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# New Options

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Mark Satin, Editor

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## South Africa: The Decentralist Alternative

Those of us who oppose the apartheid regime in South Africa keep falling into two political swamps: that of the "politics of revenge" and that of the "politics of exhaustion."

For an almost perfect expression of the politics of revenge, see Heinz Klug and Gay Seidman's article in *Socialist Review* #84, "South Africa: Amandla Ngawethu!" The authors can hardly wait for a violent revolution that would do away with the bad guys. Of course, the authors would not, themselves, have to live through the prolonged civil war—and prolonged factional infighting—that would inevitably follow.

For a clear expression of the politics of exhaustion, see Adam Hochschild's article on South Africa in the September 1986 issue of *Mother Jones*. Hochschild refuses to pretend that the conflict is *only* between good guys and bad guys or that there are only two competing politico-economic points of view. But the very act of admitting to the multiplicity of forces in the situation seems to take all the feistiness out of him. "It is possible," he writes, "to draw up blueprints about how power could swiftly be transferred to South Africa's majority without the country's becoming a thousand-mile-wide Beirut, [just as] it is possible to construct imaginary plans about how the superpowers might mutually disarm. But neither event will happen according to the scenarios we would hope for. Human greed and folly is too great."

One possible alternative to the politics of revenge and the politics of exhaustion is the politics of decentralization. In North America, many underappreciated thinkers and activists have been proposing decentralist solutions for our problems; among them, Peter Berg, Jane Jacobs, Carol Moore and Kirkpatrick Sale. Are there any such solutions for South Africa today?

Enter Frances Kendall and Leon Louw, two young white South Africans who are outspoken opponents of apartheid . . . and outspoken proponents of cultural, ethnic, political and economic diversity. Last year they published, in South Africa, a book called *South Africa:*

*The Solution*, and their "solution" is decentralist to the core. They were stunned—and deeply moved—when their book made it onto South Africa's nonfiction best-seller list . . . and stayed there for most of 1986.

We are pleased to be able to bring you these excerpts from *South Africa: The Solution*, the first to be published anywhere in North America. A U.S. edition of the book will be published this May by Institute for Contemporary Studies Press (243 Kearney St., San Francisco CA 94108); until May 1, NEW OPTIONS subscribers can order advance copies from the publisher for \$13.50, 20% off the regular price.

We do not endorse the authors' argument on every point. We do believe it raises issues that must be discussed . . . by opponents of apartheid, by proponents of decentralization, and by all who seek to build a just society where power flows from the bottom up. Let us know what you think.

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By Frances Kendall and Leon Louw

In a recent television news program, South African businessmen who met with African National Congress (ANC) representatives in Lusaka reported that they had been unable to agree with the ANC "on economic policy." The question one must ask is, Why were they trying to agree? Why were they not considering an option in which each group could pursue its own economic policy? The answer is that they were locked into a debate based on the assumptions that the "winner takes all" and "unity is strength."

As long as these remain the underlying assumptions, South African political life will be characterized by escalating conflict and bloodshed.

The current impasse in South Africa exists because all the various options under debate lead to a dead end. Very few people think that their own group really has a solution; most anticipate continued and escalating conflict, and desire only that their group should preside over it.

But there is another option, and that is to replace opposition politics with "pro" politics; to become aware that we can choose a multi-option situation in which there is strength in diversity.

There is only one way in which the wide diversity of social, cultural, ethnic and political aspirations of South Africans can be accommodated. The country must be divided into states or cantons.

### Diversity

In order to understand why this solution is necessary, it is essential first of all to grasp that the problem here is not simply one of a small white minority dominating a large black majority. South Africa's primary defining characteristic is that of diversity.

The black people who make up 72% of the population come from eight different tribes, the largest of which are Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho and Tswana tribes. They speak different languages and have separate traditions and cultures. They are as different from one another as Spaniards, French and Germans.

Whites make up 16% of the population, and they too are divided. Nearly two-thirds are Afrikaners, descendants of settlers who arrived in the 17th and 18th centuries. They have their own language and culture.

Caught between these two groups are Coloureds (people of mixed race) and Indians.

### Working model

South Africa is a unique country with unique problems. Clearly it will have to develop its own solutions based on the needs of its own people. However, we do not need to re-invent the wheel. Switzerland provides us with a remarkably apt working model in which many of the problems which face South Africa today have been confronted and solved through trial and error over several centuries.

Swiss history has led, not to a centralized state, but to a "nation by will." Small com-

## Corridors of Power

munities of varying size, economic strength and cultural tradition live voluntarily and in mutual respect in the same federal state.

The federal state comprises 26 autonomous cantons and half-cantons. Each canton has its own constitution and laws. A Federal Constitution guarantees individual rights [within each canton as well as] freedom of movement of goods, capital and people between cantons.

The Swiss system ensures that there is neither majority nor minority group domination, and that one political party cannot impose its will on the whole country. In this sense, Switzerland probably represents the democratic ideal more closely than any other country.

### Cantons for SA

Any future political dispensation for South Africa must clearly be based on a system which ensures that all her disparate groups can live without fear of domination by any other group. It is for this reason that we propose a canton system for South Africa.

South Africa currently has 306 "magisterial districts," with an average population of 80,000 per district. These magisterial districts have existing judicial and administrative infrastructures. Some have a high correlation with ethnic and/or socio-economic population distribution, others do not.

Magisterial districts provide the most logical and least contentious starting-point for the creation of cantons. Of course, in many areas there may be valid geographic, social, linguistic, ethnic, cultural and/or economic reasons for consolidating two or more districts, splitting districts or moving boundaries.

Each canton would have its own parliament, and possibly its own constitution (as initially determined by referendum). These would probably vary a great deal from one district to another. For example, the ANC might propose a form of socialism in terms of the Freedom Charter in areas where it enjoys majority support; and the Progressive Federal Party [official opposition to the ruling National Party—ed.] would probably suggest some kind of social democracy in, for example, Northern Johannesburg, where it has strong support.

There would be universal suffrage for the *de facto* residents of each canton until a canton parliament is elected. Thereafter, each canton would decide—within the limits of the new federal constitution and bill of rights—how much say its residents would have on future issues and what method of voting would be adopted. It might choose proportional representation, a Westminster-type system, or a one-party state.

The functions of the central government would be drastically limited, as the cantons would control all but a few aspects of administration. Each canton would determine its own economic policy, its own labor, transport, edu-

cation, tax, subsidization, welfare and race policies.

### "Demonstration effect"

There are some very important advantages to a canton system for South Africa.

The first is that diversity is truly democratic. The greater the diversity, the more real choices people have, and the greater the likelihood that they will be able to live in a way that coincides with their own values.

Secondly, there is a permanent "demonstration effect." People can see from day to day which tax policy, which housing policy, which race policy, which subsidy policy produces the best results.

Thirdly, the question of power-sharing [among the races, which dominates political discussion in South Africa today,] would become a non-issue since central government in a canton system would be so limited that there would be almost no power to share.

### Sunset clause

Whether people should or should not be allowed to discriminate on racial grounds is a highly emotionally charged and conflict-provoking issue. We suggest two alternatives:

Our first preference would be a constitutionally entrenched prohibition on discrimination by government at all levels. In other words, government would be color-blind.

The second option would be to include a "sunset clause" in the constitution allowing cantons to maintain racial laws for 10 years. This alternative would mean that the thorough protection of individual rights which our system offers would become fully effective only when the sunset clause lapsed. Prior to that date, cantons could maintain existing race laws, relax them, or abolish them *in toto*.

We offer this alternative because significant numbers of South Africans, mostly white Afrikaners, but also members of other groups, are determined to maintain racial segregation.

This approach would give cantons controlled by white nationalists breathing space in which to buy up land so that when the sunset clause lapses, they could exclude unwanted people from their areas by exercising their property rights.

The sunset clause would also allow black nationalist governments in areas such as Soweto to refuse entry to white businesses in order to give black businessmen a chance to make up for historical disadvantages.

### Bill of rights

The Bill of Rights which we propose would be an entrenched provision listing certain fundamental and inviolable rights of all citizens and cantons. Amendments would require unanimous agreement by all canton governments and

an 80% majority of voters in a compulsory national referendum.

The Bill includes the following provisions:

- **Equality:** No law, practice or policy of government at any level shall discriminate on the grounds of race, ethnicity, color, creed, gender or religion.

- **Civil liberties:** There shall be freedom of speech and freedom of the press, subject only to considerations of public decency and safety according to the norms of the canton or community concerned.

- **Freedom of movement:** All citizens of South Africa may move freely from, into or through all parts of the country upon public thoroughfares and in public places. (This would enable people to leave cantons whose policies did not concur with their own values and move to more congenial ones.)

### Ready for change

South Africans are ready for change. Those who aren't recognize that nonetheless it is inevitable. The current government has an electoral mandate to bring about real reform, and that is what it must do:

- A new constitution should be drawn up establishing a cantonal system.

- Leaders of *all* groups should be consulted while a constitution is drawn up. This means the government must release ANC [African National Congress] leader Nelson Mandela from jail and unban the ANC.

- South Africans of all races should be given equal rights of citizenship.

- The new constitution should be put to a popular referendum of all citizens.

Once cantonization has been accepted in principle, a Judicial Delimitation Commission will go into action. Maps showing the boundaries of magisterial districts will be printed in local papers and the courts will hear evidence as to whether these boundaries should become canton boundaries or should be altered. . . .

## New Options

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## Bioregionalists lay firm foundation

An astonishing number of "progressive" political conferences have been held over the last six months or so. But if you've attended one you've attended them all, with their banquet tables and coffee, and featured speakers denouncing Reaganomics, and resolutions calling for government-generated "growth."

The second biennial North American Bioregional Congress ("NABC II") was different. There were no banquet tables at Camp Innisfree, on the shores of Lake Michigan. There were no featured speakers: nobody was featured, everybody spoke. The latest Democratic party panaceas were barely discussed (since industrial society and the growth ethic were seen as the real problems). There *was* coffee, but you had to pay extra for it. Why should NABC subsidize bad habits? On the other hand . . . "We had a sweat lodge down at the beach," Alexandra Hart, California publisher, told NEW OPTIONS. "There were sand dunes in another direction and swamp bog walks and that sort of thing. And there was the sound of the wind. . . ."

"I was being real skeptical at first," Larry Martin, 29, industrial waste specialist at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance in Washington, D.C., told NEW OPTIONS. "But I came away feeling pretty good. If we *don't* move along these lines, we're not going to be able to go on."

"These people are great!" says Brenda Platt, 23, who recently got her degree in mechanical engineering. "Everyone was very responsible about their waste. They didn't have any throwaway containers—they washed everything. And you had to sign up to do some work, especially in the kitchen. . . ."

### First, heartfeltness . . .

The gathering was a "Congress," not a mere conference. The first three days were filled with workshops on nearly everything under the bioregional sun: "overpopulation," "organizing communities," "biosexuality," "gender and race," "beyond civilization," "earth stewardship." Then came the Congress. For two days, participants met in committees in order to prepare "committee reports" in areas of pressing bioregional concern: economics, health, urban redesign, spirituality, etc. These reports were then read and discussed by the group as a whole. Some reports were referred back to committee . . . then were discussed by the whole group some more. The idea was to reach consensus on each report. Not *approximate* consensus but *genuine* consensus, total consensus: all 188 participants had to approve

each report (or at least, choose not to block it).

To most participants at those "progressive" political conferences, this wouldn't make sense. Everybody knows there'll always be factions . . . infighting . . . winners and losers. Everybody, that is, except the kinds of people who showed up at NABC II. "My sense," Larry Martin told us, "was that people were participating in the [process] out of a sense of responsibility that the bioregional movement grow in a healthy way; that the ideas are healthy. The arrival of consensus on a committee report makes it a position from which the body itself can move." The *whole* body . . . in all sincerity. To NABC participants who felt frustrated by the slowness of the process, Tad Montgomery—water technology specialist at the New Alchemy Institute—had a ready answer: "It took the Quakers several generations to come to an agreement on the issue of slavery!" But after they did, what a difference they made.

In fact, the consensus process worked rather smoothly. Sixteen committee reports were eventually adopted, in whole or in part, by the plenary body (all the participants). Just as important was the quality of the discussion fostered, and the quality of the relationships forged. "In general, they performed with each other with a feeling of great openness," Caroline Estes, facilitator at NABC II, told NEW OPTIONS. "The most informed person, in general, was willing to sit down and listen to one who maybe didn't have a bunch of the facts together, but was onto something beyond fact. . . ."

"There wasn't a great deal of acrimony [over the committee reports] with the exception of the one on spirituality which was a very interesting discourse—one of the best I've ever facilitated so far as the heartfeltness of people coming forth. [Just about everybody] wanted to bring the spirit into this movement . . . but when that was brought up short [because one person blocked consensus], they were willing to see the other side—to see [the point of view of that one] person who saw a problem in trying to be specific about injecting spirituality into what is basically a political movement. They were willing to see that and be content—not *satisfied*, but content to at least understand that this was something that was going to take a lot of thought. It couldn't be done in a day."

### . . . Then, action

For most of the participants, including Kirk Sale, author of *Dwellers in the Land* (NEW OPTIONS #21), one of the real triumphs of the Congress was that it managed to empower

some of the committees to continue meeting after the Congress—to refine their reports, help organize conferences, prepare literature, etc. Sale goes so far as to claim that these post-Congress activities constitute a kind of "on-going structure" for the bioregional movement—something he feels it badly needed.

The *Economics Committee* will take part in organizing a conference of alternative economists, "sort of a North American version of The Other Economic Summit," Larry Martin told NEW OPTIONS [see p. 7 below]. It is tentatively scheduled for this fall.

"The *Bioregional Education Committee* is working on some bioregional educational formats for schools," Alexandra Hart reported. "The *Bioregional Movement Committee* is compiling a directory of bioregional organizations in North America—Judy Goldhaft and Peter Berg at Planet Drum [North America's first bioregional organization—ed.] are working on that. A 'skills exchange directory' is going to come out of Sunrock Farm. Then there's a literature list that Kirk Sale and the Hudson Valley Bioregional Council are involved with. . . ."

Hart is not only compiling the proceedings of the Congress, she's weaving them into a 100-page book that should be off the press by the end of May. "It's going to be the only thing around that says, Well, this is what people have agreed on so far that the bioregional movement is about. It will contain reports from 17 committees . . . highlights of the workshops . . . a history of the bioregional movement . . . how to organize a congress in *your* bioregion. . . ."

Organizing is proceeding apace, David Haenke, convener of the first NABC, told NEW OPTIONS excitedly. "There are [bioregional congresses being organized] now around Dallas . . . in the gulf of Maine . . . in the Willamette Valley in Oregon . . . in the Ohio River Valley out of Cincinnati. . . ."

"The next Steering Committee meeting is in mid-February," Hart added. "At least 15 people will be getting together in the Seattle area to plan the 1988 Congress ["NABC III"] which will be in British Columbia. . . ."

### Do you believe in magic?

The Steering Committee already has one charge. Toward the end of NABC II, the Magic Committee proposed that the next NABC designate "one person to represent our four-legged and crawling cousins, one for those who swim in the waters, one for the winged beings—the birds of the air—and one very sensitive soul for the plant people." The proposal achieved instant consensus.

To those who revelled in the traditional progressive conferences last summer and fall, the Magic Committee's idea must seem absurd. But to activists like Haenke, it makes perfect sense. "I don't see any alternative for the human

## Groups

race other than to go as deeply as possible into ecological consciousness and analysis," Haenke told NEW OPTIONS. "There are plenty of people who are working for reform. There has to be somebody working for a reformation that's *real*—even if it's very long-term—and that offers structural change . . . even deeper than that proposed by the European Greens."

For more information: *Bioregional Project, New Life Farm, Box 3, Brixey MO 65618. For the forthcoming NABC book and proceedings: Alexandra Hart, P.O. Box 1010, Forestville CA 95436, \$12 (make checks payable to "Alexandra Hart/Proceedings").*

## War tax groups form global network

War tax resistance is a worldwide phenomenon dating back to ancient Rome. In this country, war tax resistance—that is, refusing to pay the military portion of your taxes, and putting it instead into an escrow account, or donating it to peace or social justice groups—rose sharply during the Vietnam war. And it's on the rise again today.

From France to Australia to the U.S., many activists believe that, if you want to persuade a government to begin moving away from militarism, war tax resistance is a very potent "persuader." But it wasn't till late last year that we saw the first *international conference* on "individual conscience and the payment of taxes to support war."

Nearly 100 people from 13 industrial countries, most of them representing war tax and "peace tax fund" groups, crowded into a beautiful old church in the university town of Tübingen, West Germany, partly just to be there for each other (most of them had never met) and partly to hammer out how they might begin to work together. Ten representatives came from U.S. groups, including each of the "big four": War Resisters League, Conscience and Military Tax Campaign, National War Tax Coordinating Committee, and National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund (NCPTF—see NEW OPTIONS #17).

"I think together we saw the formation or birth of a new movement," Marian Franz, executive director of NCPTF, told NEW OPTIONS on her return.

"First we shared our personal experiences and philosophies. Then we discussed such questions as the current status of our national campaigns and the relationship of [tax resistance] to the goals of the peace movement. We decided we'd keep in touch through the War Resisters International newsletter, published in Europe."

The most exciting proposal by far—offered

by a group from the Netherlands—was to establish a World Peace Tax Fund. It would be for tax resisted dollars . . . and would funnel those dollars to global groups and projects meeting human needs.

"There was no agreement on the desirability of such a fund," Franz told us. "The proposal was vague. And some of us were afraid the fund would too much 'institutionalize' what we're trying to do. It could take the spirit of spontaneity and life right out of it. . . ."

"A decision on the fund has been deferred until next time we meet which will be within a year." Franz: NCPTF, 2121 Decatur Pl. N.W., Washington DC 20008.

## Adding "Reaganism" to "New Dealism"

The Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS—say "Nears"), the only national organization working solely on nuclear power issues, has just launched a campaign to increase the size of emergency planning zones around nuclear reactors.

But it's not a campaign like those of most public interest groups . . . or those of NIRS in the past. Rather than calling for massive new federal regulations and powers, NIRS is calling for strengthening *one* federal regulation—and massively increasing *state* powers. In its own words, it is calling for "greater states' rights over nuclear safety regulation" . . . but *within the context* of a better minimum safety standard set by the federal government.

"It's a new approach for us," Michael Mariotte, NIRS's articulate, 34-year-old acting executive director, told NEW OPTIONS from NIRS's attractive but not ostentatious office half a mile from downtown D.C. "It's almost like a cross between Reaganism and New Dealism. You're keeping the strong federal role but you're [also] decentralizing. . . . If it works we'll certainly see more of it [from] other groups."

## Breaking down the polarity

NIRS would have the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) expand the "emergency planning zone" around nuclear reactors from the current 10 mile radius to 20 miles. (That's the "better minimum safety standard" referred to above.) At the same time, NIRS is calling for *states* to have the power to establish and enforce *stricter* safety standards than those set by the NRC . . . and to have *veto power* over emergency evacuation plans.

"What we're advocating," Mariotte told NEW OPTIONS, "is that the NRC be looked at, not as the overall regulator, but as the establisher of minimum standards. . . ."

"Congressman Ed Markey (Mass.) submitted a states' rights nuclear-power bill in the last week of the last session, as a talking point kind of introduction. . . . There will be a number of [such] bills in the current session."

"Will the new approach allow you to break down the left-right polarity?" we asked.

"It's possible we'll find some liberal opposition to it based on the notion that it's a little too decentralized," Mariotte said. "But we may find some conservatives who are normally pro-nuclear in favor of the resolution . . . at least we're hoping we can find them."

## Being who we are

"We don't want to take credit for [originating this approach]," Mariotte told us. "But there was a conference in September—a big post-Chernobyl strategy conference, 30 people from across the country and 30 from Washington, out at the Methodist building—and we were one of the groups pushing the idea at the conference. . . ."

"A lot of the conference was devoted to, How do we reach different kinds of people? We're sitting here in the room, 60 people, most of them wearing coats and ties, looking very respectable and all that—and we have this image of being, you know, organic-hippie types. So somehow the image is out of kilter with the reality! Maybe some of the people 10 years ago, at Seabrook, had long hair and were weird looking, but that's not the way it is now. . . . But we're still dismissed as some little fringe group! So this states' rights campaign is sort of conceived as [an attempt to] turn that around. You know, not making it a liberal-vs.-conservative issue. . . ."

Mariotte is deeply aware of the possible dangers of the new approach: "If the federal government looks upon itself as setting *minimum* standards, they may [turn out to] be a lot more minimum than we might like!" He is also, very wisely, "moving away from the term 'states' rights' because of its past connotations. . . . The best we've come up with so far is 'states' authority.'"

But he is also deeply aware of the promise: "The concept forces you to reevaluate what the role of the federal government [should be]. It could be a very changed role if this ever catches on, if the states assert their powers. . . ."

"You're not really losing any federal authority, what you're doing is adding some state authority. It's different from Reagan's 'Give power to the states!' which is [simply] transferring power from the federal government to the states. . . ."

"You're not disempowering the feds, you're empowering the states," we suggested.

"Yes! Why didn't we think of it before?"

Mariotte: NIRS, 1616 "P" St. N.W., #160, Washington DC 20036.

# Letters . . .

## Village voices



—Jules Feiffer  
New York, N.Y.

NEW OPTIONS is extremely valuable to me personally and professionally. The ideas and angles which surface in your publication are truly marvelous.

Our current subscription gets routed around the office. I'd like to ask, if it is possible, to get a second copy sent to me, so I can mark it up and hang on to it. I have a deep belief in what you are doing and want to make sure something of your work and ideas gets into *Harper's*. I admire NEW OPTIONS's priorities and intelligence and hope to share them with our readers.

—Charis W. Conn  
*Harper's Magazine*  
New York, N.Y.

### Process story?

I like the lead article in NEW OPTIONS #33 ["Now That 'Progress' No Longer Unites Us," by Donald Michael and Walter Truett Anderson]. It impresses me as common sense to let go of identification with all six "stories," paradigms, ideologies. We thereby experience relationship with the universe and everything and everyone in it from an unencumbered vantage point. We are suddenly free from all the prejudices that give rise to conflict. Eureka!

—John Stubbs  
Toronto, Canada

The reason the present six stories are competing is that none are "wholized." None have been developed from a step back position. None have been developed that expand to include not

only those six stories, but any others that are developed as well.

What we need is a "process story" — a story of stories in process.

—Ben Young  
Belvedere, Calif.

### Earth story?

Michael and Anderson conclude that "we will have to have some information that is common to all people." I would suggest that the FIRST piece of information has been around for 20 years now—the picture of the whole Earth from space.

—Lois H. George-Smith  
Tucson, Ariz.

When Michael and Anderson revise their article, I propose they begin their treatment of "story" with the most fundamental of all stories, the Earth story. It has unfolded over the past 150 years into the most powerful origin story humans have ever been made aware of—the "universe story," the "evolution story," the story that every person in the world is being taught.

It seems to me that this stupendous story already provides "some norms, values, beliefs, myths, concepts for binding together a global culture." When this evolution story is accepted as true, it magnificently illuminates all other origin stories, as Teilhard de Chardin recognized and as the creation-centered philosophers of our time are now teaching [see, e.g., Brian Swimme's *The Universe Is a Green Dragon*, reviewed in NEW OPTIONS #29].

It seems to me that this approach must lead to advocacy of what Michael and Anderson call the "Green story." For the primary theme of the Green story is ecological wisdom. I realize that the Greens in Germany have compromised their positions out of political exigency, but ecological wisdom is still the essence of Green thinking.

—James F. Berry  
Raleigh, No. Car.

### Libertarian story?

All theologies, philosophies and cosmologies ("stories") are inert. For many centuries, however, every culture has spontaneously generated a sub-culture of nonconformists who've cherished their neighbors' freedom to choose lifestyles and "stories" that they, themselves, might find very offensive.

Many NEW OPTIONS readers practice such individual freedom, and will never make a commitment to Michael and Anderson's "learning society" or to the intellectual framework of any of the competing stories.

Call it atheism or call it Christian mysticism,

this emphasis on individual freedom encourages individuals to develop confidence in their personally selected stories—and to resist all who contend that there is, or can be, a single truth.

Unfortunately, diversity of stories is no more popular today than it was during the Inquisition. It's just more widely recognized, and better understood.

—John R. Ewbank  
*Bryn Gweled Homesteads*  
Southampton, Penna.

### Oneness story?

While there are—as Michael and Anderson say—many people who are deeply attached to old stories, ideologies, etc. and would violently resist a new one, there are already many who have given up on the old stories and are floating around out there waiting for a new one that fits their experience.

Any hope we may have for personal and planetary peace depends on our experiencing a unifying view of the way things are which cuts across cultural, national, political and religious boundaries. We can no longer afford to be blind men touching and describing different parts of the elephant and then fighting over which is the right perspective or trying to force our own perspective on others.

Our challenge is to discover and communicate the principles which lead to such a unifying experience so that we can all let go of our "blind men" approach and create a unifying myth, story, worldview or paradigm which can be held in common by the diverse multitudes of residents of our beautiful, threatened planet.

—Rosalie Taylor-Howlett  
Soquel, Calif.

### Double talk & illusion

I believe strongly in broadly based individual ownership and control of productive assets. This concept is the basis of the development models I espouse. It is the theme of my next book.

It is largely because of this commitment that I am deeply distressed that NEW OPTIONS has given such serious attention to the Stuart Speiser proposal ("We Can Redistribute Income Without Taxes or Tears," NEW OPTIONS #29 & 31).

The Speiser proposal is based on largely on double talk and illusion, giving us in the end the ultimate centralized welfare state controlled by a small elite with no meaningful accountability to either market or people. In the name of abolishing the concentration of ownership of capital he creates a scheme which would concentrate its control in so few hands as to even make the most ardent of the robber baron capitalists blush while removing the incentive

to work and use capital productively.

All investment decisions would ultimately fall to those who control the original loan fund and/or to the group that controls the one ultimate universal mutual fund (the UUMF?). Yet both groups would be largely shielded from the consequences of their investment choices with no particular incentive to use the capital in ways which are either socially responsible or economically productive. Removing the management of a Fortune 500 company would be child's play compared to removing the directors of these groups given the enormous power they would wield.

Speiser of course assures us that the loss of individual incentive to work is a minor matter easily corrected. But he neglects to mention how. And he eliminates the concept of risk and assumes a return on any investment of 20%.

Acceptance of the Speiser proposal would at once result in both economic collapse and totalitarian rule. This is utopia?

—David C. Korten

Author, *Bureaucracy and the Poor*  
Jakarta, Indonesia

## Save free enterprise!

In your review of Bowles and Gintis's *Democracy and Capitalism* and Halal's *The New Capitalism* (NEW OPTIONS #32), you tried to show how each is very different in outlook. From Bowles and Gintis you quote, "capitalism and democracy are not complementary systems," and from Halal, "the old conflict between democracy and free enterprise is passing."

The only common denominator in these passages is the term *democracy*. You juxtaposed *capitalism* against democracy and *free enterprise* against democracy as though capitalism and free enterprise are one and the same. I am no longer quite so sure that they are.

Free enterprise may be thought of as the organization of economic activity through a system of more or less voluntary exchange and marked by the absence of significant government involvement. The all-pervading principle of capitalism may be thought of as the expansion of capital. The two are not necessarily related, although historically they have been.

Taken to the extreme, capitalism dominated by megacorporations is as much at odds with free enterprise as is centrally directed state capitalism. Both require [massive] government involvement.

—Raymond Benton, Jr.  
Palatine, Ill.

## Remembering Mildred

I read your comments about the death of Mildred J. Loomis in NEW OPTIONS #31. To me, Mildred was a noble soul who touched me

as few persons have. MJL, like Ralph Borsodi, faced a lonely battle. But they both persevered.

In your terrorism issue (#24) you write that, in seeking solutions to terrorism, it is important "to listen—really *listen*—to everyone in the circle of humankind. And to take their insights into account. For everyone has a true and unique perspective on the whole." Mildred had that unique quality of listening.

—George Yamada

Little Current, Ont., Canada

*Yamada is editor of the journal Green Revolution, which Loomis and Borsodi co-founded.*

## Threat to civilization

The letters you received on terrorism—and that your terrorism issue clearly inspired!—were appalling in their naivete and confusion (NEW OPTIONS #27).

"Reagan is the real terrorist" is already a left-wing cliché. Now we hear of the "gift of terror" and are exhorted to "identify the terror in our own hearts."

What's going on here? Is it someone's impression that "terrorism" is anything that makes anyone afraid, at any time, for any reason? Terrorism is one thing: the deliberate targeting of the innocent, the vulnerable and the uninvolved—because of their innocence, and not in spite of it.

That, and nothing else, is "terrorism." It is a *political strategy* that systematically singles out the defenseless for slaughter.

Warfare in general may be criminal and it may be evil, but it is not terrorism. One can abhor Reagan's policies in Libya without resorting to the moral and intellectual confusion of calling him a "terrorist." Reagan didn't target the civilian population, he targeted the military. He didn't target the uninvolved, he targeted the ostensibly responsible.

Distinctions of that kind are basic to the concept of civilization and civilized behavior. If we cannot maintain such distinctions in our thinking, meaningful communication becomes impossible.

—Brooks Alexander  
Berkeley, Calif.

## Examine the wound

Thanks for your article on the Vietnam Generation Project (NEW OPTIONS #32). I am glad the Project's executive director, Sandie Fauriol, chose to answer your question opposing the vets to the anti-war people by saying, "Both were admirable actions." It's too bad she went on to exclude "the radical element" and impugn our motives.

Perhaps our judgment was not too great. But neither was that of our peers who found

themselves alone and afraid in Vietnam and committed acts from which they're still suffering. My only point is that we are all part of the same whole—Vietnam.

Over the years, I've gotten to know several dozen Vietnam vets as students and friends. They all seem to have a deep knowledge locked within them. Having experienced the war, they know the true nature of what our country did in Vietnam. Some choose to repress that knowledge, others to deny it outright. But all seem troubled deep down, as if they've undergone some personal moral shock or catastrophe.

Those of us who made up the anti-war movement hold a very similar kind of knowledge about the U.S. in Vietnam (and the world).

The generations that experienced the war in Vietnam are now demonstrating this shared knowledge in the most important of all ways. Despite an unceasing, deceitful propaganda campaign, two-thirds of the American people still oppose U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua—even using the contra surrogates.

One salient point troubles me about your article: Is "healing" the right word for the task of the Vietnam generation? It implies somehow closing a wound. My feeling is that there is a wound, but it has got to be examined, diagnosed (understood), not covered over. Covering-over is what this country has been doing for 10 years now, and it's led to such destructive phenomena as Reaganism and post-trauma stress disorder.

—Mark Rudd

Teacher and activist  
Albuquerque, N.M.

## Time passes

I am German-born, came to the U.S. in 1950 to study international relations, got married, had three children (now ages 28, 32, 34 and all living in Manhattan as artists), got divorced. My entire professional life of 30 years has been spent in the computer industry, most of it on the international end.

At times, I dream of getting out of the big business madhouse. Opposition to Vietnam made my family conscious of the misdirected, perverted goals of this country (which would shame our Founding Fathers). But my job—and a small PC software firm I am trying to build with a friend—do not leave me enough time to be an activist.

—Rolf J. Diekmann  
Waltham, Mass.

NEW OPTIONS has gathered the most promising, exciting and optimistic news I've encountered, ever. It has also jolted me into realizing that running a kite store is a trivial pursuit, and I need to move on.

—Grant Raddon  
Portland, Ore.

## Introducing . . . the new economics

For three years now, The Other Economic Summit (TOES)—a public forum of thinkers and activists committed to developing a “New Economics” — has met alongside the annual economic summit of the seven richest Western nations (NEW OPTIONS #17). Many participants have said that the papers and dialogues at TOES have been extraordinary . . . the very best examples of post-liberal, post-socialist economic thinking to have appeared in any forum or format. Now Paul Ekins, director of TOES (and former general secretary of the British Green party), has turned the first two years’ worth of papers from TOES into a book, *The Living Economy: A New Economics in the Making* (Methuen; also available from Intermediate Technology Development Group, P.O. Box 337, Croton-on-Hudson NY 10520, \$18 pbk).

If all Ekins did was collect the papers, that would be reason enough to cheer. But he has done far more. He has cut and condensed them with a very strong hand. He has welded them together into three coherent parts (critique, theory, practice). And he’s added his own comments to them—so much so, that the book now stands as the most comprehensive and systematic introduction to the “new economics” that we have. The next time a libertarian or socialist tells you that they admire your quest but that you need their economics, don’t lose patience. Hand them Ekins’s book.

### In theory

The book begins with a critique of conventional economics, and it goes right for the jugular, right for the “assumption that growth is good and more is better.” It finds three flaws in the growth assumption: it confuses means with ends; it “fails to appreciate the reality of a finite planet”; and it tends to exacerbate “the very economic problems which it is meant to solve.”

Then comes the heart of the book, the section setting forth the theoretical framework of the new economics. These are dangerous waters, demanding considerable powers of synthesis (and “movement diplomacy”!) . . . after all, we’re dealing with economists as diverse as Herman Daly (NEW OPTIONS #10), Hazel Henderson (#17), Anne Miller (#21), Michael Phillips (#18) and James Robertson (#27). But Ekins carries it off. Partly by proposing a coherent, *positive* alternative to economic growth—which he calls, variously, “progress” or “another development” or just plain “development.” And partly by hanging all this and more

on the new concept:

- “Increasing satisfaction of the whole range of human needs, with the emphasis on personal development grounded in social justice”;
- “More equitable sharing of work, both in the formal *and* informal economies”;
- “Greater economic self-reliance at the individual, local, provincial, national and regional levels”;
- “Ecological enhancement of the environment”;
- Creation of health as well as of wealth;
- “Structural transformations in social relations [and] economic activities as well as in the power structure”;
- Articulation of new indicators of (true) economic progress . . . such as Christian Leipert’s brilliant “Adjusted National Product” (ANP). The ANP is your standard GNP *minus* what Leipert calls the “defensive expenditures of all sectors” — expenditures on environmental protection, getting to work, accidents, (increases in) military defense, etc., etc.

### In action

Finally, and most grippingly for a non-economist, the book looks at the new economics “in action.” Dozens of policy proposals are excerpted or summarized.

Just think, says Ekins. We might move toward organic agriculture and cooperative land holdings. We might make much greater use of local currencies. We might move *away* from free trade (and protectionism!) and *toward* a type of trade that fosters self-reliance *among the trading partners*. We might begin to understand that the Third World has some things to teach us.

The book contains powerful arguments for the kinds of initiatives proposed in this issue of NEW OPTIONS, such as the decentralization of South Africa and the bioregionalization of North America. Here’s Manfred Max-Neef, a Chilean economist: “It may be both sensible and advisable to strive for the coexistence of several regional development styles within one country. . . .”

There are some points that weren’t included that, we think, might have found their way into the 400-page text. Some credit might have been given to prior “new economics” syntheses, such as Hazel Henderson’s two books or Mark Lutz and Kenneth Lux’s *Challenge of Humanistic Economics* (1979). There is nothing from or about David Howell, M.P., or the Centre for Policy Studies, although both are coming to some of the same conclusions as TOES from

a British Conservative point of view. There is no mention of the Society for a Human Economy, the nearest U.S. equivalent to TOES, although it involves some of the same people (NEW OPTIONS #22).

Ekins tends not to stress how often—and how deeply—TOES’s new economists disagree. For example, some would have us restore full employment, others would have us go “beyond” full employment and adopt some kind of guaranteed minimum income.

Finally, although some of the contributors concede that we’ll need to change our beliefs and values for their remedies to work, few of them really confront this rather major stumbling block! Perhaps the next TOES should include some social psychologists?

But the point of *The Living Economy* is not to present us with a finished product. In a brief conclusion, Ekins summarizes 10 key areas that need more theoretical work (financing local economic institutions, creating “enabling” rather than dependency-producing welfare measures, etc.). Thus he leaves us not with a new “correct line” but with an expanded and deepened economic agenda . . . a living economics.

## Mansbridge: losing and learning

Jane Mansbridge’s *Why We Lost the ERA* (Univ. of Chicago Press, \$10 pbk) is a devastating yet empathic account of what went wrong in the struggle for the Equal Rights Amendment. It’s a gut-wrenching mix of the anecdotal and the scholarly, the personal and the political. It’s the kind of book that could only have been written by a participant-observer . . . in this case, the “observer” is also a political science professor at Northwestern University and author of a previous path-breaker, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (1980).

Because Mansbridge refuses to demonize her opponents, because she refuses to make excuses for us, because she insists on “taking it all in,” *Why We Lost* ranks with Aldon Morris’s *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (NEW OPTIONS #22) as one of the very best accounts of the political movements of the 1950s-80s. It is heavy with lessons not just for ERA activists but for all social change agents.

### Into Schlafly’s hands

Most activists tend to celebrate themselves and demonize their opponents. For example, in their book on the new populism (reviewed in NEW OPTIONS #34), Harry Boyte, Heather Booth and Steve Max present “progressive” populism as an embodiment of virtue and “right-wing” populism as an expression of

dark, irrational impulses. Mansbridge says it's time to stop these silly games. Not because it isn't "nice" but because it's self-defeating.

If you can't see your opponents' point of view as valid, Mansbridge says again and again in a dozen different ways, then how can you even talk to them—or to those in the middle, who pick up immediately on your self-righteousness (and fear)? Mansbridge goes so far as to remind us that there were some logical, non-sexist reasons for opposing the ERA. For example, she points out that, by the late 1970s, the Supreme Court had ruled most official practices against women unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment. And she notes that many people had become wary of handing the Supreme Court another blank check—more "new words to play with."

She also points out that—for reasons that had little to do with "logic"—many of us supported the ERA in ways that were bound to hurt its chances for passage. Especially, many of us offered arguments that were needlessly "radical" and provocative. The ERA will eliminate wage differentials! The ERA will mandate abortion on demand! The ERA will allow women to be drafted! Mansbridge shows us—in painstaking detail—why all these claims and more, from militant supporters of the ERA, were almost surely false. Thus the question for her becomes, Why? Why did we need to paint the ERA as a radical and deeply unsettling measure, rather than a largely symbolic and healing one, even in the teeth of the facts? Why did we play right into Phyllis Schlafly's hands?

Mansbridge's central task in the book is to answer that question. Here are her four main answers:

- Because passing the ERA promised no immediate, tangible benefits to activists, the only way the big pro-ERA organizations like NOW could recruit volunteer activists was by exaggerating the ERA's probable long-term effects.

- The ERA organizations occasionally tried telling their activists the truth about ERA—if only to convince them to tone down their rhetoric. But the activists *couldn't hear*. They *had* to continue believing that the ERA would make a big difference—otherwise, why make so many personal sacrifices on its behalf? Mansbridge coins a term for the activists' inability to hear: "institutionalized deafness."

- Because activists were volunteers, and because the ERA organizations took pride in being participatory and decentralist, the activists were only marginally accountable to the organizations they purported to represent. "Participatory decentralization" may have been carried too far, suggests the author of *Beyond Adversary Democracy*.

- "The adversary nature of the political process never encouraged the gladiators on either side to amass information that may have

weakened their rhetorical stance."

### Second time around

NOW is fighting—hard—to bring the ERA back as a national issue. Mansbridge would prefer to put it on the back burner for a while, and have feminists "rethink the question of what will really benefit women." If we do attempt to bring the ERA back, she would have us do at least the following:

- Make the problems of "institutionalized deafness" and "participatory decentralization" explicit. *Discuss* them in our organizations and movements.

- Recognize that our "self-selection, sacrifice, and exposure to others encourages [us] to oversimplify. . . . Become more willing to listen to legislators, churches, and other groups that are sympathetic to [our] views but not totally committed to them."

### Worldwatch Institute: "baby, it's you"

This is the fourth consecutive year the Worldwatch Institute has published its *State of the World* report (Norton, \$10 pbk), detailing the planet's "progress toward a sustainable society." Is it our imagination, or is it becoming more biting in its criticisms—and more explicit in its suggested solutions—each year?

This year's edition features a chapter, "Thresholds of Change," that is one of the most powerful indictments of our ecological blundering that we have ever had occasion to read. It could have been written by a committee at the North American Bioregional Congress (p. 3 above)—if that committee had had a wealth of scientific expertise to draw upon. The ozone level is declining over Antarctica—the "predicted global warming" has begun—biologists

are predicting a "series of mass extinctions of species" — etc., etc. Here's what it all means: "A frustrating paradox is emerging. Efforts to improve living standards are themselves beginning to threaten the health of the global economy. The very notion of progress begs for redefinition in light of the intolerable consequences unfolding as a result of its pursuit."

But this is not, in its essence, a negative book. Subsequent chapters examine "sustainable" solutions in a number of areas. Lester Brown and Jodi Jacobson argue that the future will favor smaller cities. Edward Wolf argues that we must begin to move away from super-high-tech kinds of agriculture. William Chandler argues in favor of the free market at the "micro-economic" level, though he "would not deny the necessity of government intervention" at the "macroeconomic" level. Aficionados of the *New Economics* will recognize that these solutions—emerging now, according to the authors, in bits and pieces around the planet—are none other than the kinds of "middle path" solutions called for by E.F. Schumacher in his shattering essay, "Buddhist Economics."

In their concluding chapter, Brown and Wolf go beyond the calls for better "management" of resources emanating from such prestigious think-tanks as the World Resources Institute. In their super-circumspect, "scientific" way, they say we've got to choose and implement technologies on the basis of values ("The values that guide the management of technology in modern society have not been clearly articulated . . ."). And they say we've got to strengthen—in some cases, invent—global institutions that can deal with our interconnected global ecological/economic crises. In the absence of adequate global authorities, they add, "a relatively small number of countries" can make or break the planet. Here's how a "sustainable" politician might put that point to the American electorate: "Baby, it's you."

### New Options

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