important faculty of dialectical philosophy: the capacity to think speculatively. Envisioning a future beyond capitalism and the state means thinking past the world around us and putting ourselves inside of a different world, a world structured in a very different way, a world that has developed some of the social and ecological potentials that we see around us, in distorted form, today. It means trying to see the world not merely as it is, but as it ought to be.

Social ecologists have put forward a number of concrete proposals over the years for a *municipalized economy* and a *moral economy*. These proposals point toward what Bookchin calls "the recovery of the productive process itself as an ecological mediation of humanity with nature." What these practical proposals have in common is an underlying conception of how complex economies could be run differently, without markets or classes or bureaucracy, along egalitarian and participatory lines. Social ecologists argue that the economic mechanisms of a free society, whether for production, distribution, or reproduction, should have four basic characteristics: they should be conscious, transparent, alterable, and integrated.

Conscious: We want economic mechanisms to be deliberately chosen and deliberately structured, so that they fulfill the purposes that we collectively give to them, rather than the economic structures forcing us to fulfill their purposes. *Transparent:* We want every member of society to be able to grasp how society's economic mechanisms function. *Alterable:* We want to be able to change our economic structures according to ecological and social needs. And last, we want economic mechanisms to be comprehensively *integrated* with all other aspects of communal self-management.

What might these values look like in practice? How could this ensemble of speculative postulates actually be implemented? What follows is a brief attempt to sketch a reconstructive vision of economics in a social-ecological society.

The World Social Ecologists Envision

The world we envision is one of adventure and possibility, of radically new relationships and potential forms of social and individual life that are difficult to imagine, much less describe, from the perspective of the present. Most of what will happen in a social-ecological future, whether at an environmental level, a personal level, or a communal level, will be spontaneous and creative—and these are things we can neither plan nor propose nor predict. Nevertheless, such spontaneous and creative unfolding of potentials will require both an institutional framework and an ethical vision if they are to become more than mere dreams. Thus we must turn our attention to the social structures that might make free nature and a free society more likely.

Social ecologists work toward a society structured around freedom, cooperation, and ecological and social diversity. Our vision of a better world draws on a wealth of practical experiments and utopian hopes raised throughout history by emancipatory movements from below. At the center of our vision of free communities is *direct democracy*. Direct democracy means people managing their own lives, consciously and collectively, for the good of the communities they are part of. Instead of handing over decision-making power to experts, professionals, representatives, or bureaucrats, social ecology foresees all people participating directly in the self-management of their communal affairs.

Because we oppose institutionalized forms of domination and hierarchy, social ecologists reject the state as such. Instead of positing a separate body that stands apart from society and makes decisions on its behalf, we envision a network of community assemblies as the basic decision-making body and as the primary venue for practicing direct democracy. These assemblies include all the residents of a local area (in cities at the neighborhood level and in rural areas at the township level), who meet at regular intervals to discuss and decide on the issues before them: political as well as economic decisions, indeed any social decision that significantly affects the life of the community as a whole.

The popular assembly includes everybody who is willing to participate in it and provides a democratic forum for all community members to engage one another on an equal basis and actively shape social life. Ongoing interactions of this kind encourage a sense of shared responsibility and interdependence, as well as offering a public space for resolving disputes and disagreements in a rational and non-coercive way. Recognizing that people have differing interests, aspirations, and convictions, the neighborhood assembly and its accompanying civic ethos present an opportunity for reconciling

particular and general objectives. Direct democracy, in this view, involves a commitment to the wellbeing of one's neighbors.

Communal wellbeing, in turn, implies an active respect and appreciation for the natural context within which local communities exist. No social order can guarantee that the ecosystems and habitats that host our various settlements will thrive, but social ecologists believe that communities built around free association and mutual aid are much better suited to fostering environmental diversity and sustainability than those built around authoritarian systems of power. In societies that have overcome domination and hierarchy, ecological flourishing and human flourishing can complement and reinforce one another.

The ethical outlook that embodies these potentials is as important as the practical methods themselves. Social ecologists want to create social forms that promote freedom and solidarity by building these values into the very fabric of social relations and public institutions. Thus, our emphasis on face-to-face assemblies open to all is meant to encourage, not preclude, the creation of other libertarian and cooperative social forms. An enormous variety of spontaneous associations, living arrangements, workplaces, family structures, and so forth all have an important place in our vision of a free world. The only forms that are excluded are ones based on exploitation and oppression.

Social ecology's model of direct democracy can therefore be realized in a number of different ways depending on the needs, desires, and experiences of those who are inspired by it. This is especially true of economic processes, and the scenario outlined here is only one possible interpretation of the economic aspects of a social-ecological society. The fundamental shared perspective is that of a moral economy, in which the material conditions of our existence are reintegrated into a broader ethical and institutional framework. A moral economy means making decisions about production and consumption part of the civic life of the whole community.

Communal Self-Management in Practice

In this scenario, workers' councils play a crucial role in the day-to-day administration of production, while local assemblies have the final say in major economic decisions. All members of a given community participate in formulating economic policy, which is discussed, debated, and decided upon within the popular assembly. Social ecology foresees an extensive physical decentralization of production, so that workers at a

particular enterprise will typically live in the same municipality where they work. We also foresee a continual voluntary rotation of jobs, tasks, and responsibilities and a radical redefinition of what 'work' means. Through the conscious transformation of labor into a free social activity that combines physical and intellectual skills, we envision the productive process as a fulfillment of personal and communal needs, articulated to their ecological context. Along with the rejection of bosses, profits, wages, and exchange value, we seek to

to need," which distinguishes our perspective from many other anti-capitalist programs, is fleshed out by a civic ethic in which concern for the common welfare shapes individual choices. In the absence of markets, private property, class divisions, commodity production, exploitation of labor, and accumulation of capital, libertarian communism can become the distributive mechanism for social wealth and the economic counterpart to the transparent and humanly scaled political structures that social ecology proposes.

The fundamental shared perspective is that of a moral economy, in which the material conditions of our existence are re-integrated into a broader ethical and institutional framework.

A moral economy means making decisions about production and consumption part of the civic life of the whole community.

overcome capitalism's reduction of human beings to instruments of production and consumption. Social ecology's assembly model encourages people to approach economic decisions not merely as workers and consumers, but as community members committed to an inclusive goal of social and ecological wellbeing.

While the broad outlines of communal production are established at the assembly level, they are implemented in practice by smaller collective bodies which also operate on an egalitarian, participatory, and democratic basis. Cooperative households and collective workplaces form an integral part of this process. Decisions that have regional impact are worked out by confederations of local assemblies, so that everybody affected by a decision can participate in making it. Specific tasks can be delegated to specialized committees, but substantive issues of public concern are subject to the discretion of each popular assembly. Direct democracy encourages the formation and contestation of competing views and arguments, so that for any given decision there will be several distinct options available, each of them crafted by the people who will carry them out. Assembly members consider these various proposals and debate their merits and implications; they are discussed, revised and amended as necessary. When no clear consensus emerges, a vote or series of votes can be held to determine which options have the most support.

Social ecology's vision of a moral economy centers on libertarian communism, in which the fruits of common labor are freely available to all. This principle of "from each according to ability and to each according

In such an arrangement, the interaction between smaller committees and working groups and the full assembly becomes crucially important to maintaining the democratic and participatory nature of this deliberative process. Preparing coherent proposals for presentation to the assembly will require both specialized work and scrupulous information gathering, as well as analysis and interpretation. Because these activities can subtly influence the eventual outcome of any decision, the responsibility for carrying them out should be a rotating task entrusted to a temporary commission chosen at random from the members of the assembly.

Confederal Economic Democracy

When the assembly has considered and debated and fine-tuned the various proposals before it and has agreed on an overall outline for the local economy, community members continue to refine and realize this outline while implementing it in their workplaces, residences, and elsewhere. If obstacles or disagreements arise that cannot be resolved at the immediate level of a single enterprise, institution, or household, they can be brought back to the full assembly for discussion and resolution. If some aspects of an agreed-upon policy are not fulfilled for whatever reason, this will quickly become apparent to community members, who can then alter or adapt the policy accordingly. While most of economic life will be carried out within smaller collectivities, in direct cooperation with co-workers, housemates, associates and neighbors, overarching matters of public economic direction will be worked out

within the assembly of the entire community. When necessary, city-wide or regional issues will be addressed at the confederal level, with final decisions remaining in the hands of each local assembly.

The reason for this emphasis on assembly sovereignty is two-fold. First, the local assembly is the most accessible forum for practicing direct democracy and guarding against the re-emergence of power differentials and new forms of hierarchy. Since the assembly includes all members of the community on equal terms and operates through direct participation rather than representation, it offers the best opportunity for extending collective self-management to all spheres of social life. Second, the local assembly makes it possible for people to decide on their economic and political affairs in a comprehensive and coherent manner, through face-to-face discussion with the people they live with, play with, and work with. The popular assembly encourages a holistic approach to public matters, one that recognizes the myriad interconnections among economic, social, and ecological concerns.

Much of this vision will only be practicable in conjunction with a radical overhaul of the technological infrastructure, something which social ecologists support on environmental as well as democratic grounds. We foresee most production taking place locally, with specialized functions socialized and conceptual and manual labor integrated. Still, there will be some important social goods that cannot or should not be completely decentralized; advanced research institutes, for example, will serve large regions even though they will be hosted by one municipality. Thus confederation, which offsets parochialism and insularity, plays an essential role within social ecology's political vision.

While the primary focus of this scenario is on local communities generating economic policies tailored to their own social and ecological circumstances, social ecologists reject the notions of local self-sufficiency and economic autarchy as values in themselves; we consider these things desirable if and when they contribute to social participation and ecologically nuanced democratic decision making. We foresee a confederation of assemblies in consistent dialogue with one another via confederal bodies made up of recallable and mandated delegates from each constituent assembly. These bodies are established as outgrowths of the directly democratic local communities, not as substitutes for them. Since economic relations, in particular, often involve cooperation with distant communities, confederation offers a mutually compatible framework for sharing resources, skills, and knowledge.

A confederal network of popular assemblies offers a

practical way for all people to consciously direct their lives together and to pursue common goals as part of a project of social freedom. Bringing together solidarity and autonomy, we can recreate politics, the art of communal self-management, as the highest form of direct action. In such a world, economics as we know it today will no longer exist. When work becomes creative activity, when production becomes the harmonization of human and ecological potentials, when economics becomes collective self-determination and the conscious unfolding of social, natural, and ethical possibilities as yet unimagined, then we will have achieved a liberated society, and the ideas outlined here will take on concrete form as lived realities and direct experiences. ♪

Discuss!

Over the past few years, social ecologists and advocates of Participatory Economics have started to engage in a discussion on these two bodies of libertarian thought. This discussion has raised many important questions about the form a liberated society might take. This past summer, the Institute for Social Ecology hosted a debate between Participatory Economist Michael Albert and social ecologist Peter Staudenmaier on our on-line discussion forums.

Michael Albert is the co-founder of South End Press, *Z Magazine*, Z Media Institute, and various on-line projects, including ZNet. While he writes about a very wide range of topics, one of his primary intellectual foci has long been the development and popularization of economic vision and strategy. The fruits of this labor, largely undertaken with Robin Hahnel, are the economic model, vision, and approach which they call Participatory Economics.

The debate sought to examine the work of these two bodies of thought as they relate to questions of the form a liberated society might take, the underlying values that such a society rests upon, and an activist practice that would lead us in this direction. The debate was framed around two brief position papers on each writer's vision for a liberated society. These position papers were then followed up with critical and questioning rejoinders which framed a month-long debate. The debate is currently open to the public for further discussion.

Visit the debate on-line at:

www.social-ecology.org/forums



Buttercups and Sunflowers

On the Evolution of First and Second Nature

By Sonja Schmitz

A REMARKABLE FEATURE OF SOCIAL ECOLOGY IS THAT MURRAY BOOKCHIN'S vision of an ecological society goes beyond the development of eco-technologies and organic agriculture, but expands into the philosophical realm through dialectical naturalism. Murray recognizes the importance of healing the seemingly disparate relationship between nature and culture (first and second nature) by reminding us of the developmental relationship between them (dialectical naturalism). Through his discourses on dialectical naturalism, Murray invites the participation of ecologists, biologists, and scientists generally involved in the subject of evolution. The following essay is a critique of one aspect of dialectical naturalism. It is an attempt and also an invitation to other social ecologists, to develop and refine Murray's important and provocative work on the relationship between nature and culture.

For Murray, dialectical naturalism serves as a potential source of objective ethics for developing ecological societies as demonstrated by the following quote:

Today we may well be able to permit Nature—not God or Spirit or an *Élan Vital*—to open itself up to us as the ground for an ethics on its own terms. Contemporary sciences' greatest achievement is the growing evidence it provides that randomness is subject to a directive ordering principle, mutualism is good by virtue of its fostering the evolution of natural variety and complexity.¹

If there are indeed trends or universal laws that determine the evolution of first nature, then humans should derive ethics based upon these principles. Murray is particularly interested in those trends that are compatible with anarchist principles. An ecological society would be based upon a harmonious existence within its eco-community (ecosystem)² by fostering mutualistic and non-hierarchical relationships (mutualism), diversity (variation) and self-organization (autopoiesis). In accordance with dialectical naturalism, an ecological society would, in general, maximize the opportunities for unfettered directionality toward greater complexity, diversity, and subjectivity. Murray's ecological society takes the form of libertarian municipalism, the assemblage of multiple self-governing communities into a complex of confederations. The complexity of the confederation allows for a cultural diversity that facilitates freedom by diminishing racism, classism, and any other "isms" that act to oppress and suppress the potentialities latent within individuals of the human species.

As a student of social ecology and one trying to integrate my background as a biologist, I was drawn to the question of whether nature could provide a basis for deriving ethics. Scientists have been searching for universal laws in evolutionary biology ever since Darwin. The search represents a contemporary chapter in the historical quest for universal laws in the physical and chemical sciences. Aside from the satisfaction of understanding the world around us, there are, after all, practical reasons for deriving laws—they allow us to make predictions. In the ecological sciences they provide a basis for reconstructing ecosystems (restoration ecology) and inform decisions regarding the conservation and management of wildlife. The laws that determine evolution are not as easily subject to testing by the scientific method as in ecology, nor is their practicality obvious. In evolutionary science the trends are more philosophical in nature: (1) whether the tempo of evolution is rapid or gradual (punctuated equilibrium vs. gradualism), (2) whether evolution is goal-oriented and (3) whether evolution proceeds by an increase in complexity and diversity.

Murray's argument that nature has directionality toward ever-greater complexity and diversity initially struck me as provocative, if not problematic. The existence of multicellular plants and animals is often used to argue that evolution proceeds by an increase in complexity. Evolutionary biology is still in the process of describing the

extraordinary leap life took in its transitions from prokaryotic cells (bacteria) to the first eukaryotic cells (protists) and from these single celled organisms to multicellular fungi, plants and animals. One can interpret this progression favorably by emphasizing the cooperative, communal, and mutualistic tendencies required by these transitions, which is what Murray Bookchin does. Murray wants to equate the evolution of a confederation of multiple self-governing communities with the evolution of multicellular organisms. There is however, a darker side to this progression. The evolution of complex life forms is a story rife with tension between the autonomy of the individual cell and the drive to assemble into communities of cells for the sake of survival. This in itself is not incompatible with social ecology. But, the assemblage of autonomous beings is usually accompanied by the reduction of the individual into specialized and compartmentalized functions, words that conjure images of authoritarian communism and fascist political regimes. Therefore, I would like to examine whether it is indeed desirable to derive ethics from what biologists “know” about the evolution of first nature.

The endosymbiotic theory proposed by Lynn Margulis suggests that the evolution of eukaryotic cells may well have occurred by the ingestion (but incomplete digestion) of one bacterium by another about 1.5 million years ago (mya).³ In the process, the undifferentiated soup of molecules that comprised the guts of bacterial cells was organized into an assemblage of specialized compartments called organelles, each with a separate function much like our own organs. The resulting eukaryotic cell harbors remnants of its prokaryotic ancestors, mitochondria and chloroplasts, once intact, autonomous individuals, now dependent upon and part of a greater assemblage. Therefore, the evolution of the eukaryotic cell occurred at the expense of autonomous bacterial cells, which are mere vestiges of what they once were (mitochondria and chloroplasts).

The next level of differentiation involves the assemblage of single celled eukaryotes (protists) into colonies of cells and the first multicellular organisms. Biologists see evidence of this transition in some algal species like *Volvox*. *Volvox* consists of a hollow sphere made up of a single layer of 500 to 60,000 flagellated cells that function in photosynthesis and in the motility of the colony. Other cells in the *Volvox* community function solely in reproduction (sex cells). This multicellular community operates as a result of the simultaneous specialization of function of individual cells and a division of labor among them. The next step

is the organization of hundreds of thousands of cells into tissues and organ systems. Not much is known about how this transition occurred, but multicellular invertebrate animals with organ systems suddenly appear in the fossil record about 700 mya (Ediacara, Australia). Nevertheless, the same themes of reduction and specialization are observed in the evolution of multicellular fungi, plants and animals.

An example from the plant kingdom, the buttercup and the sunflower, will illustrate how the themes of specialization and reduction resurface in the evolution of complex multicellular organisms. The buttercup flower is considered primitive, meaning it is one of the earliest flower structures observed in the fossil record and several million years older than the sunflower lineage. (There are more ancient lineages among flowering plants, but I am choosing the buttercup lineage because everyone can picture them). Each part of the flower is distinguishable and together comprises a reproductive organ—the buttercup flower. It has five green sepals, five yellow petals, many single stamens (male flower parts) and many pistils (female flower parts) that develop into little fruits called achenes. Upon initial inspection, the sunflower does not appear much different. It has many green sepals, yellow petals, stamens, and pistils. Although the sunflower looks like a buttercup, its structure is deceptively different. The



sunflower is a community of individual flowers, each with a specialized reproductive function. The outer flowers each have one yellow petal; their pistils and stamens are inactive or nonexistent. On the other hand, the petals of the inner flowers have been fused into a yellow tube; and their pistils and stamens are still functional. The outer flowers with petals function to attract pollinators, while the inner tubular flowers produce seed.

each phylum in the animal genealogy. Even if we were to limit our examination to mammals or primates, is it appropriate to extend the “laws” or principles of first nature and superimpose them upon cultural evolution? I would argue that because cultural evolution is uniquely *human*, and not a generalized trend among other lineages, the trends observed in first nature do not necessarily apply to second nature.

Although Murray applauds science in its

If the buttercup and the sunflower are interpreted as examples of the evolution of complexity, do we want to cite this trend for constructing ecological societies or confederations?

The buttercup and the sunflower represent two levels of complexity. The buttercup is a simple flower with many parts that produces many seeds, while the sunflower is a community of many individual flowers with specialized functions, each producing a single seed. The buttercup is an autonomous individual capable of reproduction, while individuals of the mega-sunflower community cannot function autonomously anymore, and must reproduce as a unit.

I have often thought that Murray’s libertarian municipalism is like the sunflower; each self-governing municipality is a single flower, while the mega-sunflower community represents the confederation. But, upon closer examination, the analogy is inadequate. The evolution of complexity in plants is not compatible with, nor can it be equated with, the kind of complexity and diversity Murray envisions as facilitating freedom in his libertarian municipalities. The sort of reduction, specialization, and loss of autonomy observed in the evolution of multicellular organisms is more compatible with the functioning of a nation state or fascist political regime. Therefore the evolution of complexity has outcomes frighteningly compatible with political regimes that do not embrace the ideas of social ecology. If the buttercup and the sunflower are interpreted as examples of the evolution of complexity, do we want to cite this trend for constructing ecological societies or confederations?

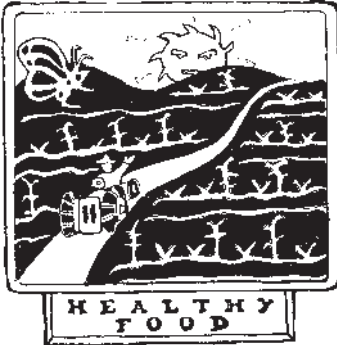
Perhaps it is inappropriate to compare the evolution of plants with the evolution of human social systems. While trends in the evolutionary process can be identified, they are not universal and do not necessarily apply across all lineages of life. Each of the five kingdoms is on a separate evolutionary trajectory, as is

achievements in illuminating the role of mutualism, diversity, complexity (and other anarchist tendencies); evolutionary biology is only beginning to yield under the scrutiny of the scientific method, or in other words, provide an objective inquiry into the laws of evolution. The exploration into the evolution of complexity has left me with grave doubts as to whether social ecologists want to derive ethics from first nature. My doubts however, do not diminish my desire to construct societies on the basis of mutualism and diversity. Perhaps the themes of mutualism and diversity hold up better under examination than does the evolution of complexity.

In summary, this essay raises two separate yet related questions. Can we derive an objective ethics from the trends or laws of first nature? And if such trends, principles or universal laws do exist, is it appropriate or even *desirable* to cite them for the construction of ecological human societies? I reserve an examination into these questions for future essays and invite other social ecologists to join in the inquiry. ♪

Notes

1. Murray Bookchin, “Toward a Philosophy of Nature” in *The Philosophy of Social Ecology* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1995), p. 64.
2. Scientific terminology is in parenthesis
3. Lynn Margulis, *Early Life* (Boston: Jones and Bartlett Publishers Inc., 1984), p. 75-104.





The Communalist Project

By Murray Bookchin

Cliff Harper

WHETHER THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY WILL BE THE MOST RADICAL OF TIMES OR THE MOST REACTIONARY—or will simply lapse into a gray era of dismal mediocrity—will depend overwhelmingly upon the kind of social movement and program that social radicals create out of the theoretical, organizational, and political wealth that has accumulated during the past two centuries of the revolutionary era. The direction we select, from among several intersecting roads of human development, may well determine the future of our species for centuries to come. As long as this irrational society endangers us with nuclear and biological weapons, we cannot ignore the possibility that the entire human enterprise may come to a devastating end. Given the exquisitely elaborate technical plans that the military-industrial complex has devised, the self-extinction of the human species must be included in the futuristic scenarios that, at the turn of the millennium, the mass media are projecting—the end of a human future as such.

Lest these remarks seem too apocalyptic, I should emphasize that we *also* live in an era when human creativity, technology, and imagination have the capability to produce extraordinary material achievements and to endow us with societies that allow for a degree of freedom that far and away exceeds the most dramatic and emancipatory visions projected by social theorists such as Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Karl Marx, and Peter Kropotkin.¹ Many thinkers of the postmodern age have obtusely singled out science and technology as the principal threats to human well-being, yet few disciplines have imparted to humanity such a stupendous knowledge of the innermost secrets of matter and life, or provided our species better with the ability to alter every important feature of reality and to improve the well-being of human and nonhuman life-forms.

We are thus in a position either to follow a path toward a grim “end of history,” in which a banal succession of vacuous events replaces genuine progress, or to move on to a path toward the *true* making of history, in which humanity genuinely progresses toward a rational world. We are in a position to choose between an ignominious finale, possibly including the catastrophic nuclear oblivion of history itself, and history’s rational fulfillment in a free, materially abundant society in an aesthetically crafted environment.

Notwithstanding the technological marvels that competing enterprises of the ruling class (that is, the bourgeoisie) are developing in order to achieve hegemony over one another, little of a subjective nature that exists in the existing society can redeem it. Precisely at a time when we, as a species, are capable of producing the means for amazing objective advances and improvements in the human condition and in the nonhuman natural world—advances that could make for a free and rational society—we stand almost naked morally before the onslaught of social forces that may very well lead to our physical immolation. Prognoses about the future are understandably very fragile and are easily distrusted. Pessimism has become very widespread, as capitalist social relations become more deeply entrenched in the human mind than ever before, and as culture regresses appallingly, almost to a vanishing point. To most people today, the hopeful and very radical certainties of the twenty-year period between the Russian Revolution of 1917-18 and the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 seem almost naïve.

Yet our decision to create a better society, and our choice of the way to do it, must come *from within ourselves*, without the aid of a deity, still less a mystical “force of nature” or a charismatic leader. If we choose the road toward a better future, our choice must be the consequence of our ability—and *ours alone*—to learn from the material lessons of the past and to appreciate the real prospects of the future. We will need to have recourse, not to ghostly vagaries conjured up from the murky hell of superstition or, absurdly, from the couloirs of the academy, but to the innovative attributes that make up our very humanity and the *essential* features that account for natural and social development, as opposed to the social pathologies and accidental events that have sidetracked humanity from its self-fulfillment in consciousness and reason. Having brought history to a point where nearly *everything* is possible, at least of a material nature—and having left behind a past that was permeated ideologically by mystical and religious elements produced by the human imagination—we are faced with a new challenge, one that has never before confronted humanity. We must consciously create our own world, not according to demonic fantasies, mindless customs, and destructive prejudices, but according to the canons of *reason, reflection, and discourse* that uniquely belong to our own species.

What factors should be decisive in making our choice? First, of great significance is the immense accumulation of social and political experience that is available to revolutionaries today, a storehouse of knowledge that, properly conceived, could be used to avoid the terrible errors that our predecessors made and to spare humanity the terrible plagues of failed revolutions in the past. Of indispensable importance is the potential for a new theoretical springboard that has been created by the history of ideas, one that provides the means to catapult an emerging radical movement beyond existing social conditions into a future that fosters humanity's emancipation.

But we must also be fully aware of the scope of the problems that we face. We must understand with complete clarity *where* we stand in the development of the prevailing capitalist order, and we have to grasp *emergent* social problems and address them in the program of a new movement. Capitalism is unquestionably the most dynamic society ever to appear in history. By definition, to be sure, it *always* remains a system of commodity exchange in which objects that are made for sale and profit pervade and mediate most human relations. Yet capitalism is also a highly *mutable* system, continually advancing the brutal maxim that whatever enterprise does not grow at the expense of its rivals must die. Hence "growth" and perpetual change become the very laws of life of capitalist existence. This means that capitalism *never* remains permanently in only one form; it must *always* transform the institutions that arise from its basic social relations.

Although capitalism became a dominant society only in the past few centuries, it long existed on the periphery of earlier societies: in a largely commercial form, structured around trade between cities and empires; in a craft form throughout the European Middle Ages; in a hugely industrial form in our own time; and if we are to believe recent seers, in an informational form in the coming period. It has created not only new technologies but also a great variety of economic and social structures, such as the small shop, the factory, the huge mill, and the industrial and commercial complex. Certainly the capitalism of the Industrial Revolution has not completely disappeared, any more than the isolated peasant family and small craftsman of a still earlier period have been consigned to complete oblivion. Much of the past is always incorporated into the present; indeed, as Marx insistently warned, there is no "pure capitalism," and none of the earlier forms of capitalism fade away until radically new social relations are established and become overwhelmingly dominant. But today

capitalism, even as it coexists with and utilizes precapitalist institutions for its own ends (see Marx's *Grundrisse* for this dialectic), now reaches into the suburbs and the countryside with its shopping malls and newly styled factories. Indeed, it is by no means inconceivable that one day it will reach beyond our planet. In any case, it has produced not only new commodities to create and feed new wants but new social and cultural *issues*, which in turn have given rise to new supporters and antagonists of the existing system. The famous first part of Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, in which they celebrate capitalism's wonders, would have to be periodically rewritten to keep pace with the achievements—as well as the horrors—produced by the bourgeoisie's development.

One of the most striking features of capitalism today is that in the Western world the highly simplified two-class structure—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—that Marx and Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, predicted would become dominant under "mature" capitalism (and we have yet to determine what "mature," still less "late" or "moribund" capitalism actually is) has undergone a process of reconfiguration. The conflict between wage labor and capital, while it has by no means disappeared, nonetheless lacks the *all-embracing importance* that it possessed in the past. Contrary to Marx's expectations, the industrial working class is now dwindling in numbers and is steadily losing its traditional identity as a class—which by no means excludes it from a potentially broader and perhaps more extensive conflict of society as a whole against capitalist social relations. Present-day culture, social relations, cityscapes, modes of production, agriculture, and transportation have remade the traditional proletariat, upon which syndicalists and Marxists were overwhelmingly, indeed almost mystically focused, into a largely petty-bourgeois stratum whose mentality is marked by its own bourgeois utopianism of "consumption for the sake of consumption." We can foresee a time when the proletarian, whatever the color of his or her collar or place on the assembly line, will be completely replaced by automated and even miniaturized means of production that are operated by a few white-coated manipulators of machines and by computers.

By the same token, the living standards of the traditional proletariat and its material expectations (no small factor in the shaping of social consciousness!) have changed enormously, soaring within only a generation or two from near poverty to a comparatively high degree of material affluence. Among the children

and grandchildren of former steel and automobile workers and coal miners, who have no proletarian class identity, a college education has replaced the high school diploma as emblematic of a new class status. In the United States once-opposing class interests have converged to a point that almost 50 percent of American households own stocks and bonds, while a huge number are proprietors of one kind or another, possessing their own homes, gardens, and rural summer retreats.

Given these changes, the stern working man or woman, portrayed in radical posters of the past with a flexed, highly muscular arm holding a bone-crushing hammer, has been replaced by the genteel and well-mannered (so-called) “working middle class.” The traditional cry “Workers of the world, unite!” in its old historical sense becomes ever more meaningless. The class-consciousness of the proletariat, which Marx tried to awaken in *The Communist Manifesto*, has been hemorrhaging steadily and in many places has virtually disappeared. The more existential class struggle has not been eliminated, to be sure, any more than the bourgeoisie could eliminate gravity from the existing human condition, but unless radicals today become aware of the fact that it has been *narrowed* down largely to the individual factory or office, they will fail to see that a new, perhaps more expansive form of social consciousness can emerge in the generalized struggles that face us. Indeed, this form of social consciousness can be given a refreshingly new meaning as the concept of the rebirth of the *citoyen*—a concept so important to the Great Revolution of 1789 and its more broadly humanistic sentiment of sociality that it became the form of address among later revolutionaries summoned to the barricades by the heraldic crowing of the red French rooster.

Seen as a whole, the social condition that capitalism has produced today stands very much at odds with the simplistic class prognoses advanced by Marx and by the revolutionary French syndicalists. After the Second World War, capitalism underwent an enormous transformation, creating *broad new social issues* with extraordinary rapidity, issues that went beyond traditional proletarian demands for improved wages, hours, and working conditions: notably environmental, gender, hierarchical, civic, and democratic issues. Capitalism, in effect, has *generalized* its threats to humanity, particularly with climatic changes that may

alter the very face of the planet, oligarchical institutions of a global scope, and rampant urbanization that radically corrodes the civic life basic to grassroots politics.

Hierarchy, today, is becoming as pronounced an issue as class—as witness the extent to which many social analyses have singled out managers, bureaucrats, scientists, and the like as emerging, ostensibly dominant groups. New and elaborate gradations of status and interests count today to an extent that they did not in the recent past; they blur the conflict between wage labor and capital that was once so central, clearly defined, and militantly waged by traditional socialists. Class categories are now intermingled with hierarchical categories based on race, gender, sexual preference, and certainly national or regional differences. *Status*

differentiations, characteristic of hierarchy, tend to converge with class differentiations, and a more *all-inclusive* capitalistic world is emerging in which ethnic, national, and gender differences often surpass the importance of class differences in the public eye. This phenomenon is not entirely new: in the First World War countless German socialist workers cast aside their earlier commitment to the red flags of proletarian unity in favor of the national flags of their well-fed and

parasitic rulers and went on to plunge bayonets into the bodies of French and Russian socialist workers—as they did, in turn, under the national flags of their own oppressors.

At the same time capitalism has produced a new, perhaps paramount contradiction: the clash between an economy based on unending growth and the desiccation of the natural environment.² This issue and its vast ramifications can no more be minimized, let alone dismissed, than the need of human beings for food or air. At present the most promising struggles in the West, where socialism was born, seem to be waged less around income and working conditions than around nuclear power, pollution, deforestation, urban blight, education, health care, community life, and the oppression of people in underdeveloped countries—as witness the (albeit sporadic) antiglobalization upsurges, in which blue- and white-collar “workers” march in the same ranks with middle-class humanitarians and are motivated by common social concerns. Proletarian combatants become indistinguishable from middle-class ones. Burly workers, whose hallmark is a combative militancy, now march behind “bread and puppet”

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theater performers, often with a considerable measure of shared playfulness. Members of the working and middle classes now wear many different social hats, so to speak, challenging capitalism obliquely as well as directly on cultural as well as economic grounds.

Nor can we ignore, in deciding what direction we are to follow, the fact that capitalism, if it is not checked, will in the future—and not necessarily the very distant future—*differ appreciably from the system we know today*. Capitalist development can be expected to vastly alter the social horizon in the years ahead. Can we suppose that factories, offices, cities, residential areas, industry, commerce, and agriculture, let alone moral values, aesthetics, media, popular desires, and the like will not change immensely before the twenty-first century is out? In the past century, capitalism, above all else, has *broadened* social issues—indeed, the historical social question of how a humanity, divided by classes and exploitation, will create a society based on equality, the development of authentic harmony, and freedom—to include those whose resolution was barely foreseen by the liberatory social theorists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Our age, with its endless array of “bottom lines” and “investment choices,” now threatens to *turn society itself into a vast and exploitative marketplace*.³

The public with which the progressive socialist had to deal is also changing radically and will continue to do so in the coming decades. To *lag* in understanding behind the changes that capitalism is introducing and the new or broader contradictions it is producing would be to commit the recurrently disastrous error that led to the defeat of nearly all revolutionary upsurges in the past two centuries. Foremost among the lessons that a new revolutionary movement must learn from the past is that it must *win over broad sectors of the middle class* to its new populist program. No attempt to replace capitalism with socialism ever had or will have the *remotest chance of success* without the aid of the discontented petty bourgeoisie, whether it was the intelligentsia and peasantry-in-uniform of the Russian Revolution or the intellectuals, farmers, shopkeepers, clerks, and managers in industry and even in government in the German upheavals of 1918-21. Even during the most promising periods of past revolutionary cycles, the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, the German Social Democrats, and Russian Communists *never* acquired absolute majorities in their respective legislatures

bodies. So-called “proletarian revolutions” were *invariably* minority revolutions, usually even *within the proletariat itself*, and those that succeeded (often briefly, before they were subdued or drifted historically out of the revolutionary movement) depended overwhelmingly on the fact that the bourgeoisie lacked active support among its own military forces or was simply socially demoralized.

GIVEN THE CHANGES THAT WE ARE WITNESSING AND THOSE that are still taking form, social radicals can no longer oppose the predatory (as well as immensely creative) capitalist system by using the ideologies and methods that were born in the first Industrial Revolution, when a factory proletariat seemed to be the principal antagonist of a textile plant owner. (Nor can we use ideologies that were spawned by conflicts that an impoverished peasantry used to oppose feudal and semifeudal landowners.) None of the professedly anticapitalist ideologies of the past—Marxism, anarchism, syndicalism, and more generic forms of socialism—retain the same relevance that they had at an earlier stage of capitalist development and in an earlier period of technological advance. Nor can any of them hope to encompass the multitude of new issues, opportunities, problems, and interests that capitalism has repeatedly created over time.

Marxism was the most comprehensive and coherent effort to produce a systematic form of socialism, emphasizing the material as well as the subjective historical preconditions of a new society. This project, in the present era of precapitalist economic decomposition and of intellectual confusion, relativism, and subjectivism, must never surrender to the new barbarians, many of whom find their home in what was once a barrier to ideological regression—the academy. We owe much to Marx’s attempt to provide us with a coherent and stimulating analysis of the commodity and commodity relations, to an activist philosophy, a systematic social theory, an objectively grounded or “scientific” concept of historical development, and a flexible political strategy. Marxist political ideas were eminently relevant to the needs of a terribly disoriented proletariat and to the particular oppressions that the industrial bourgeoisie inflicted upon it in England in the 1840s, somewhat later in France, Italy, and Germany, and very presciently in Russia in the last decade of Marx’s life. Until the rise of the populist movement in

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Russia (most famously, the *Narodnaya Volya*), Marx expected the emerging proletariat to become the great majority of the population in Europe and North America, and to inevitably engage in revolutionary class war as a result of capitalist exploitation and immiseration. And especially between 1917 and 1939, long after Marx's death, Europe was indeed beleaguered by a mounting class war that reached the point of outright workers' insurrections. In 1917, owing to an extraordinary confluence of circumstances—particularly with the outbreak of the First World War, which rendered several quasi-feudal European social systems terribly unstable—Lenin and the Bolsheviks tried to use (but greatly altered) Marx's writings in order to take power in an economically backward empire, whose size spanned eleven time zones across Europe and Asia.⁴

But for the most part, as we have seen, Marxism's economic insights belonged to an era of emerging factory capitalism in the nineteenth century. Brilliant as a theory of the material *preconditions* for socialism, it did not address the ecological, civic, and subjective forces or the *efficient* causes that could impel humanity into a movement for revolutionary social change. On the contrary, for nearly a century Marxism stagnated theoretically. Its theorists were often puzzled by developments that have passed it by and, since the 1960s, have mechanically appended environmentalist and feminist ideas to its formulaic *ouvrierist* outlook.

By the same token, anarchism—which, I believe, represents in its *authentic* form a highly individualistic outlook that fosters a radically unfettered lifestyle, often as a substitute for mass action—is far better suited to articulate a Proudhonian single-family peasant and craft world than a modern urban and industrial environment. I myself once used this political label, but further thought has obliged me to conclude that, its often-refreshing aphorisms and insights notwithstanding, it is simply not a social theory. Its foremost theorists celebrate its seeming openness to eclecticism and the liberatory effects of “paradox” or even “contradiction,” to use Proudhonian hyperbole. Accordingly, and without prejudice to the earnestness of many anarchistic practices, a case can be made that many of the ideas of social and economic reconstruction that in the past have been advanced in the name of “anarchy” were often drawn from Marxism (including my own concept of “post-scarcity,” which understandably infuriated many anarchists who read my essays on the subject). Regrettably, the use of socialistic terms has often prevented anarchists from telling us or even understanding clearly *what* they are: individualists whose concepts of autonomy originate in a strong

commitment to *personal* liberty rather than to *social* freedom, or socialists committed to a structured, institutionalized, and responsible form of social organization. Anarchism's idea of self-regulation (*auto-nomos*) led to a radical celebration of Nietzsche's all-absorbing will. Indeed the history of this “ideology” is peppered with idiosyncratic acts of defiance that verge on the eccentric, which not surprisingly have attracted many young people and aesthetes.

In fact anarchism represents the most extreme formulation of liberalism's ideology of unfettered autonomy, culminating in a celebration of heroic acts of defiance of the state. Anarchism's mythos of *self-regulation (auto nomos)*—the radical assertion of the *individual over or even against society* and the *personalistic absence of responsibility for the collective welfare*—leads to a radical affirmation of the all-powerful will so central to Nietzsche's ideological peregrinations. Some self-professed anarchists have even denounced mass social action as futile and alien to their private concerns and made a fetish of what the Spanish anarchists called *grupismo*, a small-group mode of action that is highly personal rather than social.

Anarchism has often been confused with revolutionary syndicalism, a highly *structured* and well-developed *mass* form of libertarian trade unionism that, unlike anarchism, was long committed to democratic procedures,⁵ to discipline in action, and to organized, long-range revolutionary practice to eliminate capitalism. Its affinity with anarchism stems from its strong libertarian bias, but bitter antagonisms between anarchists and syndicalists have a long history in nearly every country in Western Europe and North America, as witness the tensions between the Spanish CNT and the anarchist groups associated with *Tierra y Libertad* early in the twentieth century; between the revolutionary syndicalist and anarchist groups in Russia during the 1917 revolution; and between the IWW in the United States and Sweden, to cite the more illustrative cases in the history of the libertarian labor movement. More than one American anarchist was affronted by Joe Hill's defiant maxim on the eve of his execution in Utah: “Don't mourn—Organize!” Alas, small groups were not quite the “organizations” that Joe Hill, or the grossly misunderstood idol of the Spanish libertarian movement, Salvador Seguí, had in mind. It was largely the shared word *libertarian* that made it possible for somewhat confused anarchists to coexist in the same organization with revolutionary syndicalists. It was often verbal confusion rather than ideological clarity that made possible the coexistence in Spain of the FAI, as represented by the anarchist Federica Montseny, with

the syndicalists, as represented by Juan Prieto, in the CNT-FAI, a truly confused organization if ever there was one.

Revolutionary syndicalism's destiny has been tied in varying degrees to a pathology called *ouvrierisme*, or "workerism," and whatever philosophy, theory of history, or political economy it possesses has been borrowed, often piecemeal and indirectly, from Marx—indeed, Georges Sorel and many other professed revolutionary syndicalists in the early twentieth century expressly regarded themselves as Marxists and even more expressly eschewed anarchism. Moreover, revolutionary syndicalism lacks a strategy for social change beyond the general strike, which revolutionary uprisings such as the famous October and November general strikes in Russia during 1905 proved to be stirring but ultimately ineffectual. Indeed, as invaluable as the general strike may be as a prelude to direct confrontation with the state, they decidedly do not have the mystical capacity that revolutionary syndicalists assigned to them as means for social change. Their limitations are striking evidence that, as episodic forms of direct action, general strikes are not equatable with revolution nor even with profound social changes, which presuppose a mass movement and require years of gestation and a clear sense of direction. Indeed, revolutionary syndicalism exudes a typical *ouvrierist* anti-intellectualism that disdains attempts to formulate a purposive revolutionary direction and a reverence for proletarian "spontaneity" that, at times, has led it into highly self-destructive situations. Lacking the means for an analysis of their situation, the Spanish syndicalists (and anarchists) revealed only a minimal capacity to understand the situation in which they found themselves after their victory over Franco's forces in the summer of 1936 and no capacity to take "the next step" to institutionalize a workers' and peasants' form of government.

What these observations add up to is that Marxists, revolutionary syndicalists, and authentic anarchists all have a fallacious understanding of *politics*, which should be conceived as the civic arena and the institutions by which people democratically and directly manage their community affairs. Indeed the Left has repeatedly mistaken statecraft for politics by its persistent failure to understand that the two are not only radically different but exist in radical tension—in fact, opposition—to each other.⁶ As I have written elsewhere, historically politics did not emerge from the state—an apparatus whose professional machinery is designed to dominate and facilitate the exploitation of the citizenry in the interests of a privileged class. Rather, politics, almost by

definition, is the active engagement of free citizens in the handling their municipal affairs and in their defense of its freedom. One can almost say that politics is the "embodiment" of what the French revolutionaries of the 1790s called *civicisme*. Quite properly, in fact, the word *politics* itself contains the Greek word for "city" or *polis*, and its use in classical Athens, together with *democracy*, connoted the *direct* governing of the city by its citizens. Centuries of civic degradation, marked particularly by the formation of classes, were necessary to produce the state and its corrosive absorption of the political realm.

A defining feature of the Left is precisely the Marxist, anarchist, and revolutionary syndicalist belief that *no distinction exists*, in principle, between the political realm and the statist realm. By emphasizing the nation-state—including a "workers' state"—as the locus of economic as well as political power, Marx (as well as libertarians) notoriously failed to demonstrate how workers could *fully* and *directly* control such a state without the mediation of an empowered bureaucracy and essentially statist (or equivalently, in the case of libertarians, governmental) institutions. As a result, the Marxists unavoidably saw the political realm, which it designated a "workers' state," as a repressive entity, ostensibly based on the interests of a single class, the proletariat.

Revolutionary syndicalism, for its part, emphasized *factory control* by workers' committees and confederal economic councils as the locus of social authority, thereby simply bypassing any popular institutions that existed outside the economy. Oddly, this was economic determinism with a vengeance, which, tested by the experiences of the Spanish revolution of 1936, proved completely ineffectual. A vast domain of real governmental power, from military affairs to the administration of justice, fell to the Stalinists and the liberals of Spain, who used their authority to subvert the libertarian movement—and with it, the revolutionary achievements of the syndicalist workers in July 1936, or what was dourly called by one novelist "The Brief Summer of Spanish Anarchism."

As for anarchism, Bakunin expressed the typical view of its adherents in 1871 when he wrote that the new social order could be created "only through the development and organization of the nonpolitical or antipolitical social power of the working class in city and country," thereby rejecting with characteristic inconsistency the very municipal politics which he sanctioned in Italy around the same year. Accordingly, anarchists have long regarded every *government* as a *state* and condemned it accordingly—a view that is a recipe for the elimination of *any* organized social life whatever.

While the *state* is the instrument by which an *oppressive* and *exploitative* class regulates and coercively controls the behavior of an exploited class by a ruling class, a *government*—or better still, a *polity*—is an ensemble of institutions designed to deal with the problems of consociational life in an orderly and hopefully fair manner. Every institutionalized association that constitutes a system for handling public affairs—with or without the presence of a state—is *necessarily* a government. By contrast, every state, although necessarily a form of government, is a force for class repression and control. Annoying as it must seem to Marxists and anarchist alike, the cry for a *constitution*, for a responsible and a responsive government, and even for *law* or *nomos* has been clearly articulated—and committed to print!—by the oppressed for centuries against the capricious rule exercised by monarchs, nobles, and bureaucrats. The libertarian opposition to law, not to speak of government as such, has been as silly as the image of a snake swallowing its tail. What remains in the end is nothing but a retinal afterimage that has no existential reality.

The issues raised in the preceding pages are of more than academic interest. As we enter the twenty-first century, social radicals need a socialism—libertarian and revolutionary—that is neither an extension of the peasant-craft “associationism” that lies at the core of anarchism nor the proletarianism that lies at the core of revolutionary syndicalism and Marxism. However fashionable the traditional ideologies (particularly anarchism) may be among young people today, a truly progressive socialism that is informed by libertarian as well as Marxian ideas but transcends these older ideologies must provide intellectual leadership. For political radicals today to simply resuscitate Marxism, anarchism, or revolutionary syndicalism and endow them with ideological immortality would be obstructive to the development of a relevant radical movement. A *new* and comprehensive revolutionary outlook is needed, one that is capable of systematically addressing the generalized issues that may potentially bring *most* of society into opposition to an ever-evolving and changing capitalist system.

The clash between a predatory society based on *indefinite expansion* and nonhuman nature has given rise to an ensemble of ideas that has emerged as the explication of the present social crisis and meaningful radical change. Social ecology, a coherent vision of

social development that intertwines the mutual impact of hierarchy *and* class on the civilizing of humanity, has for decades argued that we must reorder social relations so that humanity can live in a protective balance with the natural world.⁷

Contrary to the simplistic ideology of “eco-anarchism,” social ecology maintains that an ecologically oriented society can be progressive rather than regressive, placing a strong emphasis not on primitivism, austerity, and denial but on material pleasure and ease. If a society is to be capable of making life not only vastly enjoyable for its members but also leisurely enough that they can engage in the intellectual and cultural self-cultivation that is necessary for creating civilization and a vibrant political life, it must not denigrate technics and science but bring them into accord with visions of human happiness and leisure. Social ecology is an ecology not of hunger and material deprivation but of plenty; it seeks the creation of a rational society in which waste, indeed excess, will be controlled by a new system of values; and when or if shortages arise as a result of irrational behavior, popular

assemblies will establish rational standards of consumption by democratic processes. In short, social ecology favors management, plans, and regulations formulated democratically by popular assemblies, not freewheeling forms of behavior that have their origin in individual eccentricities.

IT IS MY CONTENTION THAT COMMUNALISM IS THE overarching political category most suitable to encompass the fully thought out and systematic views of social ecology, including libertarian municipalism and dialectical naturalism.⁸ As an ideology, Communalism draws on the best of the older Left ideologies—Marxism and anarchism, more properly the libertarian socialist tradition—while offering a wider and more relevant scope for our time. From Marxism, it draws the basic project of formulating a rationally systematic and coherent socialism that integrates philosophy, history, economics, and politics. Avowedly dialectical, it attempts to infuse theory with practice. From anarchism, it draws its commitment to antistatism and confederalism, as well as its recognition that hierarchy is a basic problem that can be overcome only by a libertarian socialist society.⁹

The choice of the term *Communalism* to encompass the philosophical, historical, political, and

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organizational components of a socialism for the twenty-first century has not been a flippant one. The word originated in the Paris Commune of 1871, when the armed people of the French capital raised barricades not only to defend the city council of Paris and its administrative substructures but also to create a nationwide confederation of cities and towns to replace the republican nation-state. Communalism as an ideology is not sullied by the individualism and the often explicit antirationalism of anarchism; nor does it carry the historical burden of Marxism's authoritarianism as embodied in Bolshevism. It does not focus on the factory as its principal social arena or on the industrial proletariat as its main historical agent; and it does not reduce the free community of the future to a fanciful medieval village. Its most important goal is clearly spelled out in a conventional dictionary definition: Communalism, according to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, is "a theory or system of government in which virtually autonomous local communities are loosely bound in a federation."¹⁰

Communalism seeks to recapture the meaning of politics in its broadest, most emancipatory sense, indeed, to fulfill the historic potential of the municipality as the developmental arena of mind and discourse. It conceptualizes the municipality, potentially at least, as a transformative development *beyond* organic evolution into the domain of *social* evolution. The city is the domain where the archaic blood-tie that was once limited to the unification of families and tribes, to the exclusion of outsiders, was—juridically, at least—dissolved. It became the domain where hierarchies based on parochial and sociobiological attributes of kinship, gender, and age could be eliminated and replaced by a free society based on a shared common humanity. Potentially, it remains the domain where the once-feared stranger can be fully absorbed into the community—initially as a protected resident of a common territory and eventually as a *citizen*, engaged in making policy decisions in the public arena. It is above all the domain where institutions and values have their roots not in zoology but in civil human activity.

Looking beyond these historical functions, the municipality constitutes the only domain for an association based on the free exchange of ideas and a creative endeavor to bring the capacities of consciousness to the service of freedom. It is the

domain where a mere *animalistic* adaptation to an existing and pre-given environment can be radically supplanted by *proactive, rational* intervention into the world—indeed, a world yet to be made and molded by reason—with a view toward ending the environmental, social, and political insults to which humanity and the biosphere have been subjected by classes and hierarchies. Freed of domination as well as material exploitation—indeed, recreated as a rational arena for human creativity in all spheres of life—the municipality becomes the *ethical* space for the good life. Communalism is thus no contrived product of mere fancy: it expresses an abiding concept and practice of political life, formed by a dialectic of social development and reason.

As an explicitly *political* body of ideas, Communalism seeks to recover and advance the development of the city (or *commune*) in a form that accords with its greatest potentialities and historical traditions. This is not to say that Communalism accepts the municipality as it is today. Quite to the contrary, the modern municipality is infused with many statist features and often functions as an agent of the bourgeois nation-state. Today, when the nation-state still seems supreme, the rights that modern municipalities possess cannot be

dismissed as the epiphenomena of more basic economic relations. Indeed, to a great degree, they are the hard-won gains of commoners, who long defended them against assaults by ruling classes over the course of history—even against the bourgeoisie itself.

The concrete political dimension of Communalism is known as libertarian municipalism, about which I have previously written extensively.¹¹ In its libertarian municipalist program, Communalism resolutely seeks to eliminate statist municipal structures and replace them with the institutions of a libertarian polity. It seeks to radically restructure cities' governing institutions into popular democratic assemblies based on neighborhoods, towns, and villages. In these popular assemblies, citizens—including the middle classes as well as the working classes—deal with community affairs on a face-to-face basis, making policy decisions in a direct democracy, and giving reality to the ideal of a humanistic, rational society.

Minimally, if we are to have the kind of free social life to which we aspire, *democracy* should be our form of a shared political life. To address problems and issues that transcend the boundaries of a single municipality,

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in turn, the democratized municipalities should join together to form a broader confederation. These assemblies and confederations, by their very existence, could then challenge the legitimacy of the state and statist forms of power. They could expressly be aimed at replacing state power and statecraft with popular power and a socially rational transformative politics. And they would become arenas where class conflicts could be played out and where classes could be eliminated.

Libertarian municipalists do not delude themselves that the state will view with equanimity their attempts to replace professionalized power with popular power. They harbor no illusions that the ruling classes will indifferently allow a Communalist movement to demand rights that infringe on the state's sovereignty over towns and cities. Historically, regions, localities, and above all towns and cities have desperately struggled to reclaim their local sovereignty from the state (albeit not always for high-minded purposes). Communalists' attempt to restore the powers of towns and cities and to knit them together into confederations can be expected to evoke increasing resistance from national institutions. That the new popular-assemblyist municipal confederations will embody a dual power against the state that becomes a source of growing political tension is obvious. Either a Communalist *movement* will be radicalized by this tension and will resolutely face all its consequences, or it will surely sink into a morass of compromises that absorb it back into the social order that it once sought to change. How the movement meets this challenge is a clear measure of its seriousness in seeking to change the existing political system and the social consciousness it develops as a source of public education and leadership.

Communalism constitutes a critique of hierarchical and capitalist society as a whole. It seeks to alter not only the political life of society but also its economic life. On this score, its aim is not to nationalize the economy or retain private ownership of the means of production but to *municipalize* the economy. It seeks to integrate the means of production into the existential life of the municipality, such that every productive enterprise falls under the purview of the local assembly, which decides how it will function to meet the interests of the community *as a whole*. The separation between life and work, so prevalent in the modern capitalist economy, must be overcome so that citizens' desires and needs, the artful challenges of creation in the course of production, and role of production in fashioning thought and self-definition are not lost. "Humanity makes itself," to cite the title of V. Gordon Childe's book on the urban revolution at the end of the

Neolithic age and the rise of cities, and it does so not only intellectually and esthetically, but by expanding human needs as well as the productive methods for satisfying them. We discover ourselves—our potentialities and their actualization—through creative and useful work that not only transforms the natural world but leads to our self-formation and self-definition.

We must also avoid the parochialism and ultimately the desires for proprietorship that have afflicted so many self-managed enterprises, such as the "collectives" in the Russian and Spanish revolutions. Not enough has been written about the drift among many "socialistic" self-managed enterprises, even under the red and red-and-black flags, respectively, of revolutionary Russia and revolutionary Spain, toward forms of collective capitalism that ultimately led many of these concerns to compete with one another for raw materials and markets.¹²

Most importantly, in Communalist political life, workers of different occupations would take their seats in popular assemblies not as *workers*—printers, plumbers, foundry workers and the like, with special occupational interests to advance—but as *citizens*, whose overriding concern should be the *general interest* of the society in which they live. Citizens should be freed of their particularistic identity as workers, specialists, and individuals concerned primarily with their own particularistic interests. Municipal life should become a school for the formation of citizens, both by absorbing new citizens and by educating the young, while the assemblies themselves should function not only as permanent decision-making institutions but as arenas for *educating* the people in handling complex civic and regional affairs.¹³

In a Communalist way of life, conventional economics, with its focus on prices and scarce resources, would be replaced by *ethics*, with its concern for human needs and the good life. Human solidarity—or *philia*, as the Greeks called it—would replace material gain and egotism. Municipal assemblies would become not only vital arenas for civic life and decision-making but centers where the shadowy world of economic logistics, properly coordinated production, and civic operations would be demystified and opened to the scrutiny and participation of the citizenry as a whole. The emergence of the *new citizen* would mark a transcendence of the particularistic class being of traditional socialism and the formation of the "new man" which the Russian revolutionaries hoped they could eventually achieve. Humanity would now be able to rise to the universal state of consciousness and rationality that the great utopians of the nineteenth

century and the Marxists hoped their efforts would create, opening the way to humanity's fulfillment as a species that embodies reason rather than material interest and that affords material post-scarcity rather than an austere harmony enforced by a morality of scarcity and material deprivation.¹⁴

Classical Athenian democracy of the fifth century B.C.E., the source of the Western democratic tradition, was based on face-to-face decision-making in communal assemblies of the people and confederations of those municipal assemblies. For more than two millennia, the political writings of Aristotle recurrently served to heighten our awareness of the city as the arena for the fulfillment of human potentialities for reason, self-consciousness, and the good life. Appropriately, Aristotle traced the emergence of the *polis* from the family or *oikos*—i.e., the realm of necessity, where human beings satisfied their basically animalistic needs, and where authority rested with the eldest male. But the association of several families, he observed, “aim[ed] at something more than the supply of daily needs”¹⁵; this aim initiated the earliest political formation, the village. Aristotle famously described man (by which he meant the adult Greek male¹⁶) as a “political animal” (*politikon zoon*) who presided over family members not only to meet their material needs but as the material precondition for his participation in political life, in which discourse and reason replaced mindless deeds, custom, and violence. Thus, “[w]hen several villages are united in a single complete community (*koinonon*), large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing,” he continued, “the *polis* comes into existence, *originating* in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life.”¹⁷

For Aristotle, and we may assume also for the ancient Athenians, the municipality's proper functions were thus not strictly instrumental or even economic. As the locale of human consociation, the municipality, and the social and political arrangements that people living there constructed, was humanity's *telos*, the arena par excellence where human beings, over the course of history, could actualize their potentiality for reason, self-consciousness, and creativity. Thus for the ancient Athenians, politics denoted not only the handling of the practical affairs of a polity but civic activities that were charged with moral obligation to one's community. All citizens of a city were expected to participate in civic activities as *ethical* beings.

Examples of municipal democracy were not limited to ancient Athens. Quite to the contrary, long before class differentiations gave rise to the state, many relatively secular towns produced the earliest

institutional structures of local democracy. Assemblies of the people may have existed in ancient Sumer, at the very beginning of the so-called “urban revolution” some seven or eight thousand years ago. They clearly appeared among the Greeks, and until the defeat of the Gracchus brothers, they were popular centers of power in republican Rome. They were nearly ubiquitous in the medieval towns of Europe and even in Russia, notably in Novgorod and Pskov, which, for a time, were among the most democratic cities in the Slavic world. The assembly, it should be emphasized, began to approximate its truly modern form in the neighborhood Parisian sections of 1793, when they became the authentic motive forces of the Great Revolution and *conscious* agents for the making of a new body politic. That they were never given the consideration they deserve in the literature on democracy, particularly democratic Marxist tendencies and revolutionary syndicalists, is dramatic evidence of the flaws that existed in the revolutionary tradition.

These democratic municipal institutions normally existed in combative tension with grasping monarchs, feudal lords, wealthy families, and freebooting invaders until they were crushed, frequently in bloody struggles. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that *every great revolution in modern history had a civic dimension* that has been smothered in radical histories by an emphasis on class antagonisms, however important these antagonisms have been. Thus it is unthinkable that the English Revolution of the 1640s can be understood without singling out London as its terrain; or, by the same token, any discussions of the various French Revolutions without focusing on Paris, or the Russian Revolutions without dwelling on Petrograd, or the Spanish Revolution of 1936 without citing Barcelona as its most advanced social center. This centrality of the city is not a mere geographic fact; it is, above all, a profoundly political one, which involved the ways in which revolutionary masses aggregated and debated, the civic traditions that nourished them, and the environment that fostered their revolutionary views.

Libertarian municipalism is an integral part of the Communalist framework, indeed its praxis, just as Communalism as a systematic body of revolutionary thought is meaningless without libertarian municipalism. The differences between Communalism and authentic or “pure” anarchism, let alone Marxism, are much too great to be spanned by a prefix such as *anarcho-*, *social*, *neo-*, or even *libertarian*. Any attempt to reduce Communalism to a mere variant of anarchism would be to deny the integrity of both ideas—indeed, to ignore their conflicting concepts of democracy,

organization, elections, government, and the like. Gustave Lefrancais, the Paris Commune who may have coined this political term, adamantly declared that he was “a Communalist, not an anarchist.”¹⁸

Above all, Communalism is engaged with the problem of power.¹⁹ In marked contrast to the various kinds of *communitarian* enterprises favored by many self-designated anarchists, such as “people’s” garages, print shops, food coops, and backyard gardens, adherents of Communalism mobilize themselves to electorally engage in a potentially important center of power—the municipal council—and try to compel it to create legislatively potent neighborhood assemblies. These assemblies, it should be emphasized, would make every effort to delegitimize and depose the statist organs that currently control their villages, towns, or cities and thereafter act as the real engines in the exercise of power. Once a number of municipalities are democratized along communalist lines, they would methodically confederate into municipal leagues and challenge the role of the nation-state and, through popular assemblies and confederal councils, try to acquire control over economic and political life.

Finally, Communalism, in contrast to anarchism, decidedly calls for decision-making by majority voting as the only equitable way for a large number of people to make decisions. Authentic anarchists claim that this principle—the “rule” of the minority by the majority—is authoritarian and propose instead to make decisions by consensus. Consensus, in which single individuals can veto majority decisions, threatens to abolish society *as such*. A free society is not one in which its members, like Homer’s lotus-eaters, live in a state of bliss without memory, temptation, or knowledge. Like it or not, humanity has eaten of the fruit of knowledge, and its memories are laden with history and experience. In a lived mode of freedom—contrary to mere café chatter—the rights of minorities to express their dissenting views will always be protected as fully as the rights of majorities. Any abridgements of those rights would be instantly corrected by the community—hopefully gently, but if unavoidable, forcefully—lest social life collapse into sheer chaos. Indeed, the views of a minority would be treasured as potential source of new insights and nascent truths that, if abridged, would deny society the sources of creativity and developmental advances—for new ideas generally emerge from inspired minorities that gradually gain the centrality they

deserve at a given time and place—until, again, they too are challenged as the conventional wisdom of a period that is beginning to pass away and requires new (minority) views to replace frozen orthodoxies.

IT REMAINS TO ASK: HOW ARE WE TO ACHIEVE THIS RATIONAL society? One anarchist writer would have it that the good society (or a true “natural” disposition of affairs, including a “natural man”) exists beneath the oppressive burdens of civilization like fertile soil beneath the snow. It follows from this mentality that all we are obliged to do to achieve the good society is to somehow eliminate the snow, which is to say capitalism, nation-states, churches, conventional schools, and other almost endless types of institutions that perversely embody domination in one form or another. Presumably an anarchist society—once state, governmental, and cultural institutions are merely removed—would emerge intact, ready to function and thrive as a free society. Such a “society,” if one can even call it such, would not require that we proactively *create* it: we would simply let the snow above it melt away. The process of rationally creating a free Communalist society, alas, will require substantially more thought and work than embracing a mystified concept of aboriginal innocence and bliss.

**The separation
between life and
work... must be
overcome so that
citizens’ desires and
needs... are not lost.**

A Communalist society should rest, above all, on the efforts of a new radical organization to change the world, one that has a new political vocabulary to explain its goals, and a new program and theoretical framework to make those goals coherent. It would, above all, require dedicated individuals who are willing to take on the responsibilities of education and, yes, *leadership*. Unless words are not to become completely mystified and obscure a reality that exists before our very eyes, it should minimally be acknowledged that leadership *always* exists and does not disappear because it is clouded by euphemisms such as “militants” or, as in Spain, “influential militants.” It must also be acknowledged that many individuals in earlier groups like the CNT were not just “influential militants” but outright leaders, whose views were given more consideration—and deservedly so!—than those of others because they were based on more experience, knowledge, and wisdom, as well as the psychological traits that were needed to provide effective guidance. A serious libertarian approach to leadership would indeed acknowledge the reality and crucial importance of leaders—all the more to establish the greatly needed

formal *structures and regulations* that can effectively *control* and *modify* the activities of leaders and recall them when the membership decides their respect is being misused or when leadership becomes an exercise in the abusive exercise of power.

A libertarian municipalist movement should function, not with the adherence of flippant and tentative members, but with people who have been schooled in the movement's ideas, procedures and activities. They should, in effect, demonstrate a serious commitment to their organization—an organization whose structure is laid out explicitly in a formal *constitution* and appropriate *bylaws*. Without a democratically formulated and approved institutional framework whose members and leaders can be held accountable, clearly articulated standards of responsibility cease to exist. Indeed, it is precisely when a membership is no longer responsible to its constitutional and regulatory provisions that authoritarianism develops and eventually leads to the movement's immolation. Freedom from authoritarianism can best be assured only by the clear, concise, and detailed allocation of power, not by pretensions that power and leadership are forms of "rule" or by libertarian metaphors that conceal their reality. It has been precisely when an organization fails to articulate these regulatory details that the conditions emerge for its degeneration and decay.

Ironically, no stratum has been more insistent in demanding its freedom to exercise its will against regulation than chiefs, monarchs, nobles, and the bourgeoisie; similarly even well-meaning anarchists have seen individual autonomy as the true expression of freedom from the "artificialities" of civilization. In the realm of *true* freedom—that is, freedom that has been actualized as the result of consciousness, knowledge, and necessity—to know *what we can and cannot do* is more cleanly honest and true to reality than to avert the responsibility of knowing the limits of the lived world. Said a very wise man more than a century and a half ago: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please."

THE NEED FOR THE INTERNATIONAL LEFT TO ADVANCE courageously beyond a Marxist, anarchist, syndicalist, or vague socialist framework toward a Communalist framework is particularly compelling today. Rarely in the history of leftist political ideas have ideologies been

so wildly and irresponsibly muddled; rarely has ideology itself been so disparaged; rarely has the cry for "Unity!" on any terms been heard with such desperation. To be sure, the various tendencies that oppose capitalism should indeed unite around efforts to discredit and ultimately efface the market system. To such ends, unity is an invaluable desideratum: a united front of the entire Left is needed in order to counter the entrenched system—indeed, culture—of commodity production and exchange, and to defend the residual rights that the masses have won in earlier struggles against oppressive governments and social systems.

The urgency of this need, however, does not require movement participants to abandon mutual criticism, or to stifle their criticism of the authoritarian traits present in anticapitalist organizations. Least of all does it

require them to *compromise the integrity and identity of their various programs*.

The vast majority of participants in today's movement are inexperienced young radicals who have come of age in an era of postmodernist relativism. As a consequence, the movement is marked by a chilling eclecticism, in which tentative opinions are chaotically mismatched to ideals that should rest on soundly objective premises.²⁰ In a milieu where the clear expression of ideas is not valued and

terms are inappropriately used, and where argumentation is disparaged as "aggressive" and, worse, "divisive," it becomes difficult to formulate ideas in the crucible of debate. Ideas grow and mature best, in fact, not in the silence and controlled humidity of an ideological nursery, but in the tumult of dispute and mutual criticism.

Following revolutionary socialist practices of the past, Communalists would try to formulate a minimum program that calls for satisfaction of the immediate concerns of the masses, such as improved wages and shelter or adequate park space and transportation. This minimum program would aim to satisfy the most elemental needs of the masses, to improve their access to the resources that make daily life tolerable. The maximum program, by contrast, would present an image of what human life could be like under libertarian socialism, at least as far as such a society is foreseeable in a world that is continually changing under the impact of seemingly unending industrial revolutions.

Even more, however, Communalists would see their program and practice as a process. Indeed, a transitional program in which each new demand provides the

What these demands try to achieve, in the short term, are new rules of engagement between the people and capital

springboard for escalating demands that lead toward more radical and eventually revolutionary demands. One of the most striking examples of a transitional demand was the programmatic call in the late nineteenth century by the Second International for a popular militia to replace a professional army. In still other cases, revolutionary socialists demanded that railroads be publicly owned (or, as revolutionary syndicalists might have demanded, be controlled by railroad workers) rather than privately owned and operated. None of these demands were *in themselves* revolutionary, but they opened *pathways*, politically, to revolutionary forms of ownership and operation—which, in turn, could be escalated to achieve the movement’s maximum program. Others might criticize such step-by-step endeavors as “reformist,” but Communalists do not contend that a Communalist society can be legislated into existence. What these demands try to achieve, in the short term, are new rules of engagement between the people and capital—rules that are all the more needed at a time when “direct action” is being confused with protests of mere events whose agenda is set entirely by the ruling classes.

On the whole, Communalism is trying to rescue a realm of public action and discourse that is either disappearing or that is being reduced to often-meaningless engagements with the police, or to street theater that, however artfully, reduces serious issues to simplistic performances that have no instructive influence. By contrast, Communalists try to build lasting organizations and institutions that can play a socially transformative role in the real world. Significantly, Communalists do not hesitate to run candidates in *municipal* elections who, if elected, would use what real power their offices confer to legislate popular assemblies into existence. These assemblies, in turn, would have the power ultimately to create effective forms of town-meeting government. Inasmuch as the emergence of the city—and city councils—long preceded the emergence of class society, councils based on popular assemblies are not inherently statist organs, and to participate seriously in municipal elections countervails reformist socialist attempts to elect statist delegates by offering the historic libertarian vision of municipal confederations as a practical, combative, and politically *credible* popular alternative to state power. Indeed, Communalist candidacies, which explicitly *denounce* parliamentary candidacies as opportunist, keep alive the debate over how libertarian socialism can be achieved—a debate that has been languishing for years.

There should be no self-deception about the opportunities that exist as a means of transforming our

existing irrational society into a rational one. Our choices on how to transform the existing society are still on the table of history and are faced with immense problems. But unless present and future generations are beaten into complete submission by a culture based on queasy calculation as well as by police with tear gas and water cannons, we cannot desist from fighting for what freedoms we have and try to expand them into a free society wherever the opportunity to do so emerges. At any rate we now know, in the light of all the weaponry and means of ecological destruction that are at hand, that the need for radical change cannot be indefinitely deferred. What is clear is that human beings are much too intelligent not to have a rational society; the most serious question we face is whether they are rational enough to achieve one. ♪

Notes

1. Many less-well-known names could be added to this list, but one that in particular I would like very much to single out is the gallant leader of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party, Maria Spiridonova, whose supporters were virtually alone in proposing a workable revolutionary program for the Russian people in 1917-18. Their failure to implement their political insights and replace the Bolsheviks (with whom they initially joined in forming the first Soviet government) not only led to their defeat but contributed to the disastrous failure of revolutionary movements in the century that followed.
2. I frankly regard this contradiction as more fundamental than the often-indiscernible tendency of the rate of profit to decline and thereby to render capitalist exchange inoperable—a contradiction to which Marxists assigned a decisive role in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
3. Contrary to Marx’s assertion that a society disappears only when it has exhausted its capacity for new technological developments, capitalism is in a state of permanent technological revolution—at times, frighteningly so. Marx erred on this score: it will take more than technological stagnation to terminate this system of social relations. As new issues challenge the validity of the entire system, the political and ecological domains will become all the more important. Alternatively, we are faced with the prospect that capitalism may pull down the entire world and leave behind little more than ashes and ruin—achieving, in short, the “capitalist barbarism” of which Rosa Luxemburg warned in her “Junius” essay.

4. I use the word *extraordinary* because, by Marxist standards, Europe was still objectively unprepared for a socialist revolution in 1914. Much of the continent, in fact, had yet to be colonized by the capitalist market or bourgeois social relations. The proletariat—still a very conspicuous minority of the population in a sea of peasants and small producers—had yet to mature as a class into a significant force. Despite the opprobrium that has been heaped on Plekhanov, Kautsky, Bernstein et al., they had a better understanding of the failure of Marxist socialism to embed itself in proletarian consciousness than did Lenin. Luxemburg, in any case, straddled the so-called “social-patriotic” and “internationalist” camps in her image of a Marxist party’s function, in contrast to Lenin, her principal opponent in the so-called “organizational question” in the Left of the wartime socialists, who was prepared to establish a “proletarian dictatorship” under all and any circumstances. The First World War was by no means inevitable, and it generated democratic and nationalist revolutions rather than proletarian ones. (Russia, in this respect, was no more a “workers’ state” under Bolshevik rule than were the Hungarian and Bavarian “soviet” republics.) Not until 1939 was Europe placed in a position where a world war was inevitable. The revolutionary Left (to which I belonged at the time) frankly erred profoundly when it took a so-called “internationalist” position and refused to support the Allies (their imperialist pathologies notwithstanding) against the vanguard of world fascism, the Third Reich.
5. Kropotkin, for example, rejected democratic decision-making procedures: “Majority rule is as defective as any other kind of rule,” he asserted. See Peter Kropotkin, “Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles,” in *Kropotkin’s Revolutionary Pamphlets*, edited by Roger N. Baldwin (1927; reprinted by New York: Dover, 1970), p. 68.
6. I have made the distinction between politics and statecraft in, for example, Murray Bookchin, *From Urbanization to Cities: Toward a New Politics of Citizenship* (1987; reprinted by London: Cassell, 1992), pp. 41-3, 59-61
7. On social ecology, see Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (1982; reprinted by Warner, NH: Silver Brook, 2002); *The Modern Crisis* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987); and *Remaking Society* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989). The latter two books are out of print; some copies may be available from the Institute for Social Ecology in Plainfield, Vermont (info@social-ecology.org).
8. Several years ago, while I still identified myself as an anarchist, I attempted to formulate a distinction between “social” and “lifestyle” anarchism, and I wrote an article that identified Communalism as “the democratic dimension of anarchism” (see *Left Green Perspectives*, no. 31, October 1994). I no longer believe that Communalism is a mere “dimension” of anarchism, democratic or otherwise; rather, it is a distinct ideology with a revolutionary tradition that has yet to be explored.
9. To be sure, these points undergo modification in Communalism: for example, Marxism’s historical materialism, explaining the rise of class societies, is expanded by social ecology’s explanation of the anthropological and historical rise of hierarchy. Marxian dialectical materialism, in turn, is transcended by dialectical naturalism; and the anarcho-communist notion of a very loose “federation of autonomous communes” is replaced with a confederation from which its *components*, functioning in a democratic manner through citizens’ assemblies, may withdraw *only* with the approval of the *confederation as a whole*.
10. What is so surprising about this minimalist dictionary definition is its overall accuracy: I would take issue only with its formulations “virtually autonomous” and “loosely bound,” which suggest a parochial and particularistic, even irresponsible relationship of the components of a confederation to the whole.
11. My writings on libertarian municipalism date back to the early 1970s, with “Spring Offensives and Summer Vacations,” *Anarchos*, no. 4 (1972). The more significant works include *From Urbanization to Cities* (1987; reprinted by London: Cassell, 1992), “Theses on Libertarian Municipalism,” *Our Generation* [Montreal], vol. 16, nos. 3-4 (Spring/Summer 1985); “Radical Politics in an Era of Advanced Capitalism,” *Green Perspectives*, no. 18 (Nov. 1989); “The Meaning of Confederalism,” *Green Perspectives*, no. 20 (November 1990); “Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview,” *Green Perspectives*, no. 24 (October 1991); and *The Limits of the City* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1974). For a concise summary, see Janet Biehl, *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1998).
12. For one such discussion, see Murray Bookchin, “The Ghost of Anarchosyndicalism,” *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1993).
13. One of the great tragedies of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Spanish Revolution of 1936 was the failure of the masses to acquire more than the scantiest knowledge of social logistics and the complex interlinkages involved in providing for the necessities of life in a modern society. Inasmuch as those who had the expertise involved in managing productive enterprises and in making cities functional were supporters of the old regime,

workers were in fact unable to actually take over the full control of factories. They were obliged instead to depend on “bourgeois specialists” to operate them, individuals who steadily made them the victims of a technocratic elite.

14. I have previously discussed this transformation of workers from mere class beings into citizens, among other places, in *From Urbanization to Cities* (1987; reprinted by London: Cassell, 1995), and in “Workers and the Peace Movement” (1983), published in *The Modern Crisis* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987).

15. Aristotle, *Politics* (1252 [b] 16), trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Revised Oxford Translation, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. 2, p. 1987.

16. As a libertarian ideal for the future of humanity and a genuine domain of freedom, the Athenian *polis* falls far short of the city’s ultimate promise. Its population included slaves, subordinated women, and franchiseless resident aliens. Only a minority of male citizens possessed civic rights, and they ran the city without consulting a larger population. Materially, the stability of the *polis* depended upon the labor of its noncitizens. These are among the several monumental failings that later municipalities would have to correct. The *polis* is significant, however, not an example of an emancipated community but for the successful functioning of its free institutions.

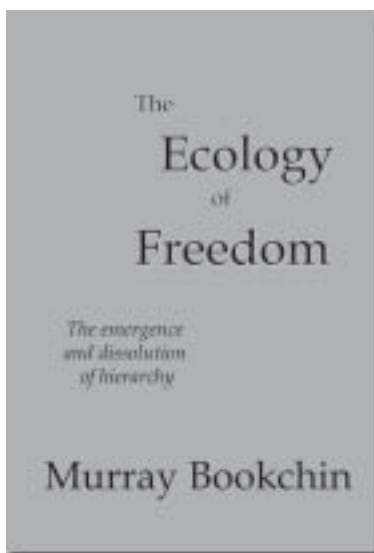
17. Aristotle, *Politics* (1252 [b] 29-30), trans. Jowett; emphasis added. The words from the original Greek text may be found in the Loeb Classical Library edition: Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

18. Lefrancais is quoted in Peter Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (New York: Horizon Press, 1968), p. 393. I

too would be obliged today to make the same statement. In the late 1950s, when anarchism in the United States was a barely discernible presence, it seemed like a sufficiently clear field in which I could develop social ecology, as well as the philosophical and political ideas that would eventually become dialectical naturalism and libertarian municipalism. I well knew that these views were not consistent with traditional anarchist ideas, least of all post-scarcity, which implied that a modern libertarian society rested on advanced material preconditions. Today I find that anarchism remains the very simplistic individualistic and antirationalist psychology it has always been. My attempt to retain anarchism under the name of “social anarchism” has largely been a failure, and I now find that the term I have used to denote my views must be replaced with Communalism, which coherently integrates and goes beyond the most viable features of the anarchist and Marxist traditions. Recent attempts to use the word *anarchism* as a leveler to minimize the abundant and contradictory differences that are grouped under that term and even celebrate its openness to “differences” make it a diffuse catch-all for tendencies that properly should be in sharp conflict with one another.

19. For a discussion of the very real problems created by anarchists’ disdain for power during the 1936 Spanish Revolution, see the forthcoming article, “Anarchism and Power in the Spanish Revolution.”

20. I should note that by *objective* I do not refer merely to existential entities and events but also to potentialities that can be rationally conceived, nurtured, and in time actualized into what we would narrowly call realities. If mere substantiality were all that the term *objective* meant, no ideal or promise of freedom would be an objectively valid goal unless it existed under our very noses.



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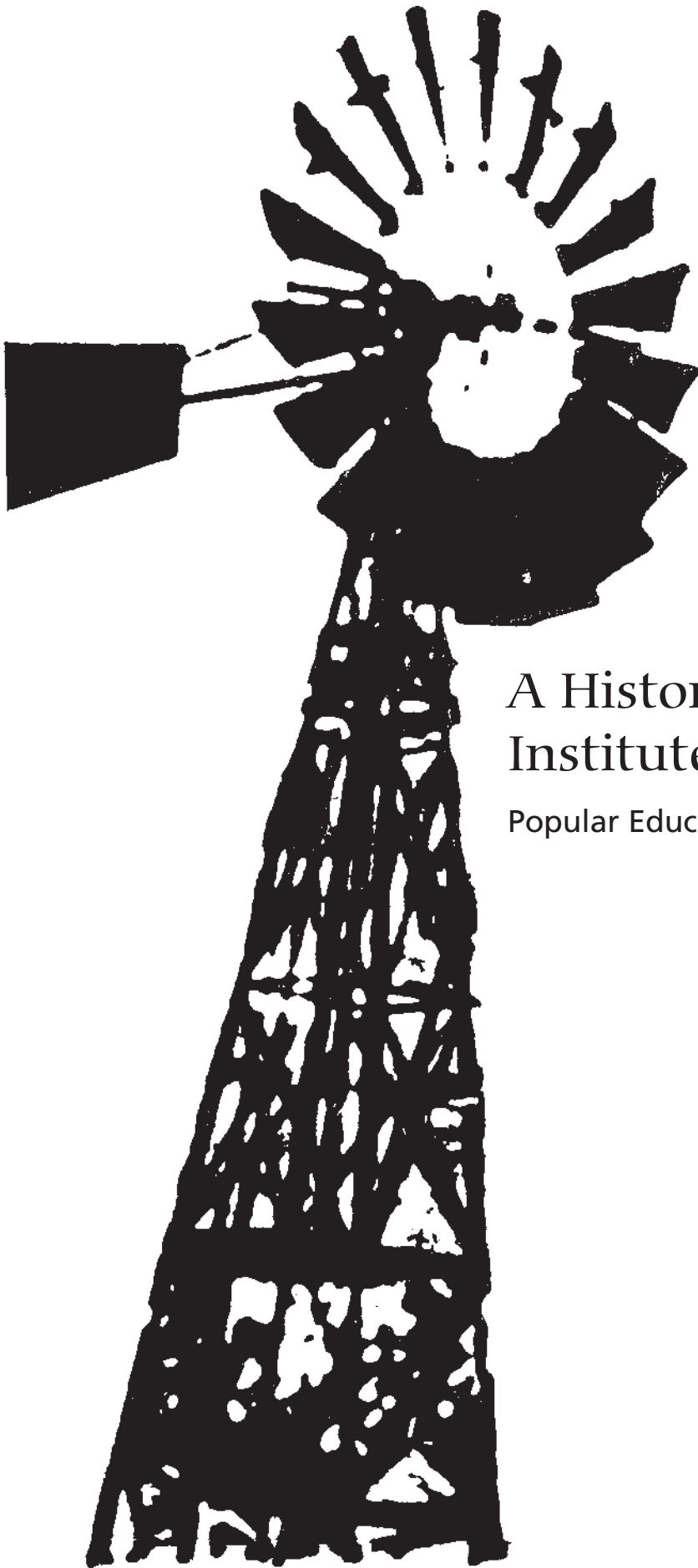
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"The Ecology of Freedom is a wayward book that takes on a life of its own. I cannot refrain from inviting the reader to participate in formulating the views it expresses—or should express—an invitation that it was commonplace enough for authors to make fifty years or so ago, but that seems to be on its way into oblivion in the age of the television and the mass media, where every thought has to be spelled out merely to gain the reader's understanding. Hence I will close these acknowledgments with the exquisite remarks (all failings of gender aside) of William Morris, my favorite utopian.

“Men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out to be not what they want, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.”

-Murray Bookchin (from acknowledgments to the third edition)



A History of the
Institute for Social Ecology
Popular Education for a Free Society

THE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL ECOLOGY WAS FOUNDED IN 1974 BY SOCIAL philosopher Murray Bookchin and cultural anthropologist Daniel Chodorkoff. The ISE was created for the purpose of research, education, and outreach in the field of social ecology, an interdisciplinary perspective that examines peoples' relationship to the natural world, and the prospects for a decentralized, directly democratic, ecological society. For almost thirty years the ISE has pursued its mission, and as a result has been involved in a myriad of educational programs, community organizing projects, publications, and popular education campaigns, encompassing most of the significant issues and movements that have been a part of the radical ecology movement.

Over three thousand students from every continent have attended ISE programs, and key activists in many of the most significant social movements of our time have been influenced by ideas they were exposed to at the ISE. For a tiny, underfunded grassroots organization in rural Vermont, the Institute has had an outsized impact. Its faculty are known internationally for their scholarship and their activism on behalf of social and ecological justice.

The two articles that follow offer an outline that, while by no means exhaustive, cover some of the highlights of the past 29 years at the ISE. The timeline of the ISE's history gives a sense of the range and scope of the projects we have undertaken, and Brian Tokar's article examines social ecology's impact on social movements from the 60's to the present. As the world enters yet another period of crisis the ideas of social ecology are more relevant than ever. ♪

Education and Community Action

A History of the Institute for Social Ecology's Programs

EMERGING FROM THE PROLETARIAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENTS OF THE OLD LEFT, infusing a distinctly libertarian ecological outlook in the rise of the New Left, social theorist and activist Murray Bookchin started to lay the foundations of a remarkable revolutionary body of work which he soon called social ecology. His pioneering book, *Our Synthetic Environment*, which predated Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* by five months, offered a comprehensive overview of ecological degradation and elaborated upon the need for a revolutionary decentralization of society in order to address these grave issues. By the early seventies, Bookchin's writings were fairly well known in the US and abroad. He had published several influential books and articles including "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," (1964) "Towards a Liberatory Technology," (1965) "Forms of Freedom," (1968) the essay "Post-Scarcity Anarchism," (1969) and "Listen, Marxist!," (1969) all of which were then compiled into the New Left classic *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971). Bookchin's written work and activist engagements brought him many opportunities to address large audiences over North America and Europe.

It was when Daniel Chodorkoff, who at the time was a graduate student and teaching intern at the Vermont based progressive school, Goddard College, approached Bookchin in 1972 about filling a course at the College on technology that the history of the Institute for Social Ecology began. This newfound relationship between Bookchin and Chodorkoff had them soon planning what would be the founding conference of the ISE.

This pioneering conference set out to examine solutions to ecological problems by integrating alternative technologies with a strong social critique of anti-ecological trends and visions for a new society based on social ecology. Noted participants included John Todd, aquatic biologist and founder of the New Alchemy Institute; Karl Hess, social theorist, author and activist; Wilson Clark, energy adviser to the governor of California; Day Charoudi, a pioneer in



solar architecture; Eugene Eccli, engineer and pioneer in the alternative energy network; Sam Love, noted environmental activist; and Milton Kolter, urbanologist. This highly successful conference served to assess the viability of setting up the envisioned Institute for Social Ecology. As with the conference, the ISE would act as an important laboratory for teaching and learning about the ideals that Bookchin advanced in his work.

With its nascent program in the summer of 1974, more than 100 students attended the first twelve-week program of the ISE on Goddard's campus. The success of this program was in part due to a donated full-page ad by John Shuttleworth in the then highly influential alternative technology magazine *The Mother Earth News*. This foundational program combined theoretical classroom work with practical, hands-on experience, and focused on interrelated areas to provide educational and research opportunities. It was this first summer program that paved the way for more than 29 years of educational programs designed to further the mission of the ISE while providing an educational experience for people interested in radical social change.

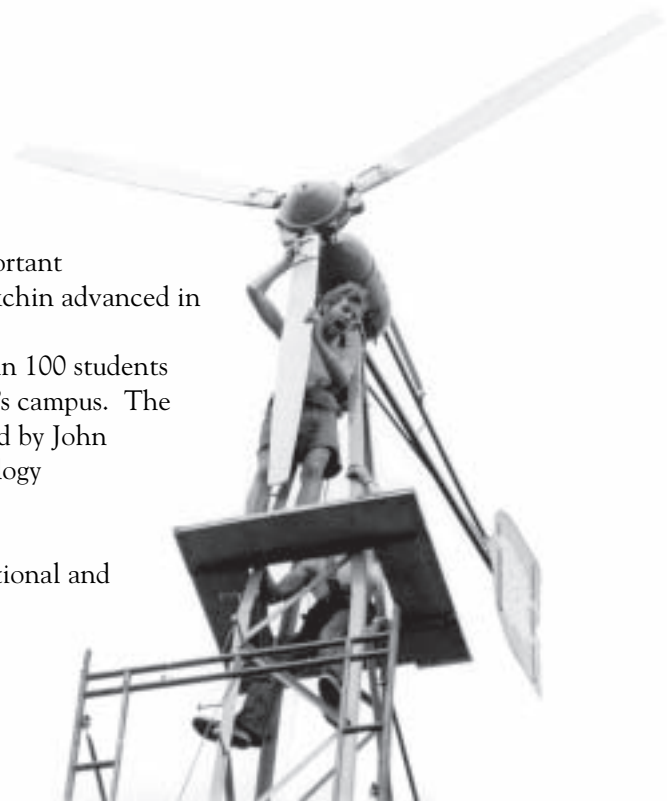
The Cate Farm Era

In 1975, the Institute moved onto a 40-acre farm at Goddard College. This farm served as a demonstration site for experimentation, teaching, research, and community outreach. The first solar building in Vermont was built there, as well as many other innovative technological systems. During the years spent at Cate Farm, the ISE researched and tested organic agriculture and aquaculture techniques, and published wind power designs. Bookchin recalls:

During the summer days, classes were conducted in nearly every dormitory and open area on Goddard's campus. A visitor to the campus would have seen students sitting round in small circles discussing the history of hierarchy, various radical social ideas, the emergence and development of the state, radical anthropology, the changing status of women and other underprivileged strata, ecological economics—as well technological innovations in energy, diversified applications of machinery, the construction and multifaceted use of fish tanks, window heat-retainers, and so on. Students used the open fields in Cate Farm to study organic agriculture and experiment with different kinds of fertilizers. Others could study and actually make new composting toilets that allowed for the recycling of human wastes into agriculturally fertile compost,

while more theoretically inclined students could explore ideologies such as socialism in its various forms, the history of radical movements, and utopian ideas... Free evenings were filled with study circles to follow up on the courses that had been given during the day.²

The Institute remained at Cate Farm for five years, offering a variety of programs in addition to its popular summer sessions. By 1976, the ISE's summer program grew to accommodate approximately 180 students. The following year also saw the creation of a Masters of Arts



Windmill at Cate Farm - 1978

ALTERNATE ENERGY: SOLAR-WATER WIND-METHANE


An intensive twelve-week program in social ecology and environmental sciences, exploring alternative technologies, a no-growth economics, organic agriculture, urban decentralization, the politics of ecology, and the design and construction of experimental models for wind, solar and methane-powered energy production.

Goddard is located in a rural Vermont community, rich in both natural and human resources, in a state noted for its progressive environmental legislation.

The summer program is directed by MURRAY BOOKCHIN, author of *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* and *Limits to the City*, Goddard College faculty. Visiting faculty include JOHN YUKO, *The New Alchemists*; KARL HESS, *Community Technologies*; SAM LOVE, *The Environmental Action Collective*; WILSON CLARK, energy consultant.

June 5--August 23 / 15 credit hours
For more information, please write:

Daniel Chodorkoff
Social Ecology Studies Program
Goddard College
Plainfield, Vermont 05667



SOCIAL
ECOLOGY
STUDIES
PROGRAM

SUMMER '74
GODDARD COLLEGE



Overview of Cate Farm - 1978

in Social Ecology in collaboration with Goddard College, combining intensive on-campus course work with off-campus practicums.

The 80s

The eighties saw a major change in the ISE's activities. Due to financial circumstances, Goddard College sold Cate Farm in 1981, forcing the ISE to reconsider how to host its summer programs. Without a home, the ISE started renting various campuses for a month each summer in 1983. In 1986, Chodorkoff, who had earned a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology at the New School for Social Research, resumed teaching at Goddard, giving the ISE's programs a stable home for the next decade.

Other major changes took place as well. The ISE took the first step towards becoming a fully autonomous organization in 1981 when it was incorporated as an independent non-profit educational organization. In addition, Chodorkoff took over the directorship of the organization in 1978, as Bookchin stepped down for reasons of age and health. While Bookchin, then honored with the title "Director Emeritus," maintained his involvement with the ISE as a teacher, it was under the leadership of Chodorkoff that the ISE grew—to this very day.

The focus of the ISE's educational programs greatly expanded throughout the eighties. In 1984, the ISE sponsored an *Urban Permaculture Design Course*—a three-week intensive course created to educate people with a basic background in design, farming, gardening, community development or education, about the possibilities of urban permaculture. Taking place in New York City, students designed and created a permaculture program in conjunction with a community building. Completion in the course qualified the graduates as *Apprentice Permaculture Designers* in the International Association of Permaculture Design. The ISE also hosted study tours including a 15-day study tour of Mexico in 1986. This study tour was initiated to allow a dozen college students a unique look at a "developing" country, investigating the social roots of development patterns, the impact of both western style development and alternative ecological approaches.

The 1986 summer program, held at the Green Mountain Valley School, introduced two new curricula, *Planning*



Solar Collectors on 519 E. 11th St. NYC - 1976



Other Activities

In accompaniment with its core educational programs, such as the internationally acclaimed summer program *Ecology & Community*, the ISE has pioneered many innovative community initiatives, as well as researched and published theories on technology, social theory and social policy since its inception. The ISE was also instrumental in bringing together individuals and organizations through educational programs and conferences to continue to develop the field of social ecology. A brief overview of such activities follows.

New York City: During the 1970s and 1980s, the ISE cultivated a strong relationship with various organizations and communities in New York City, particularly within the Lower East Side's Puerto Rican community. The ISE not only sponsored educational events in NYC, such as *Urban Alternatives: Towards an Ecological City* (1975) and a follow up conference in 1982, but also worked collaboratively with a variety of organizations. The ISE provided technical and planning assistance in alternative technology to CHARAS, CUANDO, the 11th Street Movement, and other community organizations involved in the urban homesteading movement in NYC's Lower East Side. An educational exchange was also established with these community groups, bringing NYC residents to the ISE's Vermont based summer programs, and sending interns from the summer programs to work on projects with these organizations.

The Learning Alliance, a NYC based organization for community education, was founded with assistance from the

continued...

and *Design for Sustainable Communities* and *Advanced Seminars in Social Ecology*. In 1987, two more programs were started for the summer semester, *Ecology and Community*, and *Sense of Self/Sense of Place-A Wilderness Experience*.

The 90s

Throughout the nineties, in addition to its regular summer programs, the ISE continued to sponsor conferences and colloquia, both national and international, on topics ranging from alternative education and libertarian municipalism, to ecological activism and biotechnology.

The mid-nineties saw major changes to the ISE's campus. In 1996, the ISE summer programs moved from Goddard College to the Maple Hill community in Plainfield, Vermont. The following year saw the purchase of a new campus on Maple Hill—the home of a defunct alternative school for children that featured a large land base, pond, farmhouse and schoolhouse. This new site became the focus for the ISE's continued experimentation and education around issues of alternative technology and ecological land use. That same year, the ISE started offering a B.A. Degree in Social Ecology in cooperation with Goddard College.

During the first program on its new campus, students, faculty, and staff began planning and drafting designs of what the new campus would look like. In 1998, students constructed a solar washhouse and eco-campground, began a permaculture orchard and gardens, and created a master plan for the campus on Maple Hill as part of their work in the *Planning, Design and Construction for Sustainable Communities* program.

The Institute for Social Ecology celebrated its 25th Anniversary in the summer of 1999, commemorating a quarter century of activism and education for radical social change. In 2000, after the ISE began to pulled out of all relations with Goddard College, the ISE and Burlington College formed a relationship to accredit the ISE's year round programs and a B.A. Degree in Social Ecology with both on- and off-site campus options. While the ISE gained a new B.A.



Ecology & Community - 2001

rejuvenated political awareness found within the Global Justice Movement, the ISE's educational work has drawn the attention of a new generation of activists. As the anti-ecological trends of the 20th century become further entrenched within the 21st, this educational work serves multiple purposes. Now in his 82nd year, Bookchin reflects on the importance for such education:

But one proviso must be voiced: ideas are only true when they are rational. Today, when rationality and consistency are deprecated in the name of postmodernist chic, we carry a double burden of trying to sustain, often by education alone, reason against irrationalism, and to know *when* to act as well as *how* to do so. In such cases, let me note that education, too, is a form of activism and must always be cultivated as such.³

Notes

¹ While this final piece is the work of Michael Caplan, the work herein is drawn from the invaluable assistance and contribution of Dan Chodorkoff, Brian Tokar, Erin Royster, Chaia Heller, and Murray Bookchin.

² Quoted from a personal letter from Bookchin to Caplan, February 28, 2003.

³ Ibid.

program, the joint M.A. in Social Ecology with Goddard College was lost.

The ISE continues to offer its summer programs, workshops, forums, conferences, and degree program at the Maple Hill campus, including new programs such as *Arts, Media, Activism, and Social Change* and a year-round on-site degree program with tracks in *Ecological Building, Ecological Land Use, and Social Theory and Action*.

THE SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES AS explored by Bookchin and his colleagues over the span of his lifetime and the ISE's are still as relevant today as they were fifty years ago. With the



Murray Bookchin at the ISE's new Campus on Maple Hill - 1997

ISE in 1985. A large number of courses, seminars, workshops, and lectures were held on a wide range of topics in urban affairs and the social ecology of the city. The program then spun off to become an independent project which served as a center for popular education, and a NYC landmark for the next ten years.

Low-Income Training: Continuing its important focus on the creation and dissemination of ecological technology, the ISE hosted a conference in 1976, which resulted in the creation of NCAT, The National Center for Appropriate Technology, which provides technical assistance to low-income communities to this day. In 1977, the ISE's *Aquaculture Outreach Program* began, providing technical assistance to low-income Vermonters interested in fish farming. The project made use of local resources to provide jobs and food for local residents. Some of the fish and crayfish programs are still in active production for home consumption and as small businesses. The ISE also began a collaborative project with the Central Vermont Community Action Council (CVCAC) to teach low-income Vermonters about energy conservation and solar technologies.

Publishing: The ISE's education and research activities naturally resulted in several publishing projects. In 1982, *Harbinger*, the *Journal of Social Ecology* was created as a special project of the ISE to promote the study of social ecology. While only three issues were created during its short-lived existence in the 80s, the newly revamped *Harbinger* holds the same goals. Next to *Harbinger*, the ISE has also supported various other print publishing projects, such as *Society & Nature*, the *International Journal of Political Ecology* (1992).

In 1983, a video collective associated with the ISE produced a film focused on an American community living in Nicaragua—clergy, engineers, doctors, nurses, agronomists and cultural workers—who dedicated their skills to building a democratic and ecologically sound society in Nicaragua. The film explores the conflict between social ecology principles and the pressing needs for material development experienced by the majority of the world's population.

Ecofeminism: In 1978, the ISE invited Ynestra King to develop what would become the first curriculum in ecofeminism. The same year, an ISE sponsored conference, *Women and Life on Earth*, held at the University of Massachusetts, resulted in The Women's Pentagon Action, a mass civil disobedience action that served as a model for the international women's peace movement.

The ISE hosted a conference called *Spring Fever* in 1982, a two day women's gathering organized by the Women's Affinity Group of the ISE that included workshops, readings, and demonstrations exploring the relationship between women, nature and community. In the late 80s, in collaboration with the National Congress of Neighborhood Women, a planning session and workshop on women and community development was attended by low-income women and organizations from across the continent. During the early 90s, the ISE hosted annual conferences on ecofeminism. To this day, the ISE continues to pursue the ever important subject of feminism and ecology.

Vermont: Located within Vermont for a majority of its existence, the ISE has always been committed to working within the community in both an activist and educational capacity. In 1982, the ISE participated in a community organizing campaign in cooperation with the Burlington Environmental Alliance. Together they hosted a one-day seminar for residents who were concerned with the development of the Burlington waterfront. This group went on to help defeat a plan for a municipal waste incinerator on the Intervale.

A pilot program in Montpelier called *Gardens for Children* (1984), was also sponsored by the ISE. This program initiated learning projects in the classrooms of several schools that instructed children on gardening techniques through the creation of gardens on school grounds. Linking into issues of local and world hunger, the garden projects donated the produce to the local Emergency Food Shelf. Food Works, a nationally known, independent, not-for-profit organization, was a result of this project.

Conferences: Next to all the above mentioned conferences, the ISE has sponsored several other worthy of note. In 1990, the ISE co-sponsored the third annual *Pitkin Conference on Higher Education*. Attended by educators from all over North America, the conference explored the converging themes of social ecology, higher education and community action. The same year, the *Annual Continental Conference on Social Ecology* was initiated, and continues today, with conferences held in many cities over North America, including New York City, Minneapolis, Montréal, and Los Angeles.

In 1995, an International Social Ecology Network Gathering was held in Dunoon, Scotland with the aid of the ISE—the theme was democracy and ecology. That same year, the ISE hosted an international conference, *New Currents in Ecological Activism*, which brought together activists and theorists from a wide range of movements and organizations to share experiences and evaluate future directions. A follow-up conference was held in 1996, along with a weekend conference on globalization.

More recently, the ISE helped organized the *International Conference on the Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism*. The first conference (1998), held in Lisbon, Portugal, brought together a wide range of international activists and political theorists to study libertarian municipalism. The follow-up conference (1999), hosted at the ISE's new campus, again drew a wide range of people to continue debating issues raised at the preceding conference.

Social Ecology and Social Movements

From the 1960s to the Present

By Brian Tokar

Social ecologists have played an important catalytic role in many of the pivotal social and ecological movements of the past four decades. The discussion that follows will focus on events that staff, students and volunteers around the ISE in Plainfield have been most directly involved with. We hope that subsequent issues of *Harbinger* will include stories from many others whose involvement around a wide array of social, ecological and political issues have been strongly influenced by the ideas of social ecology.



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IN THE 1950S AND EARLY 1960S, ECOLOGY WAS LARGELY AN academic and technocratic enterprise. Several corporate think tanks emerged during the fifties to address the rapid pace of resource depletion that accompanied the unprecedented postwar economic boom. There was little that was reconstructive or radical in the ecology of that period, but there were already important new stirrings. The effects of nuclear fallout from weapons testing was becoming a volatile public issue, for example, and people living close to some of the earliest nuclear power reactors, such as Indian Point just north of New York City, began questioning the safety of these facilities.

Within a few months in 1962, Murray Bookchin published his book, *Our Synthetic Environment*, and Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*. Carson's book was serialized in the *New Yorker*, and eventually shocked millions of people into an awareness of the devastating effects of DDT and other toxic pesticides. Bookchin's work extended the critique to encompass issues such as the hazards of urban concentration, chemical agriculture as a whole, and the rise of chronic, environmentally related disease. Bookchin's perspective on these issues emerged partly from his own pioneering work during the 1950s around the hazards of pesticides and food additives, as well as his personal involvement in some of the first anti-nuclear power campaigns, at Indian Point and in opposition to a reactor proposed for Ravenswood, Queens, just across the East River from central Manhattan.

Meanwhile, academic ecologists were slowly beginning to see that their work had broad, previously unappreciated social and political implications. A 1964 article in *BioScience* labeled ecology "A Subversive Science" embodied a direct challenge to many accepted social and economic practices. The pace of uncontrolled economic growth that characterized the 1950s and early 1960s clearly could not continue, ecologists began to argue, without severely impacting the health of living ecosystems and the diversity of life on earth.

It was Murray Bookchin, again, who took this understanding to its fullest conclusion. In an influential article originally published in the newsletter *Anarchos* in 1965 (later reprinted in *Post Scarcity Anarchism*), he wrote:

The explosive implications of an ecological approach arise not only because ecology is intrinsically a critical science—critical on a scale that the most radical systems of political economy have failed to attain—but also because it is an integrative and reconstructive science. This integrative, reconstructive aspect of ecology, carried through to all its implications, leads directly into anarchic areas of social thought. For in the final analysis, it is impossible to achieve a harmonization of man [*sic*] and nature without creating a human community that lives in a lasting balance with its natural environment.¹

This was the beginning of the radical synthesis that soon became social ecology. To relieve the destructive imbalances imposed by capitalist civilization on the natural world, only a stateless society based on face-to-face democracy, “humanistic” technologies, and a profound decentralization of social and economic power would suffice. Bookchin’s writings about social ecology evolved over the next several decades to encompass an uncompromising political analysis of the institutional roots of the ecological crisis, an historical critique of the myth of the domination of nature, a libertarian municipalist political strategy, and an ethical philosophy that views the potential for human freedom as an emergent property of the dialectic of natural evolution. Ideas first articulated by Bookchin, such as the distinction between technocratic environmentalism and a fundamentally radical ecology, became common wisdom among the growing ranks of ecologically-informed radicals in the late 1960s. Actions such as the occupation of the administration building at Columbia University in 1968 (initially a protest against the university’s expansion plans in West Harlem), and the creation of People’s Park in Berkeley in 1969, began to reflect some of these new understandings.

Anti-Nuclear Alliances

Social ecology achieved a much fuller expression in the popular movement against nuclear power that arose during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This movement embraced direct action and decentralized organizational models, expressed a sophisticated understanding of the complex relationship between technological and social

changes, and was captivated by the utopian dimension of the emerging “appropriate technology” movement, within which the recently founded Institute for Social Ecology played a dynamic, critical and catalytic role. During the late 1970s, well over a hundred students each summer came to the ISE, then located at Cate Farm in Plainfield, to acquire hands-on experience in organic gardening and alternative technology, while studying social ecology, ecofeminism, reconstructive anthropology and other theoretical approaches with virtually all of the pioneering thinkers in the ecology movement of that period.

The ISE, as a central participant in the emerging Central Vermont activist community, sent affinity groups to Seabrook for the landmark 1977 occupation of the nuclear construction site in that coastal New Hampshire town. Over 2,000 demonstrators converged on Seabrook that spring, for what became the most significant act of mass civil disobedience since the end of the 1960s. Over 1,400 people were arrested by the New Hampshire State Police for refusing to leave the construction site; most declined bail and were incarcerated for two weeks in National Guard armories scattered throughout the Granite State. This was where the concept of the *affinity group* first became the underlying basis of a growing popular organization.

The affinity group concept, of course, originated with the Spanish anarchists of the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI). In an appendix to his influential pamphlet, “Listen, Marxist!” Murray Bookchin compared the Spanish *grupos de afinidad* to the countercultural collectives that had appeared by then in numerous U.S. cities. The concept was adapted by organizers of a huge antiwar action in Washington, D.C. in 1971, where people were encouraged to form small collectives to offer mutual support and security in the face of an overwhelming police presence. In the antinuclear Clamshell Alliance, affinity groups were initially formed at nonviolence training sessions for similar purposes, but the experience of incarceration in New Hampshire’s armories raised the expectation that these collectives were not only useful as support groups during an action, but could form the basis for a much more widely participatory, directly democratic form of movement organization than had ever been realized before. In the preparations for a planned follow-up action at Seabrook in June of 1978, the wider meaning of affinity groups was actively promoted, Bookchin’s “Note on Affinity Groups” was distributed widely, and activists in Vermont, Boston and elsewhere in New England worked hard to make the Clamshell Alliance live up to the most profoundly democratic potential of

the organizational model it had pioneered. Antinuclear alliances organized along similar lines sprouted up all across the country; many, like the Clamshell, took their names from local species of animals and plants that were endangered by the spread of nuclear power, and adopted affinity groups and spokescouncils as their basic decision-making structures.

The euphoria of affinity group-based democracy was to be short-lived in the Clamshell, however. Protracted debates over the appropriateness of various tactics within a context of organized nonviolence led to a growing polarization. When most of the original founders of the Clamshell Alliance acceded to a deal with the New Hampshire Attorney General's office that led to the cancellation of the 1978 Seabrook occupation

the Akwesasne Mohawks. Social ecologists traveled to the lakes of northern Wisconsin in support of traditional Chippewa spear-fishing, looked after Navajo families' sheep in the contested Big Mountain region of Arizona, and caravaned to Montreal for a rally at the headquarters of the Hydro-Quebec utility in solidarity with the James Bay Cree of northern Quebec.

Green Politics

By the early 1980s, another important political development attracted the attention of social ecologists in Vermont and elsewhere: the origins of a Green political movement in West Germany and other European countries. Long before Greens began to be elected to state and national Parliaments in Europe,

{ Ideas from social ecology, and activists based at the ISE, played an important role in the development of the first national Green Program

—a large legal rally was held at Seabrook instead—activists at the ISE and elsewhere helped expose the antidemocratic nature of that decision and pressed for a renewal of affinity group democracy. The Boston area chapter was completely reorganized around affinity groups and neighborhood-based organizing collectives, and a new organization, the Coalition for Direct Action at Seabrook, picked up where the now-faltering Clamshell left off. ISE-based activists in Vermont played a central role in setting an appropriately open and participatory tone for that new organization, which staged significantly more militant-styled actions at Seabrook in 1979 and 1980.

Ecofeminist activism also arose during the years immediately following the first Seabrook occupation, and the ISE played a catalytic role here as well. Ynestra King taught the first-ever courses on ecofeminism at the ISE in the late 1970s, and the ISE sponsored the historic Women and Life on Earth conference in western Massachusetts in 1980. This led directly to the planning of the first Women's Pentagon Action later that year, which planted the seed for feminist peace camps throughout Europe, and in the U.S. as well.

ISE students and staff during the 1970s and 1980s also took numerous initiatives to support Native American struggles. They worked closely with the traditionalist Mohawks of Akwesasne—ISE students camped out overnight in the lobby of the New York state capitol in 1980 to protest a state of siege against

social ecologists became excited about this “anti-party party” that initially functioned more as an alliance of grassroots “citizen initiatives” than a conventional parliamentary party. In the early 1980s, European Greens were running for office as delegates from various social movements, decisions were made primarily at the local level, and candidates for both public office and positions of responsibility within the Greens were obliged to rotate their positions every two years. Greens in Germany and other countries were articulating a sweeping ecological critique in all areas of public policy, from urban design, energy use and transportation, to nuclear disarmament and the need to support emerging dissident movements in Eastern Europe. Translations of Murray Bookchin's writings played an influential role in the development of this new Green political agenda.

A staff member of the Institute for Social Ecology attended the first public discussion of strategies for developing a Green movement in the U.S. This occurred at the first North American Bioregional Congress, in the Ozark foothills of Missouri in 1984. Within a few short weeks after that meeting was written up in the pages of *The Nation*, nearly 2,000 letters appeared at the post office box in Marshfield, Vermont that had been set up for Green correspondence. A Green “Committees of Correspondence” organization was formally established at a gathering in St. Paul, Minnesota later that year; the ISE helped organize that event, and several prominent social ecologists were

invited, including ISE director Dan Chodorkoff, community media guru Paul McIsaac and Chino Garcia of the CHARAS community center on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

At the St. Paul meeting, several nationally known writers and activists were pushing for a national organization, through which self-named representatives of various Green constituencies would form a national organization, relate to other NGOs on the national level, and perhaps create a national Green Party within the year. The model that prevailed, however, was that of a more decentralized, grassroots-based movement, rooted in Green locals empowering regional delegates to make confederal decisions following locally-debated mandates. Social ecologists in New England had already begun creating a confederation of Green locals on that model, and the idea once again spread across the country. By the first public national conference of the Greens, in Amherst, Massachusetts in July of 1987, there were already over a hundred grassroots Green locals spread across the U.S., along with numerous other affiliated groups. Ideas from social ecology, and activists based at the Institute, played an important role in the development of the first national Green Program between 1988 and 1990.

Left Greens and Youth Greens

During that grassroots program-building process, an increasing tension emerged between Greens committed to grassroots democracy and municipalist politics, and those aiming toward a Green Party that could field candidates for national office. Social ecologists in New England circulated a call for a Left Green Network in 1988, and like-minded activists in the San Francisco Bay Area developed a Radical Green caucus. The Left Greens held their first national caucus meetings during the Greens' national conference in Eugene, Oregon in June of 1989, with a very large proportion of conference attendees participating.

While some in the Greens viewed the Left Greens in grimly conspiratorial terms, it turned out that Left Green positions were widely popular with grassroots Greens all across the country, and significantly influenced the shaping of the Green Program. The following year's Greens gathering was held in an elite resort town in the Rocky Mountains, and there were far too few Left Greens in attendance to even hold caucus meetings. Still, most of the platform positions argued for by the Left Greens became incorporated in the final program document. This, apparently, was the occasion when several influential moderate Greens decided that they would have to eventually secede from the existing

Green organization to create a more traditional national party. Ironically, many Left Greens and other grassroots activists also began losing interest in the Greens at this point. Green moderates went on to form a separate national organization, based exclusively on state-certified Green Parties, while the Left Green Network continued holding educational conferences and publishing materials largely independent of any other Green entity.

During the same period, a group of recent ISE students formed a youth caucus in the Greens, which eventually became an independent organization known as the Youth Greens. The Youth Greens debated positions on a wide array of issues, refined their positions on both external and internal matters, and attracted a significant base of young radicals largely from outside the Greens. However it was at the Eugene Greens gathering that Youth Greens and Left Greens united around the idea of a major direct action to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the original Earth Day during April of 1990. While mainstream Earth Day celebrations were taking on an increasingly compromised character—essentially casting the search for environmental solutions as an expression of individual lifestyles and consumer choices—the Youth Greens, Left Greens, and a wide array of grassroots supporters, chose to focus on the symbolic home of capitalist ecocide: Wall Street.

April 22, 1990—Earth Day Sunday—was a day of polite, feel-good commemorations with strikingly little social or political content; many big city events were almost wholly sponsored by major corporations. But early Monday morning, several hundred Left Greens, Youth Greens, ecofeminists, environmental justice activists, Earth First!ers and urban squatters converged on the nerve center of U.S. capitalism seeking to obstruct the opening of trading on that day. Activists based around the ISE in Vermont had prepared a comprehensive action handbook, featuring a wide range of social ecological writings, and helped create a broad, empowering coalition effort. The next day, columnist Juan Gonzalez wrote in the *New York Daily News*:

Certainly, those who sought to co-opt Earth Day into a media and marketing extravaganza, to make the public feel good while obscuring the corporate root of the Earth's pollution almost succeeded. It took angry Americans from places like Maine and Vermont to come to Wall Street on a workday and point the blame where it belongs.

Meanwhile, in Burlington, Vermont, social

ecologists formed the Burlington Greens to develop positions on urban issues and run candidates for local office. The Greens opposed the commercial development of the city's Lake Champlain waterfront, and argued that the neighborhood assemblies established by the Progressive city administration for planning and administrative purposes should become the basis for a more empowered model of democratic neighborhood governance. The Burlington Greens gained national headlines in 1989 when the Greens contested several City Council seats and a Green candidate challenged the city's Progressive mayor in a citywide election.

public health, the environment, and society at large. Sonja Schmitz had recently come to study at the ISE after leaving a position at DuPont's biotechnology laboratories, faculty member Chaia Heller became involved in the early ecofeminist opposition to biotechnology, and Brian Tokar was advising M.A. student Zoë Erwin on a biotechnology-centered Masters study, while considering appropriate next steps following the Vermont rBGH campaign. The four began doing presentations together at the ISE, as well as at venues in New York, Montreal and other cities. They participated in the First Grassroots Gathering on Biodevastation in St. Louis in 1998, launched a regional activist network, NorthEast Resistance Against Genetic Engineering

The work of the ISE Biotechnology Project today reflects a distinct political outlook on grassroots organizing, **an approach that is firmly grounded in the principles of decentralism, community control, and face-to-face democracy.**

Confronting Biotechnology

The ISE also became actively involved in issues around biotechnology during the late 1980s, as farmers and environmentalists in Vermont and elsewhere were becoming concerned that the impending release of a genetically engineered growth hormone for dairy cows would have a devastating impact on Vermont's small farm economy. A Vermont Biotechnology Working Group, including activists from the ISE, Rural Vermont, the Progressive Party and the Burlington Greens, helped raise public awareness about recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH), and published the first widely accessible activist handbook on biotechnology. The Vermont effort played a significant role in delaying the approval for the commercial use of Monsanto's rBGH by several years. Social ecologists were also involved in protesting a planned new biotechnology building at the University of Vermont in Burlington, and supporting activists in New York City who were opposing a planned biotechnology complex on the site of the Audubon Ballroom, the famous Harlem cultural center where Malcolm X was assassinated following a speech in 1965.

By the mid-1990s, it was clear that the impending release of a wide variety of genetically engineered food products was going to have profound implications for

(NERAGE) and began developing plans for a comprehensive published collection on biotechnology issues, which eventually appeared as *Redesigning Life? The Worldwide Challenge to Genetic Engineering* (Zed Books, 2001).

In the spring of 2000, the ISE Biotechnology Project was the initiator and the main organizational sponsor of *Biodevastation 2000*, which became the largest public gathering in opposition to biotechnology in North America to date. Some 4,000 people converged in Boston's Copley Square, and marched on the annual convention of the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO); this protest followed a three-day public teach-in that highlighted a wide array of issues related to both the genetic engineering of food, and the implications of biotechnology for health care, medical research, globalization, and the survival of indigenous cultures around the world. Since 2000, the Biotechnology Project has provided significant support for *Biodevastation* and *Biojustice* events in San Diego and Toronto, and is helping develop plans for major events in St. Louis and Washington, D.C. during 2003.

In March of 2002, residents in 28 Vermont towns voted for labeling genetically engineered (GE) foods and a moratorium on GE crops at their annual Town Meetings. Eight towns took the further step of

discouraging or declaring a moratorium on the planting of GE crops in their town. This was the first round of the Town-to-Town campaign, in which the ISE's Biotechnology Project has played a central educational and organizational role, in collaboration with the farm advocacy group Rural Vermont and the Vermont Genetic Engineering Action Network. In a followup effort in March of 2003, an additional 37 towns voted against GE food and crops. Vermont now has the distinction of having 70 municipalities that have voted against GE food and crops out of more than 85 in the entire U.S. Our coalition partners are now focusing on passing anti-GE legislation in Vermont, while we are working to sustain the grassroots focus of a growing GE-Free Vermont campaign.

The work of the ISE Biotechnology Project today reflects a distinct political outlook on grassroots organizing, an approach that is firmly grounded in the principles of decentralism, community control, and face-to-face democracy. This work has encouraged biotechnology activists to consider the widest social and political implications of these issues, and helped those confronting the institutions of global capitalism to understand how globalization directly impacts our food and our health. The Biotechnology Project seeks to address the widest possible implications of genetic engineering and other biotechnologies and solidify links between biotech activists and those working primarily on global justice issues. Similarly, ongoing workshops and courses on biotechnology issues at the ISE reflect social ecology's holistic and dialectical understandings of society, nature, politics and technology. (For details, see, "Biotechnology: Radicalizing the Debate," in *Harbinger*, Vol. 2, No. 1).

Movement for Global Justice

Finally, the ISE has played a central educational role in the current movement for global justice and to counter the institutions of capitalist globalism. Social ecologists have raised discussions around the potential for direct democracy as an alternative to increasingly centralized economic and political institutions, and helped further the evolution of what began as largely a protest movement to one that is unusually conscious of the need for a long-range reconstructive vision. During the summer of 1999, ISE students intervened in an official hearing in Burlington, Vermont that addressed US agricultural policy in anticipation of the Seattle WTO meetings. Three ISE students were centrally involved in the organizing for the WTO shutdown in Seattle, and several others formed an affinity group to participate in and document the actions. After Seattle, the ISE

pamphlet *Bringing Democracy Home* highlighted the writings of social ecologists on potential future directions for the movement, and various faculty members have highlighted these themes in their speaking tours. Many antiglobalization activists from across the country have come to the ISE in Vermont during the past few summers to further their own political analysis and participate in discussions of where the movement might be heading. We look forward to ongoing exchanges of ideas, theories and inspirations as this dynamic new movement continues to evolve over the coming years. ♪

Notes

1. Murray Bookchin, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" in *Post Scarcity Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1986), p. 80.

Radical Alternatives

An Interview with Ingrid Young

By Michael Caplan

Of the past few years, Norway and surrounding Scandinavian countries have proven to be a hotbed of activism inspired by the works of social ecology. Study groups, publishing projects, protests, conferences and seminars, anti-racist and ecological activism, and political organizational building are all common activities of the 4-year-old group Democratic Alternative (DA). Democratic Alternative, an emerging Scandinavian-wide organization committed to the political vision advanced by social ecology, represents an exciting attempt of a new association to put these ideals into practice. According to Democratic Alternative International Secretary Eirik Eglad, the organizations “has explicit aims to strengthen a principled and innovative international Left, and encourage the consolidation of a Communalist tendency.”

Ingrid Young, an Oslo-based member of Democratic Alternative, attended the Institute for Social Ecology’s *Ecology and Community* program the summer of 2000. She became interested in social ecology after starting high school, and soon joined the Norway-based Social Ecology Project. This now defunct group, superseded by Democratic Alternative, was devoted to the study of social ecology and community education. Ingrid came to the ISE to further her study of social ecology theory and practice. I had the opportunity to speak to Ingrid over email about her activities.

Harbinger: What sort of political activities have you been involved with prior to studying at the Institute for Social Ecology, and afterwards?

Ingrid Young: I was introduced to the ideas of social ecology when I started high school. Soon I became a member of what was called the Social Ecology Project. This little local group discussed and tried to spread the ideas of social ecology as developed by Murray Bookchin. As the project developed, we saw the need for a broader organization—one that could bring these ideas further and help us build a stronger social ecology movement. After some different attempts to found such an organization, we formed Democratic Alternative. In the last two years we have grown to be a Scandinavian-wide organization, and we have been met by a lot of interest from different people.

Since I left the Institute for Social Ecology, I’ve continued my work in Democratic Alternative. I have moved to the capital of Norway and have started to work with the local DA group there. We do not have that many members yet, but it’s a good group. Still, our activities mainly consist of trying to spread the ideas of social ecology and Communalism in every possible way. That means a lot of writing and also participating in different social forums where we can present our alternatives and ideas.

H: How did the Institute for Social Ecology and the ideas of social ecology impact you?

I: My involvement in Democratic Alternative is more or less the same both before and after my participation in the Institute for Social Ecology (ISE) *Ecology and Community* program. The ISE offered me the opportunity to spend a month discussing and reading politics full time. It was a great experience, not to be forced back to work or to school. The ISE was a free place to reflect on the ideas of social ecology without being interrupted. It was also nice to meet leftists from other groups, other than the Scandinavian ones I am familiar with, and to learn about their experiences and visions.

How have the ideas of social ecology influenced me? I guess that only a book can answer. I think for me personally, the ideas of social ecology have evolved my ability to see opportunities for the future. They have raised my consciousness from just protesting against what I find wrong, to actually being able to put forward an alternative and hope for a better future.

H: What type of activities has DA been involved in since its formation? What plans do you have for the future?

I: Democratic Alternative is, as you know, a fairly new organization. First and foremost we value the importance of spreading our ideas through study circles, meetings, writing and other educational work. Besides that, the different local DA groups work on different initiatives in their local communities. Largely, environmental and anti-racist work has been important areas of focus for our local groups. Lately, we have been involved with the association Globalization From Below that is connected to Peoples Global Action. We had representatives in Gothenburg helping to coordinate the protests during the European Union summit this June.

In the future... that's a huge question. What I think is so good about Democratic Alternative as an organization is the potential we have to create and build counter-institutions where citizens can be in control. We want our different groups, in the long-term, to participate in municipal elections on radical programs containing both maximum and minimum demands. This is an important way to raise people's consciousness about these ideas, and to make people see that direct democracy is possible.

As our membership grows, hopefully Democratic Alternative will develop to be a powerful force able to help create peoples' assemblies that are meaningful and can be treated as a genuine alternative to representative democracy.

H: The politics of social ecology has been very challenging for the revolutionary left here in North America. What sort of response has DA received from the Scandinavian Left?

I: The Norwegian Left consists mostly of social democrats. There are still some hard line Marxists, but they are hardly visible in the political picture. DA is still a relatively marginalized organization due partly to our size and partly to our short existence. It is hard to get publicity in the national media. We do cooperate with the radical Left mainly on single cause issues. In these forums our ideas are accepted and discussed. The communists strangely enough have problems distinguishing Communalism from their own ideology. The small libertarian milieu recognizes that there are differences between anarchism and communalism, especially on the issue of voting on the municipal level. Sweden has stronger libertarian socialist traditions, especially anarcho-syndicalism. Here, there is a wider range of forums for discussing the ideas of Communalism and libertarian municipalism.

H: Given that the municipality is an integral locus of movement building for DA, are there any traditions of Norwegian radical municipalism that you are able to build upon?

I: Here in Norway, there is a tradition of neighborhood residents unions that might be a possible entry point for building a movement for direct democracy. They do community work and look after the interests of their particular neighborhoods. Membership is based on residence, and its borders are formed organically by tradition. This locus has the potential to host a popular assembly. As the residents have shared interests, it is realistic that the members might foster support for political activity.

The nascent, or retreated, democratic traditions which already exist in the municipality represent a possible way for us to spread our ideas and to try to create counter institutions. There are two remains of democratic tradition in Norway: residence unions and public meetings. A democratized municipality and a confederation of these form a counter institution that presents a dual power against the State. DA sees



Where do we Stand?

Statement of Purpose of Democratic Alternative

Direct Democracy

Today a small minority of professional politicians, bureaucrats and wealthy individuals enjoy enormous power, while the majority of the world's population has been relegated to the sidelines as impotent spectators. Politics has been reduced to a media-competition between top-down parliamentary parties. Ordinary citizens are not treated as people, but have rather been degraded to the role of voters, taxpayers and consumers. This must change. We therefore advance a new politics for popular empowerment. The power over society rightly belongs in the hands of ordinary citizens and their own democratic institutions. Such a direct democracy must build upon popular assemblies in boroughs, towns and neighborhoods, where all citizens can meet, discuss and make collective decisions.

Decentralization

A true democracy has to build upon decentralized political institutions, allowing for public participation. Direct democracy must therefore be anchored in the municipalities - not at the level of the county or the state. Political and economic power has to reside on the municipal level. Decentralization is also necessary from an ecological point of view.

Confederalism

In a decentralized political system many decisions and tasks must be coordinated over larger areas. Today, such decisions are implemented through the top-down apparatus of the nation-state. We hold up Confederalism as the only alternative to this centralized and oppressive system. In a confederation, politics will be determined at the grassroots level while administration and coordination will be facilitated through councils that have been locally elected, mandated and subject to recall.

Moral Economy

Capitalism concentrates enormous wealth in the hands of a tiny minority of business owners, corporate managers and stockbrokers, while systematically producing insecurity, poverty, class divisions and environmental destruction. Profit comes first, human beings and the environment second. This anti-social economic system has to be replaced by a democratic and moral economy. Economic resources must be municipalized and put under direct popular control.

Freedom for All

We are against all forms of oppression; whether political, economic, or based on gender, skin color, age, ability, or sexual preferences. We fight for a politics that can include all, and support struggles for preserving social rights and achieving new freedoms. We work to spread a secular, critical outlook, based on reason and a libertarian worldview.

Internationalism

Nationalism is a poison, which constructs imaginary demarcation lines between human beings, pitting oppressed social groups against one another. We will spread the knowledge that we are all part of a common humanity. We are against all forms of immigration control and we fight all forms of racism. We will contribute to the development of a humanist politics shattering today's borders.

From Here to There

Social change must be fought for at the grassroots level. We will strengthen municipalities and work for the initiation of local forums and new democratic institutions, gathering a truly democratic counter-force in boroughs, towns and neighborhoods. We will participate in municipal elections, continually radicalizing our demands for drawing political and economic power down to the municipal level.

municipal elections as means to spread ideas of libertarian municipalism, and in the long run help to create popular assemblies with the power of genuine political decision-making over the municipality. The goal is an anti-capitalist, stateless world of confederated directly democratic municipalities. These issues are explored in Janet Bielh's book *Libertarian Municipalism, the Politics of Social Ecology*, which I recommend as introductory reading.

The most important democratic tradition for our purpose are the forums where people gather to discuss in the municipality; this includes participating in municipal citizen-based organizations and peoples initiatives. Before a major decision is made there is an old tradition of arranging public meetings for the residents. These are sadly currently being reduced to informational meetings where bureaucrats and politicians lecture about a current project. DA sees that these forums have the potential to be radicalized and ultimately institutionalized. By peoples initiatives I mean popular citizen (neighborhood) mobilizations for single-cause issues, and not referendums. Using peoples initiatives, DA can connect particular minimum demands to a maximum demand program.

H: What sort of response has DA generated from the citizens of the different regions of Scandinavia that you are involved in?

I: It's important to say that Democratic Alternative is an organization consisting of different local groups. The response varies from place to place. In Sweden we are growing rather rapidly. I think the radical scene in Scandinavia is ready for new ideas and we are able to offer these ideas. Also, in an era when we see an increasing interest in the anti-globalization movement, there is a need for ideas that represent an alternative, not just a method of protesting.

When we continue to increase both our activities and members, we will be able to take more effective action influencing the political agenda. I think this is just a question of time. Meanwhile we have to make people aware of the ideas we are working with and the organization. We need to make them see the potential for a better society, which is right in front of us for the grabbing. ♪



➔ *Web Pages of Interest*

Democratic Alternative

<http://www.demalt.org/>

Communalism: International Journal for a Rational Society

<http://www.communalism.org/>

Peoples' Global Action

<http://www.agp.org>

Alliance for Freedom and Direct Democracy

BETWEEN AUGUST 23ND TO AUGUST 25TH, 2002, THIRTY ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN ORGANIZERS FROM AROUND THE U.S. CONVERGED on a farm in upstate New York to found a new political confederation: the *Alliance for Freedom and Direct Democracy*.

Our Mission

AFADD is a confederation of anti-authoritarians working toward the realization of a free society. We believe that there can be no justice without freedom, and no freedom without the power to participate directly and democratically in the decisions that affect our lives. This freedom is thwarted whenever one group of people assumes control over another. Thus, we resist not only the domination of the working classes by the ruling class, people of color by white people, women by men, and communities by the state; we struggle against all forms of domination, as they serve only to uphold the power of the privileged, further exploit the oppressed and the earth, and limit everyone's ability to develop their individual and collective potentials.

We believe that domination, or hierarchy, is the fundamental cause of the current social and ecological crises. Hierarchy is systemic. It is deeply embedded within the ideologies and institutions that govern society. While we strive to transform our personal relationships, we recognize that the systems of power that generate hierarchical social relations must be dismantled and replaced with liberatory institutions of our own making if humanity is ever to be free to collectively determine its future.

Given this, AFADD commits itself to the following objectives:

- Popularizing a call for non-hierarchy, confederated direct democracies, communal economics, social freedom, and an ecological sensibility;
- Helping to build revolutionary movements aimed at fundamental social transformation;
- Confronting hierarchical institutions, including but not limited to capitalism and the state;
- Challenging all systems of oppression, including but not limited to racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism—within society as well as our own movements;
- Demonstrating active solidarity with movements of oppressed peoples as well as other anti-authoritarians throughout the world via collaborative campaigns of mutual interest;
- Further developing our own analyses and ability to think critically, as well as our reconstructive vision and strategies, and advancing them within social movements; and
- Creating a dual power of strong resistance movements and liberatory counter institutions that inspire and empower people to take directly democratic control over the decisions that affect their lives.

Why a Revolutionary Organization?

The vehicle that we believe offers us the greatest foundation from which to begin to actualize our vision is our revolutionary organization. AFADD is premised upon a shared analysis, vision and strategy; and can provide us with a framework to further develop our ideas, share resources, and unify our action in our struggle for a free society. We do not aspire to be “the movement,” but rather one tendency within it.

Alliance for Freedom and Direct Democracy is a membership-based organization, as opposed to collective or affinity group models of organization. We choose to organize around political affinity, rather than personality or lifestyle affinity, in order to remain politically coherent while keeping the organization as open as possible. We hope that our confederal organizational structure will allow us to act with a high degree of unity and coordination, without sacrificing the benefits of directly democratic decision-making and local autonomy.

Join Us!

Our full manifesto and by-laws can be found on-line at www.afadd.org. There are many other political approaches and organizations, and we encourage you to explore them all. However, if you find that the collection of ideas expressed in our manifesto resonates well with your own, we invite you to join us in our struggle for a free and democratic society. ♪

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**WE, the PEOPLE,
do SOLEMNLY SWEAR...**



**...to UPHOLD, PRESERVE, PROTECT, DEFEND
and PARTICIPATE in OUR OWN
LIBERATION!**

Directors Report

IT HAS BEEN ANOTHER YEAR OF TREMENDOUS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE ISE. Our campus on Maple Hill has been bustling. We have been offering year-round classes to a small group of B.A. students (in affiliation with Burlington College) in three areas of concentration: Social Theory and Action; Ecological Land Use; and Ecological Building. Students combine classroom studies with hands-on, experiential learning. Those engaged in Social Theory and Action worked with a variety of activist organizations in Central Vermont, including the Worker's Center and the ISE Biotechnology Project. Students in Ecological Land Use concentrated their energy on the ISE's permaculture and organic gardens, and those studying ecological building had the opportunity to work on our new straw bale, timber framed multi-use barn, which will house classroom and shop space.

The construction of the new building was moving along quickly until winter set in, forcing us to stop until things thaw out this spring. After weeks on end of sub-zero weather we are all ready for Spring. Our B.A. students will begin the Spring Semester on March 23rd, with a 9-week block of classes followed by our Summer Institute programs: Sustainable Design, Building and Land Use; Ecology and Community; Arts, Media, Activism, and Social Change; and Theoretical Inquiries in the Age of Globalization. We expect our usual international student body to rock the house this Summer, as they have for the previous 28 years.

As I write the ISE is awaiting word from the Vermont Department of Higher Education as to whether we will be able to re-institute our M.A. Program, this time in affiliation with Prescott College. The program we have proposed would involve students in study at the ISE and work with Prescott through their low-residency Master of Arts Program, providing both a rigorous learning environment and maximum flexibility to M.A. students.

Also of note is the ISE's Biotechnology Project's successful campaign to place resolutions against biotechnology on the agenda of over 70 town meetings around New England, a tremendous effort to educate people about this important issue.

Overall it has been a busy year, with the prospect of more work to come. We thrive on hard work, simple living, critical thinking, and the support of the social ecology community. We ask all our friends to renew their support and commitment to the ISE by contributing to our annual donor campaign. The following pages details our upcoming programs and development goals for the year. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to our important work. In thanks for your support of the Institute, we are pleased to offer several book titles from South End Press as gifts for donations of \$200 or more. We need the support of all our members and friends—every donation counts!

Dr. Daniel Chodorkoff
Director

2003 Spring & Summer Programs

BURLINGTON COLLEGE IN COLLABORATION WITH THE ISE OFFERS A B.A. DEGREE IN THE FIELD of social ecology. Students interested in this program may pursue self-designed majors in many areas of study, including: sustainable design, building, and land use; social and political theory; activism, organizing, and community development; alternative agriculture and food systems; and popular education. Most students initiate their major by attending the ISE's summer programs and then continue their studies through Burlington College's Independent Degree Program (IDP).

Students in the IDP undertake independent studies with the guidance of a mentor, who is also an ISE faculty member. This option allows self-motivated students to complete their degree from anywhere, without attending weekly classes. Students may also choose to participate in the ISE's on-site intensive learning options, taking part in classes, action learning, and workshops offered throughout the year at the ISE.

ISE and Burlington College studies are rooted in the understanding that every student is an individual. Rather than the standardized learning offered by traditional colleges and universities, the ISE believes in an alternative education model that is flexible and interdisciplinary. The ISE also holds that the most rigorous and meaningful education results from a collaborative process. In line with this educational philosophy, assessment of student work is ongoing, and narrative evaluations rather than letter grades are provided.

On-site Intensive Learning

The ISE offers three concentrations in the on-site intensive study for B.A. degree students enrolled in the IDP through Burlington College: Ecological Building, Social Theory and Action, and Ecological Land Use. Each concentration's thematic core serves to guide students' learning, which takes place through a flexible combination of course work, hands-on projects, workshops, and facilitated study groups. Students participate in real-world projects supervised by expert practitioners, such as work in central Vermont community food projects, the ISE's Biotechnology Project, organic gardens and composting systems, the construction of buildings and experimental projects on the ISE campus, community media projects, and much more. Students contextualize their action learning through rigorous reflection, discussion, and readings that help them to both refine their theoretical understanding of their area of study and improve their practice. Faculty advisers work closely with students to design a well-rounded semester, drawing on an increasingly wide variety of courses, facilitated study, workshops, and special events offered at the ISE, in addition to the action learning.

B.A. in Social Ecology

Semester Schedule

Spring 2003

Application Deadline

I	Feb. 7
II	March 14

Registration & Residency

I	March 21-24
II	May 31-June 2

Final Evaluations

I	Aug. 15
II	Oct. 24

Fall 2003

Application Deadline

I	Aug. 29
II	Oct. 31

Registration & Residency

I	Oct. 10-13
II	Dec. 12-15

Final Evaluations

I	March 5
II	May 7



2003 Spring & Summer Programs

B.A. in Social Ecology *continued*

Ecological Building Concentration

The Ecological Building concentration is based on the study of design and building through the development of the ISE's 50-acre site as a laboratory for ecological living and learning. Students will explore ecological design from the unique perspective embodied in the ISE's approach to building and land use—taking into account community needs and desires as well as the ecological impacts of any building project. Students participate in the planning, design, construction, and evaluation of major projects at the ISE, thereby learning the concepts and skills necessary to design and implement ecological building projects. Workshops on specific topics, such as straw-bale and cordwood construction, give students the chance to gain additional skills.

Social Theory and Action Concentration

The Social Theory and Action concentration takes a two-pronged approach to learning, balancing interdisciplinary classroom study with active engagement in real-world projects. A variety of courses and workshops allow students to explore sociopolitical, philosophical, and historical phenomena; here, the emphasis is on critical thinking, honing students' writing and reading abilities, and providing a grounding in the humanities and social sciences. Students will also involve themselves in campaigns and organizations intended to bring about meaningful, ecologically oriented social change. They will have the opportunity to participate in ongoing work

around issues like globalization, food security, and workers' rights, while learning the skills of community organizing and development, public advocacy, and the effective utilization of video, radio, and print media.

Ecological Land Use Concentration

Students in the Ecological Land Use concentration will learn the skills and theory of organic agriculture, permaculture, forest ecology, and other forms of ecological land use. Using the ISE's organic gardens, permaculture orchard, and forest as an educational base, students will engage in hands-on practice and an intensive exploration of the concepts behind an ecological as well as community-supportive approach to land use. As an understanding of ecology forms the basis for study in this concentration, students will address not only the relationships between plants and animals in "natural" systems but also those that define how human communities can interact with natural communities sustainably, regeneratively, and productively. Working within the ISE and greater central Vermont communities to examine real social and ecological concerns around food production, distribution, and land use will provide students in this concentration with a wide range of experiential learning opportunities.



SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1974, THE ISE HAS OFFERED EXPERIENTIAL STUDIES IN LAND-USE alternatives and sustainable technologies. The building of a new campus, on land purchased in 1997, presents a wonderful opportunity to learn about subjects at the heart of ISE's mission. The Sustainable Design, Building, and Land Use program includes instruction in permaculture, organic agriculture, community design, ecological building, and forest ecology, while fostering a critical understanding of the social and political contexts in which these alternatives may be applied.

**Sustainable
Design,
Building, &
Land Use**
May 30 to June 20

Once again this summer, students will be involved in the development of the ISE's campus while deepening their knowledge of how to create and live in a community. The program's format will be a mixture of lecture and discussion with readings, hands-on projects, and a design studio. Using the ISE's 50-acre site as a laboratory, the design portion of the program will be devoted to the study of fundamental principles and skills that can be applied to any design task: a building, an orchard, a garden, or a campus. There will be demonstrations and lecture/discussions on the following topics:

- The ISE site—its history and plans
- Layout and design principles
- Social ecology and design
- Drawing and drafting
- Alternative building
- Tool use and safety
- Forest ecology
- History of agriculture
- Ecological restoration
- Organic agriculture
- Appropriate technology
- Mapping and surveying
- Permaculture

After several days of studying both site analysis and general design principles, students will divide into two subgroups: Building or Land Use. Students will participate in one of these two groups for the rest of the program, doing hands-on work several days each week. This allows first-time students to gain a greater depth of knowledge in their area of concentration, even as it gives returning students the ability to do more advanced work.

In past years, students in the Building track have worked on such projects as camping cabins, tent platforms, a solar washhouse, and a barn. There will be opportunities to experiment with a variety of building techniques in different phases of construction, learn basic tool-use skills, and compare the environmental costs and durability of various technologies.

Students in the Land Use track will do hands-on work in three areas: organic agriculture, permaculture, and forest ecology. The ISE location on Maple Hill—with a variety of open, aquatic, and forested spaces—allows students to interweave their experiences with organic gardening, composting, gray water recycling, cover cropping, and edible landscaping, as well as to examine the ecology of and possible uses for forests. The aim for students will be to explore how human relationships with the natural world can be regenerative, creative, and ecological.



2003 Spring & Summer Programs

Arts, Media, Activism, & Social Change May 30 to June 13

THIS FOURTEEN-DAY PROGRAM IS INTENDED FOR ARTISTS, ACTIVISTS, AND MEDIA MAKERS WHO wish to create and examine socially engaged art and media projects. Over the course of the program, students will receive hands-on experience and exposure to a wide array of activist art and media, including playback theater, spoken word, installation art, artist's books, cartooning, culture jamming, puppetry, audio and video production, radio production, and web-based media and art.

This program functions as an arts and media laboratory where students brainstorm, collaborate, and develop projects and proposals based on their own political visions. Central to this program is a lecture series introducing key theoretical concepts in social ecology, providing a framework for students to identify and promote their political visions.

Students will discuss the role of the artist as animator, someone who facilitates the expression of community stories and helps to build bridges between polarized groups; and scrutinize the challenges and benefits of long-term community cultural work that lays the groundwork for developing truly grassroots movements.

This program critically examines the nature of media in society as well as various theories of media in order to develop new notions of form, process, function, and content in media projects. Students will look at the differences between alternative and revolutionary media in detail, specifically focusing on issues such as objectivity, editorial control, democracy, and how media shapes the shaping of culture, power, and information.

Students will also explore historical and theoretical perspectives on the intersection of art, media, and politics, and discuss different strategies for engaging diverse communities through political art and media. Throughout the program, participants choose between workshops on different media and art topics, while concentrating on their particular area of interest.

The aim of Arts, Media, Activism, and Social Change is to provide participants with the practical and conceptual skills, along with a theoretical perspective, to make activist art and media that is at once accessible, transformative, and revolutionary.



THE ISE'S ECOLOGY AND COMMUNITY PROGRAM IS INTENDED AS AN INTENSIVE EDUCATIONAL experience in the field of social ecology. This interdisciplinary, college-level program explores social ecology, nature philosophy, community development, political theory, social movements and activism, popular education, radical agriculture, capitalism and globalization, racism, feminism, and more. The curriculum is holistic and multifaceted, set in the context of an integrative learning approach that helps students understand the underlying principles and philosophy as well as connections between various disciplines that comprise social ecology. Moreover, the ISE emphasizes a progressive education model that attempts to empower students through the learning process itself.

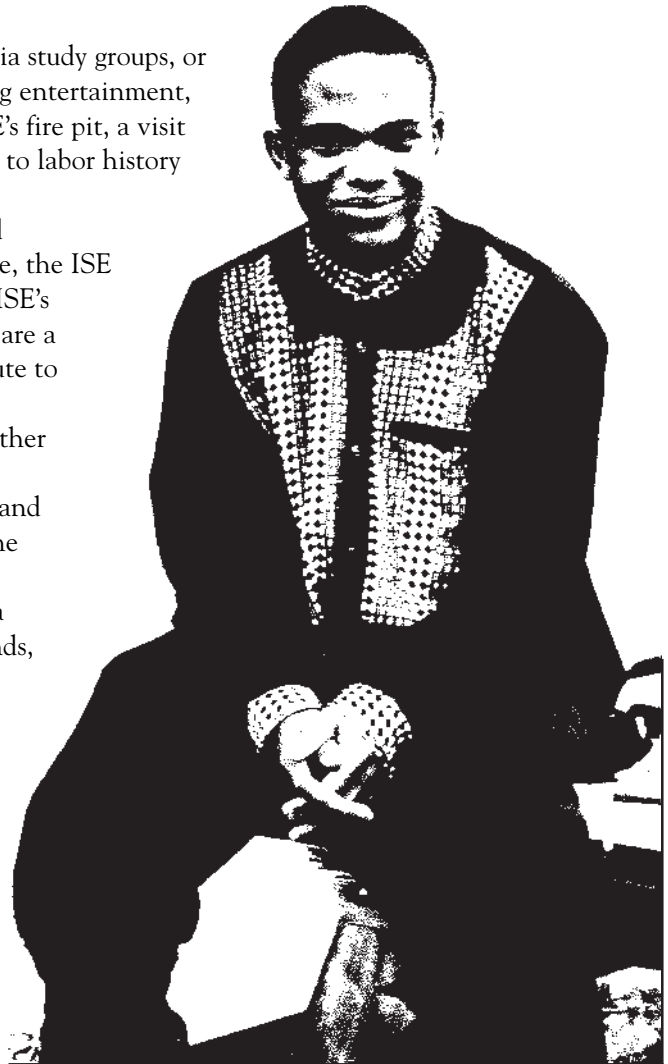
The four-week Ecology and Community program consists of a mix of lectures, discussions, hands-on practica, writing exercises, and readings. An integrative seminar, Principles of Social Ecology, is offered to all students, along with a weekly lecture by Murray Bookchin. In addition, students can design their own program of study by electing to take several seminars including: Feminism and Ecology; Deschooling and Social Ecology; Understanding Capitalism: Global Perspectives; Toward Direct Democracy; Radical Agriculture; and Movement Building: Theory and Practice. The program also features an antiracism series, which attempts to shed light on the origins of racism as well as how it relates to other forms of systemic oppression and hierarchy, while suggesting strategies to build effective, multicultural movements for radical social change.

Students are encouraged to deepen their own insights via study groups, or to take part in an array of guest lectures, videos, and evening entertainment, or to enjoy hiking, swimming, conversations around the ISE's fire pit, a visit to the Bread and Puppet museum, and a tour of sites related to labor history in nearby Barre, Vermont.

Community life is also a central part of the Ecology and Community program. Within the limits of time and purpose, the ISE hopes to create an educational experience that reflects the ISE's belief in self-reliance, democracy, and participation. There are a variety of activities, both formal and informal, that contribute to this sense of connection. For instance, weekly community meetings provide a forum to talk about the issues faced together during the program. Faculty, staff, and students also make a commitment of four hours per week to work on site to prep and clean up after meals, upkeep common spaces, take care of the garden, and expand the campus.

The Ecology and Community program, in short, offers a radical, coherent critique of current social and political trends, as well as a reconstructive and ethical approach to social change, all the while facilitating self-directed learning in a supportive yet challenging community-based environment.

**Ecology &
Community**
June 27 to July 26



2003 Spring & Summer Programs

Theoretical Inquiries in the Age of Globalization Aug. 6 to Aug. 14

THIS EIGHT-DAY INTENSIVE, open only to those who have already gone through the Ecology and Community program, focuses on areas such as philosophy, social and political theory, and history as part of a scholarly inquiry into the “age of globalization.” By theoretically exploring the past as well as the present, this continuing studies program hopes to deepen students’ understanding of dynamic social phenomena such as capitalism, statecraft, racism, and the devastation of the natural world, to name a few. To that end, this intensive draws on a variety of radical traditions, revolutionary histories, and social and political analyses, including those underpinning social ecology. The intensive is intended both to rekindle students’ desire for further study and offer intellectual inspiration for ongoing activist work.

Theoretical Inquiries in the Age of Globalization consists of eight mini-courses in two consecutive four-day blocks. Thus, students must choose from one of two classes during each morning and afternoon session. All of the courses are lecture-discussion or seminar style, although the relatively small class sizes keep them engaging and intimate. They all involve various amounts of required readings. There will also be several evening guest lectures. Although structured as an educational intensive, the daily schedule is fairly light by Summer Institute standards, allowing plenty of time outside of class for informal discussions, reading, writing, films, socializing, and recreation.

This continuing studies program rotates mini-courses and even some faculty each year, both to allow students who have already attended the eight-day session to return again and to ensure that the subject matter is fresh, topical, and vibrant. Topics explored in the past include: alternatives to capitalism, dialectical and nature philosophies, the anarchist tradition, changes to the contemporary city and the implications for municipal politics, nationalism, as well as science, technology, and globalization.

The 2003 Age of Globalization intensive will offer a completely new lineup of classes along with several new faculty members. This August’s courses will range from the history of revolutionary movements in Latin America, the United States, and Europe, to a study of the Frankfurt school and its critical theory, to an exploration of

theories of natural evolution, to an examination of liberatory political notions, to a philosophical survey of ethics, and more (a detailed flyer on this program will be available from the ISE and on the ISE’s web site in the spring). As in past summers, Theoretical Inquiries in the Age of Globalization promises to be both stimulating and reinvigorating.



2003 Development Goals

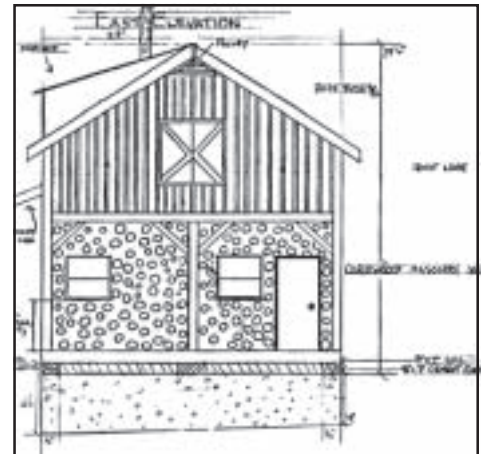
With the support of the social ecology community, we were able to successfully undertake many important projects and program developments over the last year. Our goals for 2003 are equally as demanding and important as the accomplishments from 2002. Your generous donation to the Institute for Social Ecology will help to support the following projects:

Campus Development

The ISE purchased a 50-acre campus in Plainfield, Vermont in 1997. Our campus functions as both an educational community and a demonstration site that illustrates our holistic and liberatory approach to community development and land use. In keeping with our social ecological principles of democratic community design, ecological building, and sustainable land use, we have developed organic gardens and permaculture orchards; a solar powered washhouse with a living machine waste water system; camping facilities; and an energy efficient kitchen. This past spring, we began building a timber frame barn, and in the near future we hope to further apply our ecological design methods to the construction of more student housing and expanded classroom and library space.

The ISE Barn Project was initiated in 2001 by students in our year-round B.A. program as an ecological solution to our growing needs for classrooms, storage, studio and workshop space, as well as a large meeting space. The Barn Project is one of many projects in our Long Range Plan that offers an opportunity for the ISE to put into practice our understanding of community-based ecological development. Students participating in this project gain experience in community design and land use planning, and practical experience with alternative energy technology and building techniques, such as straw bale, cob, cordwood masonry, and timber framing. Students also gain exposure to the concepts around sustainable forestry as the lumber used in this project has been sustainably harvested from our land and milled on site.

The Barn Project is now well underway. Once the timber frame is raised, different sections of the barn will be enclosed with alternative wall systems (straw bale, cob, cordwood). In order to finish this important project we need to raise an estimated \$25,000 for construction and workshop costs. With your continued support, we hope to provide a rich learning environment for our students, while accomplishing the much-needed development of our campus.



Program Development

As an educational and activist organization, the ISE is committed to the social and ecological transformation of society. In recent years we have considerably expanded our programs. In addition to our Ecology and Community program and our Sustainable Design, Building and Land Use program, the ISE now offers a Continuing Studies in Social Ecology program, an Arts Media, Activism, and Social Change program, and a week-long Biotechnology course. We have also recently expanded our B.A. program to include an on-site option, allowing students to take classes and workshops on-site at our Plainfield campus year-round. We also continue to offer our winter public lecture series and art-shows as well as summer internship opportunities. With your support we hope to further expand the educational opportunities and perspectives that we have to offer our students.

2003 Development Goals

Independent Accreditation

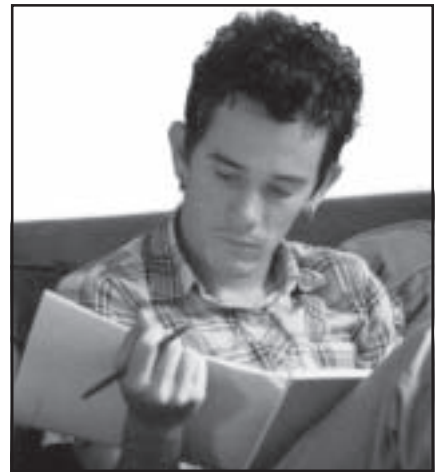
The ISE's programs are accredited through a partnership with Burlington College. Though we are grateful for this partnership, the current cost per credit doubles the price of tuition for our students. Until the ISE becomes independently accredited, the cost of our accredited programs will remain a prohibitive burden for many of our students. Self-accreditation will allow the ISE to offer students accredited undergraduate and graduate work at a significantly lower cost, while maintaining financial and academic independence from other accredited institutions.

Our Accreditation Committee has assumed the primary responsibility for moving through the accreditation process. Yet completing this lengthy process requires that we hire an additional staff person to coordinate the project.

Scholarship Fund

The ISE's educational programs serve over 100 students annually. In addition to the financial assistance that we struggle to provide for our low-income students from the U.S., each summer we offer considerable assistance to our international students. As we recognize that not all people have equal access to financial resources, we offer scholarship and work-study assistance to students who would not otherwise be able to attend our programs. The ISE is committed to making its programs accessible to all people regardless of gender, race, color, class, age, physical ability, religion, national origin, or sexual preference. Within the spirit of this goal, it is our hope to be able to offer more financial assistance to students each year so that we may serve an ever-wider and more diverse constituency.

Unfortunately, our ability to provide financial aid is limited. The high demand on our already limited budget does not allow us to offer as much financial assistance as is needed. With your support, we can offer financial aid to students who otherwise would not be able to access our programs.



Biotechnology Project

The ISE Biotechnology Project is an independent project of the ISE, operating since 1997. The ISE Biotechnology Project is the only effort in the U.S. that is focused almost entirely on facilitating grassroots action around genetic engineering and other biotechnologies.

The ISE Biotechnology Project has been a consistent voice for scientific clarity in the growing opposition to genetically engineered foods. As well, we are pushing for the enlarging of the debate to encompass the widest possible implications of genetic engineering and other biotechnologies, particularly the importance of the biotechnology industry's links to corporate driven globalization.

Our approach to grassroots organizing is firmly grounded in the principles of decentralism, community control, and face-to-face democracy that are central to social ecology, and have been widely embraced by the growing movement against corporate-driven globalization. We anticipate that our work will continue to offer an important model for U.S. activists seeking a long-range, sustainable approach to activism, one that seeks to understand the widest implications of food biotechnology, rooted in an understanding of its social and political context, as well as the potential for sustainable alternatives.

Over the course of the next year, the ISE Biotechnology Project will be working in specific areas to generate increased momentum in the fight against the biotechnology industry. This work includes expanding our existing network infrastructure, and helping to initiate and support local and national campaigns. We cannot do this work without your support. Your tax-deductible contribution will help us allocate much needed resources to this ever-important movement.



Support the ISE!

Thank you for contributing to the ISE's annual donor campaign. Your donation will be invaluable in helping us meet our development goals for 2003. In thanks for your support of the ISE, we are pleased to offer the following gifts:

Donation of \$50: 2 issues of *Harbinger*

Donation of \$500: 8 issues of *Harbinger* & two books

Donation of \$200: 4 issues of *Harbinger* & one book

Donation of \$1000: 16 issues of *Harbinger* & two books

Book Gifts *(Please choose however many apply)*

- Marx in Soho*, by Howard Zinn
- Black Looks: Race and Representation*, by bell hooks
- Steets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood*, by Peter Medoff & Holly Sklar
- Earth For Sale: Reclaiming Ecology in the Age of Corporate Greenwash*, by Brian Tokar
- Race, Gender, and Work: A Multi-cultural Economic History of Women in the United States*, by Teresa Amott & Julie Matthaei
- Resource Rebels: Native Challenges to Mining and Oil Corporations*, by Al Gedicks
- Hear my Testimony: Human rights activist of El Salvador*, by Maria Teresa Tula
- Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*, edited by Robert Bullard
- Democracy in Mexico: Peasant Rebellion and Political Reform*, by Dan La Botz
- The Dark Ages: Life in the United States 1945-1960*, by Marty Jezer

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Thank you for your support!

Perspectives in Social Ecology

Harbinger, a Journal of Social Ecology, is planning its spring 2003 issue that will focus on perspectives in social ecology. As an emergent body of thought that continues to inspire and shape the libertarian left, social ecology and social ecologists have contributed to numerous domains of radical theory and practice, and continue to do so.

Within this issue, we will examine the many different ways in which social ecologists have attempted to apply social ecology to a range of social and political projects. Further, we will continue to examine perspectives within social ecology on contemporary theoretical issues.

Constructing Ethics: Can we look to first nature to provide an objective ethic for constructing an ecologically sound society? If not, where can we look? Building on the discussion initiated by Sonja Schmitz in this issue, where do other social ecologists stand on this issue?

Moral Economics: Does social ecology successfully theorize the integration of economic life into its political vision? Recent debates with the Participatory Economics school of thought suggests we have much rethinking to do on our economic vision. Where do we stand on such libertarian communist economic proposals?

The Libertarian Left: Today, many social ecologists are pushing for a clean split from anarchism because of overwhelmingly undesirable tendencies within contemporary anarchism. What place does anarchism, if any, have within the social ecology of today? Do the current anti-social and anti-technology currents in contemporary anarchism soil the social anarchist project beyond repair, and warrant the severing of social ecology from any social anarchism?

Revolutionary Education: If education is central to this revolutionary project, how do we understand dominant notions and practices of education, and what does a liberatory education look like? What current approaches in childhood and young adult alternative education deserve our attention? As political activists, how does our understanding of liberatory education influence our political work?

Political Organizing: Libertarian municipalists from around the globe have been engaged in political activism for many years. What can we learn from these hot spots of activism in which to further sharpen our theoretical understanding of politics and practice?

These and other key questions will be addressed in the pages of the next issue of *Harbinger*. Our hope is to publish the broad continuum of ideas that represent the best thinking in social ecology, highlighting both points of agreement and difference. We also welcome submissions that explore these ideas in the more visceral form of poetry and fiction.

If you are interested in submitting to this issue of *Harbinger*, please contact the Editorial Board with your ideas. For more information:

Harbinger, a Journal of Social Ecology

c/o Institute for Social Ecology
1118 Maple Hill Road,
Plainfield, VT, 05667, USA

harbinger@social-ecology.org
<http://www.harbinger.ws/>

Deadline for submissions: September 1st, 2003

**Our Being is Becoming, not stasis.
Our Science is Utopia,
our Reality is Eros,
our Desire is Revolution.**

Murray Bookchin—1967



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