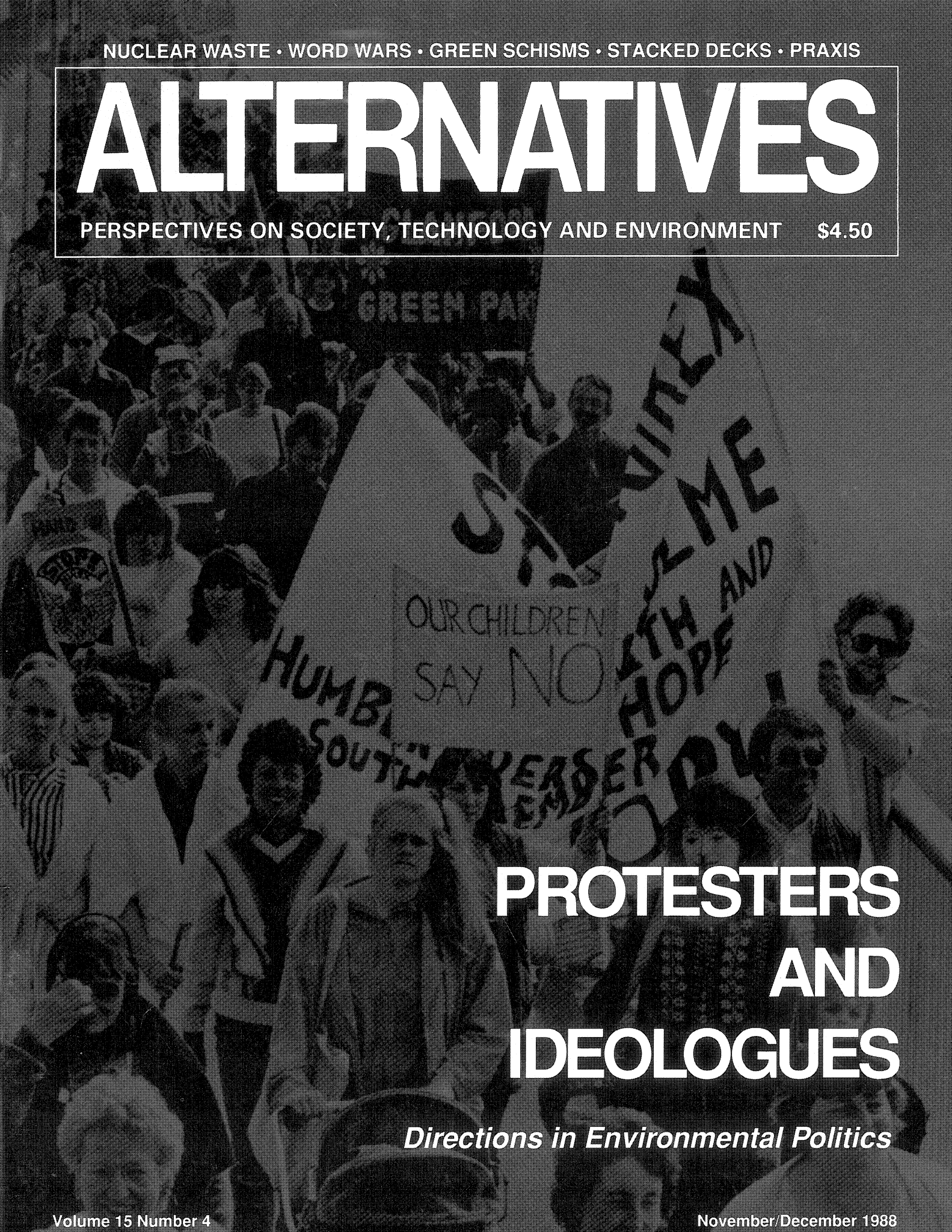


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PROTESTERS AND IDEOLOGUES

Directions in Environmental Politics

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Volume 15 Number 4

November/December 1988

FEATURES

- 12 **No Place to Go: Nuclear Waste in the United Kingdom** *Andrew Blowers*
- 20 **Seals, Wolves and Words: Loaded Language in Environmental Controversy** *John Alan Lee*
- 30 **Exploring the New Ecologies: Social Ecology, Deep Ecology and the Future of Green Political Thought** *Brian Tokar*
- 44 **Winning Against a Stacked Deck: Environmental Policy and Reaganomics** *Robert Paehlke*
- 52 **Green Politics: A Practice in Search of a Theory?** *Robyn Eckersley*

REPORTS

- 6 **Ottawa goes both ways on oil versus fish** *Alexandra Macqueen*
- 7 **Saskatchewan dams condemned** *Alexandra Cunningham*
- 8 **Danube dam plans stir unprecedented protest** *Vladislav Balaban*
- 10 **Glasnost helps environment** *W. Brad Hanna*
- 11 **Mines pollute Papua New Guinea rivers** *Colin Michael Hall*

DEPARTMENTS

Editorial	1	Reviews	65
Canadian, World, Tech Notes	2	Books Received for Review	66
Letters	62	Podium	71

Exploring the New Ecologies

Social Ecology, Deep Ecology and the Future of Green Political Thought

Brian Tokar

People devoted to a synthesis of environmental and social activism have long sought a philosophical outlook that embodies an ecological view of nature and of humanity's place within it. Environmentalists have sought valuable wisdom from naturalists such as Thoreau, John Muir and Aldo Leopold, from Eastern as well as Western spiritual teachings, from recent developments in the sciences and in systems theory and from the legacy of popular social and religious movements throughout history. Ecologically-minded activists, teachers, poets and philosophers have looked to a wide variety of sources for inspiration, insight and guidance. The present resurgence of environmental activism in North America and the emergence of Green political movements have prompted a renewed search for sources of ecological wisdom.

This search has been considerably clouded in the past year by an increasingly bitter feud between two apparently conflicting approaches to ecological philosophy: social ecology and deep ecology. Important philosophical and political issues raised by these two developing schools of thought have become lost in a morass of polemics, accusations and name-calling.

Social ecology, developed primarily in New England and New York by Murray Bookchin and his colleagues at the Institute for Social Ecology, emphasizes the embeddedness of human consciousness in

nature, a radical ecological critique of hierarchy and domination in society, and the historical unity of ecological and social concerns.¹ Deep ecology, which originated in Norway but has gained many adherents in the English-speaking world, purports to speak more directly for the biosphere as a whole and seeks a better relationship between the human species and other forms of life.² The deepening divisions between these approaches, with their very different theoretical assumptions and political styles, threatens to block the essential work of movement-building and the development of more lasting alliances among people dedicated to saving the earth and creating more ecologically sound ways to live upon it. It has spread well beyond the borders of the United States, engaging activists and thinkers across Canada, as well as in Britain, Australia, Italy and other countries.

Social ecology has attracted political activists from a variety of movements who have come to see the ecological crisis as the overriding human dilemma of our time. The unrelenting exploitation of nature upon which industrial civilization rests has driven us to the brink of ecological collapse. Peace activists, feminists, and social thinkers of all orientations have come to see the fundamentally anti-ecological nature of militarism, patriarchy, racism and other forms of social domination. Such a merging of ecological and anti-militarist concerns led to the founding of the Green movements in Europe. Social ecology prefigured many of these developments, its proponents having argued since the mid-

1960s that the view of nature as a force to be dominated and controlled was a result of the rise of social hierarchies, especially in early warrior societies.

Domination, argues Murray Bookchin, is not intrinsic in nature; neither has it ever been an appropriate response to the needs of human survival. Rather, the patterns of the natural world call upon us to embrace the values of co-operation, complementarity and unity-in-diversity, both in our relations with the rest of nature and within the human community.³

Deep ecology is more a product of traditional environmental concerns, seeking to expand upon the values of the wilderness preservation movement. Deep ecologists celebrate individual personal relationships with the ever-shrinking world of "wild" nature and embrace a wide variety of political, artistic and philosophical approaches for expressing and deepening those relationships. They share with the social ecologists a frustration with the technocratic, managerial approach to the natural world to which much of the environmental movement has succumbed, (although as we shall see, it holds onto some of the mechanistic assumptions of mainstream environmentalism), and seek to build a broader ecological movement based upon people's deep affinities with the land they know best.

Deep ecologists tend to be very knowledgeable about forestry, animal habitats and the internal dynamics of ecosystems and aspire to understand the natural world on its own terms, as removed as possible from the cultural assumptions of

this or any other civilization. They advocate a broadly focused "biocentrism", in contrast to the narrow "anthropocentrism" of mainstream (and most of radical) culture. The Earth First! movement, probably the most exciting development in environmental activism in recent years, has embraced deep ecology as its underlying philosophy.⁴ A wide spectrum of artists, philosophers, animal rights advocates and spiritual seekers have embraced deep ecology as a call for a stronger personal link to the natural world.

These potentially complementary world views have placed themselves on opposite poles of a debate that threatens to compromise the growing consensus for an ecological understanding of the world's problems and an ecological commitment to curing them. In his paper distributed at the first national conference of US Green activists in July of 1987, Bookchin attacked deep ecology as "vague, formless, [and] often self-contradictory," a "black hole of half-digested, ill-formed and half-baked ideas," and an "ideological toxic dump."⁵ He condemned deep ecologists for ignoring the social and historical basis of the ecological crisis, upholding a distorted biological determinism with quasi-fascist implications and compromising the moral and ethical base necessary for a viable eco-philosophy.

Earth First! co-founder Dave Foreman and others, writing in the pages of the *Earth First!* journal, have accused social ecologists of being dour, humourless and hyperrational, mounting an anthropocentric "leftist" conspiracy against the ecology movement, and deliberately underestimating the intrinsic failings of all human societies and institutions.⁶ Writers in the *Earth First!* paper have repeatedly aroused the ire of social activists with misanthropic diatribes about overpopulation. They advocated starvation and disease as ecological or "Gaian" solutions, and asserted that the human species as a whole—including Third World and indigenous peoples, and excepting only the deep ecologists—is innately destructive to the environment.⁷

This is not the first time environmental and social activists have expressed con-

flicting priorities. Robyn Eckersley traced the debate back to the 19th century, revealing some of the long-held prejudices the current debate exposes. She shows how the earliest conservationists, typified by John Muir, advocated a total immersion in nature, often to the exclusion of any discussion of the social or historical roots of environmental destruction. Meanwhile, Marxist-leaning social activists have embraced the factory system as the locus of human liberation, while accepting a narrowly economic and production-oriented view of human nature.⁸ Though Marx and Engels were aware of the terrible toll industrial capitalism was already taking against human health and well-being, technology and capital were still seen as vehicles for social progress beyond the confines of archaic "nature idolatry". In fact, much of the traditional left continues to express outdated 19th-century views of human liberation as the historical transcendence of "irrational" natural constraints.⁹

The emergence of the environmental movement in the 1960s was at first seen by many on the left as a mere middle class indulgence, far removed from the more immediate concerns of the world's suffering people. Many early conservation campaigns were seen, correctly, as the efforts of affluent individuals to preserve their own secluded wilderness retreats, with little regard for anything else.

Some individuals, however, saw that there was more to ecology than creating playgrounds for the rich. Murray Bookchin, writing in the early 1960s, argued that the insights of ecological science bespoke the urgency of a radical social transformation and an evocatively naturalistic vision for how such a transformation could come about.¹⁰ He attacked the economic biases of Marxism and called for a different kind of relationship between humanity, technology and nature. The naturalist and anthropologist Paul Shepard came to a similar conclusion, when he labelled ecology, "the subversive science".¹¹

These kinds of insights, coupled with growing concerns about the effects of pes-

ticides such as DDT in food, and about the industrial pollution, urban sewage and toxic chemicals that are devastating the air and the water, led to the rise of a different kind of ecological activism. The environmental movement pressed for much-needed regulations and clean-up efforts. People of many different orientations came to understand the fundamental unsustainability of modern urban society and began creating new experiments in organic farming, urban and rural homesteading and the harnessing of solar energy.

Such efforts became far more widespread as opposition to nuclear power became a major focus of environmental activism in the late 1970s; however, both the traditional left and mainstream environmentalists were slow to embrace this growing movement. The Marxist left often claimed that nuclear power, along with other technologies of "progress", would be safe if it were controlled by the workers and no longer tied to the profit motive. The large international environmental groups, with their still largely affluent constituencies, generally shied away from such complex and politically loaded issues.¹²

Partly due to its political independence, the anti-nuclear movement was able to foster a new ecological radicalism, advocating social as well as ecological alternatives, promoting self-reliance, embracing direct action and feminist organizational models. The vision of social transformation that the anti-nuclear movement began to articulate resonated well with the ideas of social ecology. The merging in the early 1980s of anti-nuclear and anti-militarist concerns established a political base for the international Green movement and for a more integrated approach to social and ecological renewal, bringing together approaches from the New Left of the 1960s and the various alternative movements of the 1970s.¹³

Earth First! and radical environmentalism

By the mid-1980s, wilderness activists in the western United States came to believe that the major US environmental organizations were falling ever further behind in the mission to protect the integrity of natural ecosystems. Conflicts over particular tracts of wilderness or the protection of particular species were becoming increasingly symbolic. Environmental lawyers and lobbyists were often willing to compromise ecological principles for the sake of political expediency and to safeguard their professional status. Just like the resource-minded conservationists that John Muir had to confront around the turn of the century, the contemporary crop of environmental officials had completely succumbed to the view of nature as a store-

Résumé

Les "verts" et les activistes environnementalistes nord-américains se retrouvent au coeur d'un débat fortement polarisé, divisant l'école de pensée de l'écologie sociale et celle de l'écologie fondamentale (deep ecology). Ces discussions (qui tournent souvent à la polémique) ont soulevé d'importantes questions sur la relation existant entre écologie et société, politique et culture, ainsi qu'entre les sociétés développées et celles dites moins développées. L'auteur/activiste Brian Tokar examine quelques-unes des croyances et pratiques propres aux intervenants en présence, et il s'interroge suite à la ré-émergence de la thèse suivant laquelle la destruction de l'environnement est en fait un problème de population. Il explore les origines du débat actuel à travers certains mythes historiques au sujet de la relation entre le peuple Américain et le territoire qu'il occupe. Monsieur Tokar exprime le désir de voir naître une approche plus globale que l'écologie radicale, qui mettrait l'accent sur la recherche de moyens pour vivre sur cette planète qui seraient plus respec-



Over the past five years, Earth First! has distinguished itself in environmental activism throughout the western US and beyond.

house of resources to feed the industrial mega-machine.¹⁴

When the US Interior Department under James Watt proposed a re-evaluation of all the remaining roadless areas in the country—part of their plan to open the National Forests to more “multiple uses”—one group of radical environmentalists went on the offensive. Under the rubric of “Earth First!”, they supported a no-compromise approach to wilderness protection, advocating a major expansion of designated wilderness areas and the active sabotage (both politically and materially) of efforts to expand logging, mining and other intrusions upon the few remaining wild lands of North America.¹⁵

Over the past five years, Earth First! has distinguished itself in environmental activism throughout the western US and beyond. They have attracted hundreds of young activists put off by the continuing compromises of the environmental professionals. Controversies around the spiking of trees to prevent the logging of old-

growth forests and the sabotage of three major genetic engineering experiments (to name two) brought nationwide media attention. They have spawned over 50 largely autonomous Earth First! groups across the United States and overseas, created an international network of rainforest activists, and successfully halted or forestalled a myriad of ecologically irresponsible projects. More mainstream environmental groups have been caught running in place trying to regain the publicity and the place in the public imagination that Earth First! has seized from them. More respectable wilderness activists and opponents of offshore oil drilling in California have been able to take much stronger positions than before as a result of Earth First!’s uncompromising presence around these issues.¹⁶

In the realm of ideas, however, Earth First!’s role has been very problematic. The redneck cowboy posture put forward in the *Earth First!* journal was amusing at first and annoying to many, but was generally

put forward with enough good cheer and self-effacing humour to disarm even the most urbane of sensibilities. Beneath the dumb redneck image they created for themselves were always enough rousing accounts of action campaigns, incisive environmental writing and flagrant defiance of all manner of authority and propriety to convince this writer, for one, that these people were on the right side of things. Unlike most environmentalists these days, they were also regularly putting themselves on the line for their beliefs and openly confronting the failings of the established institutions.

Ideological consistency has never been very important in the US, however, and Earth First! has always flaunted its nasty underside. Alongside poetic pleas for the integrity of wild nature, writers in the *Earth First!* journal have tended toward a rather grim and brutalized view of human nature. They have railed against native American hunting practices and primitive agriculturalists and touted AIDS and fam-

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ine as "natural" cures for human overpopulation.¹⁷ They have censored anarchists and feminists and provided a platform for neo-survivalists, behaviourists and outright misanthropes. Freely mixing pseudo-scholarly tomes and spit-in-the-can barroom philosophy, there is something in *Earth First!* to offend just about anyone.

The naturalist Wallace Stegner once described the American West as, "... a country to breed mystical people, egocentric people, perhaps poetic people. But not humble ones ..."¹⁸ For writers in *Earth First!*, ideas are a game and words are for riling people up and getting them angry. The more outrageous the ideas, the better. Novelist Edward Abbey, whose quintessentially western US brand of anarchist individualism has been a major inspiration for *Earth First!*, is the reigning master of that kind of writing. He gets more ornery with age, and some *Earth First!* people swallow everything he says whole.

Some commentators have observed overtly fascist overtones in the way *Earth First!* spokespeople use language, especially in their self-image as warriors poised against a destructive human race.¹⁹ The present trouble all started when Dave Foreman and other writers in *Earth First!* began parroting, and then building upon, Abbey's racist diatribes condemning

starving Ethiopians, Mexican refugees and other non-Europeans to the ecological scrap heap.²⁰

Political writers in the European tradition, on the other hand, strive to be very exacting and literal in their use of words. Highly polemical styles of writing are common. The political implications of words are drawn out to their fullest, and political targets are set up for a full onslaught of verbal abuse. Social ecology often reflects the heritage—some say the burden—of a style of discourse in which everything one says is loaded with several layers of urgent and highly charged political meaning.

Such distinctions would only be of academic interest if the debate between social ecology and deep ecology had not succeeded in polarizing the nascent new ecological movements to such a disturbing degree. The polemics have occupied many pages of the *Utne Reader*, *The Nation*, and many smaller political journals in several countries, and activists struggling to shape a viable movement that merges ecological and social concerns are being pressed to choose sides.²¹

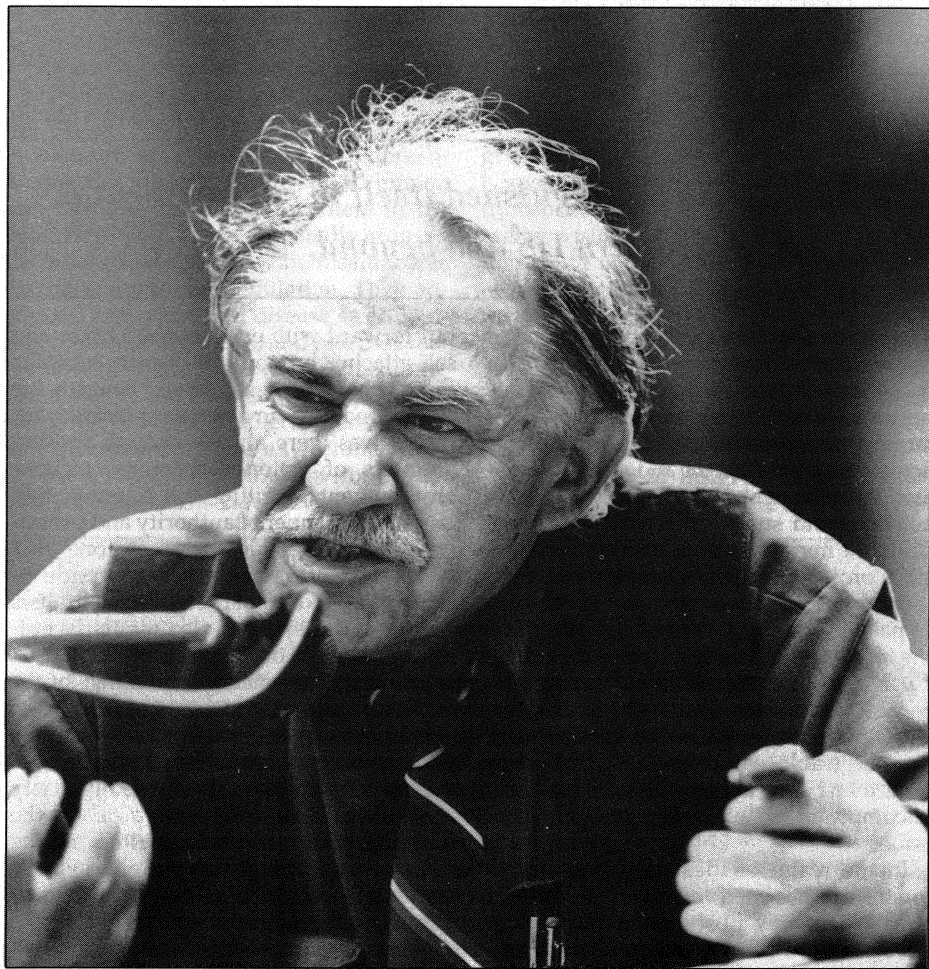
Vital questions of political strategy, efforts to understand better the evolution of people's historical relationship to the land, and explorations of the links between political and cultural change are being lost in a war of personalities, accusations and counter-accusations. For this writer, it is due time that we digested the lessons of this debate and got back to the work of forging an ecological radicalism that can really shake the foundations of the miserably anti-ecological and anti-human society in which we live.

The politics of population

Possibly the most contentious long-term controversy in the ecology movement has been over the question of population control. It is probably also the greatest point of contention between deep ecologists and social ecologists, as well as between many traditional environmentalists and people with more diverse histories of social change work.

Most surveys of deep ecological ideas emphasize the need to reduce human populations, and Dave Foreman once declared the population issue "an absolute litmus test" for whether one "belongs" in *Earth First!*²² (a dismaying thought for a social ecologist who has participated in *Earth First!*-type actions at considerable personal risk). There has been so much confusion over this one issue that it demands further discussion here.

There is no question that the industrial era has brought an unprecedented increase in the world's human population at the same time as it has drained the earth's resources and devastated its ecological integrity. Millions of people are going hun-



Murray Bookchin of the Institute for Social Ecology.

David J. Cross

gry, while the carrying capacities of lands all over the world are increasingly overtaxed. This has led many people to view overpopulation as the fundamental cause of the ecological crisis.²³

It is a compelling view, at first glance, if only for its sheer simplicity. It raises the hope that only one small adjustment, a statistical decrease in population, can somehow reverse the course of environmental destruction. Proponents of this view discuss human populations in the same abstracted, purely statistical terms that population biologists invoke to explain population patterns among birds or insects, thus accepting the reduction of ecological thinking to a highly mechanistic form of systems analysis. Social institutions, consumption patterns and concentrations of power and wealth do not have to be scrutinized. There could be enough land, enough food and enough goods to go around, they argue, if there were just a quarter as many or a tenth as many or a thousandth as many people to use them.²⁴ Just how to decrease population is rarely discussed—we are just assured that it will be “gradual” and “by attrition”—and this omission creates openings for all manner of naïve, dangerous and even openly racist proposals.

The idea of overpopulation has been with us for a long time, and has often been used by apologists for the wealthy classes to decry the excess of poor people in the world. The fact that people are *made* poor when they are driven into cities by the expropriation of peasant and tribal lands and forcibly separated from their own means of sustenance rarely enters into the discussion.

Thomas Malthus wrote at the beginning of the 19th century that poor people should be left to starve and die of “ravaging diseases”, arguing that “all cannot share alike the bounties of nature.”²⁵ Earth First! sells a bumper sticker declaring, “Malthus Was Right,” but even Malthus modified his early claims about the inevitability of geometrically-growing populations facing a mere linear increase in food supply. Advocates of eugenics in the early 20th century argued that human breeding should be controlled to eliminate the excessive breeding of “inferior races”. And now, some self-professed deep ecologists argue that AIDS and other diseases are nature’s only remaining remedy to the cancerous growth of the human hordes.²⁶

For thousands upon thousands of years, land-based peoples have sustained themselves with a minimum of damage to the basic integrity of ecosystems. Limited areas of forest have been cut and burned to make room for fields and villages, but primitive peoples generally understood the need to protect the health of the forest as a whole. Peasant societies living relatively outside the reach of cash-based urban economies have been able to sustain agrarian communities on limited tracts of

land for a very long time. It is only with the rise of highly industrialized urban societies and capitalist modes of economic accumulation that the basic stability of rural life was shaken to its foundations.

Modern industrial economies are driven by an incessant drive to expand. When the provision of people’s basic needs becomes a set of abstracted production processes, carried on for the private profit of a tiny minority of the population, the economy of scale, the manipulations of credit and capital, and the built-in distortions of mass industry make overproduction a necessity.

The effects filter down to every level of society. Whether one examines the early dislocation of British peasants for large-scale sheep herding or the more recent theft of Central American peasant lands for coffee and sugar production, one sees the immediate social effects of a profit-oriented system driven by an inexorable need to expand.²⁷ The more people are forced off the land, the more land there is to “develop” and the more people have to turn to the urban, cash-based economy to survive.

Capitalism’s reduction of people to units of production exaggerates the pressure on displaced people to have larger families to maintain a sufficient survival income. Those who remain on the land are compelled to grow luxury goods for ex-

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David J. Cross

Earth First! co-founder Dave Foreman.

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port in order to raise cash to buy food. Meanwhile, as more people are absorbed into the competition for manufactured goods, production levels rise while at the same time wages fall and profits continue to climb. Rapidly growing urban populations are good for business. In several European countries, in fact, industrial planners have raised a fear of underpopulation, a concern that is met by importing thousands of "guest workers" from Africa and the Near East, while exhorting white families with highly racist appeals to have more children.²⁸

State-socialist and Third World economies are tied to the larger international market economy in ways that drive them to carry out many of the same exploitative practices in order to procure the "foreign exchange" necessary to buy fuel, machine parts and other highly monopolized commodities. Many of the small wars being fought today in various parts of the world are between the governments of "developing" nations and indigenous populations living on resource-rich lands.²⁹

Life continues to worsen for those who are left to work the land, robbed of the social stability and control of their basic life patterns that sustained their ancestors for countless generations. The trends described a decade ago by Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins in their path-breaking book, *Food First*, continue to dominate Third World economies. Their work should be studied carefully by anyone who wishes to understand the dynamics of population growth in the modern world.

Lappé and Collins have documented with great care how the apparent inability of Third World people to feed themselves is a direct result of the political and economic structures imposed upon them by the international market economy.³⁰

Throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America, people are going hungry at the same time that massive quantities of food are being shipped for luxury consumption in Europe and North America. Subsistence farmers are forced to grow food on steep, rocky mountainsides while the most fertile land is controlled by commercial growers of coffee, cocoa, sugar, cotton and tropical fruits. There is more cultivated land per person in Africa than in the US or the Soviet Union, far more than in the 1950s, when Africa was considered to be self-sufficient in food.³¹ Vast areas of land are overgrazed by beef cattle, raised almost entirely for export. People in many African countries have to hide their food gardens in the middle of coffee fields to escape high taxation and other forms of punishment imposed by governments tied to neo-colonial practices.³²

These problems are exacerbated by development aid that favours commercial-scale agriculture and industrial megaprojects, deliberately crushing the economic independence that the great majority of

people once enjoyed. Countries like Brazil have tried to alleviate some of the social pressures that result from such distorted development patterns by opening up previously unsettled wilderness lands for people displaced by plantation agriculture, grazing and urban development. Many point to the resulting migrations as evidence that poor people are ultimately responsible for the destruction of the rainforests.³³

It is true that a substantial portion of the rainforest destruction in Brazil is being carried out for new settlements rather than directly for corporate agribusiness, but this is not the result of population growth. Rather, it reflects a concerted national policy to try to compensate for tremendous inequities in land ownership in other areas of the country by moving people out to the Amazon.³⁴ It has been estimated that as much as a third of the present loss of rainforest in the Amazon is a direct result of the massive government-sponsored road-building efforts carried out to encourage more rapid extraction of resources, along with this planned relocation of the rural poor.³⁵

So why are populations in many corners of the world growing so rapidly? History shows that rapid increases in population occur when people become dislocated from their traditional land base and when people become less secure about their personal and family survival. When the future is secure, when the infant mortality rate is low, when the range of social choices for women are expanding, and when parents are not worried about who will support them in their old age—then populations become more stable.³⁶ In much of Europe, large population increases accompanied the displacement of peasants from traditional village lands—Ireland before the potato famine offers one of the later examples. As the distribution of wealth became more balanced in much of Europe in the 19th century, life became more secure and birth rates sometimes fell by almost half.³⁷

More recently, Cuba, China, Costa Rica and several other countries have been able to reduce birth rates substantially, generally alongside dramatic declines in infant mortality. Efforts to attack the root causes of social instability and inequality and to create educational opportunities for women have proven far more effective in stabilizing populations than family planning programmes designed to increase the use of contraceptives. Meanwhile, countries in Africa and Asia that are presently suffering the decline of village economies and experiencing massive migrations to congested urban centres have some of the highest birth rates in the world.³⁸ Rather than providing evidence for innate human destructiveness, the population question reveals the profound effect of social choices on the most basic ecological and demographic realities.

Who drains the resources?

Environmentalists often cite the statistic that the United States, with only five or six percent of the world's population, consumes upwards of 40 percent of the world's resources. If we add up all of the industrial production in other parts of the world that is oriented toward serving North American markets, the discrepancy might be even greater.³⁹ This suggests that people in the United States, where the population is relatively stable by world standards, are far more responsible for draining the earth's resources than almost everybody else combined.

However, the distribution of wealth and patterns of consumption are quite distorted within the United States. One percent of the people in this country own more than a third of the wealth; the richest ten percent own two-thirds and certainly own virtually all of the vacation homes and most of the luxury consumer goods, as well as the country's productive resources. The military and the arms industry consume massive shares of oil and mineral resources, not to mention their responsibility for environmental consequences of four decades of nuclear testing.⁴⁰ We have inherited a parasitic economy that rewards waste and speculation and ignores all but the shortest-term consequences of economic decisions. Resources are not being squandered because growing numbers of people need them in order to survive, but because a relative few people are very highly rewarded for exploiting resources at a pace far out of proportion to real social needs.

Consider the case of offshore oil drilling, currently one of the most controversial environmental issues in California and several other places. The industry claims that the extraction of offshore oil is needed to prevent future energy shortages; however even the most optimistic figures show that the entire projected oil production of the Northern California coast would only satisfy the United States' present demand for oil for two to four weeks.⁴¹ Even a minimal conservation effort would save far more oil than these highly contested and ecologically fragile offshore sites could ever produce. Similarly, activists in the western US have begun to document the decline of federally-owned grasslands due to overgrazing by beef cattle. All of the cattle now grazed on range lands, at considerable public expense and ecological toll, account for less than two percent of the country's beef consumption.⁴²

California's old-growth redwood forests are being cut down two to three times faster than ever before, and this has nothing to do with any increase in demand for redwood products. Rather, the one logging company that owns much of the remaining privately-held redwoods was involved in a hostile corporate takeover last

year, and the new parent company, the Houston-based Maxxam conglomerate, has chosen to "liquidate" its timber assets in order to cover the costs of the buyout.⁴³ Similar nightmares plague the endangered old-growth forests of British Columbia.

There is no doubt that huge numbers of North Americans are extremely wasteful in their consumption patterns—high consumption has become the accepted outlet for people living in a society so far removed from its means of personal sustenance. Wasteful habits are encouraged by advertising, alienated patterns of work and leisure, and the loss of cultural ties both to the land and to each other. But the massive loss of natural ecological diversity we are seeing in our own lifetimes is neither the result of growing populations, nor of extravagant personal consumption by average citizens of the wealthy countries. It is the product of an economy that rewards speculation and thrives on growth for the sake of growth, a vastly inequitable distribution of wealth, and an international order dominated by two bloated military superpowers.

The ethic of domination described by many ecological thinkers has been traced back through thousands of years of written history, but only in the past few decades have we come to see the combination of economic ruthlessness, raw technological power and social dislocation that threatens the total degradation of the earth's life-sustaining qualities.⁴⁴

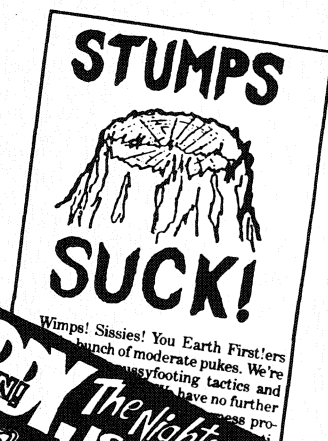
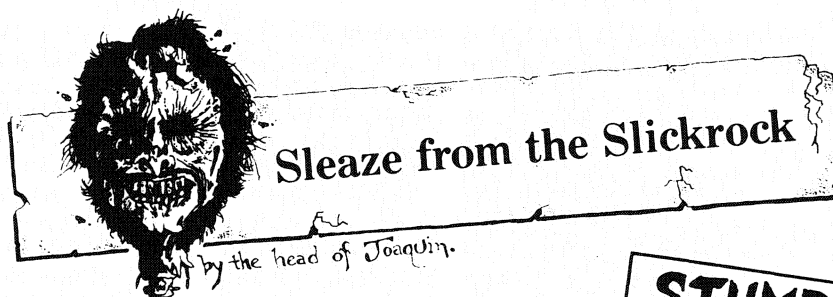
Myths from the land

It is not difficult to understand how a strong devotion to environmental activism has driven many people to the grim view of human nature held by many deep ecologists. Modern urban society is virtually designed to bring out the worst in human nature, and deep ecology, at its best, has raised the full ambiguity of humanity's present role. Such an approach rings especially true in the western United States, where public devotion to the wilderness is often the strongest, but the patterns of human settlement and the ways in which most people actually live their lives reflect a tremendous personal distance from a very present natural world. People in the far west often live surrounded by huge mountains, and population centres are often separated by considerable expanses of largely undeveloped land. But nature, for the most part, is still just a place to be visited on weekends and enjoyed in one's leisure time.

The places where most people actually live—especially in California but increasingly so throughout the arid west—are large cities and suburban housing developments inflicted upon the landscape over a very short span of years, with a nearly total lack of sensitivity to natural patterns.

*Resources are
not being squandered
because
growing numbers of
people need
them in order to
survive, but because
a relative few
people
are very highly
rewarded
for exploiting resources
at a pace far out of
proportion to real
social needs.*

*Freely mixing
pseudo-scholarly
tomes and
spit-in-the-can
barroom philosophy,
there is something in
Earth First!
to offend just about
anyone.*



Wealthy people live up in the hills and poor people live in the more congested flat lands below. Human settlements are often striking impositions upon the land, built by speculators out to make quick profits, and usually completely dependent upon automobile transportation and imported water. The lines between the places where people live and everywhere else are much sharper than in most of the country, and this cannot help but shape the way people view their own place in nature.

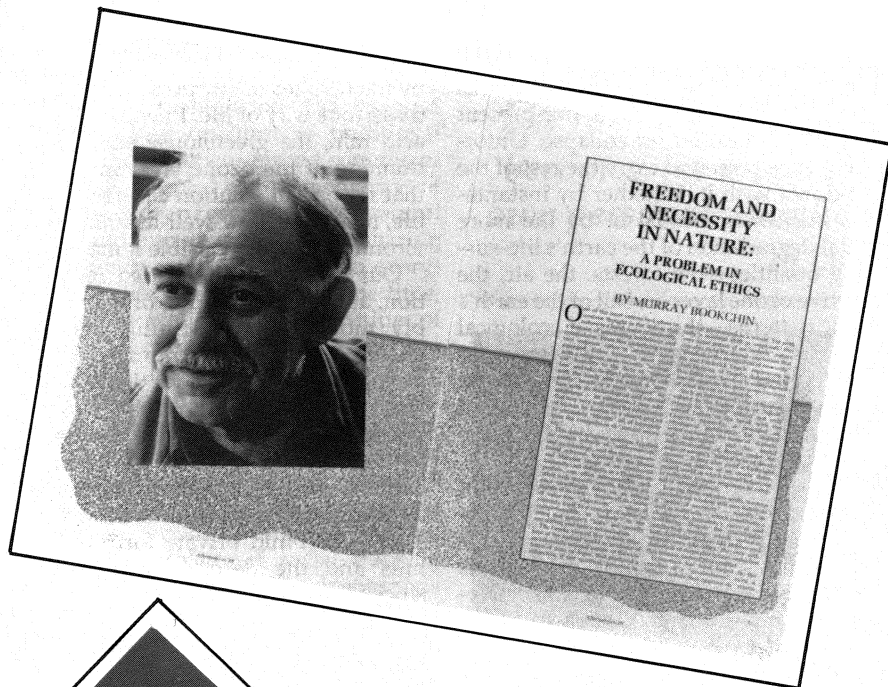
The impacts of civilization upon the western US are exaggerated by both the suddenness and the scale of development. Vast tracts of land tend to be swallowed up all at once by massive commercial ventures. Thousands of acres of ancient forest are devoured in a single logging season. Mining companies swallow up entire mountains and vast canyons are still being dammed up to secure growing urban water supplies. In the San Francisco Bay area, one can find thousands of people who grew up in fairly rural agricultural communities that have been completely sacrificed to sprawling high-tech suburbs in just a decade or two. People appear to be invading from everywhere.

It is no surprise that, for the last few years, people asked about the most important problem facing the Bay area have cited "overpopulation", next only to "transportation" and "pollution".⁴⁵ It might have been more accurate for people to cite "overdevelopment" or simply "congestion", but the idea of overpopulation has so influenced the way people think about the world that many of people's concerns about the declining quality of urban life have come to be understood in these terms.

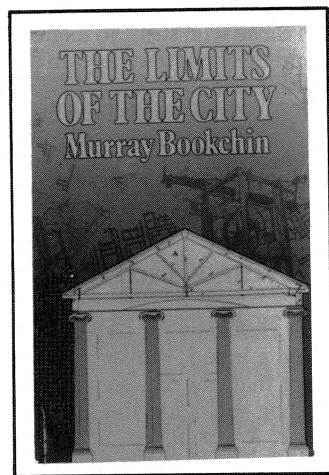
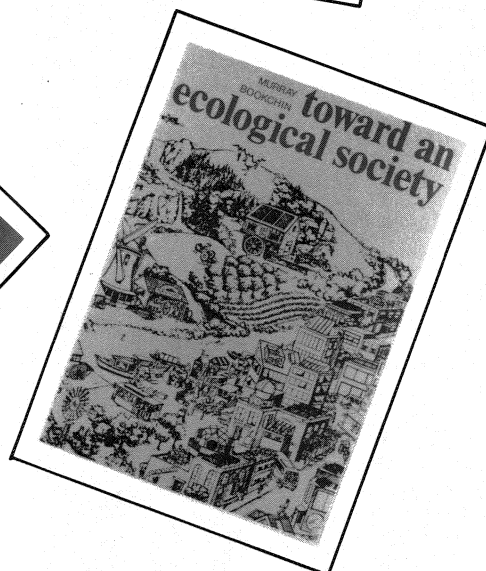
This is in considerable contrast to the situation in northern New England, for example, where many communities are facing a high rate of speculative development without a large influx of new permanent residents. There, the overt influence of outside development interests, the tourism industry, federal tax code changes favouring investments in second homes, and other institutional factors are far more transparent. In most of the US, however, one sees the interplay between people's interpretations of their own life experiences and the prevailing ideology of growth and development seriously distorting popular perceptions of the world around us.

The western US brand of deep ecological thinking also reflects a very distinct cultural relationship to the land that has evolved partly from the ethic of the early western frontier. Easterners generally live in highly socialized landscapes. The land has been scarred by many generations of

cultivation and settlement, not to mention large industrial cities and megalopolitan suburbs. As in most of Europe, relationships to the land are seen in social terms, whether one lives in a city or a small rural village. However, these relationships are often not wholly defined in modern terms, as many towns and cities still have some living relationship to their pre-industrial roots. New England towns, for example, were almost all established before people had the means—or the desire—to com-



Social ecology often reflects the heritage, some say the burden, of a style of discourse in which everything one says is loaded with several layers of urgent and highly charged political meaning.



force to be tamed.⁴⁹ Their relationship with people who came to settle on the land was complex, often following the historical example of Daniel Boone, who was said to shy away from inhabited places while at the same time playing a very deliberate role in seeking out "new kingdoms" to be colonized by land speculators from back east.⁵⁰ From the earliest explorers and the mythical characters of the frontier to the cowpokes of western lore and the pioneering naturalists of the early 20th century, the most celebrated relationship in western mythology was between the lone individual and the open wilderness.⁵¹

This historical difference in people's outlook toward the land lies at the heart of some of the conflicts among the various approaches to ecological philosophy. Social ecologists in New England have inherited an affirmative vision of human communities sharing a co-operative relationship with the land, while many deep ecologists in the West have embraced a more isolationist frontier ethic, with its harsher, more rugged view of both wild nature and human nature. Neither view begins to reflect the full complexity of people's experience in the US, or the wide range of adaptations to both natural and economically imposed pressures that people developed at various points in the country's history. Neither do they reflect the growing uniformity of suburban developments since World War II. However, the myths live on and have had striking effects on how people in different places view their own ways of life.

Contemporary cultural trends complicate the situation further, with more European-influenced analytic ways of thinking having become most highly valued in the

Appalachian Mountains to the midwestern heartland.⁴⁷ Until the opening of the western frontier to individual homesteaders in the mid-19th century, patterns of settlement and land use were often decided on a communal basis, and a co-operative relationship with the land often followed from the ideal—and the necessity—of co-operative relationships between people in village communities. Visionaries like Thomas Jefferson attributed the democratic character of early America to people's special relationship with the land, and for years resisted the development of large-scale manufacturing industry for fear of compromising this relationship.⁴⁸

The land ethics of the far West were more thoroughly shaped by myths of rugged individualism, as personified in the figure of the lone frontier scout. These individuals also had special personal connections to the land, both as a source of spiritual nourishment and as a powerful

pletely reshape the land. Despite many historical failings, they were often founded upon well-articulated ideals of harmony with the land, and people worked for generations to evolve relatively stable—though distinctly Europeanized—relationships with the forests, the rivers, the soils and, in better times, the native people.⁴⁶

A pastoral, rather than a frontier ethic shaped settlement patterns in the East, and was often carried by settlers across the

East and more personalized and experiential modes of expression having been more fully cultivated near the Pacific coast. Westerners might, indeed, value the wilderness more highly, but the romance of a withdrawal to the wilderness often becomes, for urban dwellers, a way of escaping their own personal complicity with the earth-denying ways of consumer society.

In the February 1988 issue of the local San Francisco Bay area Sierra Club newspaper, Dave Foreman set out to explain why protecting wilderness is the most important goal for environmentalists to pursue. To Foreman, the diversity of nature that may only exist in places far removed from human settlements provides the real basis for natural evolution. Why concentrate our efforts on preserving these places? "So that there is something to come back after human beings, through whatever means, destroy their civilization," he explains.⁵²

Many people of vastly different points of view have come to see that our present civilization is headed for collapse. Unfortunately, it is poised to carry the rest of the earth down with it. Whether by instantaneous nuclear holocaust or by the more gradual degradation of the earth's life-sustaining qualities—the forests, the air, the protective ozone layer and all of the earth's climatic patterns—the course of ecological collapse is underway and the chances for survival often appear slim. So it is a noble effort to fight for the few remaining wild places, in the hope that they might someday offer the seeds for global renewal.

However, if we are to take the lessons of ecology seriously, we know that everything in nature is far more thoroughly interconnected. Environmental technocrats might be able to predict by systems analysis that so many acres of such-and-such type of habitat can survive as an isolated unit, but in reality, no place is unaffected

by the ravages of our present ecologically-disastrous way of life. Phenomena such as acid rain, the greenhouse effect, and the thinning of the ozone layer make it clear that no partial solution can really sustain life, no matter how well-meaning and environmentally responsible it may seem.

Our civilization is headed for destruction, and the destruction of many—possibly most—of its defining institutions should be actively encouraged by earth-loving people. But if we leave a barren landscape of concrete and ashes with a few patches of green scattered among them, we cannot really claim we have bought the earth's survival. This absurd fantasy offers as grim a view as that of the armed survivalists who build private fortresses in the hills and the deserts, their basements stocked with canned food in the hope that they and their families will survive a nuclear war even if nobody else does. The ecological survival of every part of the earth now hinges on our ability to cast aside the imbalanced ways of our present civilization, stop raping the earth for the short-term gain of a few, and create a way of life that expresses renewed personal and communal ties to the earth and all its living beings. The destructive power of the present industrial system and its military-industrial complex defies all halfway solutions.

Arne Naess, the Norwegian philosopher who coined the term "deep ecology", is critical of most of the prevailing trends in the ecology movement. In his 1987 speech to the British Schumacher Society, he criticized both people who think that changes in our relations with nature will automatically follow from changes in social institutions and those who seem so fixated on the whales and the birds that they do not think about society at all. For Naess, only "shallow ecologists think that reforming human relations toward nature can be done within the existing structure of society."⁵³

The places where most westerners actually live are large cities and suburban housing developments inflicted upon the landscape with a nearly total lack of sensitivity to natural patterns.



Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Communication

Living ecologically

The major challenge for Greens, I believe, is to create a broad, transformative social movement that can completely recast our society along ecological lines. In *The Green Alternative*, I proposed ecological approaches to many current social problems and outlined some political strategies that might help shape such a long-term effort. I proposed a radical decentralization of political and economic power, a merging of protest politics with efforts to build sustainable alternatives, and a new vision-oriented approach to political organization.⁵⁴ Efforts along these lines have begun in earnest in many parts of Europe and North America and all kinds of ecologists need to come together to make it a whole reality.

Social ecologist Murray Bookchin has probably gone the farthest toward describ-

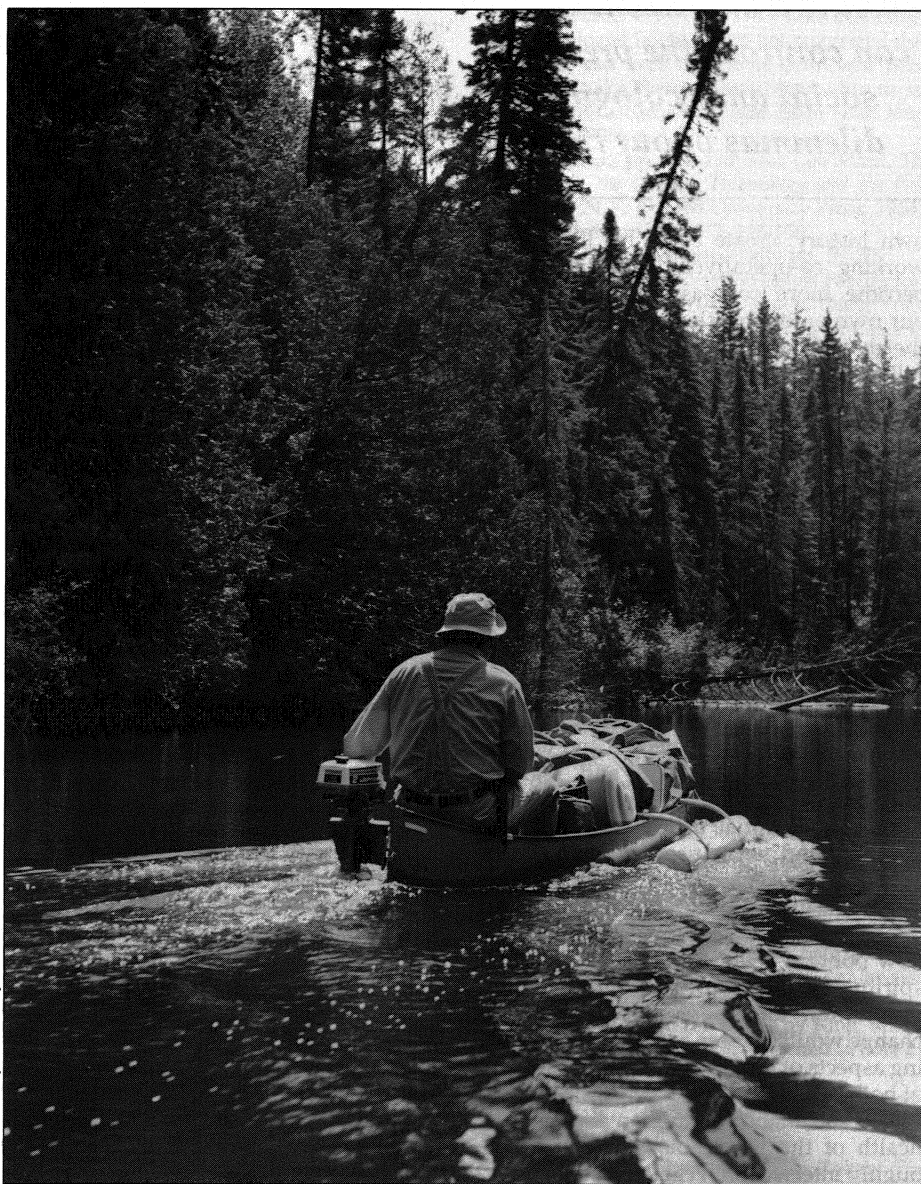
ing in philosophical terms what a truly ecological society might look like. It would restore the best qualities of traditional earth-centred societies—strong communal ties among people, complementarity of social roles, a deep respect for both natural patterns and human craft, and the sharing of community resources to sustain everyone's basic life needs. At the same time, such a society would uphold the values of universal humanity, personal autonomy and freedom that have emerged over the past several centuries. Humanity would "re-enter natural evolution," enhancing fecundity and diversity on nature's own terms and rejecting synthetic, manufactured ways of living. Personal and cultural development would be founded upon an "ecological interplay of social freedom and natural freedom."⁵⁵ The institutions that ruthlessly exploit resources, despoil the earth and repress people's deepest desires would be replaced with free, fully participatory forms evolved to foster the fullest relationship of humanity-in-nature:

Hierarchy, in effect, would be replaced by interdependence, and consociation would imply the existence of an organic core that meets the deeply felt biological needs for care, cooperation, security and love. Freedom would no longer be placed in opposition to nature, individuality to society, choice to necessity, or personality to the needs of social coherence.⁵⁶

Deep ecologists, on the other hand, see us as mired in an irresolvable conflict between anthropocentric and biocentric values. Others are beginning to see that the Green movement needs to transcend this division to embody a new *eco-centrism* that refuses to place humanity either above or below the rest of nature. This *eco-centrism* would place primary value on the ecological relationships among people in a community, among communities sharing one of the earth's diverse bioregions, and among bioregional confederations joining co-operatively to sustain the earth we all share. Intimate relationships, both among people and between people and the rest of the biosphere, would be the highest source of value and would evolve to reflect a more thoroughly ecological sensibility.

Instead of becoming further mired in sectarian debates between philosophical approaches that increasingly define themselves in opposition to one another, eco-activists need to begin evolving a broader approach, firmly grounded in a commitment to ecologically-sound living. Just as a diverse but coherent *ecofeminism* emerged as a creative body of thought from the women's peace movement, the anti-nuclear movement and a variety of feminist approaches to earth-based spirituality, earth-loving people from a variety of orientations need to begin working to evolve a more activist radical ecology that merges the best of the various existing tendencies, and furthers *ecocentric* principles

The romance of a withdrawal to the wilderness often becomes, for urban dwellers, a way of escaping their own personal complicity with the earth-denying ways of consumer society.



Ontario Ministry of Industry and Tourism

in the search for ecologically-sound ways of living and relating to the earth.⁵⁷

Such a radical ecology would be grounded in the growing experiences of the Green, bioregional, and other ecological movements, while acknowledging its roots in earlier social movements, in the ecological wisdom of indigenous peoples throughout the world, and in a full ecological diversity of political, cultural, philosophic and spiritual approaches to reconciling humanity and the rest of nature. It would embody an understanding of the dialectical relationships between the social and ecological dimensions of life, seeking to reveal both the social and politi-

cal roots of ecological problems and the origins of social problems in the culturally imposed alienation between human beings and the rest of the natural world.

Such an approach would embrace social ecology's celebration of nature as a grounding for human ethics and creativity—a potential "realm of freedom"—while placing primary value on the wealth of personal and communal relationships among people and between people and the earth. It would dissolve the false separation between "the natural evolution of the planet and the social history of the species".⁵⁸ It would seek to celebrate and enhance the power of people to shape our

***It is time to put aside
the polemics, the
vindictiveness and the
name-calling and begin to
create a movement that
can confront the pressing
social and ecological
dilemmas of our time.***

own history, create bases for living and working co-operatively, and help us to become more compassionate voices for our own emotions, the sanctity of all life, the joy and pain of birth and growth, and a full awareness of natural cycles.⁵⁹

Ecofeminism offers especially important insights toward these ends. Radical ecologists should seek to evolve nurturing ways of living and working with the earth and its cycles that could supplant the manipulative and ultimately destructive approaches of modern science and technology.

Politically, radical ecologists struggle for bioregional autonomy, refusing to co-operate with oppressive institutions that now exert control from outside of the community and also transforming all hierarchical relations among people and institutions within communities and regions. Differences among people would be celebrated as essential aspects of ecological diversity and never used as a reason for one group of people to dominate any other. The growing bioregional movement in North America probably best illustrates how political action, creative cultural and spiritual expression, philosophical contemplation and personal growth and change would be seen as mutually enhancing aspects of an ecological transformation of both self and society.

The sustenance of human life and the health of the whole biosphere are thoroughly interwoven. Whether we acknowledge it or not, our survival as a species is completely dependent upon the intactness of the web of life. Our notions of scientific progress are founded on the myth that we can compensate for, work around, and improve upon the basic patterns of nature, seeking to organize the human world around increasingly predictable, machine-like structures. Modern cybernetics and genetic engineering are based on this risky proposition, as is much of modern medicine.

The further the earth's ecosystems, our health and our personal lives are degraded by technological progress, the more our civilization becomes dependent upon technological solutions to try to manipu-

late its way out of the mess that has been created. The disruption of global climatic patterns, the weakening of the human immune system, and the long-term decline of both natural and agricultural ecosystems have shown that attempts at remaking nature in a technological mould will bring increasingly disastrous results.⁶⁰ We can never replace by technical intervention or design the ecological integrity that has emerged through billions of years of natural evolution. We need to live every day with the understanding that the vitality of life on this earth depends more than ever on the integrity of all life.

Over the past two decades, a sensitivity to ecological principles has gradually emerged throughout the developed world, and begun to affect the thinking of people in all walks of life. At the same time, the instruments of destruction have become more powerful, the excesses of consumerism have become more blatant and capital has consolidated its neo-colonial dominion over peoples and lands all over the earth. In the United States, where so many of the institutions and ideologies of destruction and control have their home base, new ecological movements are slowly beginning to influence people's thinking and behaviour at many levels of society.

The prevailing system retains its control over people's lives and psyches by exploiting the tremendous personal isolation and social fragmentation experienced by its subjects. Movements for social change have consistently reflected this fragmentation, losing themselves in internal battles and polemics that rarely help illuminate either the underlying nature of domination or the path to a different way.

The emerging Green movement in the United States threatens to pick itself to pieces before it even has a chance to take on the powers that be. This would have serious consequences for Greens in Canada, Europe and elsewhere, who often face the ravages of American corporate and military power with only minimal support from US activists. As we seek to draw the substantive lessons from continuing philosophical debates, it is time to put aside the polemics, the vindictiveness and the name-calling and begin to create a movement that can confront, on all levels, the pressing social and ecological dilemmas of our time. Our hopes for the survival of life on this planet, and for a richer, more fulfilled life for everyone, depend upon it as never before. □

An activist in the environmental and peace movements for over 15 years, Brian Tokar is the author of The Green Alternative: Creating an Ecological Future (R & E Miles, 1987), and a member of the editorial board of Green Letter.

Notes

¹ The outlook of social ecology is described most fully in Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom* (Palo Alto: Cheshire Books, 1982). See also, "What is Social Ecology?" in Bookchin's *The Modern Crisis* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1986).

² Both of the major texts of deep ecology have *Deep Ecology* as their title. The most often quoted is by Bill Devall and George Sessions (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985). See also the anthology edited by Michael Tobias (San Diego: Avant Books, 1985). The most overtly misanthropic versions of deep ecology have been voiced by spokespersons for the Earth First! movement (see below). The spiritual side of deep ecology is developed in John Seed and Joanna Macy, *Thinking Like a Mountain: Toward a Council of All Beings* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1988).

³ Bookchin's earliest discussion of the politically reconstructive qualities of ecological theory was his 1965 essay, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," which appears in his anthology, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1971). See also, "The Power to Destroy, The Power to Create," in Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980) and the first two chapters of *The Ecology of Freedom*.

⁴ Essays on deep ecology and Earth First!'s expression of its ideas appear regularly in the *Earth First!* journal, published by Ned Ludd Books of Tucson, Arizona (P.O. Box 5871, Tucson, Arizona, USA 85703). Devall and Sessions are regular correspondents (see notes below).

⁵ Murray Bookchin, "Social Ecology vs. Deep Ecology—A Challenge for the Ecology Movement," in *Green Perspectives*, 4/5 (Summer 1987). See also, Bookchin, "The Crisis in the Ecology Movement," *Green Perspectives*, 6 (Spring 1988), and Bookchin, "Yes! Whither Earth First?!" manuscript available from *Green Perspectives* (Box 111, Burlington, Vermont, USA 05402).

⁶ *Earth First!* journal, (November 1987), pp. 19-21.

⁷ See articles by George Wuerthner, Daniel Conner, "Miss Ann Thropy" and others, in *Earth First!* journal (September 1986, May 1987, August 1987, December 1987).

⁸ "Marx Faces Muir: The Roots of the Red vs. Green Tension," originally published in *Island Magazine*, reprinted in *The Trumpeter*, 5:2 (Spring 1988).

⁹ Eckersley's manuscript was scheduled for publication in the Summer 1987 issue. A modern version of the traditional Marxist outlook on progress can be found in George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left* (Boston: South End Press, 1987), pp. 224-231. For a social ecology critique, see Bookchin, "Marxism as Bourgeois Sociology," in *Toward an Ecological Society*. An ethical appeal for reconciliation appears in Frances Moore Lappé and J. Baird Callicott, "Marx Meets Muir: Toward a Synthesis of the Progressive Political and Ecological Visions," in *Tikkun*, 2:4 (September 1987).

¹⁰ Bookchin, *Our Synthetic Environment*, (New York: Harper and Row, revised 1974); see also note 3 above.

¹¹ Paul Shepard and Daniel McKinley, Eds., *The Subversive Science: Essays Toward an Ecology of Man* [sic] (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969).

¹² As late as 1978, members of the Clamshell Alliance and other anti-nuclear groups were

still lobbying the Sierra Club to take a stand on nuclear power.

¹³ For example, Petra Kelly, *Fighting for Hope* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), Rudolph Bahro, *Building the Green Movement* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1986), and chapter five of Carl Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

¹⁴ A provocative inside account is offered by Dave Foreman in the *Whole Earth Review*, 2 (Spring 1985).

¹⁵ For example, reports of ongoing action campaigns in *Earth First!* journal (May 1988 and June 1988); also Dave Foreman and Bill Haywood, *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* (Tucson, Arizona: Ned Ludd Books, 1987).

¹⁶ The Sierra Club, for example, has recently embraced the Earth First! position that no more wilderness acreage in California should be permitted to be lost to development. Estimates of the amount of "recoverable" wilderness have also begun to rise.

¹⁷ See note 7.

¹⁸ Quoted in Harold Gilliam's environmental column, "This World" magazine, *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 6, 1987.

¹⁹ For example, E.B. Maple, "Ideology as Material Force: Earth First! and the Problem of Language," *Fifth Estate*, 23:1 (Spring 1988), Box 02548, Detroit, Michigan, USA 48202.

²⁰ Bill Devall, "A Spanner in the Woods: An Interview with Dave Foreman," *Simply Living*, 2:12, pp. 40-43. (PO Box 704, Manley 2095, New South Wales, Australia).

²¹ See *The Nation* (December 12, 1987), letters by Ynestra King, John Ely and Sharon Helsel; (April 2, 1988), letter by Charlene Spretnak; and Kirkpatrick Sale, "Deep Ecology and its Critics" (May 14, 1988), pp. 670-675; letters by Edward Abbey, Murray Bookchin and others in the *Utne Reader* 24 (November 1987) and 25 (January 1988); "The Population Bomb: An Explosive Issue for the Environmental Movement?" (various authors), *Utne Reader*, 27 (May 1988); Ynestra King, "Coming of Age with the Greens," in *Zeta Magazine*, 2 (February 1988), pp. 16-19; George Bradford, "How Deep is Deep Ecology: A Challenge to Radical Environmentalism," *Fifth Estate* 22:3 (Fall 1987) and follow-up letters in the Spring 1988 issue. Other feminist critiques of deep ecology include Sharon Doubiago, "Deeper than Deep Ecology," in *The New Catalyst*, 10 (Winter 1987/88), PO Box 99, Lillooet, British Columbia V0K 1V0; Janet Biehl, "Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology: Unresolvable Conflict," in *Green Perspectives*, 3 (1987); and Marti Kheel, "Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology: Reflections on Identity and Difference," unpublished manuscript, 1987.

²² Dave Foreman, "Whither Earth First!?" *Earth First!* journal (November 1987).

²³ Frequently cited discussions of the population issue in the environmental movement include Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine, 1968), and William R. Catton, Jr., *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980).

²⁴ Catton, *Overshoot*, pp. 100-155, and "On the Dire Destiny of Human Lemmings," in Tobias, *Deep Ecology*, pp. 74-89; Daniel Conner, *Earth First!* (May 1987).

²⁵ Quoted in John L. Hess, "Malthus, Then and Now," *The Nation* (April 18, 1987), pp. 496-500.

²⁶ For example, Daniel Connor and "Miss Ann Thropy."

²⁷ For example, Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), pp. 42-68; Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins, *Food First: Beyond the Myth of Scarcity* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), chapters 7, 11 and 12; and the pamphlet, "Central America: Roots of Environmental Destruction," published by the Environmental Project on Central America (300 Broadway, Suite 28, San Francisco, California, USA 94133).

²⁸ Jonathan Lieberman, "Too Many People?," *New York Review of Books* (June 26, 1986), pp. 36-42; Tony Kaye, "The Birth Dearth: Conservatives Conceive a Population Crisis," *The New Republic* (Jan. 19, 1987), reprinted in the *Utne Reader*, 27 (May-June 1988), pp. 91-93.

²⁹ Bernard Nietzschmann, "The Third World War," in *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 11:3 (Summer 1987) analyzes 120 wars currently being fought around the world, of which 84 are between established states and recognized internal nations of the Third World.

³⁰ See note 27.

³¹ Lappé and Collins, *Food First*, p. 18; Nicholas Guppy, "Tropical Deforestation: A Global View," in *Foreign Affairs*, 62:4 (Spring 1984), p. 946.

³² Patrick Giantonio, personal communication.

³³ For example, George Wuerthner, "An Ecological View of the Indian," in *Earth First!* journal (August 1987), pp. 20-23.

³⁴ Lappé and Collins, *Food First!*, pp. 42-46; Guppy, *Tropical Deforestation*, pp. 938-941.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 941.

³⁶ Jodi L. Jacobson, "Planning the Global Family," *Worldwatch Paper No. 80* (December 1987), Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. USA 20036, also excerpted in the *Utne Reader*, 27 (May-June 1988), pp. 88-90. Also see Lieberman, "Too Many People?"

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁸ Jacobson, "Planning the Global Family," and Lisa Leghorn and Katherine Parker, *Woman's Worth: Sexual Economics and the World of Women* (Boston: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1981), quoted in Starhawk, "Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality and n Eco-feminism," manuscript in press.

³⁹ David Brower, founder of Friends of the Earth and the Earth Island Institute, estimates that the total demographic load of the United States may be as high as 50 percent.

⁴⁰ Stephen J. Rose, *The American Profile Poster* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), p. 30; also *Geodata 2* (Winter 1988), p. 2, P.O. Box 10268, Oakland, California, USA 94610. On the environmental consequences of militarism, see Brian Tokar, *The Green Alternative: Creating an Ecological Future* (San Pedro, California: R and F Miles, 1987), pp. 124-5.

⁴¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 7, 1988, p.1; *San Francisco Examiner*, April 3, 1988, p.1.

⁴² Lynn Jacobs, "Free Our Public Lands," self-published pamphlet, (PO Box 2203, Cottonwood, Arizona USA 86326).

⁴³ *Business Week*, February 2, 1987, pp. 64-65; *New York Times*, June 9, 1987, p. 10; *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 27, 1988, p.1.

⁴⁴ For example, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased by almost 25 percent in the past 35 years after many generations of relative stability (J. E. Lovelock, in the conference proceedings, *Is the Earth a Living Organism?*, National Audubon Society, 1986). Almost all of the above background radiation and carcinogenic chemicals in the lower atmosphere have also appeared within the

same time span. See Philip Shabecoff, "Vast Changes in Environment Seen," *New York Times*, November 4, 1987, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 17, 1987, p.1.

⁴⁶ Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: Myth and Symbol in the American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950). William Cronon, in *Changes in the Land* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), and Frederick Turner, in *Beyond Geography* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983) take a grimmer view. Ecologist Jamie Sayen has suggested that the soils and wet climate of Northern New England make these forests better able to recover from disturbances—see *Earth First!* journal (May 1988), p. 4.

⁴⁷ Smith, *ibid.*, pp. 127-130; also Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1964).

⁴⁸ Marx, *ibid.*, pp. 120-133, 146-150.

⁴⁹ Smith, *Virgin Land*, especially pp. 59-70.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-58; also Vernon Lewis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1927), vol. I, p. 133.

⁵¹ Smith, *Virgin Land*, pp. 71-89; also Michael Cohen, *The Pathless Way: John Muir and American Wilderness* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

⁵² *The Sierra Club Yodler* (February 1988), pp. 8-11, 16.

⁵³ Arne Naess, "The Basis of Deep Ecology," *Resurgence* 126 (January 1988), pp. 5-6. *Resurgence* is distributed in the US by Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pennsylvania.

⁵⁴ See note 40.

⁵⁵ Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom*, p. 319.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁵⁷ On the politics of ecofeminism, see, for example, Ynestra King, "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology," in *Harbinger* 2 (Fall 1983), 211 E. 10th St., New York, New York, 10003; Charlene Spretnak, "Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering," in *Woman of Power* 9 (Spring 1988), PO Box 827, Cambridge, Massachusetts USA 02138; and the "Feminism and Ecology" issue of *Heresies* 13 (1981), PO Box 766, Canal St. Station, New York, New York, USA 10013. The definition of ecofeminism has become increasingly contentious following an attempt by Kirkpatrick Sale to report on a major national ecofeminist conference without having attended. See *The Nation*, September 26, 1987; also the pieces by King, Spretnak, Doubiago, Biehl and Kheel, cited in note 21 above.

⁵⁸ Ynestra King, "Ecofeminism: On the Necessity of History and Mystery," *Woman of Power* 9 (Spring 1988), p. 44.

⁵⁹ Starhawk, Doubiago, note 21; Tokar, *The Green Alternative*, pp. 9-10. See also "A Basic Call to Consciousness," Akwesasne Notes, 1978, Mohawk Nation, Rooseveltown, New York, USA 13683; also Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987) and the sources in note 57, above.

⁶⁰ Brian Tokar, "On Science, Technology and Popular Consciousness" (unpublished manuscript, 1987). See also, Tokar, *The Green Alternative*, pp. 21-26. Environmentalist Walter Truett Anderson, in *To Govern Evolution* (Boston: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1987), defends the dubious ideal of remaking nature as a fulfillment of human destiny. Deep ecologist George Sessions has recently embraced the term ecocentrism, but with slightly different connotations; see *The Trumpeter*, 5:2 (Spring 1988).

GREEN HUMOUR

ARTHUR BLACK'S MAPLE • LAUGHING LESSONS • MUTANTS • DARK COMEDIANS • ETC.

ALTERNATIVES

PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY, TECHNOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT \$4.95



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GREEN HUMOUR



Volume 16 Number 2

June/July 1989

FEATURES

- 16 **Seven Ways to Bring Humour to Your
Environmental Group** Charles Varon
- 24 **The Environmentalist as Dark Comedian** Peter Timmerman
- 32 **Debate Rages Over Shocking
Half Human/Half Animal Babies** William M. Glenn

REPORTS

- 6 **Grilling the candidates: Environmentalists wrestle
with competing strategies in election surveys** Ingrid Liepa
- 9 **No forest is an island** Jeffrey Kohl
- 10 **Environmental concerns fuel Baltic nationalism** Ingrid Liepa
- 11 **Public pressure forces firm to scramble** Jeffrey Kohl
- 12 **CBC becomes forest battleground** Ingrid Liepa

HUMOUR

- 13 **Keeping up with the Joneses** Jeffrey Kohl
- 21 **Red humour** Fikret Berkes
- 22 **Bossin's Home Remedy for Nuclear War** Bob Bossin
- 28 **Cat got your tongue?** Mark Stabb
- 29 **Anxious Beef** J.B. Nimble
- 30 **Dancing in the dark** Jeff Rockburn
- 31 **It's a gas** David Harms
- 38 **Basic Green** Arthur Black
- 40 **Operation Mung Bean** Greg Michalenko

DEPARTMENTS

- Editorial 1 Reviews 41
- Canadian, World, Tech Notes 2 Books Received for Review 47
- Call for Papers 48 Podium 55
- Letters 49

LETTERS

Tokar is wrong—Devall

I would like to respond to several points raised by Brian Tokar in his article "Exploring the New Ecologies: Social Ecology, Deep Ecology and the Future of Green Political Thought" [*Alternatives* 15:4, November/December 1988].

Tokar accepts at face value the belief that there is a fight between deep ecology and social ecology. There is no fight. Although Murray Bookchin, in some of his rhetoric, announces "Social Ecology vs. Deep Ecology," there is no such conflict. Bookchin and some of his associates made an attack on some of the positions taken by authors of individual articles in the *Earth First!* journal and on some approaches to a deep ecology position, but no theorists of deep ecology have mounted any attacks on social ecology.

Social ecology to me is part of the deep, long-range ecology movement. We need positive, ecotopian visions of society and we need practical, social reconstruction which masses of people can understand in their daily lives. Social ecology means transforming our social relationships to be in continuous harmony with natural patterns and rhythms.

Much analysis of the social factors leading to the current environmental crisis is needed. Marxists tend to look at the process of imperialistic capitalism. Feminists look at men, especially patriarchal societies during the past five hundred years, as primary destroyers of nature. Some historians see Judeo-Christian religion as a primary cause of our environmental crisis. All these historical analyses may yield insights and greater understanding. We also need positive visions of the future and suggestions for political strategies for cultural transformation.

Theorists of deep ecology have defended a biocentric position and criticized narrow anthropocentrism. I certainly have never denied that humans are marvelous animals, different in some ways from any other animals, conscious of themselves, seeking meaning in their lives. I believe humans have a great potential for development—of their own minds, of creations of their minds including art and science, ritual and poetry.

Deep ecologist theorists have criticized the arrogance of narrow humanism and conceited philosophers who see humans as above, outside of, or lord and master [*sic*] of the rest of creation.

I deplore polemics, accusations and

name-calling and I think Murray Bookchin and his associates did a great disservice to the emerging green movement and to the whole deep, long-range ecology movement by the style, timing and rhetoric of their attacks on deep ecology.

On the politics of population, I wish Tokar had accurately quoted Arne Naess. The deep ecology "platform" drafted by Naess and George Sessions as

a tentative list of statements intended to generate dialogue includes the statement, "The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease." This is not a Malthusian statement.

In 1987 Naess defended the considerably more controversial statement, "The flourishing of human life and cultures

You say tomato ...

In writing our book, *Harps & Hoods: Ice-breeding Seals of the Northwest Atlantic*, we accepted from the onset that not all readers would agree with our objectives, our presentation and our choice of selected readings. We did not anticipate, however, that any of our readers, including your reviewer, D. Scott Slocombe (*Alternatives* 16:1, pp. 52-3), would also use different dictionaries.

Slocombe opines that "throughout the book ... Inuit is spelled incorrectly as 'Innu'." Our *Webster's* actually gives *Inuit* as an alternative spelling for *Innu* and, consistently, there is an art gallery in Toronto called *Innu*.

Mr. Slocombe also suggests that the selected readings "should have included some works that cover sides of the issue neglected by Lavigne and Kovacs." In the preface of our book, we note that the "readings and the bibliographies they contain should direct interested readers to additional material so that they can pursue their own specific interests in more detail or from different perspectives." Had Mr. Slocombe checked in the *Report on the Royal Commission on Seals and the Sealing Industry in Canada* (included in our selected readings), he would have found reference to many articles and books covering most aspects of the sealing issue, including the books he recommends by Coish and Herscovici.

Finally, Mr. Slocombe speculates about our "principal concerns" and our personal views about the "best use for seals." His speculations are not only somewhat presumptuous and contradictory, they are also incorrect. □

D.M. Lavigne and K.M. Kovacs
University of Guelph
Guelph, Ontario

I say tomato

While "Inuit" may, indeed, be a variant of "Innu", etymology is not the same as correct usage. "Inuit" has been the accepted spelling among Inuit and non-Inuit alike for at least most of this century—regardless of how some art galleries choose to spell their names.

I will also stand by my remarks on the authors' reading list. A book aimed at the non-specialist reader should not require him or her to search multi-volume government reports for works covering both sides of the issue.

Finally, it is in the nature of any review to be somewhat presumptuous, but I do not think my assessment of Lavigne and Kovacs's "principal concerns" and personal views to be mere speculation. My assessment was based on a careful reading of the book, and is an interpretation any reader can confirm or deny. If my conclusions were not only contradictory, but also incorrect, perhaps Lavigne and Kovacs might have stated what their principal concerns and views really were. □

D. Scott Slocombe
Waterloo, Ontario

requires that human population is substantially smaller than at the present time." Naess is concerned with what he calls "ultimate goals" for human society—richness of culture, literature, art, music, compassionate human relationships. These goals do not require a large human population. Huge populations tend to reduce the achievement of these goals.

These "ultimate goals" for development of human potential, however, should not come at the expense of diversity of other species. Thus the next statement in the "platform" is "present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening."

It may take a long time before the total world population is stabilized at a much lower level than the present five billion. Much discussion is needed concerning appropriate forms of birth control and the ethical considerations surrounding family planning. For Bookchin and his associates to leap to the conclusion that all supporters of deep ecology accept unethical or genocidal solutions is totally unwarranted. However, it should be noted that we may not be able to reach consensus on an ethic for population control.

I find it most interesting that both the extreme left and right-wing groups have made the population issue almost undiscussable in political discourse in North America. Family planning programmes have been harassed and in many areas immobilized in the 1980s over the issue of abortion and the concern by some leftists that the population bomb is some kind of conspiracy of the Ford Foundation.

I whole-heartedly agree with Tokar's

conclusion. It is time for Bookchin and his associates to put aside polemics, vindictiveness and name-calling and get on with the deep, long-range ecology movement.

There is enough work for all of us exploring areas of mutual agreement in eco-feminism, social ecology, deep ecology and green movements. People can work to a deep ecology type of position from many different religions and philosophical positions.

Each bioregion may develop its own approach to dwelling appropriately with right livelihood. I invite continued discussion with social ecologists. □

Bill Devall

Humboldt State University
Arcata, California

Tokar is wrong —Kaulbars

I am writing to comment on Brian Tokar's article "Exploring the New Ecologies: ..." [*Alternatives* 15:4, November/December 1988]. I was disappointed to discover that *Alternatives* has joined the current fad of deep ecology and Earth First! bashing. While I do not object to thoughtful critiques of any group that I belong to or philosophy that I hold I do not feel that the article was accurate or just on several important points.

A critique of a particular philosophy or creed obviously requires that the author(s) discuss the tenets, premises, etc. of that philosophy (e.g. Sylvan's critique of deep ecology in *Radical Philoso-*

phy). The tenets of deep ecology are never mentioned in this article, much less discussed.

A critique of a journal, philosophy, and/or movement should focus on the commonly held beliefs as expressed in the dominant writings. For example, the beliefs of IRA gunners are not taken as representative of all Catholics. Tokar focused on a few select articles in the *Earth First!* journal and ignored the writings of frequent contributors such as Devall, Sessions, Manes, etc. Further, he took the *Earth First!* journal to be the only source of deep ecology writings, ignoring other journals such as the *Trumpeter*, *Environmental Ethics* and *The Deep Ecologist*, and other works by Sessions, Naess, Seed, Martin, Jung, etc. Critiques of factions within a group are valid, but it should be made clear that the sub-group is not representative.

The article refers to the "bitter feud" between social ecology and deep ecology. I am reasonably active in the environmental movement yet the only evidence I have seen of this bitter feud are the reports in the alternative press. The *Earth First!* journal has published a couple of responses to critiques of deep ecology, and Dave Foreman has made a few remarks about social ecology, but largely the "feud" is a non-issue and gets little attention in deep ecology writings. It would seem that the "feud" is a greater fascination to the press than the alleged combatants. Nonetheless, I fear the press is creating a "feud" by perpetuating misconceptions and over-emphasizing minor differences.

In your article Dave Foreman is again criticized for his "racist" remarks concerning Ethiopia, Mexico, etc. These remarks were implicitly posited as logical "If—Then" statements, and were accompanied by a rationale for making them. He has since been "quoted" as advocating the "Then" statement, and no mention is made of the conditional context or the rationale. The conditional context is "If we don't change our current practices with respect to the production and distribution of aid to the Third World."

The question of population levels has been a point of much of the controversy surrounding deep ecology and Earth First! The "usual" exchange goes something like this:

Earth First!—Current population levels are not sustainable, the health of the planet and humanity requires a drastic reduction in human population.

Response—We produce enough food for everybody, and it is inequitable distribution that has resulted in hunger and starvation.

The response is true enough, and I

Challenge to contributors

Apart from helping to develop an "ethos" or "ideological climate" conducive to transforming society into a sustainable system, I would very much like to see your magazine have one or more regular columns or stories on practical large scale sustainable projects or industries.

The main anti-ecology/anti-green argument is that we would shut down the economy and everyone would be out of a job. We need to show sustainable development does not mean a return to the cave, but that a sustainable society can provide interesting and rewarding jobs and a comfortable if not as wasteful style of life.

Further, we need to be developing alternative sustainable growth and development now to have an alternative work and economy off and running. If there is a switch to a sustainable society, it can't start from zero. A transition period will be necessary.

I hope you can address these issues in your magazine. In particular practical solutions/suggestions would be helpful to those of us who would like to assist in new sustainable developments, now. □

Robbie Newton

Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan

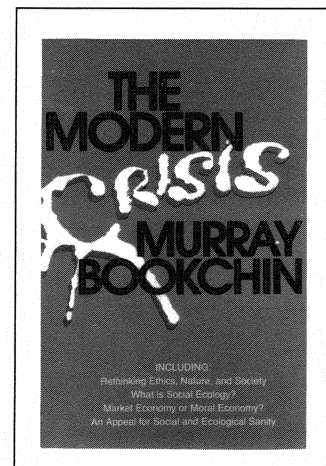
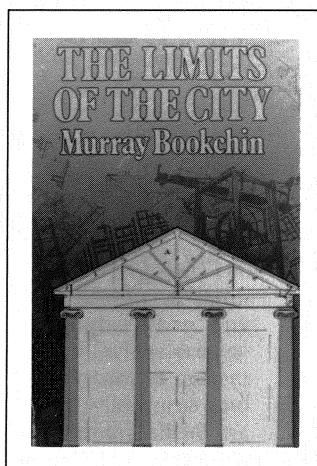
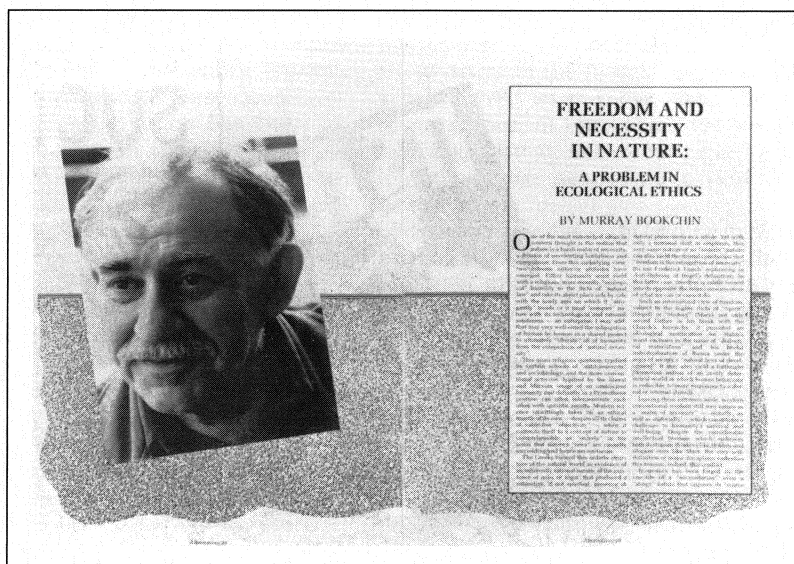
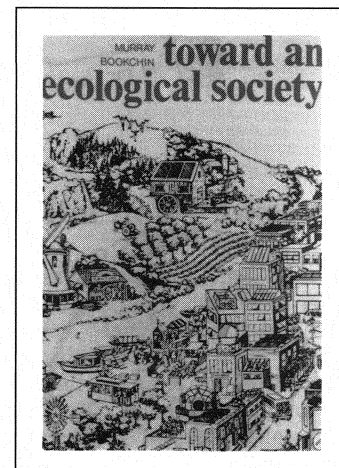
found the analysis in this article to be a thoughtful and accurate description of the causes and consequences of hunger and human misery in the world today. Further, the article is a good critique of Western culture and proposes realistic and necessary changes for addressing the social needs of the population. Unfortunately it is irrelevant to the question of long-term sustainability because it rests on two invalid assumptions. It is assumed that food and a few basic resources are the only factors limiting human population. Human health and happiness require more than food; we need clean air and water, and the energy and resources to provide for other basic needs such as shelter. I would also suggest that we have spiritual needs which cannot be met simply by supplying the minimal physical needs. Assuming present and probable technologies, the best evidence suggests that at current population levels we cannot meet any of these other needs indefinitely.

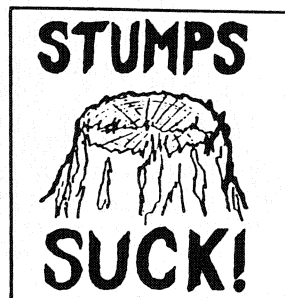
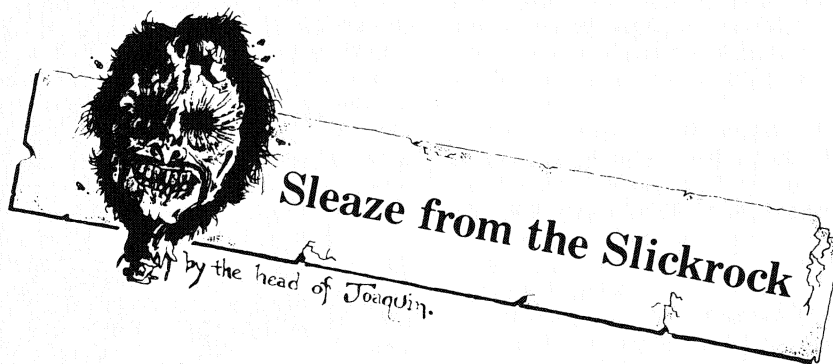
It is assumed that present food production technologies are sustainable, and that with equitable distribution we could feed everyone indefinitely. In fact our present technologies are manifestly not sustainable. Our agricultural practices are heavily dependent on ecological subsidies in the form of non-renewable fossil fuels and they are rapidly eroding the resource base necessary to produce food.

Given that current levels of food production are not sustainable, one is confronted with the spectre of a population that is rapidly expanding as our ability to feed it is diminishing. The result can only be horror and suffering for hundreds of millions, if not billions of people. To avert that suffering Earth First! advocates a planned reduction of the human population to a level that will allow for a life of health and dignity for all humans. The issue deserves a cogent and rational rebuttal, instead Earth First!ers are simply branded as "misanthropes" and the issue is ignored.

Name calling has always been an effective device for discrediting the opposition without ever having actually to address the points raised, which always leads me to suspect that the people slinging the epithets have no rational response. As an aside, I would have thought that the misanthropes are those who advocate policies that will result in the brutalization and starvation of billions of people, but perhaps I misunderstand the word.

You refer to the *Earth First!* journal as publishing "pseudo-scholarly tomes." I presume that you refer to the pieces by Ned Ross, Will Flowers, Christopher Manes, Bill Devall, and a host of other biologists, philosophers and scholars?





As a professional biologist I have found the articles in the *Earth First!* journal to be scientifically as sound as most of the professional literature, and much better reading. I would be interested in a detailed, scientific critique of these articles as I have not seen any. I am not as qualified to comment on the articles dealing with philosophy, mythology, etc., but I have found them to be interesting and thought provoking.

Some final points:

- Earth First! is not an organization; you can't join it, be a member, or in any way belong to it. The Earth First! movement subscribes to certain beliefs (easily available, but not mentioned in the article); the extent to which a particular individual is able to live up to those beliefs is a matter of conscience. There are Earth First! local groups, but belonging to one is not a prerequisite for being an Earth First!er.

- Earth First! local groups are not "largely autonomous"; they are wholly autonomous.

- Dave Foreman edits the *Earth First!* journal and is a co-founder of Earth First! His writings have no more credibility than anyone else's and he does not "speak" for Earth First! (as he has stated in print); he certainly doesn't speak for me. His alleged position as leader of the non-existent Earth First! organization is debatable at best.

Deep ecology benefits from thoughtful critique, but there is very little available. I would have found this article both more useful and more enjoyable if it had addressed deep ecology and/or Earth First! with the same thought and insight as it did the issue of resource distribution. In my opinion the article as written was inaccurate, biased and unlikely to promote the unity that Tokar calls for. □

Mike Kaulbars
Earth First! Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

Tokar is wrong —McCormick

I found Brian Tokar's article, "Exploring the New Ecologies," [*Alternatives* 15:4, November/December 1988] fascinating. As a supporter of the deep ecology position, I found it refreshing to read someone coming out of the social ecology tradition trying to move beyond the full scale "attack-mode rhetoric" resorted to by so many of its adherents. However, I would like to challenge Mr. Tokar to move even further towards the inclusive ecocentric position he fleetingly mentions toward the end of his paper.

Before this can happen, however, Tokar will have to go deeper in rooting out the subconscious prejudices in his use of language regarding deep ecology. Tokar claims that "many deep ecologists in the West have embraced a more isolationist frontier ethic, with its harsher, more rugged view of wild nature and human nature," and that the "land ethic of the far West," "often following the historical example of Daniel Boone," saw the land as "a powerful force to be tamed." He then repeatedly contrasts this sort of motif with the social ecology tradition: "Social ecologists in New England have inherited an affirmative vision of human communities sharing a co-operative relationship with the land," and states that the settlements of the East "were founded upon well-articulated ideals of harmony with the land, and people worked for generations to evolve relatively stable—though distinctly Europeanized—relationships with the forests, the rivers, the soils, and, in better times, the native people."

While there may be some elements of truth in all this, I think Tokar largely overstates his case here. He tends to bend over backwards to describe social ecology in the most co-operative, harmonious terms, and then through guilt by association ties deep ecology up with harsh, "isolationist frontier ethics," perhaps even "following the historical example of Daniel Boone." Here he veers dangerously close to the excesses of his mentor Murray Bookchin, who, in one of his celebrated blasts against deep ecology (see *Socialist Review*, 3/88) likens supporters of this position to "barely disguised racists, survivalists, macho Daniel Boones and outright social reactionaries," formulating "vicious notions," and "an ideological toxic dump," in league with "Pharaoh, the Buddha ... Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini" (a small sampling). Perhaps this is the sort of harmonious, co-operative ethic Brian Tokar is telling us social ecologists are so unswervingly devoted to?

Secondly, I would like to touch on Tokar's comments on overpopulation and human carrying capacity. The fact that certain members of Earth First! have made ludicrously extreme statements on population control is not in question here; these comments have been rightly denounced in this periodical and elsewhere. (See my "How Deep is Social Ecology?", *Kick it Over*, November 1988 for a further discussion of this.) What is less clear is the frequent charge—repeated by Tokar—that advocates of population stabilization are inherently "apologists for the wealthy class," creating "openings for all manner of naïve, dangerous and even openly racist proposals."

While it may be possible to quote advocates of population limitation who have made "openly racist proposals," it is also true that proponents of population growth have recently made many ridiculous and unsubstantiated claims.

Reagan Republican Ben Wattenberg, in *The Birth Dearth* (1987), claims that the US has now become severely underpopulated, and will be unable to wage successful wars in the future if it does not reverse this trend immediately. In his horrible opus, *The Ultimate Resource*, Reagan/Bush population guru Julian Simon tells us:

The standard of living has risen along with the size of the world's population since the beginning of recorded time. And with increase in income and population have come less severe shortages, lower costs, and an increased availability of resources, including a cleaner environment and greater access to natural recreation areas. And there is no convincing reason why these trends toward a better life and toward lower prices for materials should not continue indefinitely.

While, as Anne and Paul Ehrlich have suggested, this sort of material would make a delightful addition to the April Fool's section of any scientific journal, the level of seriousness these views have acquired in recent years has been no laughing matter. In their recent work *Earth* (1987), the Ehrlichs trace the history of international population conferences through the Reagan era, concluding that the views of Simon and Wattenberg were not only taken seriously by the Reagan/Bush administration, but were adopted as national policy. Further, we have just lived through two full terms of Reagan and his advisors talking this "planet earth as endless cornucopia" nonsense, and try as I might, I have not been able to detect one word from Tokar, Bookchin or any of their associates directly criticizing any of these developments. What are we to make of this admission? Are we to assume their silence implies consent?

In closing, I would simply say that however valid the point may be—made by Tokar and others—that issues of economic and gender disparity must be seriously considered as part of the population equation, this does not change, for instance, the fact that growth cannot continue forever, or that it is not in the best interest of poor families to have 10 or 12 children when their ability to provide for 2 or 3 is severely strained. The human race is still expanding at numbers astronomically higher than any point in known history, while ecosystems are already overstressed at present levels, with remaining wilderness and non-human species habitat shrinking rapidly. However much fun it may be to

call proponents of population limitation "eco-fascists", "imperialist running dogs" and so forth, the current fashionable tendency to mock, ridicule, or in some cases outright deny *any* danger in unchecked human population growth merely increases the certainty of widespread ecological disaster within our lifetime. □

Bill McCormick
Crozet, Virginia

No, I'm not—Tokar

The response to my article on deep ecology and social ecology has been very telling, so far. Many people have said and written that it helped them understand what all the fighting was about and have thanked me profusely. Only a few strong partisans on either side of the "debate" have condemned it, with an odd mixture of defensiveness (illustrated above) and overt hostility (Murray Bookchin called it "insidious" and has resorted to character assassination to try to discredit the piece). I suppose the article served its purpose, then; the responses confirm once again the weariness and dismay with which most ecological activists have come to view this whole matter.

Fortunately, in the eight or nine months since the article was completed, there has been some significant effort on the part of deep ecology writers to clarify their position (Bookchin, however, says they have simply changed their position). It is not as much of a clarification as one would like, but a valuable step, especially given the assertion by Arne Naess in the current issue of *The Ecologist* that deep ecology does not intend to be a coherent philosophy at all, merely the product of a movement's overall thinking (Devall and Sessions have made similar statements). Still, most of the known deep ecology "spokespeople" have disavowed all of the more overtly misanthropic statements made by a few of their adherents, and Earth First! people on the whole seem to have rejected Foreman's assertion that people should accept his "line" on population ("Malthus Was Right," a direct quote) or leave the group.

Unfortunately, there has been no such clarification on the part of Bookchin and his friends, just a reassertion of the need for the ecology movement to be engaged in social and historical analysis (which all but a few individuals seem to agree with) and an endless repetition of the same few obnoxious and clearly offensive quotes from Foreman and Abbey.

People scratching their heads to understand social ecology's positive theoretical contributions have been left to seek out Bookchin's earlier writings, such as *The Ecology of Freedom*, and the immensely valuable essays, "Toward a Philosophy of Nature" (in Michael Tobias' *Deep Ecology* book) and "Freedom and Necessity in Nature," which appeared in *Alternatives* 13:4, 1986.

I never pretended to be an analyst of scholarly debates in philosophy, merely an observer of the role of philosophical discussions in shaping a political movement. For activists seeking to overturn this society's life-denying ways, one cru-

cial question is, "What is the relationship between the destruction of the natural world and the agents responsible for carrying that destruction out?" Social ecology begins by asserting that the idea of dominating nature emerged with the rise of structures of social domination in early human societies (essentially the late Neolithic). Many deep ecologists at first asserted that such concerns did not matter, that "humans", as an undifferentiated mass, simply had to stop placing themselves above other species. Still, deep ecologists have gone a long way toward articulating the inherent worth of all of nature (an idea elaborated in the introduction to my book, *The Green Alternative*) and exposing the psychological toll of an exaggerated anthropocentrism.

The social and historical dimensions are still underplayed, however, by most deep ecologists. George Sessions has attempted to begin correcting the situation in a recent article in the *Trumpeter* (5:2, Spring 1988), however I believe his embracing of the term "ecocentrism" (a term I first heard from the bioregional poet Gary Lawless in 1984) falls short of the full synthesis of ecological and social analysis that I believe is necessary (I admit I have not yet seen the second installment of his article).

Warwick Fox, in a recent article in *Environmental Ethics* (Vol. 11, 1988), argues that, by bringing all of nature into the realm of ethical consideration, deep ecology "subsume[s] the egalitarian concerns associated for example with feminism, Marxism, anti-racism and anti-imperialism." This is an admirable statement of solidarity with other movements but, as anyone familiar with the long, difficult debates between adherents of these various other movements will attest, assertions of philosophical inclusiveness often merely gloss over the particular experiences of each of the distinct classes of people (and other beings, too) that are systematically trounced upon by this society. Try and convince people in the ghetto who have to fight racism, economic deprivation and often daily exposure to toxic waste that it is okay to subsume their concerns under the needs of all species.

People who follow the various ethical debates about humanity and nature might also find it valuable to read critical theorist Tim Luke's critique of deep ecology in the Summer 1988 issue of *Telos*. Luke, who is sympathetic to deep ecology's accomplishments on the whole, suggests that deep ecologists are too unaware of their own anthropocentric biases, which are revealed by their reliance on modern philosophical categories such as freedom, fulfillment, rights and subjectivity. Such biases are not a

product of insufficient identification with nature, but are intrinsic to philosophical discourse. Deep ecology, argues Luke, needs to be far more aware of its own place in human discourse and its relationship to other movements, rather than pretending to somehow be above it all.

As for the population issue, I think it is fair to say that nobody who understands ecology believes the present situation is sustainable, or that it is simply a matter of growing more food. The question is whether high population is a cause or a symptom of ecological and social breakdown and I have tried to argue that it is the latter. Simply reducing numbers, by whatever means, is not a solution, so long as the dominant economic system is predicated on the dynamic of growth and expansion at all costs. A predatory industrial capitalism (and I include the state capitalist economies of the East in this category) would continue to devour resources, destroy indigenous peoples, and force migrations from traditional lands to cities, even if there were a tenth as many people. The problem is far more complex than mere numbers, as I tried to explain in my article. As for Wattenberg and Simon, they are merely apologists for the bankrupt ideology of grow-or-die (and for militarism, too) and McCormick is totally correct to relegate them to the April Fool's column. The same kind of nonsense lies behind the European campaigns to increase family size, to which I alluded on page 36 of the *Alternatives* article (see also my footnote 28).

Finally, I am pleased that my discussion of the cultural differences that underlie Eastern and Western views of nature in the US was provocative, and that everyone can find "elements of truth" in it. It was never meant to be a deterministic argument, only a suggestive one. As a New Englander who recently lived in California for two years, I was struck by the pervasiveness of some types of misanthropic thinking, not only among deep ecologists, but among all sorts of people in the West. A little historical research confirmed that there were long-surviving threads of continuity. My "Myths from the Land" discussion was not an attempt to "explain" the existence of deep ecology or social ecology, only to try to better comprehend the degree of hostility and miscommunication between the two camps. As for those who have attempted to explain it all away in terms of Bookchin's abrasive personality, I am saddened to admit that there is a strong "element of truth" in that interpretation, too. □

Brian Tokar
Plainfield, Vermont

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Cover photo by Liz Pope

Volume 16 Number 3

October/November 1989

FEATURES

- >Thinking Globally and Acting Locally.....*Julia Gardner and Mark Roseland*
- 26 **Part I—Thinking Globally: The Role of Social Equity in Sustainable Development**
- 36 **Part II—Acting Locally: Community Strategies for Equitable Sustainable Development**
- 50 >Feminist Utopian Vision and Social Change*Jacqueline Pearce*

REPORTS

- 18 >“No queremos el refugio”:
Conservation and community in Costa Rica*Dorothy Anger*
- 23 >Giving “PEP” to Pointe Sainte-Charles:
Community economic development in a big city*Nancy Neamtan*
- 7 Noranda withdraws from pulp venture,
may invest in recycling instead*Ingrid Liepa*
- 8 Alberta commits forests to pulp*Ingrid Liepa*
- 10 New Zealand's South Westland rainforest
wilderness to be preserved*Colin Michael Hall*
- 11 Urban yuppies go wild, threaten plants*Douglas Symington*
- 12 Fighting toxic terrorism*Jeffrey Kohl and Anukriti Sud*
- 15 Greens grow in France, finally*John D. Ely*
- 16 USSR has environmental troubles*Liana Kremer and Mark Simpson*

DEPARTMENTS

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|---------------------------------|----|
| Editorial | 1 | Reviews | 55 |
| Canadian, World, Tech Notes | 2 | Books Received for Review | 61 |
| Harms' Way | 6 | Letters | 63 |
| Call for Papers | 34 | Podium | 67 |

IS SUSTAINABILITY POSSIBLE WITHOUT EQUITY?

is the first issue in an *Alternatives* series entitled

ASKING THE HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

LETTERS

A response by Bookchin

To respond as briefly as possible to letters critical of my views in the last issue of *Alternatives*:

1. I am truly delighted that Bill Devall is a social ecologist. Regrettably, I am not a deep ecologist. My reasons are not due to any disinclination to share with Bill the "need for a positive, ecotopian vision of society." Indeed, I've held this vision since 1952, when I published a book-length work on our ecological dislocations in *Contemporary Issues*, and I am more than willing to work with Bill and other deep ecologists to realize it.

My concern, however, is that we have very different views on humanity's place in nature, and this difference has very practical implications. The human species, unlike any other species, has vastly remade the pristine natural world from which it evolved. Indeed, our species seems to have been constituted by natural evolution *itself* to actively intervene in the so-called "natural order" and remake its environment; not simply modify primal nature or intervene in the biosphere "to satisfy *vital* needs," as Bill and George Sessions put it in their *Deep Ecology* (p. 70).

To be frank, merely to satisfy "*vital* needs" and no more is what a rabbit may do, but this limitation of human activity cuts across the grain of what is uniquely human in the biosphere. A rabbit essentially survives, and its "*vital* needs" are fairly easy to specify. By contrast, human beings, if only because they "have a great potential for development—of their own minds, of creations of their minds including art and science, ritual and poetry" (why leave out technology, community, institutions, cities?) as Bill acknowledges, are "constructed" by natural evolution, as it were, to basically remake their environments on an unprecedented scale.

Given "art and science, ritual and poetry" alone, human needs are very expansive indeed, and can hardly be confined to "*vital*" ones. Nor does one have to believe in a "narrow humanism," teleology, or anthropocentrism to recognize the fact that human activity, intervention, and reconstruction are *natural* activities, genetic as well as cultural phenomena, to recognize that they can be a potentially valuable, indeed, creative factor in the biosphere given an ecological society.

Put more broadly: what I contend is that human beings, conceived as a spe-

cies, have absorbed the primal "first nature" in which they evolved as mammals into a *social* "second nature" in which they are *still* evolving as cultural beings—alas, very much for the worse, these days.

Like it or not, however, there is absolutely no way they can return to "first nature" anymore, however much they may beat conga drums, revere pagan deities, and flee from those human artefacts we call "cities." They must either recreate "second nature," both in sensibility and institutionally, to consciously advance into a "free nature" that reharmonizes their relationship with nonhuman life in emancipated, ethical, and rational communities; or they will simply

I have never called proponents of population limitation "eco-fascists."

tear down the planet. Hence the need to actively intervene in the evolution of "second nature," to change society as well as sensibility, to deploy the human capacity for action, complex thought, and innovative techniques in order to create a new harmony between human and human, and between humanity and the biosphere.

By contrast, deep ecology is basically a wilderness movement that rejects almost any kind of human stewardship insofar as human beings make use of nonhuman nature for human ends beyond the satisfaction of "*vital* needs", whatever these words may mean beyond mere survival.

Granted, an image of the biosphere as "purely a matter of utility," in Marx's words, is utterly unacceptable. But how are we to conceive of the protection of "wilderness", to which Bill earnestly assents, *without* human stewardship? After all, how wild is a "wilderness" if it has to be "protected", "guarded" or "defended"? As we move to the edge of ecological extinction, we may well need all our technological ingenuity and powers of intervention to repair the planet, rescue disappearing life forms, remove lethal pollutants that may be with us for unknown millennia—even after we have redirected our social "second nature" along ecological lines.

Philosophically, deep ecology and social ecology rest on very different assumptions about what constitutes nature and humanity's place in the natural world. Deep ecology, in my opinion, has a surprisingly static view of nature. It essentially sees the natural world as a scenic view, a panorama that one admires from a mountain top or from behind a picture window. Humanity, whose unique qualities are rather vaguely stated by deep ecologists, is simply "one" of many species that appear in this panorama. It is essentially equatable in terms of its "intrinsic worth" to any other species in the picture.

By contrast, social ecology rests on a highly evolutionary view of nature's latent possibilities for ever-greater complexity, subjectivity, and choice; ultimately consciousness and freedom. I speak, here, not of any predestined evolution but of a visibly traceable trend in the evolutionary record—a cumulative palaeontological and anatomical record—based on *fact*, not on theology or metaphysics. Nor do I speak of a "hierarchy of being" that in any way justifies humanity's "lordship" over "creation" (a notion, I may add, that presupposes a deity that "made" the world for "mankind").

Taken simply as a product of evolution, with or without any images of a "natural hierarchy or preordained destiny" (all of which are really *social* concepts human beings have evolved from the totality of life to function with a highly sophisticated conceptual intellect, a wide-ranging language, radically changeable forms of association, and a remarkable repertoire of technologies that can either serve human and nonhuman life or reduce the planet to debris. What lies at the head of the modern ecological agenda is whether human "second nature" will function to advance evolution—both natural and cultural—or render the earth lifeless.

These approaches lead to markedly different emphases and outlooks. For deep ecology, the "defence" of wilderness really pre-empts the need to radically change society. Indeed, if "wilderness is the real world," as David Foreman, Kirkpatrick Sale, and Arne Naess literally agree, then social reality holds a secondary place in the ecological agenda and human intervention into nature beyond the simple imperatives of "*vital* needs" is, in fact, to be shunned rather than fostered.

For social ecology, the ability to remove

ecological dislocations is above all a social issue that stems from social dislocations. Human intervention is thus a desideratum provided it serves human and nonhuman needs in a rational society—not an affliction that is in some sense “unnatural”.

Put bluntly: “the real world”, if one chooses to use such terms, is fundamentally social and encompasses wilderness and wild life forms whether we like it or not. Far from being a rationale for the exploitation of the planet, the need for ecological intervention is almost a prayer—and perhaps the last one—to bring human rationality to the service of nonhuman and human life.

2. I can only applaud Bill for finally rejecting Malthusianism. I assume that both he and George Sessions will remove from future editions of *Deep Ecology* their observation that “Malthus, in 1803, presented an argument indicating that human population growth would exponentially outstrip food production, resulting in ‘general misery’, but his warning was ignored by the rising tide of industrial/technological optimism.” (p. 46) I assume, too, that both Bill and Sessions will alter their praise for Paul Ehrlich, author of *The Population Bomb*, a work that in the late sixties contained rather gothic misanthropic passages about “managing” population growth that included a recipe for a powerful Bureau of Population (under Nixon, no less!) and advocated the notorious triage strategy.

3. Readers of *Alternatives* will hopefully understand that I am rather weary of dealing with one Bill McCormick, who has rather snidely tracked me over four separate periodicals already, generally attacking and distorting my views with a malice that is beginning to go beyond the bounds of ordinary decency. If I’ve become an *idée fixe* in his mind, I’m afraid he’ll have to live without any co-operation by me. I will merely note that I have never called “proponents of population limitation ‘eco-fascists.’” Advocates of letting Ethiopian children starve (Foreman)—yes! Advocates of the “genetic inferiority” of Mexicans (Abbey)—yes! But not people who are concerned about population growth and offer voluntaristic approaches, such as birth control and the freedom to choose abortion. For McCormick to claim that I call them “imperialist running dogs” is an imaginative new addition to this man’s repertoire of slander.

Further, I find nothing in Foreman’s recipe for starving Ethiopian children or, for that matter, in “Miss Ann Thropy’s” plaudits for the AIDS epidemic that is either reducible to an “If-Then” logic, as Mike Kaulbars would have us believe in

the case of Foreman, or that is a “descriptive” rather than a “prescriptive” approach, as Kirkpatrick Sale led *Nation* readers to believe in the case of “Miss Ann Thropy”. It was quite plain from anything but the most biased reading of Foreman and “Miss Ann Thropy” that they welcomed famine and disease as a “control-mechanism” for population growth.

In my view, attempts to find all kinds of specious excuses for Foreman or “Miss Ann Thropy” raise some very troubling moral problems in the ecology movement. We must confront the issue of whether we wish that movement to veer in a really misanthropic and reactionary direction or whether it will be guided by an ecological humanism that evokes respect not only for nonhuman life but for humans as well.

4. Finally, I have no intention of exchanging insults with Brian Tokar about his or my “personality traits”. Indeed, in recycling social ecology as his own brainchild, he is at least getting some of its ideas around with a reasonable amount of lucidity. Readers who may be led to believe that I have merely been engaged in a “reassertion of the need for the ecology movement to be engaged in social and historical analyses ... and an endless repetition of the same few obnoxious and clearly offensive quotes from Foreman and Abbey,” as Tokar so generously puts it, may care to know that I have written a good deal more than *The Ecology of Freedom* and “the immensely valuable essays” on nature philosophy. Indeed, since then I have written three books—*The Modern Crisis* (1986), *The Rise of Urbanization and Decline of Citizenship* (1987), *Remaking Society* (1989)—and a dozen essays, from which Tokar has taken generous helpings, particularly on the issue of demography, with no acknowledgement whatever. People may dislike each other, alas, but why be petty and mean-spirited about it?

I’m delighted that Tokar criticizes terms like “eco-centrism”, so favoured these days by deep ecologists—terms, as he puts it, that “fall short of the full synthesis of ecological and social analysis....” I welcome the fact that he solidarizes with the view that deep ecology fails to adequately embrace racial, feminist, and imperialist problems. I can only congratulate him for finally using pertinent words like “industrial capitalism” rather than safe words like “industrial society” in arguing that “Simply reducing numbers, by whatever means, is not a solution, so long as the dominant economic system is predicated on the dynamics of growth and expansion at all costs.” These formulations, so redolent

of what I have been writing in *Green Perspectives*, are admirably put and should be seriously examined by deep ecologists.

My objection to Tokar’s original essay is predicated on his attempt to reduce the differences between social and deep ecology to matters of mere residence rather than content, notwithstanding all his recent qualifiers on this problem. It seems to me that Tokar was debasing the whole debate by claims that laid-back, communally-oriented Californians are actually rambunctious individuals guided by a frontier ethic while feisty New England Yankees are little more than gentle communitarian pastoralists. I’m glad to know that Tokar has changed his position on this score not only to one of “miscommunication between the two camps,” but to the usual demonizing view that the dispute is due in large part to “Bookchin’s abrasive personality.” Such penetrating psychological observations should earn him far more friends and readers in the deep ecology “camp” than an argument based primarily on residence. □

Murray Bookchin
c/o *Green Perspectives*
Burlington, Vermont

Lewis encourages

The article in *Alternatives* Vol. 16 No. 1 “Think as big as you can” by David Lewis was terrifying and at the same time it was encouraging for me as an artist and a green living in BC. I’m glad to know of such a well-informed and passionately concerned individual in BC.

Since I moved here from Montreal in August 1988 I have observed the most beautiful land and the most wanton destruction. The Coquitlam River where I walk every day is used as a drainage ditch taking all the runoff from streets, shopping malls and parking lots on both sides of it. Even on a basic level, the warnings of the terrified scientist have not reached most of the people I observe. The wasteland is expanding rapidly.

Human history has been full of surprises. I’m waiting to be surprised by an environmental revolution. Personally, I’m tired of trying to convince—I’ll just paint. □

Marilyn Welch
Coquitlam, BC

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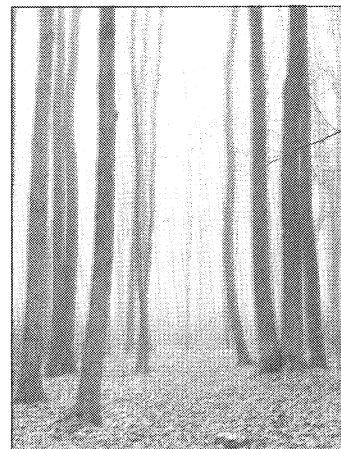
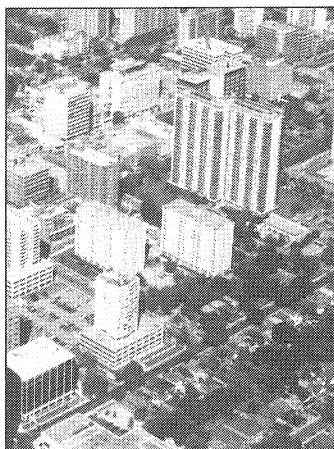
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CAN CONSERVATION STRATEGIES LEAD TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?



Vol. 16 No. 4/Vol. 17 No. 1

March/April 1990

FEATURES

- 24 Conservation Strategies: Providing the Vision for Sustainable Development E.W. Manning
30 Sea Changes, Sustainability and Strategies Michael Kelly and Kim Sanderson
38 Provincial Conservation Strategies: The Experience of Prince Edward Island John B. McClellan
44 Forest Conservation Strategies in Canada: A Challenge for the Nineties Julian A. Dunster
52 State of the Environment Reports and National Conservation Strategies: The Linkage T.J. Elkin
62 Sustainable Development, Conservation Strategies and Heritage: Three Basic Tools for Influencing the Global Future J.G. Nelson and H.E. Eidsvik

REPORTS

- 9 Eastern Europe goes nuclear Vladislav Balaban
10 Czechoslovakia may accept toxic mud Vladislav Balaban
11 Canadian link to Salvadorean nuclear accident Christopher Mockler
12 What to do with poo Ingrid Liepa
12 Escaping from oil tyranny Victoria Branden
14 Chemical cultivation of Christmas trees condemned Sandra Megens
15 Ideas for Christmas trees Ingrid Liepa
16 Peigan fight Oldman Anton Pojasok
17 Getting the lead out of waterfowl habitat Sandra Megens
18 Diaper services return Glen Hougan
19 Success story: Dispensing with disposables Victoria Branden
21 New Brunswick gets groundwater legislation Darla Cameron
22 Eco Rock A.J. Sinclair, D. Symington and S.N. Winn

87 *Alternatives'* Environmentally Obnoxious Products Contest

DEPARTMENTS

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|---------------------------------|----|
| Editorial | 1 | Reviews | 72 |
| Canadian, World, Tech Notes | 2 | Books Received for Review | 74 |
| Harms' Way | 8 | Letters | 84 |
| Call for Papers | 37 | Podium | 88 |

CAN CONSERVATION STRATEGIES LEAD TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMENT?

is the second issue in an *Alternatives* series entitled
ASKING THE HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Tokar called romantic

In "Explaining the New Ecologies" (November/December 1988), Brian Tokar asserts that "until the opening of the western frontier to individual homesteaders in the mid-19th century, patterns of settlement and land use were often decided on a communal basis.... Jefferson attributed the democratic character of early American to people's special relationship with the land ... and ... resisted ... large-scale manufacturing...." (p. 39).

Not only is the first part of statement wrong, it is yet another expression of romanticizing early American experience. In his case, this is even more extreme than most who would hardly flag the transition as late as 1850. Even devotees of early New England tight communities would put this a century or more earlier. I believe even they are wrong. In my *The Best Poor Man's County: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania [sic]* (1972) I cite overwhelming evidence that even the "communal" Mennonites and Quakers settled on large private holdings not in collective villages. *Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay*, ed., N. Shurtleff (1853-4), I, 157, 181, 257, 291 show that the village system broke down very quickly in the late 1630s. Communities continued, of course, and

do today though Americans seem to have the greatest problem recognizing this. Compare Toronto and Detroit inner cities and suburbs.

This is not a trivial point. Private property has been one of the pillars of American (indeed Canadian) society from the founding despite many attempts to the create communitarian arrangements. It is not trivial because Tokar and many other Americans (I presume he is) want to hark back to a kinder, gentler era. It is not there! Fashioning a new ecology has no precedents of consequence—earlier on, neither Europeans nor native peoples lived our experience.

This brings me to the second point about Jefferson who advocated economic development through freeholders producing for an Atlantic market. In this he was challenged by Alexander Hamilton who advocated manufacturing. It is sheer nonsense to state that Jefferson saw a "special relationship" in ecological terms, except that rural life had fewer problems than emerging Manchester, the first great industrial city. In the end, both Jefferson and Hamilton won their arguments. Today, ironically, largely because of industrial technology only a handful of farmers produce for North American domestic and overseas markets. Had he lived longer would Jefferson have argued against Cyrus McCormick's reaper (amongst others) invented in the 1830s, or Massey's com-

Although it would be comforting to agree with Tokar, harking back to a softer early America violates the reality of western history.

bine in the 1930s? I doubt it.

Private property, justifying corporate "persons", and technology frame our social condition and hence our dealing with environment. Unfortunately, even to protest the desecration of the environment we all transport ourselves in vehicles fabricated from minerals and wood. To be convincing we must admit the contradictions of living which none of us can avoid. Although it would be comforting to agree with Tokar, harking back to a softer early America violates the reality of western history. □

James T. Lemon
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