

Challenge and Response: The Emergence of the Green Party in the United States

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The Green Party of the United States received considerable attention from major national and statewide newspapers and broadcast media during Ralph Nader's run for the presidency under its banner in 2000. The coverage tended to treat the Green Party as an appendage of Nader's personal run for the presidency, or, if not that, in any case, as a sudden and perhaps passing historical phenomenon. Comparisons were made to the sudden stir made by Ross Perot and the Reform party in the 90's. The question posed was whether the Green Party is another one of those interesting but ephemeral blips in the political history of the United States.

To Green Party leaders, the question seemed academic as their party moved through and beyond the elections of 2002 — an election in which they fielded 545 candidates nationwide, won 70 (mostly non-partisan) races; and, for the second time in their brief history, and in spite of a winner-take-all electoral system that makes winning partisan seats extremely difficult for a new party, won a state legislative race against a Democrat in Portland, Maine.

These indications of what was to them a growing momentum for their party, followed hard on their annual convention in mid-July. There, in Philadelphia, two blocks from the Liberty Bell, and the site of the Constitutional Convention of 1788, delegates from 34 accredited state Green Parties met. They admitted five newly accredited state Green parties; conducted Campaign Schools for candidates for Governor, U.S. Senate and House seats, and state legislatures; elected a new and expanded Steering Committee, developed ground rules for selecting a presidential candidate in 2004, acknowledged with considerable satisfaction the participation of a much greater number of people of color than previously; held press conferences that received prominent coverage and editorial comment in leading dailies throughout the country; and deepened their committee structure to respond to the growing pains of a party in the midst of greater-than-expected growth.

To Green national leaders, the center of gravity of the party did not lie with Nader nor any other leaders, however significant he or they might be in assisting the development of the Green Party. They could note that Nader, by his own choice, was not a Green Party member — evidence of the Party's separate and independent identity.

Furthermore, the Party had applied for and received official standing as a national political body the previous year from the Federal Election Commission. The Party had recently opened an office in Washington, D. C. and had hired experienced fund raisers who were now raising upwards of \$30,000 a month to fund national party operations, a small figure by comparison to the major parties, but substantial for a new party and far more than what was being raised just a few years earlier. But most of all, Green leaders could and did point to the way in which the Party grew from small beginnings in 1984; had grown, they noted, from the bottom up and not as an invention from the top

Origins and development of the Green Party

The Green Party / Movement in the United States began with self-starting local groups in 1984, the first such group having formed in early January of that year in the state of Maine. By 1989, over 400 local groups had sprung up in most parts of the country. A Clearing House in Kansas City, Missouri fostered communication among all the local groups. The movement took the name of Green Committees of Correspondence, recalling the organizing that took place under the

name of Committees of Correspondence in the decade before the Revolutionary War. In addition to local group membership, individual national memberships were also encouraged. Over 2000 had signed on by the end of the 80s. In the beginning, local groups spent much time debating the meaning and application of Ten Key Values. These had emerged from the first national meeting in St. Paul in August, 1984. The Ten Key Values are drawn from the Four Pillars that the then West German Greens articulated, plus three sets of two values each. The Four Pillars are Ecological Wisdom, Social Justice, Grass Roots Democracy, and Non-violence. The three sets of two each are: Respect for Diversity and Feminist Values; Decentralization and Community Economics; Global Responsibility and Sustainability (or: Thinking to the Seventh Generation). The debates over their meaning and application were often intense and sometimes harsh. One important argument reflected the on-going controversy between Social Ecology and Deep Ecology, the former led by Murray Bookchin at the Social Ecology Center in Vermont and the latter inspired by the work of Arne Naess, the Norwegian eco-philosopher. The debate was whether one had to liberate human beings first before being able to save nature; or whether the work of saving nature had to be well advanced before it would be possible to liberate human beings. It was an argument that would continue to stir in Green circles, taking various forms. The most familiar is the present day question that is posed as to whether the Green Party must give priority to social and economic justice first, or to the environment. Other debates focused on whether a Green economics does and must lean more towards Socialism or towards Capitalism; towards reform or revolution; towards being true to principles at all times or towards some form of compromise. One important group within the Greens argued for a transformational philosophy which looks to move beyond these oppositional categories to find new ground for the economy, social change, and principled action. This group eventually took the lead in moving the Greens towards state wide parties and then national political organization; first with the Green Politics Organizing Committee (1989-1991), then with the Green Politics Network (from 1992), which in turn led to the creation of the Association of State Green Parties (ASGP) in 1996. ASGP changed its name to the Green Party of the United States in 2001.

Local groups, in addition to having steady debate among themselves about the Ten Key Values, also engaged in a variety of actions. Campaigns were launched, for example, to stop nuclear power plants, to stop waste-to-energy plants and promote recycling, to push for affordable housing, ban clear-cutting of the forests, and promote universal, single payer, health care insurance. Other projects involved back to the land experiments, community radio stations, cooperatives of many kinds, and community supported agriculture.

But gradually the Greens turned their attention to issues of democracy and to what they saw as the breakdown of the political system, the unraveling of connections between parties and voters and of the voters' confidence in the party system as a whole, and the consequent failure of public policy to respond adequately to pressing problems. Greens would increasingly put it to themselves, why spend so much time and effort protesting what government leaders are doing or not doing on particular issues, why not press for ways to replace these leaders? One of their slogans was: "Don't beat the government, BE the government!" They began in the early 90s to focus attention to running candidates for political office and to building a Green Party that would be independent of the two major parties. They were experiencing and traveling an intellectual and political road that Ralph Nader would later replicate to some degree and that would lead to his bids for the presidency in 1996 and 2000.

Greg Gerritt ran for the state legislature in Maine in 1986 in a three-way race in which he received 18% of the vote. His run was a harbinger of Green political activity. Jim Sykes ran for governor of Alaska in 1990, garnering enough votes (3%) to give the Alaska Green Party official ballot status. In

California, in 1991, the Greens gathered 96,000 signatures to get official ballot status for their party. In 1992, Jonathan Carter, who would later run for governor in 1994 and 2002, ran for Congress in Maine's second district and got 10% of the vote, surprising the political establishment. Similar Green political activities were being undertaken in many other states. At the national level, a Working Group on Electoral Politics was created by the Green Committees of Correspondence in 1989. The Working Group changed its name to Green Party Organizing Committee (GPOC) in early 1990 and bent its efforts to help in the formation of state Green Parties and to create eventually a national Green party. A set-back for GPOC occurred in the summer of 1991. The Left Green Network, an organization dedicated to an anarchist/socialist philosophy, had formed in 1988 side by side with the Green Committees of Correspondence. It strongly opposed the program of the GPOC and, in the summer of 1991 at a national convention in Elkins, West Virginia, took over the Green Committees of Correspondence, re-naming it The Greens/Green Party USA. However, in the following year, 1992, a new organization was formed, the Green Politics Network (GPN), devoted to the original goals of GPOC. Its primary effort went into planning and promoting the concept of a national organization composed of autonomous state Green Parties. This effort and the efforts of similarly motivated Greens in many states became the seed bed for a national Green party.

Nader's first run for president in 1996 spurred the development of Green political parties in the states. Immediately following the election, the Green Parties of Maine and Connecticut called a national meeting in Middleburg, Virginia to begin the formation of a new national Green political party. Leaders of the G/GPUSA opposed this meeting, but 11 state Green Parties agreed to form what soon became known as the Association of State Green Parties (ASGP).

ASGP grew rapidly in the next several years, from the original 11 state Green parties to 24 by the year 2000, and in June of that year it held a high profile Presidential Nominating Convention in Denver at which Ralph Nader and Winona La Duke were chosen to head the national Green Party ticket. At that point, it seemed that Nader might win at least 5% of the vote, a total that would provide over \$10 million in public funding for a presidential campaign in 2004. In the event, and given the closeness of the race between the Republican and Democratic candidates, many who had intended to vote for Nader, voted for Democrat Al Gore instead. Nader therefore received only 3% of the popular vote and thereby the prospect of a publicly funded Green Party campaign for president in 2004 was forgone. Nevertheless, the Nader/La Duke campaign gave a significant boost to the Green Party in all parts of the country. States in which there had been little Green Party presence now saw the rise of local groups and statewide Green Party organizing; and states in which there had been solid Green Party development experienced substantial growth, beyond the expectations of local and state organizers. By the summer of 2001, there were 34 state Green Parties associated together in ASGP. Several additional state parties were preparing applications to join, five of whom would be admitted within a year. At their annual convention in Santa Barbara, California, in July, 2001, ASGP formally changed its name to the Green Party of the United States (GPUS) and subsequently received official designation as such by the Federal Election Commission. Meanwhile, the avowedly left wing Greens/Green Party of the United States suffered a split in their ranks at their annual convention in Carbondale, Illinois in July of 2001, and as a result the moderates in the group left to join the ASGP (now GPUS). During the 12-year period from 1990 to 2002, there was a gradual increase in the number of Green candidates for political office and in the number of victories gained. In 1990, 20 Green candidates stood for office with 8 victories; in 1994, there were 85 candidates with 16 victories; in 1998, 124 candidates with 27 victories; in 2000, 283 candidates with 47 victories; and in the election cycle of 2002, the Greens ran 545 candidates in 39 states. This number included 16 candidates for governor -- out of 25 gubernatorial races in the country; 8 candidates for U.S. Senate; 59 candidates for U.S. House of Representatives; 109 for state

legislature, and 38 for other statewide office. Seventy candidates won their races in 2002 and the party's officeholder count, as of January 1, 2003, stands at 171. Highlights of the electoral campaign in 2002 included the election of John Eder to the Maine State House and of David Segal to the City Council in Providence, Rhode Island. Another highlight was the continued Green surge in California, where the Green Party gained 25 victories.

But as important as the victories in making an assessment of Green Party progress, are the percentages of the vote that Greens are getting in different places around the country. AnnDrea Benson received 22.2 percent in her race for Pennsylvania's 3rd Congressional District. This is the highest percentage a Green has hitherto received for a Congressional seat. In a conservative area in southern Virginia, D.C. Amarasinghe got 17 percent for a Congressional seat. State legislative candidates in Idaho received 32 percent and 22 percent in their Green Party's first foray into state races. Peter Cameo's 5.3 percent for governor of California was the highest a third party candidate in that state has received for this office since the early 1970s. Jonathan Carter in Maine did the best of the 16 Green Party candidates for governor in 2002 by receiving 9.3 percent of the vote. These figures not only show a gradual increase in the percentage of votes gained by Green candidates. They also indicate that, in spite of not having a system of proportional representation enjoyed by their counterparts in most other countries, in spite of draconian state laws that inhibit third parties from even being able to form, and in spite of the ingrained habituation to a two-party system among those in the population who pay attention to politics, parties, and candidates — in spite of these and other handicaps, the Green Party of the United States is doing rather well.

Historical Context: Crisis and Response

The political growth of the Green party, and prospects for more growth in the future, can be seen as part of broader social, economic, and cultural changes, both in the United States and in the world at large. At the core of the changes relevant to the emergence and growth of the Green Party is the rise and deepening of environmental awareness that goes back at least to the early 60s with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Succeeding decades saw the increasing contamination of air, water, and food; the emission of billions of tons of carbon into the air from the burning of fossil fuels; and the consequent pressure on the earth's protective and adaptive systems resulting in severe climate change and global warming. Many different indicators registered a rising threat to human health and a deepening threat to the capacity of eco-systems for self-healing. Scientists in ever greater numbers described it as a crisis and a very grave one. It is this crisis that figures very strongly in the rise of the Green Party throughout the world, beginning with Tasmanian Greens in the late 60's and New Zealand's Values Party in 1972, continuing with the success of the then West German Green Party in electing 26 of their number to the national Parliament in 1983, and expanding into the formation of numerous Green parties in Europe and then also in Africa, Asia/Pacific, and in both continents of the Americas. The emergence of the Green movement/party in the United States in 1984 is part of this worldwide political response to the ecological crisis. Over 80 countries now have Green Parties. However, though it is the case that the ecological crisis has given birth to a new ? Green — political party in all parts of the world, it is not a given that the kind of response would be the birth of a new political party in the United States. The latter's political system is based on a winner-take-all voting system, one that makes it very difficult for new parties to get started; whereas in most of the world various systems of proportional representation govern the ebb and flow of political parties and make it easier for a new political party to gain a foothold. Under proportional representation, if a party reaches a certain threshold of at least 5% of the vote, it receives a corresponding percentage of the representatives in the parliament.

A backward glance at the political history of the United States offers at least a partial answer to the question of a Green Party taking root in the United States. The partial answer may be stated as a proposition: Whenever a great crisis threatens to engulf the nation — and the existing configuration of political forces, including political parties, do not respond with sufficient vigor — then either a new political party is born and comes forward to deal with the crisis; or there occurs the rejuvenation of an existing major political party. One can cite several epochal events in support of this thesis. In the late 1790s the newly minted United States government was undergoing great stress internally and externally and many European nations expected the country to collapse, including Great Britain. Jefferson and Madison created a new political party, the Anti-Federalists, which responded to widespread discontent with policies pursued by the Adams administration and offered a new direction in foreign affairs. Victory followed in the election of 1800 and Jefferson's presidency saw not only the survival of the nation but its movement towards greater maturity and territorial scope. Some 40 years later, with the wrenching slavery issue wracking the country and the existing parties not being able to respond to the rising anti-slavery sentiment, the Republican Party was formed in the 1850s and under Lincoln undertook to deal with the crisis, through war if need be, and the war came. Again, in the 1890s, after another 40 years had gone by, the Populist Party became a voice for the Midwestern and southern farmers in their struggle with the rising new class of business and industrial barons. After an interval of another 40 years, and after the crisis produced by the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt led a successful effort within the Democratic Party to shift its focus sufficiently to become a voice for the new urban working class.

After FRS New Deal, and after the Second World War, there emerged movements for civil rights, women's rights, and — under the impact of the Vietnam War — for greater responsiveness of the political establishment to demands for greater participation. But this did not produce a new political party, though efforts were made in that direction. Nor did they result in bold new programs by the two major parties, the articulation of which might have rejuvenated one or both of them and the political system as a whole. Instead, party participation declined precipitously; voting also declined. It would not be until the mid-eighties that a new movement got started with ecology as its driving force and with the need to create a new political party urgent in its mind's eye. Once again, as in the past, a new crisis facing the nation, and now also the planet, is demanding, and receiving, a political response. The jury is still out as to whether or not this new party, the Green Party, will be able to do for its day, what Jefferson and Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt did for theirs. Will the crisis of a political system in decline, together with an ecological crisis that cuts deeper than what the political leadership of both major parties had expected, find in the Green Party a vehicle through which the nation will confront and deal with these and related crises?

The Green Party is positioning itself to become the major voice on issues of ecology, community renewal, an anti-imperial, multilateral foreign policy, racial and social justice, and democracy — developing a platform and campaigns for office that relate these themes to a broad range of issues facing the country and the planet. Insofar as it is successful in overcoming dismissive behavior on the part of the media, it will present voters in the United States with strong positions on solar power (opposing further fossil fuels development), corporate crime and accountability, campaign finance reform, electoral reform, a planetary peace policy and defense of civil liberties (opposing the war on terrorism), fair trade (opposing free-trade globalization), the rights of women and of children worldwide, racial polarization at home and abroad, a living wage, small business development, a single-payer health insurance system, organic food, and water conservation — to name leading themes of their platform and their electoral campaigns. On these issues, their candidates argue, the dominant forces in the major parties take an opposite stand, or a weak stand, or are silent.

Pitfalls, Possibilities, and Prospects

Though alive with energy and plans for more growth, the Green Party faces daunting challenges. These challenges, however, are to a large degree the result of the growth they have already achieved. Ten should be identified and described: 1) the ambiguous relationship with Ralph Nader; 2) the ambivalence towards the Green Party on the part of many people who regard themselves as liberals and progressives; 3) the continued exclusion of the Green Party from candidate debates in many states and nationally, especially on TV, and the consequent difficulty the party and its candidates experience in bringing their message to the electorate; 4) the winner-take-all system of electing candidates and the related problem of raising money for candidate campaigns; 5) the intra-party tug of war between centralization and decentralization; 6) the tendency of organizations, the Greens being no exception, to turn into bureaucratic machines once well established; 7) the dual face of power whereby the gaining of office immerses the party in the fierce dilemmas of compromise; 8) the reluctance hitherto of progressive people of color to join the Green Party; 9) arguably the most formidable obstacle and yet holding the greatest promise, the crucible of being an opposition party committed to peace and multilateral solidarity with other nations in a country dominated by an elite bent on world supremacy and eager to pillory political dissenters as unpatriotic; and 10) the dual burden of having both to contest for power within an arguably moribund political system and at the same time to restore the American voters' belief in political parties as necessary and desirable vehicles for change and transformation.

First, Ralph Nader and the Green Party. The relationship between the party and Ralph Nader, never an easy one, has been compounded on the one hand by the possibility of another presidential run by Nader in 2004 and on the other by the major media's tendency to think of the Green Party as largely an outgrowth of Nader's campaigns and tied to his political fortunes. Will another run by Nader seem like a rehash of the past, or — a variation of the same thing — will he be seen as a perennial "also-ran" on the order of a Harold Stassen? Another vexing question: If Nader seems strong enough with enough voters so that he looks as if he might equal or even do a little better than the 3 million votes (about 3%) he garnered in 2000, will he again be attacked as a spoiler and is that the kind of baggage the Green Party wants to carry on its back in its efforts to sustain momentum and gain even more? Wouldn't the party be better off grooming one or more of its own up-from-the-ranks leaders to run for president/vice president? Or why not sit out the 2004 election altogether, is an additional argument made by some; a variation of which is for the Green Party to choose a candidate who will be willing to bow out before the election in return for agreement from the Democrats to adopt some of the Green Party's key issues. If, of course, Nader could do what he thought he could do in 2000, which is to get at least 5%, and thus qualify the Green party candidate in the next presidential election of 2008 for public financing, then some of these questions could be moot. But the crux for the party, especially its leaders is; could he accomplish this and is it worth the risks involved? As of December, 2002, several influential state Green Parties (Wisconsin, Texas, and Michigan) have gone on record stating that a presidential candidate must be a member of the Green Party in order to get the nomination of their parties. A steady debate flourishes within the Green Party on this issue. Some argue strongly that "let Ralph be Ralph"; if he wants to run, the Greens should be more than happy to support him all the way. This is enforced by Greens in some states who point out that only a star figure like Nader can assure them of gaining ballot status, given the onerous conditions the two major parties put on third parties. The North Carolina instance is not untypical. In that state, a party must garner 58000 signatures to get a presidential candidate on the ballot in 2004. But that's not all: to stay on the ballot the Green candidate for President must get 10% of the vote on election day.

However, there are also a substantial number of Greens, especially among the state and

national leadership core groups, who are opposed to running Nader again. They argue that his personal style is too aloof; he does not involve the party in his strategy planning; he is unilateral and mercurial in his actions; he is not a Green; he is in danger of becoming a “perennial candidate”; his message is that of “a one-noter” (the anti-corporate mantra); and that the net effect of these and other factors is a drag on the Green Party. He was helpful, if not essential for the advances made by the Green Party, in his two previous runs under the Green Party banner, but the situation is different now, and the party must progress beyond him. A third group argues that they will support him if he does the one thing that in their estimation will surmount many of the arguments against his running and will propel him and the Green Party forward with renewed power. That one thing is: He must join the Green Party. It is key to success, in their view, for both a negative and a positive reason. The negative reason is that by persisting in not becoming a Green, and yet continuing to run under the Green Party banner, both he and the party operate under a cloud. Nader comes off as inauthentic, and the party as opportunistic. It was one thing for this interesting “non-relationship relationship” to be in place in 1996, they point out, though it was an extremely difficult passage for the Green Party people who fought that campaign. To a degree this non-relationship relationship still worked in 2000, and felt morally and spiritually plausible. But to persist in this neither/nor relationship does not wear well, argue these Greens. This negative thing can be turned around, they point out, and made a positive thing, by Nader now embracing the Green Party as his own, and vice versa. This will release a wave of support for both Nader and for the Party and will give the campaign in 2004 a new and dynamic surge of energy and clout. So goes the argument.

Second, The Ambivalence of Progressives towards the Greens. This ambivalence exists, and exists in abundance, as one can readily see from the pages of *The Nation*, or as one listens to and reads statements by people regarded as “left” or “liberal” or “progressive” in the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, etc., or on talk shows, or in TV interviews. The voices of many such liberals and progressives who wish for a Democratic Party that is stronger on their issues, and for that reason may be attracted to the Green message, nevertheless reveal an emotional attachment to the Democratic Party that they can’t overcome. Others are hesitant to go Green because they worry that people are not ready to shift their voting allegiance to a new party in very great numbers. Until this happens, they reason to themselves, they will stick with one of the two major parties, most often the Democrats. Or, if they are unenrolled in either party and are registered as Independents, they will vote for the major party candidate that seems closest to their liking — or will vote for that major party candidate as a defense against the one they detest. Still other progressives and liberals, whether Democrats or Independents, are deeply frightened of Republicans. They think that the Green Party, by running candidates, gives Republicans the victory in many if not most contests.

But Green savants observe that progressives and liberals who have these concerns are not a numerous part of the electorate. Nor do they possess a robust political will. They have been taken for granted for decades by the Democratic Party. They have regularly been given opportunity by the Democratic Leadership to contribute to platforms, a kind of sop or olive branch (depending on how one looks at it) that is intended to keep them thinking they have influence, a maneuver that has worked from presidential campaign to presidential campaign for several decades. In the end most Democrats of the “progressive” and “liberal” stratum accommodate themselves to the leadership at the top. The emergence of the Democratic Leadership Council as the dominant force in the party reveals that the center of political gravity in the Democratic Party has moved decisively in a direction that may be defined as pro-corporate, as well as pro-big government. Concerned liberals and progressives find themselves regularly out in the cold. The problem for the Greens is that liberal/progressive voices continue to be read and listened to by a fair number of people who

take their political cues from the established left and liberal journals and books. The obvious answer to this, which the Greens are rather tardily discovering and acting upon, is to produce their own journals and books and media programs. This is beginning to happen, as for example, Sam Smith's Green-centered Progressive Review out of Washington and his highly popular daily presentations on line and on his website. The Progressive Review gets over 100,000 hits per month and received an astounding 1.4 million hits in 2002. Such efforts will expand over time. If and as this happens in a substantial way, the number of liberals and progressives feeling anguish and ambivalence will recede and be replaced by leaders and their various clientele with a less ambiguous and harder view of the political landscape.

The Greens will capture a growing audience among liberals, progressives, and conservatives who read much because of the continued inability of the Democratic Party to move decisively on issues of social justice, the environment, health care, renewable energy, civil liberties, and the defense of communities from corporate predators. The main reason the Democrats are unlikely to be able to move decisively is because they continue in unabated form to encourage and support a prohibitively expensive, and expansive foreign policy which commits a preponderance of what are necessarily limited resources of even so great a power as the United States to military uses, thus leaving only crumbs, relatively speaking, for the mounting economic and social misery at home.

Third, Media Snubs and Gyration. Getting media attention, and the exposure that is essential to any campaign for office, is an annual and almost daily vexation for Green Party candidates. Ralph Nader's infamous exclusion from the presidential debates in Boston and St. Louis in the 2000 campaign is a classic in this regard. Two years later it was replicated in various ways in many high profile races around the country. Ted Glick, running for U.S. Senate in New Jersey, was getting nowhere in his efforts to be included in the TV debates. He decided to risk getting arrested by attempting to enter the first debate in order to listen in and comment to the press afterward. He was charged with criminal trespassing. This confrontation, making him "interesting" from a media point view, fired up support for his inclusion; and, after still more confrontations and more arrests, the Republican candidate agreed to his inclusion. The Democratic candidate kept stonewalling. Glick led a 7-hour sit-in at the Democratic campaign office. Finally, there was agreement to an hour-long debate with all six candidates. But the agreement also stipulated that this would be followed by a half-hour debate between just the Republican and the Democrat. As might be expected of the press, they pretty much ignored the six-way debate. The news that night showed a few minutes of back and forth between the Republican and the Democrat; and then a passing mention of the six-way debate. No effort was made to identify different positions taken by the different candidates. But the Glick campaign felt that the toe-hold they got was worth the effort and that it will be easier next time for Green Party candidates in New Jersey. In California, state polls showed major public support for participation in the gubernatorial debates by Peter Camejo, the Green Party candidate. Gray Davis, the Democratic candidate, resisted debates with anyone, but especially with Camejo. He finally agreed to one debate with Bill Simon, the Republican, to be hosted by the Los Angeles Times. Simon then put Camejo on his guest list — so he could be near the press room to answer questions — whereupon Davis became livid and threatened to walk out criminal trespassing. This confrontation, making him "interesting" from a media point view, Gray Davis, the Democratic candidate, resisted debates with anyone, but especially with Camejo. He finally agreed to one debate with Bill Simon, the Republican, to be hosted by the Los Angeles Times. Simon then put Camejo on his guest list — so he could be near the press room to answer questions — whereupon Davis became livid and threatened to walk out if Camejo even entered the building. The Times gave in. But the press now flocked to cover the "Camejo story". They gave him continuous coverage before the debate. Participation in debates became a major topic of

discussion for the remainder of the campaign. Again, as in the case of Ted Glick in New Jersey, the willingness of Green candidates to push the envelope on this issue prepares the way for later success. It is an issue of immediate public interest and concern and the media, however timorous and locked into a two-party ideology, are not unaware of public sentiment, and are forced into showing some spunk and spine by the Green onslaught.

In Maine, where the Green Party has been organized since 1984, the media gradually adapted, first to the appearance of the Green Party, then to its apparent intention to endure in spite of being ignored, and then to a recognition of the clout it can have in affecting the political landscape. The Green Party's candidates for governor and for U.S. Senate from 1994 to 2002 have been included in all the debates. Jonathan Carter's campaign for governor in 2002 received as much print and broadcast exposure as the Democratic and Republican candidates. Maine's adoption of public financing for legislative and gubernatorial campaigns is an additional factor in pushing the media to give Greens equal time and focus. The gubernatorial campaign of 2002 was the first one in which candidates for governor could opt for public financing. Carter's consequent access to almost one million dollars was a considerable factor in the media's willingness to give him equal coverage.

Fourth, Winner-take-all and the Money Crucible Mention has already been made about the daunting obstacles facing the Greens in a political system based on first past the post, winner take all horse races. It would seem that their best strategy might lie in pushing hard for a proportional representation system (PR). If this were in place, their party could arguably garner an even greater percentage of the vote than do their counterparts in those countries throughout the world that have PR systems. This is based on the fact that U.S. Green candidates for state legislative seats and in some cases for Congress poll well over 10% of the vote, not infrequently reaching into the 30 and 40 percentiles. And there is the current example of John Eder in Maine winning a state legislative race in 2002 with 67% of the vote. Green Party and candidate platforms regularly call for PR; but they have not as a whole made this a truly top priority, to the disappointment of the organization leading the fight for PR in the United States, the Center for Voting and Democracy. It may be that the Greens have their eyes peeled on building their party into becoming a contender for major party status within the present system, with the thought that they might even be able to replace the Democratic Party over the long haul. This may seem (pardonable or unpardonable) hubris to many. In any case, the Green Party as a whole reveals a certain ambiguity about how hard to push for PR..

Green Parties and candidates are, however, beginning to put energy and commitment behind efforts to institute Instant Runoff Voting. If this voter preferential system were in place for all offices, but especially for President, Congress, and state Governors, the onus of spoiler could no longer be pinned on the Greens and this might do even more than campaign finance reform to create voting conditions in which the Green Party can compete on a reasonably equal footing with the two major parties. However, it is the case that campaign finance reform is an important goal for the Green Party. Their candidates eschew and in any case do not attract large corporate donors and other special interests that regularly and heavily finance the campaigns of the Republicans and Democrats. Public financing of one's campaign is a live option now in Maine and is in the works for several other states. In Maine, neither the Republican nor the Democratic candidates for governor in 2002 opted for public finance in that first election in which this was an option, though over half of the major party candidates for the state legislature did. J Jonathan Carter, the Green candidate for governor, received over \$900,000 in public finance and that helped to give him a fair shot at getting the public's attention, even though it was only half of what his opponents had available from their corporate and other private sources. There are those who point out that since Carter got only

somewhat more than 9 % of the vote, the availability of public financing is not as critical to increasing the Green vote as had been thought. They point to the fact that Pat LaMarche received 7% of the vote for governor of Maine as the Green candidate in the previous election in 1998 and she spent only \$25,000. Still others point to gaffes in the Carter campaign that may have caused a lower vote for him and that therefore it is not really possible to use this publicly financed campaign as a bellwether on the relation between money and Green party chances in an election. In any case, most observers agree that the presence or absence of money in a campaign is of considerable significance; and that the relative absence of it for Green candidates throughout the country is a serious obstacle for them.

Fifth, Internal Pressures within the Party: decentralization versus centralization. This is an especially difficult problem for the Green Party. One of its Ten Key Values is Decentralization; another is Community Economics. In fact, the very foundations of the party are anchored in a grass roots philosophy. Furthermore, the formation of the national Green Party came out of the ASGP, the Association of State Green Parties, whose name speaks volumes about where the locus of power is supposed to be in a nationally organized Green Party. On the other hand, as the national party grows and develops, there is more and more pressure to streamline operations, to develop a strong center that is fully capable of such things as fund raising, effective media relations, an ability to provide efficient support to Green candidates and office holders when and as needed. An office in Washington becomes necessary. A national Steering Committee is looked to more and more to resolve issues that come up between states and even within state parties. There occurs a gradual proliferation of sub-committees. Already by the end of 2002, there were the following committees. At the overall administrative and policy setting level there were The Coordinating Committee (CC) composed of representatives of each member State Green Party (39 as of January 1, 2003); and, a body elected by the CC, the Steering Committee. The CC's official name is the Green Party National Committee. Ranged around these two committees were: Fundraising; Media; the Coordinated Campaign Committee (to help Green candidates for Congress and the President); Platform; Accreditation; Diversity; Presidential Exploratory Committee; Finance; and the Budget, Rules, Policies, and Procedures Committee; plus the Lavender Greens, and the Black, Women's, and Youth Caucuses. There is also a Campus Greens organization, headquartered in Chicago, composed of chapters at over 200 universities and colleges, an autonomous body and loosely connected with the national Green Party.

Greens in various parts of the country complain from time to time that "the national" is doing things they shouldn't, taking too much responsibility, arrogating to itself too much power and authority. The people at the center not only scoff at this, but feel over-burdened with demands to do this, to do that, and look with a mixture of exasperation and resigned tolerance at the claims made by fellow Greens that their actions are leading to over-centralization. By early 2003, when this was written, much activity had gone into the development of a budget and a budget process acceptable to all, the latter with mixed success. The national budget for the coming year was pegged in the neighborhood of three quarters of a million dollars, still a small sum by comparison to the major parties, but a very large amount when compared to the miniscule revenues of even a few years ago. Given this degree of growth in so short a time and given the prospects for even greater growth in the near future, Greens were warning themselves about the dangers of a concentration of party resources in the hands of national party leaders and central office. Some long time and experienced Greens were recalling "the iron law of oligarchy", famous among political scientists, a "law" formulated by Robert Michels in 1915 in his study of democratic parties in Europe. To avoid this, some Green critics of the budget and the budget process were saying, there must be a constant effort made for a balanced allocation of funds to field organizing, committees, and state parties.

Obviously, the jury is still out as to whether and to what degree, and how soon, the Green Party of the United States will or will not succumb to the “iron law of oligarchy”.

Sixth, Internal Pressures: a Slide Towards Bureaucracy? Hand in hand with issues of centralization, and contributing to the problematics of internal “oligarchy”, there is the conundrum of organization itself, any organization, especially as they become bigger. As the party grows, in the States and at the center, budgeting becomes a big issue, the actions and internal processes of the various committees are subject to more and more questioning, and the entire administrative edifice of party organization at all levels is subject to more and more insistence on clear procedures, accountability, and what is called structural coherence. On the one hand, this seems necessary for smooth interactions and operations, indeed it is deemed necessary in order to protect and achieve greater democracy and accountability. On the other hand, the emphasis on better procedures ties people up in often protracted disputes and agonizingly slow decision making. Leaders become more and more sensitive to doing the wrong thing and they often fail to meet the inevitable crises within the organization with the vigor and good will that one hopes from leadership. The cold hand of bureaucracy seems to clamp down on people’s energy and squelch innovation and spontaneity. This can happen at all levels of the party, local, state, and national. It has not yet overwhelmed the party. The party may find ways to achieve a balance of freedom and rules, leadership and accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, and the like. Its strong insistence, in its foundations and its slogans, on the grass roots may be a yeast that helps the party achieve — and for a longer time than one might have thought — the balance that eludes most organizations and institutions once established.

Seventh, The Perils of Office and the Undertow of Compromise The Greens in the United States have, as of January 2003, 171 office holders, most of them at the local level. The full impact of “being in power” is not yet within their experience. They have a ways to go before they encounter the dilemmas of office holding that have overtaken Green Parties in Europe and in other countries where there are Greens in Parliament such as Mexico , Australia, and New Zealand, and now more recently in Brazil. Thus, the jury is out on whether and how the Green Party of the United States will successfully meet the perils of power. The perils are especially poignant and pressing for a party like the Greens who put much stock in principled political action and are primed in their consciousness to distrust power and politics. This skepticism is one factor that may assist them in their bouts with power. Once Greens are in office in a substantial way, other factors present in their situation may also help them stay fresh and sufficiently brash. The fact that they will have spent a long time short of being in office in great numbers — a kind of extended incubation period — will help give them an enduring basis in the grass roots. They will also benefit from having had a fair amount of experience in local office. The experience of Greens in other countries will have been drawn upon extensively. In the past several years, people in the party throughout the country have discussed and debated with considerable heat the pros and cons of what Green Parties and office holders are doing in other countries, debating the paradoxes of power and drawing lessons and developing greater understanding of the stakes involved. They have done this on a sustained basis, made possible by the cybernetic revolution that has greatly expanded via email the powers and operations of communication. The Party’s International Committee, with scores of members from most of the state Green Parties, has, in addition to its other roles and activities, become a kind of chamber of debate on international matters, many of which turn on issues of strategy and compromise. And, on the home front, Greens are currently turning more and more attention to the nuts and bolts of office holding, including especially the whys and wherefores of compromise and the embedded issues of effectiveness and accountability to Green values and the Green constituency. Mike Feinstein, Green Mayor of Santa Monica, California, will host a national

conference of Green office holders in February 2003, the second one he has held.

Eighth, Towards Diversity During the past decade, a “Diversity Caucus” has regularly held well-attended sessions at national meetings of the Green Party, during which often intense self-criticism has taken place regarding the absence of people of color in the leadership and ranks of the Green Party. Pioneering spirits from among the communities of color, and from the gay and lesbian community, have aided this process within the party. An important step towards greater participation was taken when the Association of State Green Parties (ASGP) agreed in 2000 to accept the idea of granting voting power to caucuses drawn from peoples who have been historically discriminated against. The provision that was made is that a caucus can form and receive one vote in the national Coordinating Committee (later officially designated the National Committee) if it has at least 100 members from 14 state Green parties. This structural arrangement had been strongly held and advocated by the Greens/Green Party USA, the socialist/anarchist competing organization. It was adopted by the delegates respectively of the two organizations at their summit meeting on unity in Boston on September 30, 2000. As a result of this change, the ASGP (now the Green Party of the United States) has a Lavender Caucus, a Black Caucus, a Women’s Caucus, a Youth Caucus, with other identity caucuses in the wings. As the Green Party has grown, it has been successful in attracting black, Hispanic, and Native American leaders to its ranks to run for office and to participate in party leadership roles. Examples: Tony Affigne, leader of the Hispanic community in Providence, Rhode Island, founded the Rhode Island Green Party and has played a seminal role in the formation of the Green Party in the United States. Joe Mosley, African American in the New Jersey Green Party, has been a vital force in the development of the party in his state and he has been a strong voice in the national party’s Diversity Committee. In 2002, Peter Camejo and Donna Warren, Hispanic and black respectively, were the Green Party candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor. That same year, Jonathan Farley was the Green candidate for Congress in Tennessee. Winona La Duke, Native American from Minnesota, ran for Vice President with Nader in 1996 and 2000. Elizabeth Horton-Scheff, an African American, twice won a seat on Hartford’s City Council and is now its President. In January, 2003, Green Party member and Hispanic leader Matt Gonzales won a dramatic victory in a closely fought battle in San Francisco’s 11-member Board of Supervisors for President of that powerful Board (called a City Council in most American cities), making him the second most powerful official after the Mayor in that city. The seven-person Steering Committee of the United States Green Party includes Anita Rios, Badili Jones, and Nathalie Paravicini — Hispanic, African American, and Hispanic respectively. In addition, the Green Party is attracting increasing attention from influential intellectuals in communities of color. Leading the way are Manning Marable, Cornell West, Randall Robinson, and Tony Affigne, nationally acclaimed Black and Hispanic scholars. They speak out in their communities for the Green Party. And now, currently, younger scholars of color have emerged as significant voices, such as Jonathan Farley, a 31 year-old mathematics Professor at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Ninth, the Global Connection The Green Party is unique in the United States in that it has counterparts with the same name in more than 80 countries worldwide, unlike any of the major or minor parties in the United States. The Green Party is also unique in that it contests for power in the world’s only super power, a condition which puts them in a position unlike their counterparts in any of the other countries that have Green Parties. The Green Party in the United States is structured into a situation in which they are the only political party that strongly disagrees with a foreign policy that pursues the goal of world supremacy, a pursuit that Republicans articulate with conviction born both out of a sense of “manifest destiny” and out of a pessimistic sense that given the vacuum of power that the world experienced with the fall of the Soviet Union, unless the United

States moves to fill that vacuum, other states will and may do that to the detriment of the long term security interests of the United States. Republicans, and the Bush administration, have become overt in their articulation of what they regard as these geo-political realities. Democrats in past decades have been in the habit of presenting a face to the world that rhetorically downplays the more aggressive moves of U.S. foreign policy in the name of collaboration and multilateralism. But they are now generally following the lead of the Republicans, disagreeing at times on the manner of implementing the policy articulated by the Republicans but not mounting a decisive critique, much less offering a different vision. This puts the Green Party in the United States in a problematic position. On the one hand they can now fully engage in the contest for political power as the only political party firmly committed to multilateralism, collaboration with other countries and regions in the world, and a peace program that, in the context of a commitment to democracy, looks towards stronger world governance institutions. This can ally them internally with the sizeable peace movement and related environmental movement in the United States and with other sections of society and economy that resist the disproportionate allocation of money and resources to military budgets— an allocation that inexorably prevents putting more of resources and money into a declining quality of life for middle and low income people, many of whom are people of color. They can thus also deepen their contacts with Green Parties in other countries, especially the increasing number of such countries in which Greens are in high office. On the other hand, they risk not being understood by large sections of the electorate who may dismiss them as “hopeless peaceniks” or even worse, as vaguely unpatriotic, seeming as they do to go against the short term security interests of the United States. The label of unpatriotic and even anti-American can so readily be pinned on their party and their candidates by the two major parties in the heat of electoral contests for power. It will be the task of the Green Party to be fully aware of the situation they are in, both its great opportunity and its dangerous pitfalls. They will have to find a way of speaking and a set of arguments that successfully persuades the electorate to seek security through a strong policy of multilateralism, collaboration and peace; and that successfully blunts the counter argument that only through the exercise of military might and efficient surveillance of its citizens can the United States gain security. It seems evident that the United States Green Party in the next decade, and more, will find themselves in a fierce struggle for the soul of America.

Tenth, the ninth point just above ties in with an especially sobering challenge. Political scientists and public savants have for decades now been analyzing the increasing withdrawal of voters in the United States from the major parties and from politics in general. This often takes the form of dismissal and even disgust among the people of the very concept of a political party. An increasing number of voters have become unenrolled in any party, and vote, as they tell themselves and others, for the candidate and not for the party. An increasing number of voters have dropped out of voting altogether. The Green Party, therefore, faces a double challenge: to restore and re-invigorate people’s interest and faith in the concept of a political party and at the same time to compete successfully with the major parties for the vote of a numerically declining electorate. This is probably a new phenomenon in American politics. What Ralph Nader and others have described as a tragic decline in civic consciousness poses a serious obstacle to the success of the Green Party. Yet they are the fastest growing political party in the United States, having increased overall by 27% in the year 2001-2002. The major parties not only are not growing in numbers but continue a decline. It may be possible, by way of a new party with a new and attractive message, to renew people’s sense of the importance of having political parties, that they are and can be effective channels for people’s concerns and effective creators of credible and authentic public policy directions for people to choose from among. But in a highly fragmented political culture and where people experience a deep sense of frustration punctuated by the flaring up of unrealistic hopes that again and again turn sour, the Green Party has a tough but historic role to play. They may fail but

it does not seem that they have miscalculated either the challenges they face or the promise of political rejuvenation that they pose to the American people.

Concluding Observation

The Green Party is still a small force, yet it has laid down substantial roots and it has shown steady growth. It has taken upon itself the responsibility to give full voice to issues of democracy, ecology and social justice and to economic renewal through a shift to renewable energy sources. They have placed themselves at the center of related social, economic, and military /security problems facing the nation and the world. Since these problems are steadily increasing, and efforts will also increase to find answers through political action via the ballot box, it is arguable that the Green Party will become a major vehicle for dealing with the crisis.

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