

# What Do Greens Stand For?

by Richard Evanoff

The Greens are too simply diverse in their thinking for anyone to come up with a definitive statement about what all Greens believe. Nonetheless there have been attempts by Greens in many countries to articulate a "Green vision." In this month's *ecoLogic* I'd like to share some of the ideas that Greens in my own country, the United States, have come up with. The Greens/Green Party U.S.A. have organized themselves around "Ten Key Values," which serve as guidelines for both Green theory and praxis in the U.S.\*

1. *Ecological wisdom* — applying the concept of organic wholeness and interrelatedness to all aspects of life, from the environment to social, political, and economic relationships.

2. *Grassroots democracy* — maximizing citizen participation in the political decision-making process; moving away from representative democracy and its ineffective system of accountability towards more direct forms of democracy; relying more on community-based mutual assistance than on government largesse.

3. *Social justice* — restoring the concept of citizenship to communities by devoting more time, energy, and resources to the pressing social issues of our times, including education, violence, drugs, and homelessness; eliminating discrimination on the basis of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc.; providing a higher quality of life by putting genuine human needs before profits; working to provide the basics of life for the many rather than extravagant lifestyles for the few.

4. *Nonviolence* — eliminating violence at all levels of society, from the family and the streets to the "legitimized" violence of the state; working for the peaceful resolution of confrontations between nations; opposing nuclear weapons and supporting the peace movement; advocating nonviolent forms of implementing social change (the Greens explicitly reject terrorism and violent revolution as political tactics).

5. *Decentralization* — restoring the primacy of the local community in the political decision-making process; creating efficient and practical community-based institutions to replace centralized government bureaucracies; encouraging diverse regional cultures as opposed to single national monocultures.

6. *Community-based economics* — demanding corporate accountability and more democratic control over corporations; promoting employee-ownership and workplace democracy; providing basic economic security for all; restructuring income distribution to reflect wealth created outside the formal

monetary economy.

7. *Feminism* — eliminating sexism in all its forms and building responsible relationships between genders; replacing hierarchical patterns of behavior based on dominance and control with non-hierarchical patterns based on mutual sharing, respect, and cooperation; balancing an overdependence on rationality with a stronger emphasis on feeling, intuition, and contemplation.

8. *Respect for diversity* — respecting cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, and religious diversity; eliminating all forms of prejudice and discrimination; recognizing that diversity is essential to the full functioning of an organically whole society.

9. *Global responsibility* — ceasing to regard Third World countries as "developing" nations trying to "catch up" with the industrialized nations and working instead for the creation of ecological sustainable societies in both industrialized nations and the Third World by eliminating waste, extravagance, and overproduction in the First World and by helping Third World nations move towards self-sufficiency in the basic necessities of life.

10. *Future focus* — redirecting attention away from immediate gain for selfish purposes towards a concern for the impact our present way of life will have on future generations.

These values should not be regarded as constituting some kind of Green "party line." Anti-dogmatism and vigorous debate have been hallmarks of the Green movement since its inception. Dissension is not only permitted, but encouraged. Greens attempt to make decisions on the basis of consensus rather than majority rule, but when there is no consensus, the minority is free not to participate in implementing decisions made by the majority.

Greens in the United States have focused on building a strong grass roots movement at the local level rather than on fielding candidates in national elections (which is one of the reasons why Ross Perot is better known in the U.S. than the Greens!). At present there are some 450 local green groups around the country, which engage in various forms of political activism and sometimes field candidates for local elections (such as school boards, city councils, and the like). There are also five state Green parties, in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, and New Mexico.

If you are an American citizen and in basic agreement with the "Ten Key Values" you can become a supporting member of The Greens/Green Party U.S.A. by sending \$25.00 to The Greens Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 30208, Kansas City, MO 64112 U.S.A. Supporting members receive the Green periodicals, *Green Politics*, *Groundwork*, and *Regeneration*, and notification of national Green gatherings. Supporting members have a voice in the organization, but no vote.

It may also be possible, however, for

Americans living in Japan to organize a "Greens Abroad" group. Having a group here in Japan would enable us not only to have a voice in the U.S. Green Party, but also to participate in the decision-making process and to send delegates to state, regional, and national confederations. A "Greens Abroad" group in Japan could also act as a liaison between U.S. Greens and the Japanese Green movement. The membership fee for individuals participating in such a group would be only \$15.00.

I have all the necessary information for establishing a Greens Abroad group here in Japan, but the group would need a coordinator to get it off the ground. (Eventually we would democratically elect officers and coordinators, of course.) Presently I myself am overextended with other responsibilities, but if there is anyone who might be interested in taking charge and organizing a Greens Abroad group, please write to me and I can get you started. My address is: 1933-8 Hazama-cho, Hachioji-shi, Tokyo 193 Japan. I also have the addresses of Green parties worldwide. If you are a foreign resident of Japan and would like the address of the Green party in your home country, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope or postcard to the same address. □

[\*The brief explanations which follow each of the values are entirely my own and, while generally reflective of much current Green thinking, should in no way be regarded as official interpretations. The comments have been adapted and updated from my paper "Prospects for a Green Political Party in the United States" in *Kokusai Seikei Ronshu* (Tokyo: Aoyama Gakuin University, 1991). The Greens/Green Party U.S.A. was formed shortly after the paper was written.]

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